

Seattle's Central Area



Black Seattle The Central Area

(Each week the Medium will feature a selected commentary by Komo's Don Phelps)

Recently I had the pleasure of lecturing to students in the School of Business at the University of Washington. The young men and women were both stimulating and challenging, but the biggest reward for me was discovering that there were several minority group students in the class. There was one Asiatic and eight or nine blacks in a class of about 25 students.

There is a reason why this is the case. Until recently blacks were not welcome to apply for top level jobs in private enterprise. The few who made it in business were indeed the Jackie Robinsons and Willie Mays' of whatever company they joined. But in the words of a community service advertisement, "Things Are Changing".

Most black people lucky enough to make it to college have tended to lean towards teaching, social work and the so-called social related fields because they knew at the end of the rainbow there might be a job. But now the welcome mat is out in virtually every field to the minority who has got the intestinal fortitude to work through the system. Statistics show that blacks have been pragmatic and have tended to go into fields where other blacks have been

One of the sad commentaries about fields such as entertainment and athletics is that far too many black youngsters have set their sights on these areas hoping to make it big. Except for a handful, few have ended up in the big time.

For example, let's say that the average salary of professional basketball players is \$50,000 a year, and you have 10 or 12 men on a club with some men making say, \$100,000 or \$115,000 a year. This means that on the other end of the pay scale some fellow may be making \$10,000, \$12,000 or \$13,000 and he is sitting on the bench. Usually his chances of playing ball and making his bundle are very remote and if he doesn't get a lucky break within two or three seasons he ends up beating the pavement looking for a new way to make a living. Another field where blacks have felt that lots of money can be made with marginal talent, and perhaps a maximum effort, is the entertainment field. With the exception of a very small handful many very talented musicians and various other kinds of entertainers end up playing weekend gigs for less than local union scale.

During a recent visit to San Francisco, I was surprised to find, in the downtown area near Union Square, small musical groups playing for whatever passersby would throw in their hats. There were groups of musicians, most of them black, who played as well as any of the big name musicians that I know, but they were all but begging for nickels and dimes on the streets of San Francisco.

For a moment let's take a look at some of the areas that are opening up and should be considered by minorities--both men and women. The world of big business is foreign to minorities for the most part and black people in particular. I suppose that those who are as unsophisticated as I think of a bank as somewhere to go to store away what little money you can save. There is more to it than this, and there are many phases of banking where one can specialize. All of the major corporations are looking for enterprising and well-trained minorities. They range from the telephone company, to IBM, to Boeing, to the major insurance and investment companies.

One field that I think is really opening up to blacks that I don't think they are taking advantage of is the field of journalism and news reporting. Having a chance to spend some time in KOMO's news room, I am learning that a crack newsmen can pretty well write his own ticket. One black from this area who has made it big is Jim Giggins, an ABC network correspondent who has just completed an 18-month tour in Vietnam.



Pictured above during the taping of Action: Inner City are from (left to right) Joseph White, SMCP East Branch Neighborhood Citizen Participation coordinator, Louis Warner, SMCP East Branch manager, and Jim Brown, who is employed in the SMCP New Careers Program.

ACTION INNER CITY; MODEL CITIES

A special television program featuring the Seattle Model City Program will be aired on KOMO-TV (Channel 4) on Sunday, June 11, at 2 p.m.

Nate Long, producer of the program, "Action: Inner City", said the show will feature a slide presentation of the East Branch Model Cities facilities and citizen participants.

"We believe we have put together one of the most entertaining programs of the year," Long said.

"The slides are in color, and this has lent a great deal more depth and feeling to the program".

The program will be moderated by Jim Brown, a young official with the SMCP New Careers Program.

It is narrated by Louis Warner, East Branch manager and Joseph White, East Branch Citizen Participation Neighborhood Coordinator.

Warner and White recently linked with Mayor Wes Uhlman for a preview screening of the slides on Channel 9--the University of Washington educational television show.

Long said the program was specifically designed to answer many of the questions raised by citizens about the work of the Seattle Model City Program in

the Central Area.

Warner added:

"We have striven to feature many of those thriving facilities and people who bring much needed social and physical services to our citizens."

The slide presentation was created by White from photographs he has taken in recent months of people and service agencies in the Central Area, Pioneer Square and the International District.

White also has volunteered to show the slide presentation to any interested citizen group in a special screening.

Brown will introduce Warner and White on the program. He said:

"The objectives of the Seattle Model City Program are both physical and social rehabilitation but when you hear this, the tendency is to think mostly of social welfare programs and construction."

"The Seattle Model City Program is more than that. Did you know that the crime rate was reduced by SMCP funding a street lighting project in a census tract that had one of the highest crime rates in the city, a program which helped both residents and police?"

"Social or physical? You choose. Through

use of Seattle Model City Program funds, linked with those of Forward Thrust, the City, state and federal government, SMCP has converted its East Branch into the lending area in the city in terms of open space, and exceeds the national standard for open space in relation to population.

"The Garfield Pool and the Firehouse Park, both developed through SMCP assistance, have won national awards for design. SMCP's Mini-Tran program, which provides inexpensive transportation to East Branch residents to the many, many service agencies and hospitals, has been duplicated on a national scale."

"The greatest success of SMCP could well be that along among community groups in the Central Area -- and this includes community councils-- the SMCP has sustained vigorous citizen attendance at SMCP-related meetings for three years. Task forces meet every week and the East Branch Advisory Council meets monthly, with attendance ranging from 20 to 100 persons. To sustain that involvement in a disadvantaged neighborhood, should be considered a remarkable achievement."

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