

Automakers pledge support to Black causes

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

DETROIT (NNPA) - The three Detroit-based major carmakers have vowed that despite a struggling automotive economy this year, they are not shirking their dedication to programs that support African-Americans.

"My message is that we continue the outreach to the African-American community that GM and GMAC have been engaged in for decades," said Roderick D. Gillum, vice president of General Motors Corporate Responsibility and Diversity.

"We take pride in our team of African-American employees, the impact of our business with Black suppliers and dealers, and our partnership with organizations like the NNPA. Let's keep this partnership going strong."

Gillum, Marc A. Perry, multicultural marketing manager for the Ford Motor Company; and Bonita Coleman Stewart, director of Daimler-Chrysler's Interactive Communications, were speaking at an economics forum, sponsored by the National Newspaper Publishers Association during its annual summer conference here.

"We've had to make some serious decisions, some tough decisions," said Perry. "But, we are committed to the African-American market and to working with our African-American agency,

UniWorld Group, to help raise consideration and sales."

Despite major hits from rising oil and gas prices, the historic commitments made by their dealerships to the Black community remain alive and growing, the three executives told the publishers gathered in the Motor City.

Perry cited Ford's continued support of sports programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities members, such as CIAA basketball tournament and the Bayou Classic in New Orleans.

He said that last year Ford spent more than \$3.7 billion with minority suppliers.

However, in order for Black newspapers to keep up with market developments, it must quickly respond to increasing technological demands. Stewart mentioned the explosion of websites, blogs and mobile devices.

"In short, the conventional communication file has changed," said Stewart. "Both the automotive and the newspaper industries must work to become more competitive."

Stewart of Daimler-Chrysler cites a combined U.S. purchasing power of \$1.9 trillion by African-Americans, Hispanics and Asians that is expected to grow 40 percent to \$2.7 trillion by 2010.

"This shows that the

multicultural consumer base is part of an overall strategy to grow business in this country," she said. "At Daimler-Chrysler, we start by promoting diversity internally because we believe that an inclusive workforce is what drives smart solutions and innovative products... We represent, as minorities, 30 percent of our workforce and we plan to increase that number by being actively engaged in mentoring efforts," she said.

Stewart said that Daimler-Chrysler's sponsorship relationships with organizations, such as NNPA, are a part of the organizations commitment to outreach to Black businesses and prospective employees as well as Black consumers.

"Over the last seven years, Daimler-Chrysler has more than doubled the number of dollars spent with minority suppliers from \$1.7 billion in 1990 to \$3.8 billion in 2005," Stewart said, a number that represents 13 percent of the corporation's total purchasing power.

Blacks have deep historical ties to Detroit, ranging from the love affair with automobiles to the mass northern migration of Southern Blacks to Detroit to escape low wages and the sting of Jim Crow laws and customs. An estimated 700,000 African-Americans left the South to take jobs at GM and other manufacturers before and af-

ter World War II, according to Gillum.

Labor strife raged between the United Auto Workers and Detroit's manufacturers during the 1930s and '40s and major race riots ensued in the 1960s.

But the 82 percent Black city, which now ranks as the 11th largest in the U.S. with 900,000 residents, has also survived White and Black middle-class flight.

Like other U.S. cities, it is struggling to rebound from the destruction of crime and drugs.

And in order to make its rebound, domestic carmakers are relying on African-American consumers.

"We have a strong tradition of involvement with your [Black Press] readers and the African-American community as a whole. When anyone mentions General Motors or any of our brands: Cadillac, Buick, GMC, Pontiac, Chevrolet, Saturn — most of those names should conjure up many pleasant memories for

African-Americans," Gillum said at the panel discussion.

"They remind all of us what an impact GM has had on American culture and African-American culture in particular. If there wasn't an El Dorado or a Deuce-and-a-Quarter in the family, there was a Cutlass or an Impala or a Bonneville."

Gillum cited GM's financial literacy program in neighborhood churches and community centers and noted that GM had the first minority dealer development program in 1972, three of which were featured in the 2006 Black Enterprise Top 100 list.

GM also led a 22-member business coalition in support of affirmative action in higher education during University of Michigan lawsuits heard by the U.S. Supreme Court.

On a 5-4 vote, the court upheld the law school's affirmative action program in 2003. Even so, a California-inspired ballot initiative that would ban affirmative action

is being sponsored in Michigan by affirmative action foe Ward Connerly. GM, a leading employer of African-Americans, is opposing that measure.

GM distinguished itself from other dealers when it launched the first minority supplier development program in 1968, and it remains the industry leader in the development and contracting of diverse suppliers.

"For years in the history of the United States, the United Auto Workers addressed affirmative action and the auto industry has stressed minority procurement. One of the most beautiful things you can see in Detroit is George Washington Carver's home intact at the Henry Ford Museum in Greenfield Village," said Harry Alford, president of the National Black Chamber of Commerce, who moderated the forum.

"It's not about the money, it's not about just the advertising... The relationships that we have go on and on."

Map

(Continued from Page 4)

struggled in the past to define how much politics is acceptable when states draw new boundaries. Two years ago, justices split 5-4 in leaving a narrow opening for challenges claiming party politics overly influenced election maps.

The court was also fractured Wednesday with six separate opinions, covering more than 120 pages, on the Texas boundaries.

The court's four most conservative members opposed the part of the decision that found a violation of the Voting Rights Act.

Justice Antonin Scalia complained that the court should have shut the door on all claims of political gerrymandering in map drawing.

Justice John Paul Stevens took the opposite view.

"By taking an action for the sole purpose of advantaging Republicans and disadvantaging Democrats, the state of Texas violated its constitutional obligation to govern impartially," he wrote.

Kennedy's decision did not specify how quickly the lines of District 23 must be redrawn, but he said that more than one district would be affected.

"The districts in south and west Texas will have to be redrawn to remedy the violation in District 23, and we have no cause to pass

on the legitimacy of a district that must be changed," he wrote.

District 23 is represented by Rep. Henry Bonilla, a Republican, and takes in a huge swath of Texas under both the new plan and the court-drawn map that was replaced. The current district stretches from near El Paso to southwest Texas and hugs Texas western border with Mexico, taking in several border districts.

After Wednesday's ruling, Angela Hale, a spokeswoman for the Texas attorney general, said, "The timeline and the procedure for redrawing the only district requiring further action will be addressed by the three-judge federal district court at a hearing in the near future."

The League of United Latin American Citizens is prepared to go to court next week to present its redistricting plan to the district court, president Hector Flores said at the group's annual convention in Milwaukee. The decision was a victory for all underrepresented groups and gives hope that the face of Congress will change in the midterm elections, Flores said at a news conference.

"Latinos will register to vote and will vote in November," he said. "And we will change the map and we will change the beltway."

Court

(Continued from Page 12)

schools," says a statement issued by the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. "Since the Court's unanimous decision in *Brown v. the Board of Education*, which ended legally sanctioned segregation in public schools, the nation has struggled to integrate its public schools and its institutions of higher education. Unfortunately, *Brown's* 52-year history has been marred, first by resistance and, most recently, by continuing legal attacks."

The upcoming cases have caused anxiety in the civil rights community because of the loss of Sandra Day O'Connor, the swing voter in close cases. Justices Clarence Thomas, Antonin Scalia, new appointee Samuel Alito and new Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. are staunch conservatives. David Souter, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen G. Breyer, and Justice

John Paul Stephens are the only liberals left on the court. Justice Anthony M. Kennedy could emerge as the court's new swing voter.

"We can win. We can seize this opportunity, this overreach, and we can use it as the basis to continue this new civil rights movement, fight and win. It's going to be up to us," said Driver. She says BAMN will revive its protests of three years ago by trying to mobilize masses of people outside the Supreme Court on the day of the arguments.

"If we can get a million people there, we can convince Justice Kennedy that it's too dangerous to overturn these programs and that the conservative thing to do is to uphold *Brown v. Board of Education*."

Says Akwasi Evans, publisher of *Nokoa News* of Austin, Texas, who moderated the panel discussion: "We need to be there with her in November."



- Pre-Registering for 2006 Classes
- Bi-Lingual (Spanish) Courses
- Excellent Placement Record - 92% Success Rate
- Financial Aid Available for Those Who Qualify
- Prepare for the Nevada State Exam

902 W. Owens | Las Vegas, NV 89106
702-636-8686 | www.expertisebeauty.com

After graduating from the Expertise Cosmetology Institute, I immediately landed the perfect opportunity at Hot Headz Salon... Money's great and my schedule is MY SCHEDULE. Thanks, Expertise

—Ms. Kris, Las Vegas Class of 2002