

Business Exchange

By William Reed
Publisher of Who's Who in
Black Corporate America.



Rap culture at top in U.S. marketing

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Hip-hop is cool. Originated by blacks in the South Bronx section of New York City in the 1970s, hip-hop is a lifestyle with its own language, style of dress, music and mind set.

In just 25 years, hip-hop has become a dynamic force in the international fashion scene. The leading voice of a cross-cultural set of Generation X and Y youth, hip-hop is a multi-dimensional billion-dollar industry that stretches across racial, economic, cultural and global boundaries. An entrepreneurial spirit has been part of hip-hop since it began. It has allowed many African-American hip-hop artists, designers and everyday people to cash in on hip-hop clothing lines.

What's in your closet? Is it "new school" Avirex, Sean John, Rocawear, Timberlands and fitted caps, or, are you still in "old school" Adidas and matching sweat suits? Blacks are making mo and mo money from hip-hop. People from New York to Tokyo are wearing clothes inspired by African-Americans and the hip-hop culture. Clothes express individually, and hip-hop fashion setters: MCs, B-boys/girls and DJ's style of dress identify them as unique. When rappers like Run DMC, Sugar Hill Gang and Kurtis Blow started to get national recognition, the world saw the look and it generated substantial money and attention as people began to copy hip-hop style.

Hip-hop fashion became synonymous with billions of dollars through rap music's popularity and music videos. This coupled with guaranteed exposure from major rap acts sporting a company's clothing, caused black-owned companies, such as Cross Colors, to quadruple profits. Whites in the fashion industry saw the profits that could be made from the young urban market and quickly jumped on the hip-hop bandwagon. The more popular and lucrative the rap industry became, the more profitable it was for companies to offer the looks rap celebrities were sporting. The link between music and fashion, along with the streetwise black entrepreneurship that fostered it, was the foundation of what we now see on urban streets and suburban malls.

Bottom line, hip-hop artists are ultra capitalists who glorify materialism; their primary focus is on wealth and material possessions such as cars and clothes. With its built-in peer pressure, hip-hop generates continual dollars. Among the 12 to thirty-something crew, if you don't wear what everyone else is wearing, you'll be considered a "Bama". (A Bama is someone without class.)

The hip-hop mentality is made up of brand conscious consumers. Nowadays, fashion is based on who is talking about what he wears in a video. Rappers like Jay-Z and an ex-liquor store robber, the late Notorious B.I.G., talk about Versace in their rhymes. Most Seventh Avenue designers now capitalize on this genre of "urban chic". These white-run companies bridged the gap between urban cool and classic preppy with items such as: cut-up jeans; baggy pants (a trend which started with prisoners not having belts to hold up their pants) and the "preppy" sweater tied around the shoulder or waist (which was a way for kids on playgrounds not to lose their sweaters). Mainstream designers such as Gucci and Tommy Hilfiger generated millions of dollars in revenues by being mentioned by blacks in their rap videos. Black hip-hop entrepreneurs have not been left out.

Rap mogul Russell Simmons understood the formula of fashion plus rap celebrity and moved to offer the Phat Farm and Baby Phat lines. Other moguls, such as No-Limits CEO Master P. (Percy Miller) and Sean "P.Diddy" Combs, each with personal fortunes exceeding \$200 million, have clothing lines such as Sean John and Rocawear.

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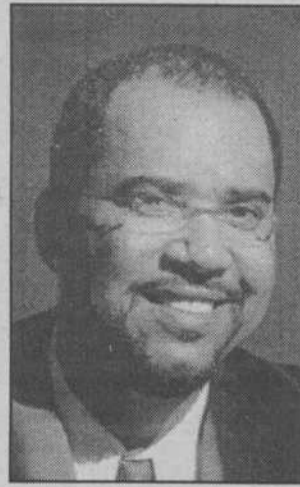
Pulitzer Prize winner to speak at fair

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The Nevada Minority Purchasing Council (NMPC) is sponsoring its 7th Annual Minority Business Opportunity Day Trade Fair luncheon on Thursday, Nov. 29, at the Stardust Convention Center, 3000 S. Las Vegas Blvd. Keynote speaker for the event is Pulitzer Prize winner Angelo Henderson of the Wall Street Journal.

The event's theme: "Standing United For Our Future," will start at 9 a.m. with activities to help small and minority businesses.

Seminars on topics such as gaming and tourism, contracts and contacts, certification, and economic survival, will be taught by experts who will discuss credit, taxes, in-



ANGELO HENDERSON

vestments and loans.

"An opportunity for small businesses and minority businesses to gain access at a small price—we have to match them up," said Dianne Fontes, president of NMPC, "how

they can survive and succeed."

NMPC is an affiliate of National Minority Supplier Council, which is headquartered in New York and was founded in 1975.

The organization has 39 chapters nationwide and has a membership of 15 thousand minority and small businesses and more than 35,000 corporations.

"A business organization with the mission to help minority businesses gain access with corporations," Fontes said.

A corporate appreciation luncheon will follow the keynote speaker, and the trade show will be held from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m..

Henderson a Wall Street

Journal senior writer, has covered stories on drugs, crime, neighborhoods and real estate, as well as small and minority businesses. In 1999 he won the Pulitzer Prize, journalism's most prestigious award, for a dramatic narrative about a drug store robber that ends in the robber's death.

A year later, his 16-year journalism career was honored again by Columbia University, which named him one of the nation's best reporters on race and ethnicity.

Admission for non-NMPC members is \$70, and that's for the entire day and all the activities including luncheon and events.

For more information, call 894-4477.

Blacks employees sue Cargill claiming racism

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—A lawsuit was filed against Cargill Inc. Thursday claiming that the food distribution giant pays black employees less than their white peers.

Lawyers filed the lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Minneapolis on behalf of 25 current and former Cargill employees, and claimed the discrimination was companywide.

Attorney Lawrence Schaefer said the plaintiffs would seek class action status that could extend the case to more than 1,000 black employees who have worked at the Wayzata-based company

during the past six years.

Cargill vehemently denied the allegation.

"The allegation in the suit is that we intentionally discriminate. That is not true. I would not work here if that were true. It's wrong and it is not good for business," said Nancy Siska, Cargill's corporate vice president for human resources.

Schaefer, of the Sprenger & Lang law firm, called the lawsuit a "second generation" class action because his firm previously sued Cargill for companywide race and gender discrimination.

The first suit resulted in a

settlement in 1985 that imposed companywide reforms on Cargill for 4 1/2 years, he said.

"The first case was mostly about getting these employees a foot in the door at Cargill," he said. "This case is about getting a seat at the table and ensuring that real changes occur."

If the lawsuit is successful, Schaefer estimated damages to the class could top \$50 million. Schaefer said Cargill has only one black among its top 150 executives and low percentages of blacks at all management levels.

"I don't know how they

are counting that or who they're counting as our top 150," Siska said. "We think of our senior management team as our top 25 corporate center employees. In that group, we have one African-American. He has headed our grain division, which is one of our largest. He's currently the corporate vice president for transportation."

Cargill is one of the world's largest privately held companies, is an international marketer, processor and distributor of agricultural, food, financial and industrial products and services with 90,000 employees in 57 countries.

Biometrics new form of security technology

By Eric Harris

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Biometrics is moving from the science lab to the computer world. Biometrics is known as the study of measurable biological characteristics and is an emerging practice in the safety and security industries.

In computer security, biometrics refers to authentication techniques that rely on measurable physical characteristics that can be automatically checked. Examples in-

clude computer analysis of facial features, fingerprints or speech.

So, what's the big deal with security and authentication? Computer security is our way of ensuring that data stored in a computer cannot be read or compromised. Authentication is the process of identifying an individual, usually based on a username and password. In standard security systems, authentication is distinct from authorization, which is the process

of giving individuals access to system objects based on their identity. Authentication

merely ensures that the individual is who he or she claims (See Security, Page 7)

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