

BUSINESS

Black publishers call for boycott of Office Depot

Special to Sentinel-Voice
One of the nation's largest office supply stores has been charged with discrimination against African-American newspapers. The object of black newspaper publishers' ire is Office Depot.

This week, black newspapers across the country— including publications in Florida, Office Depot's headquarters— were to begin running full-page ads asking readers to boycott the chain, according to Les Kimber, co-founder of *The California Advocate* newspaper in Fresno and president of Kimber Kimber & Associates, the nation's only advocacy advertising agency for black newspapers.

Office Depot officials deny that the company discriminates, however, according to Kimber, they admit having almost exclusively used white dailies for their print media advertising.

Said Kimber: "We have spent a considerable amount

of time communicating with Office Depot over this problem, but to date they have not seen fit to resolve the issue.

David C. Fannin, Executive Vice President and General Counsel for Office Depot, said in an Aug. 15 letter: "Office Depot works with a variety of media to meet our business needs. Because our advertising takes the form of promotional inserts and targeted flyers, we almost exclusively advertise and distribute through daily publications."

Kimber called Fannin's statement "an admission" of intentional discrimination "against black newspapers and the black community," claiming "only a small percentage of African-Americans are subscribers to white daily newspapers."

"We have a long history of supporting various community organizations and institutions within the ethnic minority communities,"

Fannin continued, listing the NAACP, SCLC, Urban

League and National Council of Negro Women as "key components of our community outreach strategy."

"It is very disturbing that Office Depot would adopt the age old divide-and-conquer strategy that is very familiar to the African-American community," wrote Kimber, calling the list "an obvious attempt to pit these organizations against the African-American newspapers."

"The fact that you would mention philanthropic efforts

of Office Depot as it relates to the African-American community," Kimber wrote, "is indicative of your apparent lack of knowledge about the powerful relationship between the black community and the Black Press." He said Fannin is "in for a rude awakening," if he expects the organizations to support him over the "legitimate concerns raised by the Black Press of America."

Black publishers receiving the correspondence between the two agreed to run ads informing readers about how black newspapers are being excluded by Office Depot. The president of the West Coast Black Publishers Association, Cloves Campbell, Jr., said, "It is time for black newspapers to deal with the obvious exclusion by Office Depot and other companies."

Office Depot attempted to settle the issue by offering Kimber's agency \$9,000 in exchange for a promise to

stop its campaign against the chain, in an effort to prevent negative publicity. Kimber Kimber & Associates refused the offer.

Although Office Depot has threatened to take legal action against the agency, as well as "any individuals and/or any newspapers involved in the publication of a negative campaign against Office Depot," more than 45 black newspapers throughout the country have agreed to run ads calling for the boycott.

Ford avoids supervision in discrimination case

DETROIT (AP) — A Circuit judge has rejected a request by lawyers representing several Ford Motor Co. managers to get court supervision of the automaker's plan to cut up to 5,000 white collar jobs.

The managers are suing the automaker for age discrimination, alleging they were passed over for promotions or forced out in favor of younger or so-called "diversity" candidates.

"He made it pretty clear he didn't want to get involved," Ford attorney Robert Powell said Tuesday of Wayne County Circuit Judge Edward Thomas. On Monday, the judge denied the request for court supervision.

On Aug. 22 Ford announced it would offer up to 5,000 managers voluntary buyout or early retirement packages. The automaker hopes to reduce its white-collar work force of some 50,000 by 10 percent.

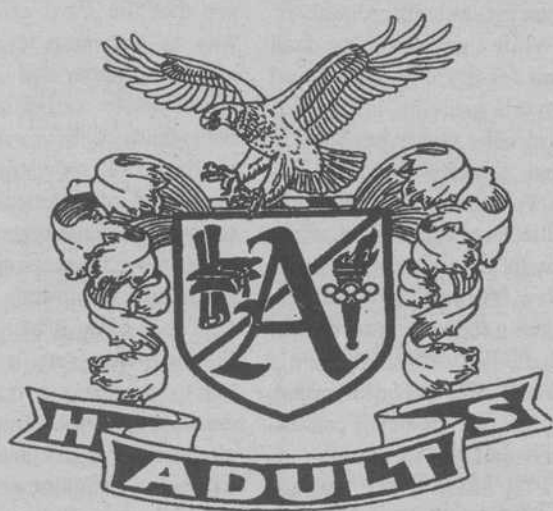
Any manager who accepts a buyout would not be allowed to subsequently sue the company, Powell said.

Michael Pitt, an attorney for the plaintiffs, said court supervision was sought because the plaintiffs were concerned those being offered separation packages would be the same managers who received a negative score on evaluations. He said there would be no challenge to the ruling.

No buyout offers will be made until mid-October and copies of those made to managers who are suing Ford also will be sent to their attorneys, Powell said. Managers have 45 days to review the offers with their attorneys before making a decision. In making his ruling Judge Thomas cited that provision as a key reason for denying supervision, saying it is unnecessary, The Detroit News reported.

Ford faces lawsuits by two groups of current and former managers who are attempting to have their suits certified as class action, and one individual suit which claims the managers were denied promotions or were terminated because of their age or for being white males.

In July, Ford said it would discontinue its 18-month-old system of evaluating about 18,000 managers. Under the Performance Management Process, employees were graded A, B, or C. Those receiving a C could lose bonuses and raises, and two consecutive C grades could mean dismissal. Initially, at least 10 percent of employees were to be graded C, but that later was lowered to 5 percent. Ford president and CEO Jacques Nasser told employees on July 10 the letter system was being replaced by three designations: top achiever, achiever, and improvement required.



Adult High School Diploma Test Preparation

Clark County School District Adult High School Diploma Program offers test preparation classes for the Nevada State High School Proficiency Tests.

Students ages 17 and older who are not enrolled in school and need to prepare for the State Proficiency Test to complete graduation requirements should contact a counselor for registration and enrollment in preparation classes. The next administration of the State Proficiency Test is scheduled for October 8-12, 2001. Students must enroll in a class to prepare prior to testing. Students may consult a counselor at one of the locations below. Photo identification is required at all testing sessions.

Registration Sites

St. Louis Site
2701 E. St. Louis Ave.
Monday -Thursday
8AM-8PM
Friday 8AM-5PM

Rancho High School
1900 E. Owens
Monday-Thursday
4:30-8:30 PM

Garside Middle School
300 S. Torrey Pines
Monday-Thursday
4:30-8:30 PM

Desert Rose Adult High School
Monday-Thursday
8AM-8PM
Friday 8AM-4:30 PM