

## "A Call To Sister Mother and Da Mayor . . ." The Wise Ones

by Ulysses Tucker, Jr.

Do you remember "Sister Mother," the eyes of the community and "Da Mayor," the streetwise neighborhood drunk in Spike Lee's critically acclaimed *Do The Right Thing*?

As a youth, it was proper protocol for a "Sister Mother" or "Da Mayor" to keep a watchful eye on all they could survey in the community. I'd break a window or commit some type of decadent act and the information beat me home. "Boy, take your pants off and go to your room. Ouch! This type of networking use to be very common in the Black community. Some say that we as Black people have lost our sense of community and control. If I was unfortunate enough, "sister Mother" or "Da Mayor" whipped me all the way home and then hand me over to my aunt, grandmother, uncle, or parents for another one. Ouch again!

It was difficult to date, shoot craps in the alley, hook school or church, or commit some stupid act without the "watchful eye" or the pipeline "faxing" the info to the home front. I can recall many days where my mother stood on the porch, patting her foot softly, waiting for me to walk around the corner. Furthermore, telling the truth could make the difference between an open hand slap, dinner that evening, or an extension cord. "Sister Mother" and "Da Mayor" would never make up such a story.

"Sister Mother" and "Da Mayor," where have you gone with your watchful eyes? Have you fell victims to the senseless crimes that rot our neighborhoods like cancer? Is it apathy? Is it the pain from losing your purse, on the first of the month, to to kid across the street? Or is it that our family structure, neighborhood watch dog system died with crack cocaine, gang violence, or inadequate housing? Where have you gone?

Could it be that you're afraid to show your face because 98% of all killed last year were by other Blacks? Or is it the fact that we now have more Black males in prison than enrolled in college (43% of the total prison population is Black)? "Sister Mother/Da Mayor," please come back. We need you now. We need you to keep an eye on our future, our youth and babies. We need your values, insight, wisdom, strength, leadership, and direction more than ever before. We don't need any "Murder Capitols" like D.C., or Howard Beaches, drive by shootings, or Ray-Ray Winston's, and more recently, Authur Davis. We need your eyes, not the end of a night stick or the results from a shotgun blast. Please look out your window. We know that you are in there. We need you now.

"Sister Mother/Da Mayor," we need to learn, again, from your example and for you to help get our communities back on track. We know that you have been trying to make ends meet since Ronald Reagan did you wrong, but George said that he would be "Kinder and gentler," and anything else has to be better than "Ronnie." Yes, we know that H.U.D. failed to provide you will senior citizen housing, that you could possibly be homeless and we not even know where you are. We know that you are barely getting by on your Social Security check, but we need your model of consistency back. We know that you're watching the demise of our neighborhoods through your window and our young people killing each other in the streets. Ma Bell/US West Communications has nothing on you. Turn on your system and let's get back to the fundamentals.

You were my mother/father when they were not around. You made us think before we acted because your eyes were ubiquitous. We know that integration took your children to nine different cities and we understand that you haven't seen 15 of your 18 grandchildren. We understand that your very own children act if though they do not know you.

"Sister Mother/Da Mayor," you have been resting a very long time behind those locked doors and drawn curtains. You are a vital part of our guest. We need your support in the continuing efforts to regain control of our communities and neighborhoods. We need you now. We can't afford you to rest.

## You Can Help Others Through IRS Program

If you enjoy helping people and working with them to make a difficult task easier, VITA may be for you. VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) is an IRS program for assisting people who need help preparing their income tax returns.

"We are seeking a group of volunteers that will join us in our efforts to serve all the communities of Oregon," said Steve Matthews, Taxpayer Education Coordinator for IRS in Oregon.

VITA assistance is available for seniors, disabled persons, low income and non-English speaking individuals. The VITA volunteers help these people fill our Form 1040EZ, Form 1040A, a basic Form 1040 including Schedule A for itemizing deductions and taking advantage of such benefits as Child Care Credit, Earned Income Credit, and Credit for the Elderly. They also help with preparation of State of Oregon forms.

Matthews advises that as a volunteer you are not considered a professional tax preparer and will not be held legally responsible for the return. The volunteer income tax assistance is provided free at community centers, libraries, churches and schools that set aside rooms for this purpose. In Oregon, VITA is especially in need of bilingual volunteers, particularly those who can speak Spanish and Asian languages.

If you would like to volunteer, or if your organization would like to be involved, contact the IRS for more detailed information. The statewide IRS toll free telephone number is 1(800)424-1040. In Portland, the number is 326-6565. Or write to: IRS, P.O. Box 2709, Portland, OR 97208. Helping others is what VITA is all about.

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## Another Historic First For Seattle

SEATTLE—Only two days after the release of African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela, Seattle became the first American city to call for additional sanctions against the government of South Africa.

The nine-member Seattle City Council on February 13 unanimously approved a resolution welcoming the release of Mandela, calling for the release of all other South African political prisoners, and condemning South Africa's apartheid regime.

The Council resolution, which was sponsored by Council member Jim Street and endorsed by Mayor Norm Rice, also calls upon the U.S. Congress to enact "full, comprehensive economic and political sanctions against the racist government of South Africa and keep them enforced until full democracy is established in that country."

Rice declared Sunday, Feb. 11 as "Nelson Mandela Day" in honor of Mandela's release after 27 years of imprisonment.

"We welcome with joy the release of Nelson Mandela. We hope that this action is a sign that the process of dismantling apartheid in favor of a non-racial democracy will be greatly accelerated," said Councilmember Street.

"Despite our joy at the release of Nelson Mandela, we cannot forget that 28 million Black South Africans still live under the heel of apartheid, subject to the most brutal oppression and denied even the most basic human rights," Rice told a rally of over 1,200 people on the day of Mandela's release.

Rice, elected in 1989, is the first African-American Mayor in the history of Seattle, which has only a 9.5 percent African-American population.

Co-sponsoring and voting in favor of the resolution calling for increased pressure on the South African government were Seattle City Councilmembers Paul Kraabel, George Benson, Cheryl Chow, Susan Donaldson, Jane Noland, Dolores Sibonga, Sam Smith, Jim Street, and Tom Weeks.

## MAKE A DIFFERENCE

You can make a difference in the life of someone with AIDS. Cascade AIDS Project is seeking volunteers to act as PALs (Personal Active Listeners). PALs provide one-on-one emotional support and companionship to people with AIDS and their loved ones. The next PAL Training is March 17-18 and 24-25 (both weekends required).

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