

POWER
TO THE
GRASSROOTS
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BUSINESS AND BUSINESSMEN
Part II

Last week I discussed a few common oversights or undersights many of us have toward Black people in retail sales. This week I would like to discuss and cite a specific example on "how" and "why" some of these pseudo-myths and attitudes exist against black businessmen.

INSTITUTIONALIZED RACISM AND
THE BLACK BUSINESSMAN

I will use the "retail record" business as an illustration to show the relationship between the Black retailer and the white wholesaler. Although this model may vary depending on the type of business a person is in, it nevertheless can be a general working model that shows how the majority of distrust and disunity comes about among Black people.

The white power structure causes this disunity, and perpetuates this division through an institutionalized system of racism; and Black people, who should know white America better than white America knows herself, shouldn't accept this second class thinking about themselves, without profound question.'

HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS

White America does not like Black people to compete with them, and will do everything in their power to keep a Black businessman dependent upon them for survival. Too many black people progressing in retail business means too much "Black Power", and too much "Black Power" means a "white panic".

Why do Black record dealers - in general - have to charge more money than a white retailer for a given record? A simple answer would be that, he pays more for his records; but, how many Black people can or want to arrive at such a basic conclusion. We would rather take the slave conditioning route, and say, "Every time a Black man gets in business he cheats his brothers". To help perpetuate this image of Black people always fighting, and talking about one another the white wholesaler performs a number of business programs that are geared to keeping a Black retailer powerless.

After talking with a Black record retailer in the community about what really goes on behind the scenes, I decided to go with him one morning to see for myself what black record retailers actually encounter in their daily work.

For example: When a Black record retailer in Pasadena goes to Los Angeles to buy his records, he will immediately become educated to the reality of retail business that he didn't learn in

school. The first reality that keeps him non-competitive - with reference to the white power structure - is the fact that, white record dealers can buy their records on a consignment basis, whereas, Black record dealers cannot. The process works like this: A white retailer can go into a white wholesaler's store and order 300 or 400 records on a consignment basis; which means, whatever records he doesn't sell he can bring back and the wholesaler in turn, will refund his money. Thus, through this "reality" of business transaction, we find that, white America's progress is due to a "social" or "cultural affinity," rather than, a fragmented economic disunity which Black people so ably demonstrate. The Black retailer therefore, because Black businessmen are not unified to fight off this oppression, will in many cases find themselves bewildered and frustrated "victims" of the system. In retrospect, a Black record retailer finds, that he cannot buy his records on consignment; he must keep every record he buys, whether he sells it or not. This, as a consequence, forces him to buy only the records he feels people will buy; and at the same time, acts to limit the variety of records he has in stock.

NEXT WEEK

I will continue this line of thought next week, and also discuss the relationship of the Black businessman and the police departments.