

## BUSINESS

## Success tied to customer treatment

By James Clingman  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

I hear it all the time. "I patronized a Black-owned business and was treated terribly." How about this one? "I went to that Black restaurant and the service was bad, the food was cold, and the staff was discourteous and very slow." And the granddaddy of them all: "I tried to do business with Black contractors, but they didn't show up on time; they wanted me to pick them up because they didn't have transportation, and they wanted me to go out and buy the materials needed for the job."

I write a great deal about the responsibility of Black consumers to support Black-owned businesses, and sometimes it's brought to my attention that I do not spend enough time dealing with the obligation Black business has to provide good products and services. Believe me, I understand and do promote

quality from our businesses. I teach Black Entrepreneurship at the University of Cincinnati as well as in what was recently the eye of the storm during the aftermath of the Timothy Thomas murder in the Over-The-Rhine section of Cincinnati. In my classes I stress the obligations of business owners to their customers.

My interactions with Black business owners and prospective Black business owners include an emphasis on good service, integrity, and simply doing what you say you are going to do for the customer. Our businesses have it hard enough without heaping more problems on themselves by not following through on agreements, not opening on time, not showing up to do the job on time, cheating and stealing from their customers, and the list goes on.

You would think they'd see this and make sure their

employees were carrying out the very best of practices toward their customers. You would think, considering our mental enslavement, that Black business owners would try a little harder, do a little more, make that extra effort to please Black customers. But we still suffer from the programming that makes us hate one another and ourselves, thus making it quite difficult to do business together.

Additionally, we think it's all right to do a brother or a sister wrong, mainly because we are not used to being dragged into court or sued by our people. But we sure are afraid of the White man and we make every effort to take care of our obligations to him, because we know what will happen if we do not. Shamefully, we go about our business ripping one another off with schemes and practices that pull us further and further apart, and we wonder

why we cannot "come together."

I have been cheated several times by Black business owners. I have one situation that I am dealing with currently in which a sister whom I considered a good friend participated in a scheme that included forging my name to a lease for a copy machine because her credit would not allow her to get the machine on her own. I have another lien filed against a sister I worked with on a conference who refused to repay a loan I made to her. These were business transactions and there are others as well, like getting poor service from stores, contractors, and restaurants. I have been there, done that, and I have several T-shirts to prove it!

But what do we do? First of all, Black business owners, get your act together! Stop taking short cuts, stop cheating and lying to your  
(See Clingman, Page 17)

## Blacks must monitor efforts to privatize Social Security

By Maya Rockeymoore  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Living up to his campaign promises, President Bush recently announced the formation of a commission charged with the task of outlining a framework for privatizing the Social Security system. Perhaps in a deferential bow to the African American community (or in an effort to cloak the nature of his mission), Bush appointed three African Americans—all purported to be in favor of privatizing the system—to serve on his 16 member bipartisan task force.

Because Social Security is so important to the economic stability of African American families at all stages of life, the African American community cannot afford to ignore the activities of this commission or the drastic implications that privatization could have on the economic stability of our families.

For over a half-century, the Old Age Survivors and Disability Insurance program—more commonly known as Social Security—has protected American families from falling into poverty because of the loss of income due to retirement, death of a breadwinner, or disability.

As the most important source of income for more than 80 percent of elderly Americans and virtually the only source of income for the

poorest 40 percent of older Americans, Social Security provides people with a guaranteed retirement income, safeguarded from being eroded by inflation, for a lifetime.

African Americans are particularly reliant on Social Security benefits. While only 12 percent of the U.S. population, African Americans are 17 percent of those receiving Social Security disability benefits and 22 percent of all children receiving Social Security survivor benefits.

A recent study by the National Urban League Institute for Opportunity and Equality found that African American children are almost four times more likely to be lifted out of poverty by Social Security than are White children.

For years, proponents of privatizing Social Security have promoted the idea of diverting all, or a portion, of the payroll tax away from Social Security into individual retirement accounts so that individuals can invest these funds in the stock market. They argue that individuals can "build wealth" by investing their Social Security retirement savings in the market.

While wealth accumulation and sound investment practices are certainly important goals to pursue, many agree that it is not smart to

jeopardize Social Security's guaranteed benefits by subjecting it to the risks of the stock market. After all, Social Security is designed to be the safety net that individuals can rely upon in the event of financial setbacks that may come with private investments.

With Social Security expected to experience a financing shortfall in 2038, there

are good reasons to find ways to strengthen the system. Risky privatization proposals, however, are not the answer.

Funding private retirement accounts by diverting money away from the current system would increase retirement insecurity and undermine the viability of the survivor and disability  
(See Social Security, Pg 17)

## Black newspapers look to gain web presence

ATLANTA (AP) - The nation's black newspapers are looking to the Internet for new clout in advertising and journalism, combining their traditional local stories about social change and positive community news with a focused online audience advertisers covet.

The National Newspapers Publishers Association, which represents 210 of the roughly 250 U.S. black newspapers, is halfway to its goal of raising \$500,000 to create a Web presence for each paper.

The group plans to have 100 papers online within a year. AT&T Corp. and United Parcel Service each donated \$125,000 to help launch the first 100 newspapers' sites.

The group is holding its 61st annual convention in Atlanta through Saturday. Nearly every discussion at the conference is related to the possibilities of "aggregated digital content," or how each newspaper could benefit if its stories, advertisers and readers are configured correctly online.

"So much of what's done on the Internet is about volume," association executive director Benjamin Jealous said Thursday. "Having one or two newspaper sites doesn't get a lot of attention. But if you put up 200 papers, then you're a player."

The association says its members have a weekly circulation of 15 million people, reaching more than a third of the country's black households. While the average black press reader is 42, the association is aiming for the 18-30 demographic advertisers seek most ardently.

Only 42 of the association's papers offer any news on their sites, while more than 70 percent offer no classified advertising in either print or online versions, Jealous said. Tight staffs and the expense are the main culprits.

"The community that we serve is just coming online, so we're using the print version to direct people to the Web site," said Jesse Long-Bey, city editor of Detroit's Michigan Citizen, which has a weekly circulation of 60,000.

Long-Bey said he believes the Internet also will prompt many of the papers to do more hard news coverage, including stories that point out problems in black communities.

"We have a hardcore cadre of readers and they want  
(See Black Papers, Page 17)

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