

Blackonomics

Yet another empty 'victory' for blacks?

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

After receiving an e-mail regarding the Danny Glover-MCI affair, I just had to write about it. The e-mail read: "Urgent Alert—We Celebrate A Victory." A message from MCI to the TransAfrica Forum Board Chairperson stated, "Our contract with Danny Glover runs through January 2004 and we intend to honor our contract." The e-mail went on to say, "This morning we confirmed that the message above is the official position of MCI. To put it in another way, we won!" I then sent an e-mail asking the sender, "What did we win?"

In case you have not heard and did not read my last article ("Demopublicans, Republicrats, and Entrepreneurs"), MCI was threatened by Joe Scarborough, a conservative MSNBC talk show host, for casting Glover in its commercials. Additionally, a group of Black folks threatened to retaliate against MCI if Glover was let go. Subsequently, Scarborough announced on his show that his pressure and his threat of a boycott of MCI had worked. He said they had officially cancelled Glover's appearances in their commercials; MCI also said Glover would be paid for the balance of his contract.

That announcement came after the Black group served notice that they would drop MCI if Glover were let go and not allowed to speak his mind on issues such as racism, George Bush's policies and Fidel Castro. I posed the question at that time, "Who will win this latest battle?"

I thought Scarborough had won, that is, until I saw the e-mail saying "we" had won. You know who really won? MCI. As usual, as in the battles with Pepsi, CompUSA, Revlon and the long list of infamous transgressors against Black people, we call for apologies, we start "call-in campaigns," or another let's-make-them-know-how-much-money-we-spend-on-their-products campaign. The offending company comes up with an "act" of contrition, mounts a public relations campaign, makes appropriate apologies, all the while cutting a deal on the side with folks like Scarborough and Fox News' Bill O'Reilly to keep them happy. So, I ask again, "What did WE win?"

Remember Fire Marshall Bill on the television show, "In Living Color?" He would scream, "Let me tell you something!" While we are busy trying to prove how much money we spend with those who offend us, we could be redirecting a great deal of that money toward ourselves. All CompUSA had to do was apologize and hand out 10 percent off coupons, and we ran right back to them, instead of supporting a Black-owned computer company. Hotels that offend us get bad "Report Cards" from the NAACP; so we end up staying in the ones that get Cs rather than Ds, instead of getting more Black-owned hotels. MCI did its thing and now we're screaming victory because they said, "...we will honor our contract..." with Danny Glover. (The last time I checked, folks were legally bound to "honor" contracts. Is that still the law in this country?)

Let me tell you something else! Why don't we all switch our telephone service to MATAH Direct? What's that? It's a long distance service that has the best rate and gives money back to Black folks through the MATAH Network, the only Black-owned and operated distribution channel in the country. You want to win?

Redirect your money rather than give it back to those who offend you. You want to win? Support companies that support you, not those that merely hire a Black actor to do a commercial. You want to win? You want to do something? You want to take some action rather than declare empty victories? Switch to MATAH Direct. That will really prove to MCI and everyone else that we are serious about our economic freedom, that's it's not even about them; it's about us. Apologies are highly overrated.

And while you are at it, how about purchasing some other products, all made by your brothers and sisters, from

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Frederick Douglass Cedar Hill to get funds

By LaWanda Johnson
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — The library bookshelves are bare. The water-stained wallpaper is peeling, the carpet worn. But just weeks after the Washington AFRO reported that Frederick Douglass' home in southeast Washington was in need of millions of dollars in repairs, Republicans showed up en masse to announce that they would ensure that the National Park Service gets the \$2 million needed for renovations.

From the front porch of Douglass' home, House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.), Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) and other members of the Republican leadership in Congress vowed that nearly \$1 million is "on the way" for work on the 8.5-acre site known as Cedar Hill, which includes the main house, gardens and an extensive collection of personal effects.

Douglass moved to Cedar Hill in 1877 and lived there for 18 years. While living here, he served as U.S. minister to Haiti and as U.S. marshal for the District of Columbia, and continued to write about and speak out for human rights and equality until his death on Feb. 20, 1895.

"As a former history teacher, I am personally pleased to have this opportunity to tour the site and pledge my support," said Hastert, "not just to preserve the walls and artifacts on these grounds, but to help promote and perpetuate the legacy Mr. Douglass left for all of us to follow."

On the front lawn of Cedar Hill, Hastert and Frist signed legislation that was later introduced to guide House and Senate committees to approve a \$955,000 expenditure in this fall's spending budget.

The National Park Service, which manages the property, has been working with the Republican-led Congress since 2001 to preserve the structure and its artifacts. Park Service officials say this funding boost will help complete a nearly \$2-million, three-year renovation project.

"I am proud to announce the U.S. Congress will provide the National Park Service nearly \$1 million this year to help complete the renovation of this national treasure," said Hastert. "I believe all Americans—from the rural plains to the inner



Congressional officials have vowed to pump \$1 million into the renovation of Frederick Douglass' Cedar Hill house.

cities—need to have a better appreciation for our nation's history and particularly our country's forefathers."

About 20 Black Republicans present for the announcement roared their approval, proudly declaring that Frederick Douglass was a Republican, and that this was Republicans taking care of a fellow Republican.

"The African-American community should become a two-party community," suggested Timothy Jenkins, former University of the District of Columbia interim president. "It would assist with its struggle for economic parity."

A National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) State of the Parks report on the Douglass site, released in February, stated that it needed an immediate increase in

funding.

"We are very pleased that the speaker and Senate Majority Leader have joined the effort to preserve the legacy of a great American, Frederick Douglass," said Thomas C. Kiernan, NPCA president. "When we let historic sites like the Douglass house decay, we turn our backs on the very roots of our nation."

According to NPCA, there has been light damage to several of the home's 19th-century photographs, and Douglass' treasured collection of nearly 1,200 books was forced from the home to prevent additional damage from moisture. Funding was not available to restore the books and the home's historic wallpaper.

Despite these needs, funding for the Frederick

Douglass National Historic Site had essentially remained the same for several years, \$429,000 in fiscal year 2002. In 2001, NPCA named the Douglass site to its annual list of America's 10 Most Endangered National Parks.

"I am thrilled to announce along with the speaker our joint commitment to protecting this historic landmark," said Frist. "We are also here today united behind an agenda that we believe, as congressional Republicans, will resonate with all Americans, and especially with African-Americans."

Frederick Douglass IV blamed the deplorable condition of his great-great-grandfather's home on the lack of attention given to Black monuments by the African-American community.

"We have to be diligent about the care given to our own historical sites," said Douglass. "Look at the condition of Carter G. Woodson's home—it's in even worse condition."

In June 2001, the Woodson home was placed on the list of endangered places and a public campaign was announced in February 2002 to raise \$3.5 million to restore the home within three years.

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The Department of Housing & Urban Development celebrates Homeownership month every year during the month of June. This year the Las Vegas HUD Office will be attending the Juneteenth Celebration which will be held at:

Sammy Davis Jr. Plaza

Lorenzi Park

June 14th, 2003

3:00 pm to 9:00 pm

A major priority of HUD is to promote the "American Dream" which is Homeownership for everyone. The mission of HUD is creating opportunities for homeownership; provide housing assistance for low-income persons; works toward creating, rehabilitating and maintaining the nation's affordable housing. Las Vegas HUD officials will have plenty of literature to disseminate on the process of buying HUD Homes. See you there.