

BUSINESS

Economic freedom demands gumption

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We have all heard the saying "You can't get something for nothing." We also know if it looks too good to be true, it probably is.

We are familiar with these and other logical sayings, but too many of us are unwilling to allow these principles to guide us when it comes to gaining our true economic freedom.

Let's take a look.

Most Black people understand that, as Frederick Douglass taught us, only through some form of struggle will we achieve our freedom. As to our economic freedom, that truism applies to an even greater degree. If we want economic empowerment we must be willing to sacrifice something to obtain it.

Remember the Montgomery, Ala. bus boycotts? Sacrifices were made by those who were willing to walk instead of conveniently ride the buses. Those people wanted something of substance, and they sacrificed to obtain it.

Today, we give a lot of lip-service to wanting our economic freedom, but in many cases we are unwilling to give up even the slightest measure of "convenience" to achieve the freedom we desire.

And if we do manage to make a small sacrifice, we want our reward instantly. We want immediate gratification. Furthermore, when we decide we have had enough of being discriminated against, caricatured, and treated unfairly we conjure up superfluous attempts to redress those issues.

When we catch someone calling us a bad name, we sue him or her, and we insist they go to sensitivity training. When White radio personalities say things like "black hoes" we sue them because they hurt our feelings, and we ask for a boycott. (By the way, has anyone asked for a boycott of those Black personalities who use similar pejorative terms in their music videos? Just a thought.)

When we feel discriminated against by a big business, or even a small business for that matter, we seek retribution through feeble economic sanctions and we dust off our protest signs and start demonstrating against them.

These solutions are all very nice and have some impact, but when you really look at what we have accomplished with these strategies, you see very little long term benefits. For instance, everybody was angry at the high gasoline prices last spring.

A "gas-out" day was called over the Internet and across the media. The problem was that it lasted only one day. What made us think that because we did not buy gasoline for one day we would make the prices go down? How ridiculous. The dealers knew we would be at the pump in great numbers the next day to "fill 'er up." We needed to sacrifice more than one day to have been effective.

Back in the 1980s Revlon made a public faux-pas. We boycotted and after the company hired a Black public relations person and made some donations to Black organizations, all was well again.

Since then Black people have probably bought more than enough Revlon products to make up for the boycott.

The Texaco incident is another one. After all of the hoopla and all of the money from Texaco's caught-in-the-act-contingency-fund was distributed, it was business as usual. Have you seen those beautiful commercials on television featuring Black dancers, sponsored by you know who?

We could look at many other examples of our futility and our acquiescence to those that do and say things against us, but we must also look at what we gain from our reciprocal actions against them. From my seat, I can't see much gain, at least not for us. For them, well, that's another story.

Nothing of real substance will come to Black people unless and until we are willing to lay something on the line. It's not about what someone calls us; it's about what we answer to (what do you think they call us after we

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CompUSA targeted for dissing black media

WASHINGTON (AP) — A recent campaign targeting CompUSA Inc. — utilizing cash register receipts — revealed figures that show the computer seller should advertise with black-oriented mass media to tap the lucrative market even further.

Hundreds of blacks have mailed their receipts to a popular syndicated radio program, "The Tom Joyner Morning Show."

Campaign organizers complain that CompUSA does virtually no advertising

with black media. They delivered the receipts to the company last week.

"It's just a massive amount, just boxes upon boxes of receipts, to let them know black folks spend a whole lot of money at CompUSA," said commentator Tavis Smiley, a TV host on Black Entertainment Television.

Smiley and Joyner galvanized the return receipts drive, asking listeners to send receipts from their purchases at CompUSA stores

nationwide after an advertising consulting company identified CompUSA as a company that gives short shrift to black media.

"In my job, I don't ever release figures," said CompUSA spokeswoman Suzanne Shelton. She said the company does not reveal details of its advertising and marketing strategies, but did say CompUSA is not advertising on the radio this year, focusing instead on newspaper advertising. She

did not say how much of its advertising was with black newspapers.

The mail-in campaign is an effort to demonstrate the amount of dollars blacks are spending at the company, said Smiley, who mailed the receipts to the Dallas-based company last week.

"It doesn't make good business sense to not reach out in an aggressive way to African-Americans and other people of color," Smiley said. "A lot of folks who do this

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Cubs slugger Sosa taking over Jordan's restaurant

CHICAGO (AP) — Move aside, M.J.

In this city's gastronomy game, Slammin' Sammy is stepping up to the plate.

Michael Jordan's Restaurant will become Sammy Sosa's Restaurant, a move prompted by declining sales at the basketball star's eatery just north of downtown Chicago, said H. Gene Silverberg, a controlling partner in both restaurant ventures.

But he acknowledged the switch also is related to a rift between Jordan and the restaurant's owners. Jordan apparently stopped eating at the restaurant after the owners rejected his ideas for making it more upscale, Silverberg said. Jordan's restaurant, er Sosa's, will be moved to a smaller location early next year, Silverberg said. He said sales at Jordan's have slipped about 20 percent in the last couple of years, although it remained profitable.

The switch apparently is being made without Jordan's approval; Silverberg said he doesn't need it.

"Michael will respond in court, not through the media," Jordan attorney Fred Sperling said last week.

Jordan's absence at the restaurant could account for some of the decline, Silverberg said. Unlike Jordan, Sosa will be required to make appearances when his restaurant opens by the start of next baseball season.

And by all accounts, Sosa is ready to play ball. He donned a chef's hat at a recent news conference to announce the restaurant and even swung a 4-foot-long red fork. Sosa swinging a fork is the restaurant's logo.

"No way would (Jordan) put on that hat," Silverberg said later. "Sammy is still playful ... and we need that to

make this work."

For his part, Sosa said he's going to consult with the chefs on the Spanish and American menu and has no problem appearing at the eatery.

"One reason I want to do this restaurant is to (thank) people from all over the world," said Sosa, who admitted he can't cook. "I've never had a restaurant before. ... People will see me there quite often."

Sosa said he had nothing to do with the decision to

move Jordan's restaurant and called him "my hero."

"He's still the man in my heart," Sosa said. "I love Michael."

It is unclear whether it was the food, atmosphere or Jordan's departure from basketball that led to the restaurant's decline.

Food critics said the cuisine, basic "American comfort food," was nothing to write home about. The decor — a shrine to Jordan — and gift shop were

reminiscent of Planet Hollywood, another celebrity-heavy theme restaurant that fell on hard times, said Penny Pollack, dining editor at Chicago Magazine.

"I don't think there is ever a reason to go back unless you had an out-of-town guest who really needed to go there," Pollack said.

Lunchtime customers had mixed opinions.

"I love the Cubs and

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