

Graves: Essence should've let Blacks bid on magazine

By Makebra M. Anderson
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — Earl G. Graves, publisher of *Black Enterprise*, says that before selling to Time Warner, the owners of *Essence* magazine should have allowed Black companies to make an offer to purchase the company.

Time Warner, the largest publishing company in the world, had previously purchased a 49 percent stake in Essence Communications, the parent company of the magazine.

With Time Warner moving many of its people into key positions on the business side, it was expected that it would eventually make a move to acquire total ownership of the Black women-oriented publication.

"In selling their controlling interest to Time Warner, CEO Ed Lewis and the shareholders of Essence Communications have made the best deal they felt they could make. It is unfortunate, however, there wasn't an open bidding process in which Black entrepreneurs could have made an offer for the company and possibly preserve *Essence* as a Black-owned business and institution. There are a number of Black entrepreneurs—including those who own and operate BE 100s companies—who had the resources and management capability to acquire and run Essence Communications," Graves says in a statement.

The sale of *Essence* is part



of an accelerated trend of major Black businesses being bought by White-owned companies. That list includes Johnson hair products, Motown, Black Entertainment Television and now *Essence*.

With the U.S. population expected to grow by 50 percent over the next 50 years—with 90 percent of that growth among people of color—major White companies are expected to increasingly seek to buy Black companies.

Robert L. Johnson, who sold BET to media giant Viacom, contends that's not necessarily bad.

In an interview with Richard Prince, author of the "Journal-isms" column for the Maynard Institute, Johnson said, "Black businesses will have to realize that to be in business takes precedence over being Black, if you're going to grow your business."

He told Prince that other Black businesses, such as Radio One, will eventually follow suit.

"At the end of the day, they will sell to the highest

bidder" who will likely be White," Johnson said. "It's just a question of when."

Time Warner Inc. agreed to buy the remaining 51 percent of Essence Communications, which publishes *Essence* and *Suede* magazines, that it didn't already own in a non-binding agreement that would add the lifestyle publications to its magazine division. Time Inc. currently publishes *Time*, *People*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Sports Illustrated*, *InStyle*, *Real Simple* and *Fortune* magazines among others. Time Inc. bought the other 49 percent of Essence Communications in 2000.

"Since I'm a proponent of Black entrepreneurship, it's sad that it [Essence Communications] is no longer a Black-owned company, but in recent years there have been more partnerships between Black owned companies and general market companies to fulfill the goals that both sides have," says Yanick Rice-Lamb, former editor of *Heart & Soul* and *BET WeekEnd* magazines.

"From everything I've heard, it has been a win/win situation for Essence and Time. Essence will be able to leverage some of Time's resources, which will ensure that it will last longer and even endure into the next millennium."

Some say that should not be the only consideration.

"It reminds me of when Bob Johnson sold BET to Viacom. You can't blame Bob for worrying about his

bottom line and I don't have the right to demand of him to take losses, but I'm still upset that we lost some great magazines like *Emerge* and *YSB* in the process. *Essence* has always been a clear voice for Black women and you have to be concerned that the focus of the magazine will start to blur," said Joe Ritchie, professor of journalism at Florida A & M University.

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— Robert Johnson

"When Time Inc. bought the first 49 percent, it was already a little worrisome. *Essence* has always been about the images of Black women in America and in the Black Diaspora. Having that image under total control of White media is troubling."

Ed Lewis, Chairman and CEO of Essence Communications and Publisher of *Essence* magazine said in a statement that the partnership with Time Inc. will strengthen *Essence*.

"Once the deal has been approved and we become and full-fledged member of the Time Inc. family, we're looking forward to aggressively broadening the scope of the *Essence* brand and penetrating new markets around the

world," he said. "It will give me great pride and comfort to know that *Essence* will be secure for generations to come and that its prospects for even greater success will be brighter than ever."

Lewis will remain on board as non-executive Chairman and Founder of Essence and current Group Publisher, Michelle Eubanks, will become President of Es-



sence Communications.

Some of the most successful media companies that remain Black-owned include: Tom Joyner's Reach Media, Radio One Inc., which is headed by Alfred Liggins and Catherine Liggins Hughes; Black Enterprise, which is run by Earl Graves; and Johnson publishing, which publishes *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines.

Despite concerns that Black-owned businesses are a risk, most understand that

business is always about the bottom line.

"The magazine business has become more difficult over the years because it takes a lot of money to run a magazine, and it takes a long time to make a profit. *Essence* would have continued to remain strong, but since Time is so large and has so many successful publications there is no way they can't benefit from that," she said. "You're always going to get criticism anytime you merge with a larger corporation—whether it's Black-owned or not, because people like to see Black-owned companies. We have the time-honored tradition 'to whom much is given, much is expected', but a lot of business people are about the bottom line. At the end of the day, it has to be profitable. And whatever it takes to make that happen, they will do." Ritchie is not impressed by that argument:

"It's a shame to see *Essence* go because the magazine was really about quality and maintaining its role as the defining entity of African-American culture as far as the image of Black women was concerned," he says.

"It didn't matter what your socioeconomic status was, if you were a Black woman."

Maps

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pursue and destroy Lee's retreating forces.

Gettysburg was a decisive defeat for the Confederates after a series of victories. Lee surrendered to Grant nearly two years later, after terrible losses on both sides.

The contribution of the Virginia Historical Society includes maps of Virginia locations, created by Confederate officers.

They detail roads, bridges, waterways and buildings, including farms and plantations with the owners' names.

The Virginia society also presents the viewpoint of the Union side in a diary and scrapbook that belonged to Robert K. Sneden, an Army mapmaker. It includes battle plans and fortifications. The society acquired it recently after it had been locked in a bank vault for decades.

The Library of Virginia has maps that went with reports to the governor and field maps of the southwestern part of the state, found in books that belonged to Confederate Gen. William W. Loring.

Items already posted can be seen at: http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/civil_war_maps

King

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map for us to work with Navigant to improve King/Drew," said John Wallace, a spokesman for the county Department of Health Services.

The report, "shows how technical and complex some of the problems are," Burke, whose district includes the hospital, said. "It raises a number of issues that must be addressed."

The board will discuss the report and the creation of the independent, hospital authority at its next meeting.

Kevin Herrera writes for the WAVE Newspapers

Jones, Dupri halt recording benefit single

ATLANTA (AP) — Music producers Quincy Jones and Jermaine Dupri say the tsunami disaster in Southeast Asia has prompted them to postpone recording "We Are the Future," an update of the 1985 benefit song "We Are the World."

"The timing is not right for us to record a song about the future when so many people have lost their lives,"



QUINCY JONES

Dupri said in a statement Tuesday.

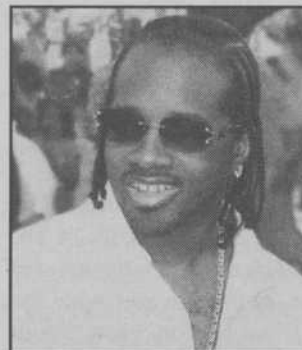
Jones and Dupri had planned to record the new song on Feb. 14 as an afterparty/recording session following the Grammy Awards, which will be presented Feb. 13 in Los Angeles.

"We Are the World" was recorded by 43 artists in a Los Angeles studio after the American Music Awards ceremony in January 1985. The song to benefit Africa's hungry became an instant and international hit, playing incessantly on radio stations and MTV.

Proceeds from the new song will go to help children in war zones, particularly in areas such as Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Afghanistan, said Jones' publicist, Arnold Robinson. He emphasized

"The timing is not right for us to record a song about the future when so many people [in Southeast Asia] have lost their lives."

— Jermaine Dupri



that while helping these children remains atop Jones' agenda, tsunami relief takes precedence for now.

"There's obviously an immediate need there right now," Robinson said. "Thankfully, everybody is being very giving at this point and time."

Dupri told Rolling Stone magazine last month that he hoped to recruit Jay-Z, Usher and Kanye West for the new

song, but Robinson wouldn't comment on who might participate now that the recording is being rescheduled.

A new date should be set within the next year, Robinson said.

"We Are the World," which was produced by Jones, featured some of the music industry's heaviest hitters, including Michael Jackson, Ray Charles, Bruce Springsteen and Bob Dylan.