

Economic Justice On Thursday January 26th, African Americans who care about our community rallied at the board meeting of SoundTransit in order to advocate for Blacks getting contracts and jobs. Although sad things happened at that meeting that showcased the little regard for our community, our voices were heard. As you know, SoundTransit is authority that owns the light rail project, a project that will end of spending billions (not millions) of tax payers dollars to run trains from the north end to the airport (and beyond).

The group pushing for King County Blacks receiving our fair share of this money is called the Community Coalition for Contracts and Jobs (CCCJ). Remember this name and support CCCJ, for it has been working in your interest. The point persons are stalwart community leader and businessman Eddie Rye and able co-leader Ms. Patricia Paschal. These leaders called area pastors, civil leaders, business owners, union workers, and other civic leaders to attend last Thursday's SoundTransit board meeting. Why? Because the general contractors have not been fair and responsive to CCCJ requests; and to add insult to injury, on an \$87 million dollars paid to date on the \$280 million dollar tunnel contract, African American contractors and suppliers only received a total of \$857,000. Brothers and sisters, if my math is right this means our people only received less than 1% of this project that our tax money supports.

Perhaps a little bit of recent history is in order. How did CCCJ form? Well, folks in our community got fed up driving by projects in our community on which Blacks were not working. In 2003 Verlene Wilder, Pastor Ricky Willis, Pastor Kenneth Ransfer, Carl Mack, Pastor Pat Wright, Tony Orange, Todd Hawkins, Michael Woo, Frederic Simmons, Harold Wright, Eddie Rye and my self, Pastor Carl Livingston, and others got fed up seeing Seattle Housing Authority (SHA), South East Effectiveness Development (S.E.E.D.) and other agencies doing projects such as rebuilding housing at Holly Park and Rainier Vista without Blacks so much as even holding up a sign that read "Slow." We are unemployed, under-employed, poor, and tired. We can't take this situation of business as usual anymore. A prayer vigil was held prior to a Seattle Housing Authority Board meeting and the group demanded equity from SHA Board. LELO and CCCJ obtained information showing that SHA has been in non-compliance in ways that hurt Blacks and thus a complaint was filed with US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) against SHA and their prime contractors.

In June and July of 2003 CCCJ, the Black clergy, Black contractors, and community members to protest the awarding of the initial Sound Transit contract to Kiewit Pacific for \$94 million dollars. In its bid Kiewit listed three Black contractors for less than \$300,000. Black contractors, Black clergy and other community leaders called this unacceptable. Speaking with facts and passion, we called the board for not including Blacks in a fair way on the design and prep work contracts that had been awarded. We reminded this that this is happening in our community, right under our noses, and that we pay taxes too. We said that we were fed up, and were not going to take it any more. As a result of the protest of the contract award was delayed for over a month.

During this period, former Sound Transit Board chair and Martin Luther King County Executive were instrumental in increasing promised participation by African American contractors to more than \$3 million dollars. He and others promised our community that they would not allow any community to be passed over from sharing in this work in a fair way. This was the promise; we are holding Sound Transit to, and thus we entered into discussions with board members who would listen to us, and negotiated with contractors who (acted like) they would work with us.

As is typical, promises have not resulted into actions. How often have we seen this? Our architects and engineers have been overlooked for design work. Contractors, suppliers, tradespersons and journeymen have not received significant work. These are the kind of practices that keep us poor and impoverished, sick and tired, disadvantaged and disenfranchised. King told us before he died that the battle is economic now-not legal. Political segregation is largely over; today the battle is about the money. Let me teach a little bit.

Since slavery Blacks have been skilled in construction. We were craftsmen before we came here. Just look at the pyramids and the obelisks. When we arrived, we built Monticello-just ask Thomas Jefferson; we built the capitol building that Congress meets in-just ask George Washington; we built the master's house and the slave quarters-just ask Willie Lynch and Aunt Jamima. We know how to build things. During Jim Crow in every quarter of this country we continued to build things. We built Boley, Oklahoma-Boley was a Black town; we built Quandara, Kansas-Quandara was a black town. We know how to build things. We built black neighborhoods in majority White towns. We built Black Tulsa-go ask John Hope Franklin; we built out Black Harlem-go ask Zora Neale Hurston; we built out Central Area Seattle-go ask the Gaytons. We were the best trades people in Alaska until the unions ran us out of the money in the 1950s. We know how to build things.

We even know design work. When the French architect ran off with the plans to build the capitol and the country was 'up the [proverbial] creek without a paddle', it was an African American who figured out the design, committed it to plans and specifications, and said, 'Go ahead America, you can build from these'-go ask Benjamin Banneker. Back to the point.

The Asian American owned construction firm that received a significant part of the early work stopped working with Rye and others. This by itself was too much to take. Then when word arrived about the \$87 million that largely passed our community, we had to respond. Paschal, Rye and others sent out the call. The Black media dedicated radio programming to the subject. CCCJ brought the banners out. We came to the meeting early, but could not speak on the agenda early. The board moved us towards the end. This was the beginning of the negativity we were to experience.

We witnessed a Citizen's Advisory Panel speak on a report that basically praised SoundTransit, and said nothing about SoundTransit's commitment (or lack thereof) to diversity, and especially to the Black community. We witnessed a Black attorney working for Sound Transit state that a contract for \$89 million for a parking garage could be waived from having to meet diversity goals because the contract was indivisible.

Who's fooling whom? The demolition is not divisible? The excavation is not divisible? The grading is not divisible? The trucking of materials is not divisible? The concrete work is not divisible? The steel work is not divisible? The framing work is not divisible? The painting is not divisible? Not even the landscaping is divisible? Do they think we are ignorant? Only Sound Transit Board member, Seattle City Councilman Richard McIver spoke against this. I personally told the African American attorney as he walked by me, "Man, you're killing us." Yet, the contract was approved unanimously.

Other contracts were approved without any requirement for participation by women and minority owned firms. Seattle City Councilman McIver spoke in favor of a provision to maximize participation by women and minority owned firms on all Sound Transit contracts. The chair and others countered, "I don't think we can require this given I-200." McIver countermanded properly, "Aren't we receiving federal money and doesn't federal law have such provisions?" They called their attorney to the table and he agreed that I-200 may well make such language either illegal or unenforceable. An African American attorney working with him stood behind but had nothing to say.

Now that I am on this point, let me ask: how long are we going to allow African Americans to work against our interests when it is generally understood that they have their job because they are African American? How much longer will we do this? Should not be at least talk about such people in our Black media and then on behalf of the community protest their position to the powers that want our vote? I am tired of it; what about you?

Finally, they called us to the table two hours after the meeting started. About half of our crew had to leave by then. Patricia Paschal spoke effectively about the \$87 million that was largely denied our people. On the next panel, Eddie Rye, Pastor Kenneth Ransfer, and myself, Pastor Carl Livingston spoke on the discrimination the few contractors who are working are experiencing, on the broken promises of concerning Blacks getting our fair share, and on how this is the same stuff we have been experiencing for forty years.

I stated that I had no confidence, after what I witnessed today, that the board even cared (except for McIver). I said that the attorney was patently wrong about federal law. The doctrine of preemption (and the Supremacy clause of the U.S. Constitution) made federal law applicable at all times where significant federal money is involved. I said this is all the more the case where federal government officials are on the board, and thus part of the governance and the financing. I also stated that I-200's supporters always said that I-200 would not prohibit outreach programs. Yet, no outreach was done for our community. What about that?

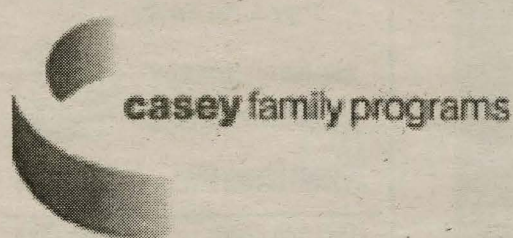
The next panel was comprised of such contractors and workers as Harold Wright, president of the Black Builders Association (and a founding member of the Central Area Contractors Association). Mr. Wright drove the point home: this makes forty years that he has been fighting for contracts and for work in this city. He detailed all that has been done to keep him out of the money on the projects the board oversees. Most of our members and friends had to rush away after speaking. This event will be televised on public television, but what we really need not to wait for the re-airing of the event, nor even to read this and weep; instead, we need you to talk up what is going on, come to our rallies, and help us keep the pressure on. The CCJC is fighting for jobs and contracts for you-fight with us. Frederick Douglass stated,

"Power concedes nothing without a demand." By: Rev. Carl Livingston 206.587.2922 papaschal@hotmail.com eryl@comcast.net

**"Success is to be measured
not so much by the position
that one has reached in life
as by the obstacles which he
has overcome while trying to
succeed."**

Booker T. Washington - 1856-1915

*You can make a difference in the life
of a child... Become a foster parent.*



1123 23rd Avenue • Seattle, WA 98122 • 206.322.6711

SEATTLE BAIL BOND COMPANY Remembering

**Hubert R. DeWitty
Great Bail Bondsman
of The Northwest**



Lucille Fisher-Qualifying Bail Agent/President
Jimmy Patillo-Bail Agent/Office Manager
Michael Patillo-Bail Agent/Night Manager
Martha Brooks-Bail Agent/Bookkeeping
Yulondo Chapman-Data Entry Clerk
Kris Neilson-Field Representative

Seattle Bail Bond Company

321 Yesler Way

(206) 622-6633

(253) 850-9477

Seattlebailbonds@yahoo.com

Since 1970

Hubert R. DeWitty