

Report: Minority-owned firms to key economy

By William Reed

Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — A recent report from the Minority Business Development Agency said America's competitiveness and economic growth in global markets will increasingly depend on the growth and expansion of minority owned businesses.

The "Characteristics of Minority Businesses and Entrepreneur: An Analysis of

Barber

(Continued from Page 1)

on business license and health and safety violators.

According to BBC officials Moreno Valley police initiated the raids "apparently to shut down drug operations."

At presstime DCA officials and Moreno Valley city leaders had not responded to formal requests for reaction to the barbers' demands.

"My phone has been ringing off the hook. People are outraged," said Gordon. He told the *Black Voice News* that barbers targeted in the raids have been further humiliated by a police and city hall information blackout.

"When we called police and code compliance asking for an incident report — we were told 'there isn't one.'" Gordon said despite multiple requests for information from the three agencies, he and other barbers targeted in the raids have been "systematically denied."

Adding insult to injury Gordon says several customers have expressed concern over bringing their loved ones to his shop. "My reputation and livelihood of 24 years has been damaged. Collectively, we intend to fight back."

Gordon said the Hair Shack located in a strip mall along busy Sunnymead Boulevard has no prior history of police trouble.

"Incidents like this are not going to be tolerated anymore, and we're going to speak out. This was an attack not just on African-Americans, but all ethnic business establishments."

The barbers stopped short of publicizing their demands, saving the details for an upcoming news conference. Gordon confirmed he has contacted civil rights and American Civil Liberties Union attorneys.

Gordon and barber Ron Jones were cited for what BBC inspectors call 11

the 2002 Survey of Business Owners" report analyzed minority businesses to identify trends that may have impacted their performances in 2002. The 2008 report is part of the Economic Census and includes results from a questionnaire conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.

According to the report, minority-owned firms were twice as likely to export (2.5 percent of firms) compared to non-minority-owned firms

(1.2 percent of firms).

Accelerated growth of the minority population — expected to reach 50 percent of the national population by 2050 — is a key factor in helping to position minority firms as increasingly important players in America's business sector.

"U.S. minority firms are a great American asset and the time is right for them to seize the opportunity to expand and export their goods

internationally," said Ronald N. Langston, George W. Bush-appointed African-American national director of the Minority Business Development Agency.

"Doing so will not only grow their business but strengthen the national economy and create jobs in minority communities."

An agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, the MBDA has been at the forefront of minority busi-

ness development since 1969. The MBDA report illustrates that overseas markets have the greatest potential for minority business enterprises' (MBE) growth.

The report shows that over 70 percent of the world's purchasing power — and 95 percent of its population — is beyond U.S. borders. Langston asserts that President Bush's trade agenda and free trade agreements are creating new busi-

ness opportunities for minority businesses to grow.

"Free trade agreements, along with the ease of global transportation and the Internet continue to simplify the export process. Together, these are great tools to help all U.S. companies maintain their competitive advantage," said Langston. "We need to do everything we can to encourage more minority firms to engage in exporting (See Report, Page 9)

'cleanliness' (towel drawers, comb, supply cabinets not labeled) violations plus a \$1,500 fine. The operation which included Hair Sculptures, a beauty salon co-owned by Jackie Brazeau, a Latino, netted 2 arrests, 49 health and safety citations and failure to show an independent contractor's business license, violations and \$20,000 in BBC and code compliance fines.

Barbers from 15 Black-owned area business establishments plan to meet at an undisclosed location to develop strategies they say will more than likely involve legal action, boycotts, and formal complaints to the Department of Justice, NAACP and ACLU.

"It was a smack in the face that something like this could happen in Moreno Valley," said veteran barber and business owner Ray Butler.

Butler and his sister Fay, a barber for 30 years are part of family owned Ray's Barber and Beauty Hair Salon nestled in a strip mall less than a mile from Hair Shack.

Butler, a barber for 53 years with active professional licenses in four states, wants a top-down probe. "People made decisions to unlawfully attack 'us' they should be brought to justice. Cosmetology inspectors fronting for police is virtually unheard of in any state."

Moreno Valley barber Kevon Gordon says the police raids undermined his business of 24 years, humiliated Black barbers and viciously attacked one of the Black communities most sacred bastions: the barber-shop.

"From Moreno Valley police officers to members of City Councils to 'Lil Stevie Wonder and Motown music mogul Berry Gordy, I've left my mark on a many heads, but this mess threatens to rock the entire industry," he said.

The Butlers, whose business was not raided, displayed a show of solidarity by taping a copy of the *Black Voice News* article chronicling the raids on the shops' front window.

"We want our patrons to know the culture of our police. We will not stand back and allow anyone to run up in our shops without a search warrant asking customers if they have warrants. We're going to make sure this doesn't happen again," said Fay Butler.

Former patron James Wright, a Los Angeles pastor, said, "It's not one barber-shop, it's not one place, it's not one time, this kind of abuse of power is taking place in minority communities across the nation, the difference now is, we're speaking out."

Word of the raids spread like wildfire throughout the region. Across the nation barbers activists and bloggers engaged in lively online debate. Gordon said barbers, law enforcement, church leaders, civil rights attorneys and patrons in San Bernardino, Riverside, Los Angeles and San Diego counties have called with offers of assistance.

"As customers we have a duty to speak out against these raids. When I come to get my hair cut, I have a right to be respected. If someone ran a warrant check on me without probable cause, the next call I'd make would be to a civil rights attorney," said barber Harold Park's patron of 10 years, Reginald Richard.

"Moreno Valley today Atlanta tomorrow," said Andrew Fahiem a 2007 barber college graduate. He pointed to fresh text messages from barbers in Atlanta and Chicago who learned about the raids online. One text read, "Brothers, what the hell is going on out there? We're behind you."

Moreno Valley contracts police service from the Riverside County Sheriffs Department. Sheriff's spokesman Sgt. Dennis Gutierrez said the newspapers request for a statement on the raids and reaction to the demand for an investigation had been passed on the Sheriff Stanley Sniff for review.

"This kind of affront sends up a red flag to young brothers like me who have worked hard to stay away from gangs and drugs in favor of legitimate practices. It sends the wrong message."

Still Gordon who says his business has suffered financially since the raids, admits the controversy has a silver lining, "It got barbers fired up. It brought us together.

That's good."

Pastor Lacy Sykes of CrossWord Christian Church stated: "I actually go to Hair Shack Barbershop. Ron Jones is a member of my church, and it was inappropriate from the standpoint that it appears that it was a raid on minority barbershops."

"I know they [police] have challenges in Moreno Valley and the police are doing the best they can do, but it does not circumvent the police from obtaining the proper search warrants. Minority businesses have been around a long time in Moreno Valley and are doing great things within the community and deserve their respect."

Like the Black church, the

barbershop and beauty salon is, for many, a sacred institution where those who enter meet all strata of community including, the shoe shine boy, preacher, church sister, teacher, chorus girl, doctor and the occasional pimp.

Black Moreno Valley barbers and a growing list of community activists have vowed to 'serve and protect at all costs' this physical and psychological atmosphere conducive to unrestrained expression, real or imagined, richly embroidered with Black idiom canvassing topics from personal and community issues, religion and war to race relations, sports, prostitution and politics.

Chris Levister writes for BlackVoiceNews.com.

Government Job Fair



City of Las Vegas

City of North Las Vegas

Clark County

Clark County Housing Authority

Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department

Clark County Water Reclamation District

Nevada Department of Public Safety

Regional Transportation Commission

Southern Nevada Health District

University of Nevada Las Vegas

Clark County School District

University Medical Center

and more...

Saturday, April 26, 2008

10am – 4pm

Clark County Government Bldg

Center Rotunda

500 S. Grand Central Parkway

