

BUSINESS

SBA pledges to quadruple loans to black entrepreneurs

Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A recent meeting between the National Black Chamber of Commerce and the Small Business Administration to brainstorm ways to enhance lending opportunities for black entrepreneurs led to a pledge by the SBA to quadruple lending to black business owners by fiscal year 2000.

"We have to be forward thinking and find ways to open the door and provide opportunities to ... African-Americans," SBA Administrator Aida Alvarez said prior to signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) sealing the pledge.

NBCC President Harry Alford said getting the loan money to black business people is the

highest priority.

"We're in the business of making sure this money becomes available to hard-working black entrepreneurs," he said. "It's about getting the word out in the community so that the average small business person can apply for the funds. There is an alarming number of business people who do not know these programs exist."

This year, the NBCC has also signed MOU's with Glendale Federal Bank and the Federal Bureau of Land Management.

Information on how black businesses can gain access to the SBA loans will be provided at the NBCC Annual Convention, July 9-12, at the Sheraton Inner Harbor Hotel in Baltimore, Md. For details, call 202-416-1622.



Pictured are (seated) SBA Administrator Aida Alvarez, NBCC President Harry Alford. From left to right, Irma Munoz, national director of community outreach; Darryl Dennis, general counsel to the administrator; Congressman Danny Davis, D-Ill.; Anthony Robinson, president MBELDEF; Congresswoman Donna Christian-Green, D-Va.; and Roy Montoya, chairman, U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Black economic empowerment: When will we overcome?

By James Clingman

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Will someone help me understand why some of us get so involved in being so fair to everyone else that we forget about ourselves?

Our economic house is on fire and we are holding the ladder saying "after you" to everyone else. Does that make sense?

I know we are a compassionate people, but as the flight attendant says on the airplane, "In case there is a loss of oxygen, put your mask on first, and then put your child's mask on." Economically speaking,

Black people are the parents and other ethnic "minority" groups are our children.

We can't help them until we help ourselves.

You cannot help someone else if your situation is in constant upheaval.

Financially, we would be one of the largest nations on earth if we controlled the \$469 billion

we earn each year. But we don't.

While every other group is taking care of its people, Black people always seem to be leading the way, making sure that everyone is brought under the same "big tent" and included in whatever benefits are handed out to so-called "minorities."

First, we must not continue to allow ourselves to be called "minorities" and to be dumped into the same cauldron with every other non-white male group in this country. That only diffuses what little influence we have.

Black people built this country.

We suffered the most horrendous treatment in the history of the world, in a holocaust lasting hundreds of years.

Our claim to the rights and privileges of the United States was bought and paid for many years ago.

Most of the laws and regulations written to

right the wrongs that had been committed were written for Black people. Now, after our people have fought and died to uphold those laws, everyone else is waltzing in and taking full advantage of their benefits. We cannot continue to fall for this scam. Equal rights for "minorities" is fine, but leave Black people out of that scenario.

Call us non-immigrants, as Dr. Claud Anderson says.

Don't get me wrong. I have nothing against any ethnic group or any individual. My gripe is primarily with us.

We sit back and allow others to manipulate and placate us with terms like "minority" and accept the silly notion that every group except White males equates to Black people. At the same time, those same "minorities" are marching right by us in terms of employment, contract awards, business deals, median income, net

worth and in every other category you can think of.

Does that make sense? Who is looking out for Black people in this country? Surely not other minority groups. Certainly not the government, nor multi-national corporations.

It is our responsibility to look after ourselves. Black people have an obligation to look out for one another.

We must understand that we are never going to overcome until we take care of one another first, just like every other group does in this country.

There is nothing wrong with self-interest, especially in the economic arena. Let's try it for a while, collectively, and see how far we get. Maybe then, we will be able to sing, "We have overcome."

James Clingman is the former editor of the Cincinnati Herald.

Is not it time for a black computer company to appear?

By John William Templeton

Special to Sentinel-Voice

SAN FRANCISCO — Sometimes you can't see the forest for the trees.

That is the case with one of the most amazing trends in the African-American consumer market.

Beginning in 1995, African-Americans spent more on computers than they did on televisions, according to the Current Population Surveys of the U.S. Census Bureau — \$589 million to almost \$500 million for televisions.

They also spent another \$180 million on computer

software — equivalent to the amount spent on CD-Roms and other recorded music. When statistics for 1997 are released, the total amount spent on hardware and software is likely to top \$1 billion.

Marketing research indicates that most of these computers were bought for students so that they can stay competitive in school. An Apple Computer Inc. executive confided that its studies indicate that single Black mothers index the highest of any group in a willingness to buy a computer for their children.

The ironic aspect of this trend is that it is a total gift to the computer industry, which has done worse than nothing to market technology to African-Americans, even though some of the biggest breakthroughs were pioneered by Blacks.

Did you know that the lead engineers for the first IBM PC, Windows 95 and the Macintosh disk drive were Black?

Perhaps it is time we do something for ourselves. As much as the Black computer market has grown, it still only scratches the surface. In President Bill Clinton's State of the Union address, he opened

the doors to an even greater opportunity by committing funds to the rejuvenation of schools in school districts with a high proportion of children living in poverty.

Black parents are being forced to buy computers for their children because their schools are not equipped with them. There is a 14-percent gap in computers per student at the 4,200 schools with 75 percent or more African-American student bodies compared to the national average, reports QED's Jeanne Hayes in Denver.

If the president is serious it

would mean a substantial commitment to buying the 1.2 million computers that it would take to reach the national goal of five students per computer by the year 2000 for the seven million African-American kindergarten-through-12th-grade students.

Even if the feds do not follow through we, as a community, should require our local school boards and charitable organizations to come up with the dough.

Now, if you're still with

me. Somebody needs to make those computers and somebody needs to make software that mines the rich oral tradition of the African experience and the creativity of today's artists. Although computer purchases are going up, software purchases are going down as Black buyers find an even worse situation than the book and movie markets when they go to software stores.

There is nothing for Black children and a void in practical
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Treatment

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blood cells that are normal.

The technique does not change the fundamental mutation in a patient's DNA. Instead, it changes the instructions given by the DNA. This is like a courier changing a message as he carries it from the boss to a work crew. The crew will end up following the revised instructions instead of what the boss ordered.

Sullenger said it may be possible to treat sickle cell anemia by mixing immature red blood cells, called progenitors, with the ribozymes and then returning them to the patient.

"All of the daughter cells from those progenitor cells would then have the ribozyme to repair the sickle RNA," he said.

Dr. William P. Winter, a sickle cell researcher at Howard University, praised the study, but said its clinical value still must

be proven.

"It is interesting and exciting that this could work," he said, "but it is a long way from being a real therapeutic possibility."

Winter said researchers still have to find a way to efficiently target the blood cells that must be changed to correct the sickling disease. Sullenger agrees that targeting is a problem when correcting mutations, but he said his team is now testing the technique in laboratory mice bred to have sickle cell anemia. He said if it works in the lab animals, then testing in humans may be possible in about three years.

The Duke researcher also said that replacing as few as 5 to 10 percent of the mutated blood cells will relieve symptoms and that replacing half the cells would be enough to make the blood function normally.

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