

'Whites only' sign said to be posted in Tyson's food plant

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Twelve Black employees of Tyson Foods Inc. in Ashland, Ala. are suing the Springdale, Ark.-based corporation alleging that it maintained a segregated break room and bathroom. They charge that it was replete with a "Whites only" sign.

"When I was young, my mother used to tell me stories about segregated bathrooms," said plaintiff Henry Adams in a statement issued by the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law,

one of the law firms intervening in the case against the chicken processing plant.

"I never thought that her reality of 71 years ago would become my reality today," Adams said.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has also joined the lawsuit, filed Aug. 12 in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama Eastern Division. The 70-year-old, multi-billion dollar Tyson Foods has 300 plants around the world, including 12 in Alabama.

According to the com-

plaint, in July 2003, a newly-renovated bathroom at the plant remained locked except to a White supervisor and certain White employees. It alleges that a Tyson authority initially placed an "out of order" sign on the door although the bathroom was working well.

"The same White employees denied plaintiff-interveners and other African-American employees, including supervisors, use of the bathroom," the complaint said. It added that despite complaints to the supervisor and

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Times

(Continued from Page 1) paper. "There is no Gainesville-based African-American or community newspaper serving the East side. It's a large area," she said.

In the wake of many African-American owned media outfits, such as Black Entertainment Television and *Essence* magazine, that have been gobbled up by White owned conglomerates, African-American media owners wonder if this is a wave of the future.

"It's not so much a mockery, as it is an economic problem. Money and advertising dollars are going into a White-owned, Black represented newspaper. The dollars aren't circulating in our community. Many White advertisers don't advertise in Black-owned papers because they figure we will buy their products anyway," said the owner of *Mahogany Revue*, Candace Lewis-Khufia.

For 17 years, Lewis-Khufia has published the bi-weekly *Mahogany Revue* magazine, serving the Gainesville and Ocala areas with local, state, national news and features. She was based in Gainesville for 12 years but relocated to Ocala in 1999. She and Charles Gotson, the long-time publisher of the *Black College Monthly* and the *African-American Voters Guide*, are disappointed that local businesses are supporting the new paper.

"If you're getting together, it should be to enhance your Black community. We are competing for the same dollars they will go after. It's like a White contracting company fronting

the 51 percent minority ownership of a business to get minority contracts. The *Gainesville Sun* has a paper for every White area. If they were truly interested in reporting news that pertains to us, why don't they incorporate Black news into their regular publications?" said Gotson.

Although Gotson has published the *Black College Monthly* for 22 years and the *African-American Voters Guide* for 14 years, he and Lewis-Khufia have been hard pressed to garner real support from Black advertisers.

"We get less than 1 percent of the advertising. The White-owned *Gainesville Today* gets about 50 percent of their advertising. Even lawyers don't advertise. It's a climate we've created. We have a low opinion of ourselves. Now they'll advertise. It's easier for them to write a check when a White man asks them," he said.

"How can we fight it or call it discrimination if everyone is behind it?," Lewis-Khufia asked.

"A minister with the Faith Missionary Baptist Church, 300 members strong, was quoted as saying the *Guardian* will give more coverage to news that will empower people with job opportunities, educational resources and provide positive coverage from an African-American perspective. We don't support our own. The same people who are so elated by this are the same people we have offered to write for us or send in news. They are also the same ones who don't have a subscription to the *Mahogany Revue*. Why

aren't they saying we don't want this?" said Lewis-Khufia.

According to Gotson, a native of Gainesville, the mainstream media there is sorely lacking in diversity. Of the 91 employees at TV-20 in Gainesville, only four are Black. "They recently fired a Black anchor, and the only full-time [African-American] person at TV-20 quit a month ago," he said.

In addition to lack of Black business advertising support, White-owned businesses that advertised in the current Black-owned publications will certainly find it easier to advertise in the *Guardian*. Supporters of the *Gainesville Guardian* were writing checks for a year's subscription. Some who had previously pledged advertising dollars to the *Black College Monthly* are saying they are being forced to advertise in the new paper.

"They don't realize the magnitude of the door they have just opened. What is the difference between a Black-owned magazine presenting news in the Black fashion and a White-owned magazine presenting Black news? They are fostering prejudice. Because the White media has come up with this idea, now it's something beautiful," said Lewis-Khufia.

Added Gotson, "They are taking money out of our pockets. They don't have any respect for what others have done. It's the ultimate disrespect. We're still suffering from the slave mentality [believing] that the White man's ice is colder."

Starla Vaughns Cherin writes for the *Westside Gazette*.

Medical

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records from 1.5 million patients in 183 Medicare managed-care plans between 1997 and 2003.

They found narrowed racial gaps for mammograms and diabetics' eye exams, blood-sugar tests, and testing and control of diabetics' cholesterol. Gaps were also reduced for prescribing beta-blocker heart drugs and cholesterol testing after heart attacks.

The most dramatic improvement came for beta blockers. By the end of the study, 93 percent of Blacks met standards, compared to 94 percent of Whites — an improvement of 11 percentage points for Blacks.

Progress wasn't apparent everywhere, though. Racial disparities widened by three percentage points for both control of diabetics' blood sugar and of heart patients' cholesterol.

The other two studies, led by Harvard and Emory University in Atlanta, show persistent disparities in mostly expensive and elaborate procedures like some blood vessel repairs, heart and back surgeries, and joint replacements.

"The more invasive the procedure was, the more difference we found," said Dr. Viola Vaccarino, who led the Emory study.

By contrast, with a simple treatment like aspirin, Blacks and Whites were handled similarly.

The studies weren't designed to pinpoint the precise reasons for the gaps or changes over time. However, researchers

said more elaborate treatments are harder to improve quickly because they involve multiple steps and resources. They may require coordination between doctors, hospitals, and pharmacies.

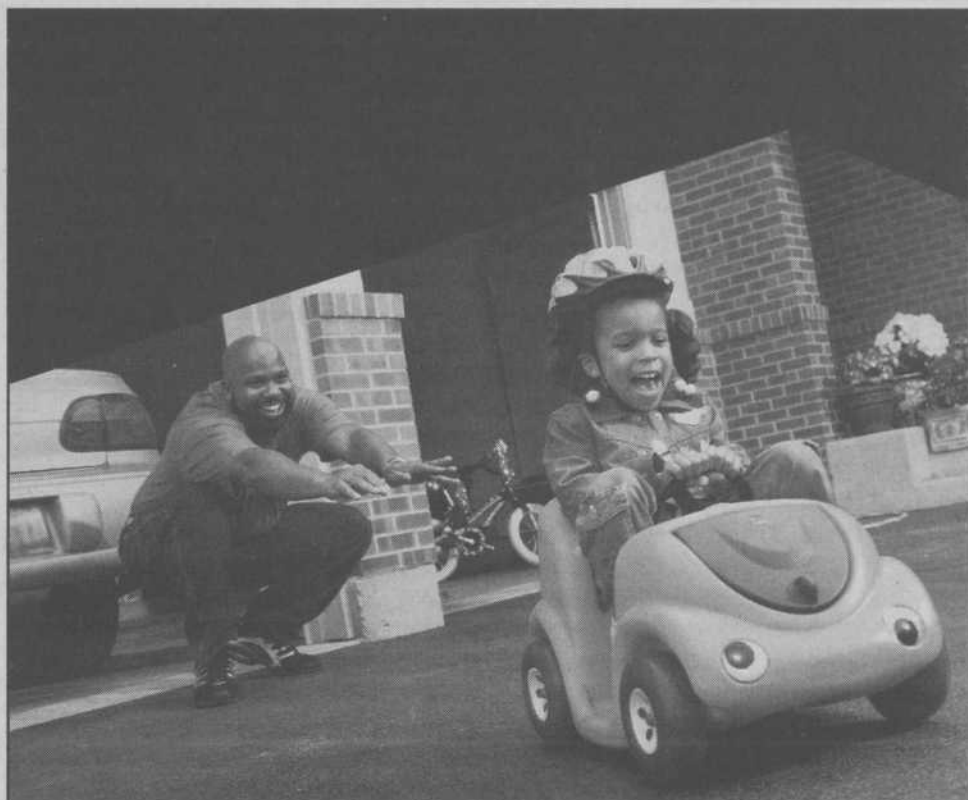
"Ordering a test is... relatively easy, compared to controlling the level of cholesterol," said Dr. Amal Trivedi, lead researcher in the managed-care study. "With cholesterol control, it's quite costly to take regular medicine."

Alan Nelson, a retired doctor who oversaw a congressionally mandated report in 2002 on racial differences in care, agreed that more expensive care may be harder to upgrade quickly. But he said he believes that cost doesn't drive the doctors to handle patients differently.

The managed-care study also suggests that better medicine can close racial gaps, doctors said. The federal government required Medicare managed-care plans to measure and report more on their performance starting in 1997, at the beginning of the study. Care for Whites also improved, though not as much as for Blacks.

Doctors said treatment can be further equalized with universal insurance coverage, more data on race, more awareness of disparities, and medical improvements like linking doctor and hospital payments to performance.

"No one should fool anyone that this is going to happen overnight... because the health system is so complex," added Dr. Georges Benjamin, director of the American Public Health Association.



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