

# Black reading enclave after control of information

By Stephenetta Harmon  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

MINNEAPOLIS (NNPA) - Every Tuesday evening, in the basement down a dimly lit hall in Pilot City Neighborhood Services, the African-American Men Project has hosted one of its best-kept secrets - Black Men Reading.

For the past eight months, the weekly book club has been meeting to not only embrace Black literature, but also Black history, love and wealth.

The evening, facilitated by African-American Men Project commissioners and University of Minnesota Teaching Specialist Ezra Hyland, also addresses a critical issue in the African-American community - literacy and the appreciation of it.

With attendance ranging from five to as many as 50, there is no such thing as a typical evening, although Hyland said he tends to begin each night with about 15 or 20 minutes of a video show-

ing a significant Black figure.

"Modeling is important," he said. "We want them to see a Malcolm X or a Na'im Akbar. So if you can't read, you can see the power of language and literacy in their lives."

Afterwards, there is a general discussion, possibly something from the daily newspaper, "just to get people warmed up," followed by a discussion specifically related to the text the group is reading.

Hyland also explained that the importance of the book club is not just about reading, but about changing perceptions.

"One of the dominant themes in Black literature," reported Hyland, "has been its association with literacy and freedom. Through control of information, White people have been able to control Black people."

Hyland continued, "In this dismal state of Black literacy [one in five can't read], our culture has been hijacked in a

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- Teaching Specialist Ezra Hyland

lot of ways, so that today many young children think to be book smart is White; to be intellectual is to be soft. In this culture, this American society, Black people have been lied about, lied on and lied to so much that, many times, we do not know what to believe about ourselves. We don't know what is true and what is not true. The importance of Black Men Reading is that it is going to give us a chance to correct some of these misconceptions."

In a situation where 20 percent of the members may not be able to read, Hyland said, "Being part of a discussion where these ideas are expressed is very important. It inspires them to develop and deal with their issues. No human being wants to be ig-

norant. The typical expression is, 'I never knew that. I never heard that.'

"These young men, and women, are seeing themselves in ways they have never seen before. Rather than being discussed as a problem, they see it at a possibility, as potential. When they come to Black Men Reading, they see how others have dealt with their life situations. They see themselves reflected."

In one Black Men Reading session, Hyland discussed the importance of W.E.B. DuBois and the historic relevance of DuBois' classic text, "The Souls of Black Folk." Hyland reported the many misgivings scholars had toward DuBois' philosophy of a Talented Tenth, cit-

ing it as elitist, and showing how the philosophy impacts African-Americans today.

In another session, guest speaker Verna Cornelia Simmons, author of "Power of People," discussed with attendees the four types of people who use four powerful ways to either positively or negatively influence your life. The group discovered how "Adders" and "Multipliers" can put individuals on the road to personal success, and they learned about ways to deal with "Subtractors" and "Dividers" who offer a negative influence.

Thornton Jones, AAMP program developer, said, "Black Men Reading is also about personal enrichment. The more youths [and communities] know about their culture, the greater their self-esteem. That's what we talk about at Black Men Reading. Let them see that we come from kings and queens. Education is key. We need to know and share that with our youths."

Referring back to the idea

of modeling, Hyland discussed the fact that children are actors.

"Dr. Juwanza Kunjufu (activist and author of several books, including 'Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys I and II') talks about how children imitate what they hear, not just what they see. Every time we see a child with a ball, we say he's going to be the next Michael Jordan. Every time we see that same child with books, we talk about how difficult learning and homework are. If we can see Black men with books, learning and teaching, then it will give those children permission to do the same," he said.

"We have to create a place where the images we want and need to see are being nurtured," said Hyland. "To me, two or three men discussing a book is as powerful an image as 10 young Black men running up and down a basketball court."

Stephenetta Harmon writes for The Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder.

# Animal activists accuse KFC of ritual cruelty to chickens

By Adrienne Donnell  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (NNPA) - Picture this: A billboard with Col. Sanders spattered in blood and clutching a terrified chicken in one hand and a bloody butcher knife in the other. This is the gruesome image people will see traveling along I-20 South near exit 140 in Birmingham.

The billboard is an attempt by the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) to discourage consumers from eating at Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC).

PETA has accused KFC of supporting the cruel treatment of their poultry. PETA stated on their web site that "KFC suppliers scald mil-

lions of fully conscious chickens to death every year; pick up chickens by their broken or crippled legs, four or five birds in each hand, and slam them into transport crates; and breed and drug them to grow so quickly that their legs break and their organs fail."

However, a statement on KFC.com responds to that allegation by saying that they monitor their suppliers by using "humane procedures for caring for and handling animals they supply to us."

PETA also released a tape of the harsh treatment of their chickens. One of the clips on the video displays a beak-trimming machine. The machine is a Lyons model that was used about 30 years ago

*"Kentucky Fried Cruelty... We Do Chickens Wrong"*

- PETA Billboard

and is no longer in use, according to Richard Lobb, a spokesperson for the National Chicken Council.

"PETA's attempt to portray this outdated method as today's standard practice is false and misleading," said Lobb. Nevertheless, Dan Shannon, spokesperson for PETA, says that the machine is still currently being used and the footage on the videotape was filmed within the past year and a half.

In May of last year, KFC requested the U.S. Depart-

ment of Agriculture and Department of Labor to review a proposal made by PETA to use gas-killing chickens as an alternative to the current methods used in the United States. Shannon admits that nearly seven months after this proposal, nothing has happened. After numerous letters have been written to the company asking if anything has changed, the company still admits to not making any changes.

"KFC hasn't owned up that they've made the

changes....As soon as they do we will end the campaign. Until they do that we will continue to run the billboards," Shannon implied.

Since PETA began their campaign, KFC's sales have dropped 8 percent. Yet, Shannon stated that changing their policies would be beneficial to the company but "human stubbornness" is the only thing preventing them from making any changes. He says that if they switch to the new policies, KFC can save money in terms of labor. He also admits that they can get more meat from the chickens if they suffer less injuries. Richard Lobb states that "PETA's objective is not to improve animal welfare but

to eliminate meat, poultry and other food of animal origin altogether from the human diet. They desire a totally vegan society and will say or do anything to achieve this objective."

Although Shannon does agree that they do promote a vegetarian diet, he also acknowledges that they are more so against animal cruelty which is what he claims KFC promotes.

The new billboards will read: "Kentucky Fried Cruelty... We Do Chickens Wrong," and are currently displayed in Little Rock, Arkansas; Las Vegas; Atlanta; and Springfield, Ill.

Adrienne Donnell writes for The Birmingham Times.

## Flu

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grams and the community to get the message out in a culturally sensitive way.

The CDC has also established a new project, the "Racial and Ethnic Adult Disparities in Immunization Initiative," called READII (Pronounced Ready). It includes a component that aims to expand the use of Black and other "targeted" media to educate African-Americans and other minority groups on health issues.

"We've been just putting information out there and assuming everybody in America will get it," says Smith, CDC spokeswoman. "But, the fact of the matter is that not everybody gets information in the same way. And so we're just moving towards being more proactive to reaching out to targeted media and to trying to communicate to people in ways that they can best receive it."

Basic habits of good health to prevent getting or spreading the virus include:

- Avoiding close contact.
- Staying home when sick.
- Covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Washing your hands often.
- Avoid touching our eyes, nose or mouth.

If one develops the flu, one should get plenty of rest, drink lots of liquids, avoid alcohol and tobacco use, take medications to relieve the symptoms and see a doctor if the symptoms are unusually severe or trouble breathing develops, the CDC recommends.

Orenstein, the CDC immunization official, says: "I hope that by working to get this message out, that in future years we can assure that African-Americans have the same opportunities to prevent this disease as the Whites."

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