

'First black' syndrome cripples our progress

James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Why is it that each time there is a problem within the Black community or there's something we are unhappy about, we fall for the "First Negro" game?

Albert Clegg taught us about this syndrome back in the '60s and '70s and we are still being duped by it.

When we protest against the dearth of Black involvement in corporate America, they appoint "the first Black" to the Chicago Stock Exchange.

We complain about how unfair our money system is, and they appoint "the first Black" to the upper echelon of the Federal Reserve System. They lull us into a state of euphoria by merely projecting that "the first Black" will become CEO of a major corporation in two more years.

There are more examples. In some cities we still count to one when a new Black fire chief is appointed. We jump for joy when "the first Black" gets the top job on the police force even when we are the majority population in that area. Heck, in some areas we still swoon about "the first Black" school principal. I say, "Why has it taken so long?"

It's sad that in this day and age we can still be pacified with "the first Negro" strategy. Our issues are very serious, especially our economic ones. We cannot afford to play into the hands of those who would only throw us a crumb or two to quiet us down.

Is being the "first Black" really solving our problems? Or, does it merely serve as an isolated symbolic gesture of the sad fact that we can be bought off by window-dressing?

Even more important to me is this: The Federal Reserve System is nearly 100-years old. Should we jump up and down now that a Black man has finally been appointed to a high level position in that organization?

The Chicago Stock Exchange has been around for quite some time now. Putting a Black man on the Board in 1999 is really nothing to brag about. Have you ever heard of the okey-doke?

Black people have been putting out fires, policing, teaching and running businesses since before the end of slavery. Why is it worthy of celebration now that one of us has been promoted to the top spot in anything?

The worse part about this is that we play into it. Some of us believe that being "the first Black" makes one better than others.

If you ask me it's certainly nothing to boast about. Black people have been in this country since its inception. We have participated in its wars, depressions and its construction. As a matter of fact, we built this country.

We have participated in its commerce. No, we were its commerce. What is there to celebrate in 1999 when "the first Black" is appointed to anything? Not much, but we fall for it every time. And, when that does not work, they throw a few Benjamins our way.

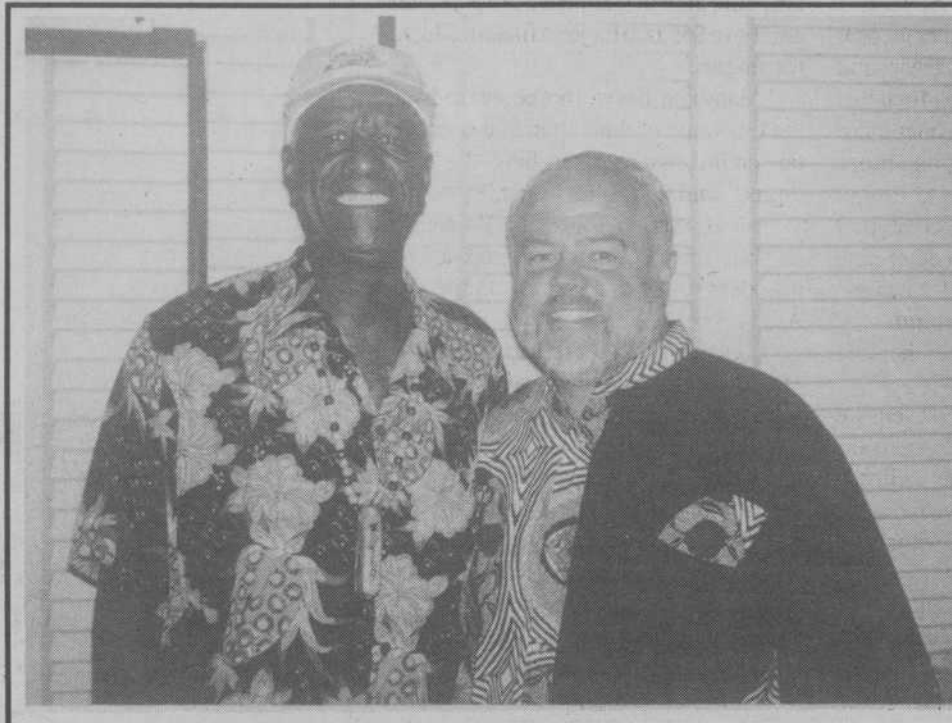
Here's the real deal: If we want to celebrate "the first Black," let's celebrate the first Black-owned hotel in our town. Let's throw a party when the first Black-owned bank is opened. How about doing some bragging about the first Black supermarket in your town? Or, the first Black theater complex, record company, theme restaurant, conference center or airline? Those are things we can take pride in for being the first.

Let's understand that "the first Negro" principle in 1999 is a prescription for our continued economic enslavement. Sure, rejoice in another brother's or sister's success, but don't revel in the notion that something is being done for our people simply because he or she happens to be the "first."

Getting caught up in the hype about "the first Black" on a board, or on anything else for that matter, is not where our attention should be. We must keep our eyes on what is really important in this country — economic freedom.

We have been in this country too long and have committed too much for anyone to still be counting to one. Pardon me for being a party-pooper, but call me when the number reaches 1,000.

BUSINESS



PIECE OF THE ROCK

Father of the gourmet chocolate chip cookie industry, Wally "Famous" Amos, left, chats with boxing promoter Rock Newman during a recent Women In Communications luncheon in Las Vegas. Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Liquidating personal property relatively easy

LaCheryl B. Cillie
Special to Sentinel-Voice

It is a fact of life that we are born to die. Growing up in church as a child, I often heard the minister remind us: "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we will carry nothing out." This is a sobering reality.

Because of this truth, it is quite possible that we will be left with a relative's personal property to dispose of. If you are unsure about the value of particular items, it makes good economic sense to obtain the assistance of a reputable auctioneer or tag sale conductor.

These professionals make it part of their continuing education to become knowledgeable about a wide range of items. If it is the estate of an older relative, there may be valuable antiques and collectibles.

Where a partial or complete liquidation of the estate is called for, their insights should bring peace of mind and a good price for the merchandise.

When contemplating a formal sale, ask the attorney handling the sale to recommend someone with experience that meets your specific needs.

If you do not have an attorney, look in the yellow pages under auctions, auctioneers, estate sales or appraisals. Appraisers assess the value of personal property and often handle sales for the courts and individual attorneys.

As with any major decision, handle with care. Be sure to ask how familiar they are with your type of merchandise. Obtain references and fee schedules

prior to making a decision. Fees usually range from three to 33 1/3 percent based on the type of merchandise sold. Be ready to negotiate, but do not be unreasonable.

Included in that fee will be setup, cleanup, sale crew and advertising. The sales company usually will assume total responsibility for monies paid, check written, theft, and damage to property, but this will vary from company to company.

In addition to these services, most companies have a mailing list of the people who frequent their sales.

Hosting a sale is labor intensive. Set-up is very important to the sale. The way the items are arranged and organized may affect the price. Items should be neat and clean, as long as cleaning does not affect the value of the item. It is very important to sell the items at the house where the person lived. This increases the selling price 20-30 percent.

Keep the following in mind when liquidating an estate:

- Make sure you have enough to sell beforehand;
- Do not remove items before a professional assessment. It may decrease your chances of having a successful sale;
- Always leave merchandise in place and as it sits throughout the estate;
- Allow the professional to see all of the items that will be displayed for sale;
- Check all old purses, Bibles, under pillows, mattresses and the like for cash prior to the sale;
- Do not remove items from sale on day of sale. Do

it before the sale date if necessary;

— Remove all bank statements and other important documents from drawers, cup boards and the like prior to the sale;

— Allow sale conductor to do his or her job without interference;

— Do not allow anyone to buy prior to sale without the consent and knowledge of sale conductor.

Average household items overlooked by most people which make excellent sale items include, pots, pans, dishes, appliances, cleaning supplies, sheets, towels, can goods, and eating utensils.

Remember to allow the professional to do his/her job. They will try to get the most

money for you, since they are paid a commission on everything they sell. Obviously the more you make the more they make. This should alleviate your getting taken advantage of.

Liquidating an estate should not be a hard thing. Remember the above guidelines as well as add your own; they should help make your sale a more successful one.

LaCheryl B. Cillie is an African-American auctioneer and appraiser from the state of Alabama. She is the co-author of "From Darkness to Light, A Modern Guide to Recapturing Historical Riches, Understanding Auctions, Collectibles and Estate Sales."

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