

Group celebrates 25 years matching minority businesses

By Janice R. Henderson
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The concept was a simple one. Create a business organization that brings together American corporations seeking products or services from minority business owners who can meet those needs. This marriage forged the genesis of one of the nation's leading business matchmakers.

This year the National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC) marks its 25th year of bringing together corporate America and minority businesses.

"Our efforts are beneficial to both corporate America and minority businesses," Harriet Michel, NMSDC president said. "The union is good for everyone's bottom line. It makes good business sense because it's a win-win proposition."

The organization, founded by corporations in 1972 with the assistance of the Nixon administration, has contributed to the growth of thousands of minority business enterprises

(MBE) ranging from classic "Mom & Pop" operations to multi-million dollar ventures.

Michel noted that purchases by corporations from minority suppliers reached nearly \$30 billion in 1995. She said NMSDC salability is born out of a practical need.

The latest data from the United States Census Bureau show a continuous surge in the number of minority-owned businesses. Hispanic-owned companies are leading the trend with a 76 percent jump since the last economic census. Black, Asian and Native American businesses also show a significant rate of growth, much higher than U.S. businesses as a whole.

But the picture isn't entirely rosy. Minority businesses are confronted with the ever rising, anti-affirmative action tide, drastic cuts in government programs to assist minorities and a business community reducing its overall supplier base. Statistics show that minorities currently represent 26 percent of the United States population, but only 13 percent of total businesses and six percent of gross receipts.

"NMSDC is one of the most important minority economic organizations in the country," said African-American business pioneer, Byron Lewis. Lewis is the founder of UniWorld Group, Inc., the largest minority-owned advertising firm in the country.

"The group gives minority business owners a resource for corporate contacts and an opportunity to network with other MBEs," Lewis said.

NMSDC equips its certified minority suppliers with access to corporate contacts, technical assistance and valuable business resources.

"Minority businesses are one of the fastest growing business segments and they are well-positioned to contribute both to job growth and to the overall economic health of minority communities and the country as a whole," Michel said.

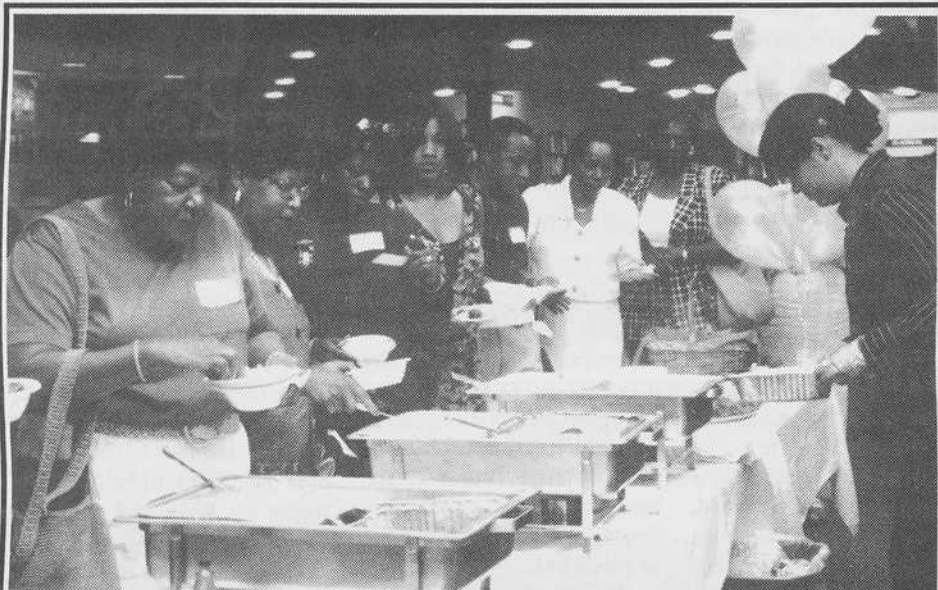
Headquartered in New York City, NMSDC has 42 Regional Councils and 3,500 corporate members including most of the Fortune 500

companies, large privately-owned and foreign-owned businesses and other major purchasing institutions such as hospitals and universities. The Regional Councils certify and match more than 15,000 Black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American businesses with member corporations interested in purchasing goods and services.

NMSDC's annual Conference and Business Opportunity Fair caps the 25th anniversary commemoration. The Conference, scheduled for Oct. 19-22 in New York, is expected to draw over 4,000 business leaders from around the country.

This year's conference theme is "Minority Businesses and Corporations: A Silver Anniversary with a Golden Future - The Inclusion Solution." Robert E. Allen, chairman and CEO of AT&T Corporation and Byron E. Lewis, chairman of CEO of UniWorld Group, are co-chairs of the event.

For information on how minority businesses can become a part of NMSDC, call (212) 944-2430.



First Fridays

The monthly social networking group of professionals will line up this Friday at Seven Seas Restaurant beginning at 6:30 p.m. For more information, call 681-8515.

Photo special to Sentinel-Voice by Lisa Margerum

D.C. residents protest new law

Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON — The leader of the Congressional Black Caucus urged District of Columbia residents to go to jail if necessary to fight a new law that strips elected officials of most of their powers.

"You're here in a peaceful rally. You really ought to be in the halls lying down," Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., told about 500 people gathered outside the Capitol Wednesday for a rally staged as members of Congress returned from a summer recess.

"This struggle and this fight requires civil disobedience," Waters said.

"Guess what? They don't hear you down here. They're not going to move as long as you're being nice. They don't understand nice," Waters said. "If you've got to go the jail, go to jail."

Waters, joined the Rev. Jesse Jackson, ministers and union leaders in the event. Later, Jackson led a march past Senate office buildings before setting off in front of the building

where the office Sen. Lauch Faircloth, R-N.C., is housed

Faircloth championed the new provisions which have temporarily transferred authority for nine key city agencies from Mayor Marion Barry to a presidentially-appointed financial control board.

The changes were part of a Congressional effort to shore up D.C.'s financial status. Under the new law, Congress

spends millions of dollars to take the reins of several costly city functions including running prisons and courts.

Adding to the city's problems is a three-week delay in reopening schools because the City lacks money to make court-ordered repairs. A board of trustees was appointed to run the schools after the financial control board diminished the authority of the elected school board.

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IN SEARCH OF SAFE HAVEN

Volcano's fury unleashed

By Wesley Gibbings
Special to Sentinel-Voice

ST. JOHN'S, Antigua (IPS) — Montserratians who have fled the volcano ravished island and trying to start a new life in neighboring Antigua are finding challenges living in their new home.

To begin with, the cost of living in Antigua is considerably higher than they are used to. A modest two-bedroom wooden house rents for \$350 while a similar home in Montserrat would have cost half that.

And while Antiguan have been accommodating, job opportunities are few and far between. "Things have been very hard," says one refugee who has been unemployed since he came to Antigua six months ago.

Antiguan officials have also been cracking down on Montserratians who have taken jobs without first applying for a work permit.

"All the Labor Department has been doing is making sure we regularize the

Montserratians to avoid problems," labor commissioner Austin Josiah said. The island has since dropped its fee for work permits and began granting them liberally.

The Antigua and Barbuda governments are conducting a nationwide survey of non-national workers in an effort to root out those without work permits.

A police officer who remains in Montserrat but transferred his car to Antigua, says he does not see Antigua as an option. Although his wife and 4-month old baby have settled Britain, he remains. The British government is assisting Montserratian refugees, giving them \$8,000 to \$15,000.

The officer is one of 85 others in Montserrat who have decided to stick things out as the headaches associated with the crisis have escalated.

The island's 26 prisoners, serving sentences for everything from murder to burglary, have been spending their time at a

(See Volcano, Page 5)

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