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Don't Cry Injustice When You Don't Support The Cause

THOUGHTS FROM THE PUBLISHER

By CHRIS BENNETT

Last Saturday, a group of concerned citizens marched and carried protest signs in front of several South Seattle merchants who filed a law suit to prevent the name change of Empire Way to Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. The protestors may have been few in number, but their commitment and enthusiasm were tremendous as they braved the hot, humid and rare Seattle sun to gain "R-E-S-P-E-C-T."

Only time will tell if the protestors were successful. However, there were several questions that need to be examined. Why did less than 100 Blacks and other minorities show up? Could it be the negative media coverage before the boycott? Timing of the event? Or has the Black community become so complacent, secure and wrapped up in their own individual world that they refuse to believe in the struggle from whence their "temporary success" came?

What happened to the organizations that run to the community when their own individual pet projects or jobs are threatened by economic and social racism? Where were you? Did your own personal ego and pride not let you socialize with the organizers? Or did the organizers fail to run the "respect protest" past you for approval?

Where were all those who constantly complain about no community support for their membership drives, or no community support for the Black theater, parades, construction jobs, unemployment? Where were the politicians? Where were you?

What about the other so-called minorities who are always hollering "me, too" when the pie is being divided, but are never there to help cook the pie? Where were you?

There is not enough space to print the names of the thousands of individuals and organizations who chose not to attend last Saturday's boycott. But most of them have frequented the pages of The Medium and other

so-called minority papers about some kind of injustice. And speaking of so-called Black and other minority media, where were you? You play our music, seek our patronage for your advertisers and our dues and subscriptions, but you can't support us when we need you. Where were you?

We hear the self-proclaimed philosopher describing what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. would have wanted. We even have a few misguided newscasters, all-white of course, saying Dr. King would not have wanted this, or he would not have wanted that. One commentator even had the nerve to say that race was not a factor. His own frame of reference should have told him anytime there is a confrontation between Whites and Blacks, history will verify that the underlying issue is race.

Dr. King wanted and died for what Blacks strive for everyday --- freedom, justice and equality for all mankind. The Black civil rights protest movement through non-violence, respect and preservation of dignity is what Blacks die and live for. Dr. King used his God-given talent to amplify it. In short, he amplified what Black people felt was right for them.

Yes, Seattle's Black community is a divided community, confused through trickery. But it is a sophisticated and intelligent community. And there will be other opportunities for sophisticated Black Seattleites to reassess their prior commitments, for the encounter with racism is a frequent occurrence. Maybe you were not able to carry a protest sign or sit in a rocking chair in front of the businesses like some of our Black senior citizens did. But you can still participate by exercising your economic muscles. The protest leaflets read, "Don't shop where you can't get R-E-S-P-E-C-T."

Boycott Of Insensitive Merchants Continues

The Coalition For Respect will continue its boycott of Rainier Valley merchants who oppose the street-name change from Empire Way to Martin Luther King, Jr. Way.

The Coalition picketed merchants Saturday, August 21. Eddie Rye, Jr., one of the organizers, said, "While it was only a two-day notice, I thought that it was a success. For the first time community residents could physically identify the places of business who were opposed to the name-change. There were also a thousand leaflets distributed to the community during the four-hour period."

The Coalition plans to resume picketing at 10 a.m. Saturday, August 28. The picketers will meet at the corner of Martin Luther King, Jr. Way South (formerly Empire Way), and South Orcas, the site of last week's picketing.

Some of the groups supporting the boycott, according to the Coalition For Respect, are: Shipsalers Local 541, Blacks In Government, Black Transit Workers Association, Hotel Motel Restaurant Employees and Bartenders Union Local 8, National Black United Front, The Community Exchange, most of the leading Black churches and several other



Shown above are Larry Gossett and children, Tony Orange and Ed Russell at Saturday's protest. Below are young and old, Black and White gathering picket signs before going to protest locations. See additional photos on Page 14. —Staff Photos by Gillie Haynes.



community-based organizations and unions.

"Plans for daily picketing are underway," stated Rye. "They will

continue until the merchants display the sensitivity and respect warranted by the racially mixed community in Rainier

Valley."

For further information, call 722-0726, and come out Saturday morning to demand R-E-S-P-E-C-T.