

From Wall Street to King Street

By John William Templeton
Special to Sentinel-Voice

J. Paul Brownridge is one of the most welcomed people on Wall Street. As treasurer of the city of Los Angeles, he manages billions in operating accounts and even larger sums in pension funds.

But like any good money manager, he has his eye on where the cash is coming from—and where it isn't coming from.

In his home city, he recognized that sales and property tax receipts were down along the neighborhoods through which Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. passes in Los Angeles. His heart told him that depressed communities were an alarming societal tribute to the late minister-activist. Brownridge began a comprehensive research project—his second in two years—to find out the status of King Streets across the nation. His first project was a photo essay on Black Olympians in time for the 1996 Olympics. "Fifty of the top 100 American cities have Martin Luther King Jr. streets or avenues or ways and they're uniformly depressed areas," says Brownridge.

In an article in the John F. Kennedy School of Government's Winter Bulletin,

the treasurer pointed out that the essence of the oft-quoted "I Have a Dream" speech was the economics of a "bad check" that had been written to African Americans and returned for "not sufficient funds." Brownridge said of the King Streets, "Few desire to exit the freeway onto them; some fear doing so. This is wrong; this is a dishonor."

The treasurer proposes a national initiative for the 30th anniversary of King's death in 1998 to redevelop the King Streets of many of our inner cities, making them quality living and working corridors. Brownridge's perspective is a real example of the new cute saying, "show me the money."

The explanations for a whole host of social issues relate back to the capital available for job creation, institution building and public services.

His observation that King streets generally ran through African-American neighborhoods is similar to research I conducted for my 1985 book Illustrated National Guide to Black Households. As late as 1980, 87 percent of African Americans in the United States lived on blocks that were 100 percent African American. The concentration index I developed was above

90 percent for 108 of the 110 metropolitan statistical areas in the country. The focus of national policy has been to pick the best and brightest individuals from those communities for individual success, including moving out to the suburbs instead of improving those communities. However, Brownridge wants to move beyond the "A Better Chance" approach and provide a quality environment to all,

particularly children.

It all starts with capital to create businesses, buy homes and educate youth. The Federal National Mortgage Company has made a start by pledging \$10 billion for mortgages in depressed neighborhoods through city-based partnerships of government officials and lenders.

In the King Street Project, there will be both competition (See Streets, Page 14)

Boycott

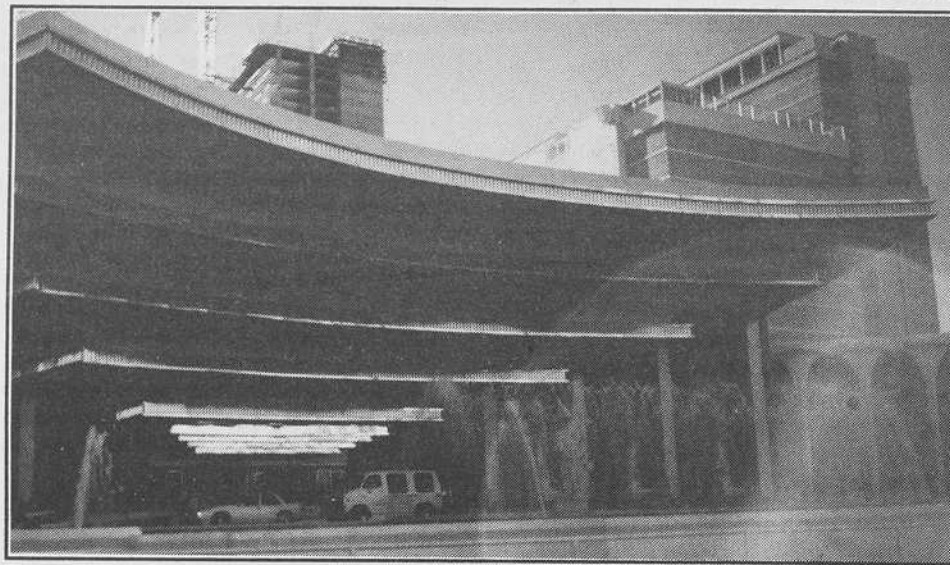
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employees in executive, managerial and professional

positions. It also asked whether the companies used minority advertising outlets and black



Martin Luther King Boulevard stretches across several blighted neighborhoods. Photo by Savoy/LVS-Voice



ITT Sheraton, which owns Caesar's Palace, is one of several hotel chains targeted by the boycott. Photo by Savoy/LVS-Voice

firms as vendors and whether the companies supported charities that serve the black

would not participate: Westin Hotels, Best Western International, Radisson Hospitality Worldwide, Renaissance Hotels and Resorts, Choice Hotels International, Holiday Inn Worldwide and Omni Hotels. All got an "F."

Doubletree gave no response at all. In response, the NAACP notified a Doubletree hotel in Little Rock, Ark., that a March regional conference would be moved elsewhere.

Doubletree spokesperson Ann Rhodes, said NAACP officials had agreed to give the company until early 1997 to get the requested information because of an impending merger. She added that the Little Rock Doubletree that is losing the NAACP conference has 65 percent Black employees and more than one-third of them are in management.

At Choice Hotels International, which also got a failing grade, a spokeswoman said the NAACP requested the information just as the company was undergoing an ownership change.

"They asked at the worst possible time," said Curtis. She said the company would have no problem giving the requested information if the NAACP asked again.

Mfume accepts these excuses as attempts to hide and stonewall the process. He said, "If the hotel chains who have not responded to our questionnaire are so proud of their records as they say they are, then they should willingly share them publicly...What is it they have to hide? We have been attempting to get this information for almost a year. It is time to stop stonewalling, this really comes down to putting up or shutting up."

community.

Of the 16 companies, none answered the entire survey and only six received passing grades.

Marriott International and Hilton Hotels Corporation, which has two hotels in Las Vegas, both received a "C," the highest grade awarded; Hyatt Hotels Corporation, Adam's Mark Hotels and the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Corporation were graded a "C-minus," and HFS Inc., operators of Days Inns, got a "D."

Ten firms with lower grades were targeted by the boycott. Two of them, ITT Sheraton Corporation, which owns Caesar's Palace, and Promus Hotel Corporation, which runs the Embassy Suites chain, answered some questions but withheld information dealing with employment and property ownership. Each received a "D-minus."

Mfume said seven firms notified the NAACP that they

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March 30th, 1997 • 6:30 AM

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