The Portland Observer

OPINION

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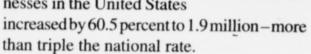
Bit of Entrepreneurship by Necessity

A case for eliminating economic barriers

BY MARC H. MORIAL

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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



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.

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

made her a wealthy woman and philanthro-

Like Madam C.J. Walker, many African

Americans may have turned to entrepreneur-

ship in the years covered by the Census

Bureau study because of high unemploy-

back down to where it was before the recession

The fact is, black unemployment never got

make them!

ment in our communities.

pist.

Consider the case of Madam C.J. Walker, 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 be-I had to make my own living and my cause of economic down own opportunity! But I made it! Don't 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



For me, the most significant statistic coming out of this year's Super Bowl wasn't



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

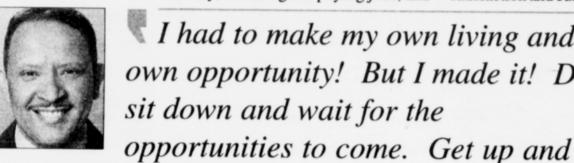
-- Madam C.J. Walker, trailblazing African American businesswoman

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

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

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 politicos and



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

Unlike all 31 of the other pro football

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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

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.



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