

Detroiters pondering boycott over African town

By Bankole Thompson
Special to Sentinel-Voice

DETROIT (NNPA) - A university professor is calling for a boycott of Arab, Asian and Hispanic businesses if those groups continue to oppose resolutions for the building of an African Town in Detroit.

Lynn Lewis, a civil rights expert at the University of Detroit-Mercy, said opposition to African Town, an idea generated by young entrepreneurs and elaborated on by Claude Anderson, means opposition to Black dollars.

"If our money is not good enough for our economic development, then it is not good enough for them," Lewis said before Detroit City Council members.

"If African-Americans were today to stop doing business with all the groups that have spoken against this plan, they will go bankrupt," Lewis

said. "I want to recommend all African-Americans in this city to boycott their businesses if they continue to oppose this plan."

Speaking passionately, Lewis said the recent uproar against the resolutions demonstrated what she called "Negro-phobia," meaning some groups' fear that the economic empowerment of Blacks could hinder their businesses.

She said all other ethnic groups have benefited from Detroiters who serve as their majority customers.

Keith Hines, a Detroit resident, said he supports Lewis' call for a boycott.

"We got to be fair," he said. "We have all kinds of towns here in the city but none about us. If these groups oppose it, we should boycott their businesses."

Another resident, Jeanetta Ray, said, "If they are against

us empowering ourselves, why should we support them? We should support our own Black businesses."

In November 1999, an article in The Detroit News, titled "Chaldean Town: Chaldean Dream Takes Shape in Detroit," quoted Asaad Yousif Kalasho, head of the Chaldean Town Association, as saying Chaldeans' goal for such a town was to have, "a Greektown or Mexican Town in the old Chaldean neighborhood, bounded by West McNichols, West State Fair, Woodward and I-75."

Kalasho said there were about 40 businesses along Seven Mile, mostly owned by Chaldeans, and few owned by African-Americans.

He estimated that those small businesses generated about \$5 million in annual income.

Another piece, written by Habeeb Salloum in Aljadid

Magazine in 1998, underscored how Detroit has become a business hub for different ethnic groups, including Arabs.

In the article, titled, "Detroit: Arab Capital of North America," Salloum talked about how Arab businesses are flourishing in the city.

"Detroit's Arabs and their businesses are a microcosm of that of the Middle East," Salloum wrote. "Everything to be found in these lands and more can be found in Detroit."

During initial discussion of African Town, Councilwoman JoAnn Watson, who invited Anderson to the city council, said she fought for funding for other ethnic groups at council table.

"I fought and supported funding for La Raza when it slipped in the mayor's budget," Watson said, referring to the Hispanic population.

Watson said no matter the opposition, it couldn't denigrate the fact that "Africa is the birthplace of humanity," and that African Town would be a fitting tribute to the Motherland.

"And if the Motherland is assaulted like in the past weeks, it is disgraceful," Watson said.

Like many, she said African Town in an 85-percent African-American city was a fitting tribute to a people whose ancestors labored on plantations for centuries without pay.

"We are all in it together to improve Detroit," said Maria Elena Rodriguez, head of the Mexican town Community Development Corporation.

Rodriguez said the language of the resolutions, which calls for \$38 million to be set aside for a Black business district, "should be fine

tuned." Jumana Judeh, vice president of the American Arab Chamber of Commerce, who described the resolution as "extremely negative," would not return three calls placed to her office.

To many Detroiters the idea of African Town is reminiscent of the days when there were Black business districts such as Black Bottom, Paradise Valley and Hastings Street, before they were wiped out by the construction of freeways in the city.

Rodriguez said for that alone, "There should certainly be something like African Town that pays tribute to African-American history, because we are still reeling from the effects caused in the building of the freeways. African Town will be a positive thing for businesses."

Bankole Thompson writes for the Michigan Citizen.

Bush

(Continued from Page 1)

If Bush's first term is any indication, with Republicans controlling every branch of government — executive, legislative and judicial — Bush will leave more of a conservative legacy than Ronald Regan's eight years in the White House during the 1980's.

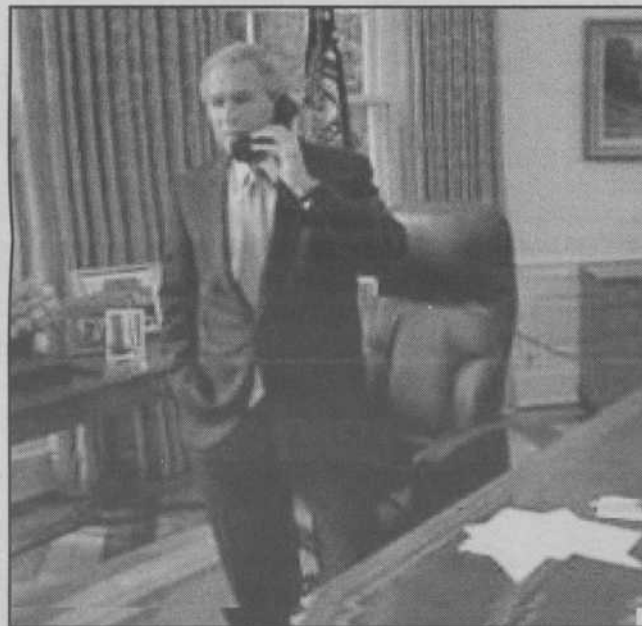
Nowhere will that be more evident than on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Bush is expected to fill three or four vacancies on the United States Supreme Court.

Of the nine justices, only Clarence Thomas, 56, is younger than 65 years old. Speculation about possible retirements from the court has focused on Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, 80, who has been treated for thyroid cancer, and Justices John Paul Stevens, 84, and Sandra Day O'Connor, 74.

Seven of the nine justices were appointed by Republican presidents and most civil rights victories, such as last year's University of Michigan law school affirmative action case, have been decided by 5 to 4 votes, with Justice O'Connor usually being the swing vote. Bush has pledged to appoint judges in the mold of Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia, two of the most conservative members of a conservative court. Because federal judges are given life-long appointments, the court can rebuff progressive initiatives for another half-century.

"Expect more Right-wing hostility toward civil rights



Standing at his desk in the Oval Office, President George W. Bush receives a phone call from Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry, in which the Senator conceded defeat in the 2004 presidential election on Wednesday afternoon.

and social justice," warns Jesse Jackson, who ran for president twice in the 1980's. "Expect more attempts to buy our leadership. We must resist at every level attempts to stack the courts with Right-wing judges, when they seek to use FCC rulings to monopolize the media, when they seek to make court decisions against our interests. We must be more vigilant, more determined and more resistant than ever. This will be a difficult period, but we still have resourceful people. We have a lot to fight back with."

Progressives will need that and more. Although Bush complained about the Senate rejecting some of his conservative nominees for judges — including some considered too extreme by fellow

conservatives on the bench — Bush got his nominees confirmed at a higher rate than Bill Clinton. And there is no doubt that by the time he leaves office, the Supreme Court and every federal circuit in the nation will be dominated by Republican-appointed judges likely to be less sensitive to protecting civil and human rights.

Bush demonstrated during his first term that he doesn't mind talking like a "compassionate conservative" while firmly opposing even mild affirmative action programs, such as the one practiced by the University of Michigan Law School. Before it was upheld by a conservative Supreme Court, Bush sent his solicitor general into court to oppose Michigan's undergraduate

and law school programs. The Court, on a 5-4 vote, upheld the law school's admissions process and rejected the undergraduate program. In a statement issued after the rulings, Bush praised the Supreme Court for upholding the concept of diversity, even though his administration had argued against the program approved by the court.

Instead of favoring affirmative action, Bush will con-

tinue to back what he calls race-neutral approaches to diversity.

He told a group of journalists on August 6, "...in terms of admissions policy, race-neutral admissions policies ought to be tried. If they don't work, to achieve an objective which is diversification, race ought to be a factor." Bush has made it clear throughout his presidency that he believes race-

neutral approaches have been effective.

However, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and other groups have conducted studies showing that the so-called race-neutral approach used by public universities in Texas and California, for example, are not as effective as race- and gender-conscious remedies.

At the University of (See Bush, Page 7)

Nina Jones wins student of month

Nina Jones adds Student of the Month to her list of accomplishments. The 23-year-old mother of one graduates in three weeks and will go on to take the State Board test to become a Certified Licensed Cosmetologist. Upon successfully passing that exam, Jones will work in a hair salon in the Blue Diamond area of Las Vegas.

"I've been teaching for over 20 years..." said Ms. Selene, an instructor at Expertise, "she is one of the most fantastic students I've seen... she is so determined and she's a goal setter... She's a complete student." Jones's expertise is braiding. She also enjoys coloring and cutting. "My goal is to open my own shop here in Las Vegas, then expand into California," she said. To be successful in the hair salon business, Jones says you must love hair, be focused and maintain a positive attitude.



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