

# Dallas suburb struggles with Black clout

By Gordon Jackson  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Dallas (NNPA) - Black families are moving into the southern Dallas suburb of DeSoto in droves. Some say while their money is welcome, their leadership and vision for the city's future may not be.

That's the viewpoint of Dee Dee Curtis, secretary and treasurer of the DeSoto Economic Development Corporation, who, until two months ago, was the lone Black on the board.

"We're getting a lot of resistance," Curtis said. "What's happening is that we're having an older establishment that's running things and don't want to relinquish power. Not only do they not want to relinquish it, they don't want to share power."

Curtis said that the city council boards and commissions do not accurately reflect the changing demographics of the city. Once 12 percent Black in 1990, today's DeSoto Black population comprises over 60 percent of the 45,000 residents.

"We're not trying to totally take over," she said. "We're just trying to have some say and involvement."

Curtis and the development board have been embroiled in a string of conflicts

with the DeSoto City Council.

One clash involved being ordered to move their headquarters from a private site to inside City Hall. That was followed by six applicants — five of them Black — not being interviewed for vacant development board slots, which is an alleged violation of the city's charter. After that, came the firing of the board president by the city council.

These are disputes that Curtis feels have been at least partially racially motivated.

The accusations have infuriated DeSoto Mayor Michael Hurtt.

"Race had absolutely nothing to do with it," Hurtt said strongly. "That's the craziest thing in the world."

One of the major issues involves future economic development projects—Interstate 35, which runs down the east side of the city. The economic development organization has brought in major developers to explore the opportunities. Curtis feels the city council is hampering the progress.

"We were told that we're moving too fast," Curtis said. In her opinion, the city council is more interested in development of homes and apartments on an internal

thoroughfare, near the Hampton/Belt Line Road corridor.

"This brings no tax revenue to the city at all," she said. "All it does is overloads our school district so that we have to build new schools, and that costs us money."

Velma Pearson, a member of the DeSoto Concerned Citizens Council, concurred.

"Houses are not going to raise any taxes," said Pearson, who thinks the city council favors the project because it would be profitable for old powerbrokers.

"(Old powerbrokers) still have their own people in place on the city council," Pearson charged.

Mayor Hurtt vehemently denies the charge. He named a founder of the economic development group and former DeSoto mayor as one of the old powerbrokers he constantly disagrees with.

Hurtt further stated he's not focusing on rooftops over retail, but reaching for a strong combination of both.

"We're desperate for a project like that. That is major sales tax dollars to the community," Hurtt insisted. "That's the gateway to our community."

Naming off the best well-known commercial real estate developers in the Dallas area, Hurtt said: "They will

tell you that shopping centers, power centers and things like that, they don't come to

communities until they have the rooftops necessary to support them. Residential is

what drives retail." *Gordon Jackson writes for the Dallas Examiner.*

## Immigrants

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same fields.

"So, without question, Blacks are much more likely to be affected by any decline in wages or benefits resulting from immigrant-induced increase in the labor force."

While discrimination may be the best explanation for persistent Black unemployment, Anderson implies a more consistently sinister scenario.

"Arguably the most racist policy in this country for the past quarter century has been that of immigration," Anderson said. "An onslaught of poorly educated, mostly Hispanic immigrants has severely hindered attempts of African-Americans to climb up the economic ladder."

"Blacks overwhelmingly vote for the Democrats, while the Democrats have strongly supported massive Hispanic immigration that harms Black folks economically. Democrats correctly perceive Hispanics as mostly expanding the lower class and, therefore, see most Hispanics as future Democrats; but Demo-

crats are willing to sacrifice Black interests in order to ensure future Democratic Party majorities, believing Blacks will remain loyal.

"You have to remember Blacks could not get in unions and, early on, needed allies to see their dreams come to fruition to their political agendas. Groups like the NAACP, Urban League and SCLC are committed to coalition politics. ...Therefore, the Democrats care far more about winning elections than helping the poor people we already have" Crawley explained.

Anderson said there is a sinister consistency in how immigration plays out when it comes to Blacks vis-à-vis the current number of illegal immigrants.

"The labor market theory infers that without this high number of immigrants in the country, employers would have to pay higher salaries and offer basic benefits. "...Years ago, I worked as a government inspector, and there was a time where we looked to crack down on the

garment industry, which has its base in cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York. We would fine sweatshops that were loaded with immigrants, mostly Spanish-speaking," Anderson recalled.

"But these shops open up elsewhere, and flourished in such a manner that after a while, even the fines weren't a deterrent to stop employers from hiring illegal immigrants," he said.

A new study from the Pew Hispanic Center reports salaries among Latinos have fallen for the last two years — in large part due to more than 850,000 new illegal immigrants entering the country each year.

A recent protest that drew more than 1 million people to the streets in protest of an immigration bill currently sitting in the Senate seemed to remind those elected officials that their futures rest with those that can count.

Anderson said very few of those faces were Black.

*M.L. Ingram writes for the Philadelphia Tribune.*



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