

# OPINION

Opinion articles do not necessarily represent the views of the Portland Observer. We welcome reader essays, photos and story ideas. Submit to [news@portlandobserver.com](mailto:news@portlandobserver.com).

## Bit of Entrepreneurship by Necessity

### A case for eliminating economic barriers

BY MARC H. MORIAL

There is a silver lining in the dark cloud of the great recession. A new Census Bureau report reveals that from 2002 to 2007 the number of black-owned businesses in the United States increased by 60.5 percent to 1.9 million—more than triple the national rate.

According to Census Bureau Deputy Director Thomas Mesenbourg, "Black-owned businesses continued to be one of the fastest growing segments of our economy, showing rapid growth in both the number of businesses and total sales during this time period."

The reasons for this are many, beginning with the long history of African American entrepreneurship in response to poverty, high unemployment and discrimination.



Consider the case of Madam C.J. Walker, the daughter of slaves who, in the early 1900s, turned her dream of financial independence into a hair care and cosmetics business that revolutionized the beauty products industry, created good paying jobs, and

*"I had to make my own living and my own opportunity! But I made it! Don't sit down and wait for the opportunities to come. Get up and make them!"*

-- Madam C.J. Walker, trailblazing African American businesswoman

made her a wealthy woman and philanthropist.

Like Madam C.J. Walker, many African Americans may have turned to entrepreneurship in the years covered by the Census Bureau study because of high unemployment in our communities.

The fact is, black unemployment never got back down to where it was before the recession

in 2001. So in effect, what we are seeing is a bit of entrepreneurship by necessity. There's also an economic independent streak, particularly among emerging generations in the black community. Building a business gives great satisfaction and cushions them from the shock of losing jobs because of economic down cycles.

New York State leads the country with more than 204,000 black-owned businesses, followed by Georgia and Florida. The retail trade and health care and social assistance sectors accounted for 27.4 percent of black-owned business revenue.

The survey also found that in addition to an increase in the number of black-owned businesses, annual sales increased by 55 percent to \$137.5 billion.

I recently called on federal, state and local governments to develop a "hyper-focus" on

black- and minority-owned businesses. Every city, county, and state needs to have a plan that focuses on small and minority business. There is a spirit of entrepreneurship out there that needs to be nurtured and energized.

While the Census Bureau report is generally good news, we know that black businesses still make up only 7 percent of all companies and they tend to be smaller and have lower gross receipts than other businesses. Black-owned businesses are also often hampered in their revenue growth by a lack of capital, connections and contracts.

What I hope this report says loudly and clearly to the investment community is that you are missing an emerging market in the United States. If minority businesses are growing at a faster clip than overall businesses, imagine what the growth rate would be if those barriers were eliminated or lowered.

We need the investor community to look at this report and recognize that they are missing an incredible opportunity.

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.

## The Big Score in this Year's Super Bowl

### Public ownership working beautifully

BY JIM HIGHTOWER

For me, the most significant statistic coming out of this year's Super Bowl wasn't the 31-25 score in the Green Bay Packers' hard-fought victory over the Pittsburgh Steelers. Nor was it the \$1.3 billion cost of the



new, monstrosly huge football palace built by the Dallas Cowboys, where the game was played. Rather, the number that impresses me is 111,968.

That's the number of people who own the Packers--each of whom is an ordinary Green Bay resident and devoted cheese-head.

Unlike all 31 of the other pro football

teams, the Packers aren't the personal plaything of some rich family or profiteering corporate consortium. Instead, it's a non-profit community enterprise owned and managed by local fans as a project, according to its bylaws, "intended to promote community welfare."

Green Bay's citizens elect the team's board of directors, and this hands-on and community-minded board then hires and fires the team administrators and coaches.

Public ownership means that no impulsive greed-head can sell the beloved Packers and move them in the dead of night to a cash-rich big city. It also produces unmatched fan support, even in years when the Packers do poorly on the field.

In fact, if things aren't going well, fans

don't have to whine helplessly about it on the shock-jock call-in shows. As citizens of this small city, they can talk directly to the team management. Or as shareholders, they can vote to change managers.

Interestingly, at a time when politicians and pundits across the country are demonizing the very idea of public ownership, the good folks of Green Bay are showing that it works beautifully and adds immeasurable strength to the community.

Not only are these Green Bayers Super Bowl champs again this year, but they've produced more NFL championships in their city than any other set of owners has done.

Jim Hightower is a radio commentator, writer, and public speaker.

**Subscribe!** 503-288-0033  
Fill Out & Send To:  
**The Portland Observer**

Attn: Subscriptions, PO Box 3137, Portland OR 97208  
\$60.00 for 6 months • \$110.00 for 1 year • \$200.00 for 2 years  
(please include check with this subscription form)

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

or email [subscriptions@portlandobserver.com](mailto:subscriptions@portlandobserver.com)

Advertise with diversity in  
**The Portland Observer**  
Call 503-288-0033  
[ads@portlandobserver.com](mailto:ads@portlandobserver.com)

**The Portland Observer** Established 1970  
USPS 959-680

4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Portland, OR 97211

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, PUBLISHER: Charles H. Washington

EDITOR: Michael Leighton

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER: Mark Washington

CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Paul Neufeldt

The Portland Observer welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts and photographs should be clearly labeled and will be returned if accompanied by a self addressed envelope. All created design display ads become the sole property of the newspaper and cannot be used in other publications or personal usage without the written consent of the general manager, unless the client has purchased the composition of such ad. © 2008 THE PORTLAND OBSERVER. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED. The Portland Observer—Oregon's Oldest Multicultural Publication—is a member of the National Newspaper Association—Founded in 1885, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc, New York, NY, and The West Coast Black Publishers Association

CALL 503-288-0033 FAX 503-288-0015

[news@portlandobserver.com](mailto:news@portlandobserver.com) • [ads@portlandobserver.com](mailto:ads@portlandobserver.com) • [subscription@portlandobserver.com](mailto:subscription@portlandobserver.com)

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Portland Observer, PO Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208