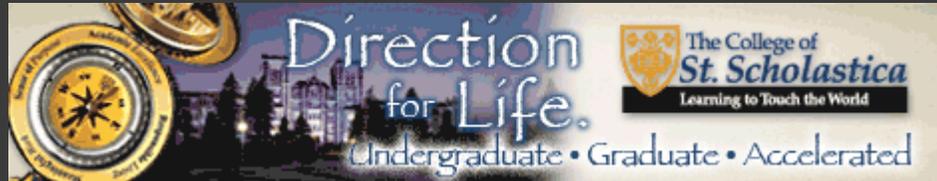




Thursday, May 15,
2008

Part of the BlackPressUSA Network



We need a conspiracy to create Black prosperity in North Mpls

by Don Samuels
Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder
Originally posted 3/20/2008

The foreclosure crisis has cut deep into the developing economic muscle of North Minneapolis. This latest assault seems to justify the conspiracy theory you have probably heard:

The ravaging of our community is being allowed so that prices will become depressed, properties neglected and chaos intolerable and pervasive. The government and investors will then come through, bulldoze the whole thing and build new high-priced homes for the wealthy and the White, five minutes from downtown.

I propose an alternative, African American conspiracy theory. It goes something like this:

The Black working-, middle- and upper-middle classes seize the timely opportunity to recreate a new, economically diverse and culturally supportive community. They buy up hundreds of beautiful, spacious and temporarily under-priced houses in North Minneapolis. They return to make it a vibrant African American community, supporting the arts and a thriving Northside economy.

In addition, African American Timberwolves, Twins and Vikings become inspired by the example set by former Vikings Tim Bayless, Oscar Reed and Carl Eller. They build or buy spectacular homes along the river and throughout Jordan, Near North Willard and Harrison. They add their wealth to the community, and kids beam proudly to see them walk by each day.

Black pastors, entrepreneurs, professionals from 3M, Wells Fargo and other corporations return to become our neighbors and community leaders. They join with those who never left to spur a rise in Black pride and the realignment of Black identity. Together, across class and race, we effectively advocate for living-wage jobs, schools that graduate all our kids, ex-offender rehabilitation and the upgrading of urban culture.

Black entrepreneurs, encouraged by the social renewal, open businesses on West Broadway, Glenwood and Plymouth, creating vibrant economic corridors that dwarf the old Rondo in St. Paul and Seventh Street in Minneapolis.

You can hear jazz at the Capri on many weekends and R&B at local clubs every weekend. You can bask in the urban ambience at any of the five plazas planned for Broadway. You may visit Juxtaposition Arts, Northside Arts Collective, Hollywood School of Dance at the Capri, Le Petit Joliet, Lundstrum School for Performing Arts and others, still unknown, in a powerful revival of Black esthetics.

The full spectrum of Black music and programming will emanate from KMOJ at the impeccably restored Delise's building. And, visitors from all over the country will consider a stroll down West Broadway, Plymouth or Glenwood, essential to the national Black experience.

Barber and beauty shops have upgraded to become state-of-the-art in amenities with crisp, professional service. A winsome "May I help you?" and exemplary customer service are standard fare up and down the avenue. There is a bookstore for African American

children and sit-down restaurants offering Southern soul food, African and Caribbean cuisine.

Children have lots to do at the refurbished Broadway YMCA, or the whole family can visit the therapeutic YMCA coming to Per Plymouth inside the \$90 million facility. You might even see them frolicking at the water park through the large picture windows \$50 million, 24-hour YWCA coming to Broadway and Bryant.

In addition to all of this, several Hispanic, Hmong and Middle Eastern eateries and shops also speckle the community, creating diversity of tastes, sounds and sights.

Some African Americans have already initiated the conspiracy, rehabbing fine homes throughout the neighborhoods and building new ones in places like Heritage Park with excellent views of the cityscape. They can now drive five minutes to downtown jobs entertainment.

It is time to rebuild our community with the kind of capacity that held us together before the suburban dream inadvertently robbed of our most successful half. Together again, we have the resources to make a vibrant, diverse and self-sustaining community.

Note: If your home is threatened by foreclosure, act now. Call 311 for advice and referral.

Don Samuels is the Minneapolis Fifth Ward City Council Member. He welcomes reader responses to Don.Samuels@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.