

Giving the Black Dollar Away

Written by Jeffrey L. Boney

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Giving the Black Dollar Away

I remember the last time I made the decision to support a popular local fast-food chain that a lot of people in the black community frequent. It was a life-changing and eye-opening experience. Call it an epiphany or a revelation. Having chosen to eat my food there, I became shocked by the fact that I discovered a metal object my lodged in food.

I immediately took my partially-eaten food back to the cashier that took my order, and was appalled by the attitude that this individual had towards me, in not acknowledging the issue at hand and not offering to give me back my money. Of all the things on my agenda that day, I found myself arguing with a business owner about getting my money I chose to spend on a product that I wanted, but wasn't happy with. A true business owner understands that "the customer is always right," but there are many businesses in the black community that could care less about you being right, as long as you remain a customer.

You have probably seen it yourself, a black patron is standing in line ordering their food and they ask for extra napkins or two additional packets of ketchup, and get chewed out and treated like they are subhuman. The irony, however, is that regardless of how that person gets treated, they don't ask for their money back and will probably return to spend their money with them at least two or three more times that week. On top of that, the other black customers that are standing in line, observe this horrible treatment and behavior, but get more upset with that customer because they are holding them up from ordering a six piece wing dinner with rice and gravy, instead of choosing to take their valuable dollar elsewhere where it will be appreciated.

It seems that the black dollar scatters away from the black community quicker than darkness leaves when light appears. While all businesses should focus on providing quality customer service, many black consumers use the excuse that they don't spend their money to support black businesses because of service. The funny thing is that there is more evidence to support the fact that non-black businesses that are located in communities that have a heavy

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concentration of black residents, treat the black consumer in a more unfavorable way than black businesses do. I constantly hear stories from black consumers about how they were treated at a restaurant, convenience store or a high-end establishment, yet they still spend their money with them.

Several months ago, there was a reported incident that took place at a lounge on Washington Avenue that garnered tons of media attention, both on television and social media. There was outrage, centered around allegations that black patrons were asked to leave the establishment, owned by a white male, because they were black. Many of the individuals quoted in the media, were upset that they were not allowed to spend their black dollars at this establishment, because they were the type of customer that the restaurant should have wanted.

When Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to go to the back of the bus, that began a mental and financial paradigm shift within the black community. Dr. Martin Luther King, along with many other black consumers in Montgomery, Alabama, made a powerful statement by enduring the inconvenience of not riding the bus, and holding onto their black dollar, because they considered it that valuable. The impact of the black dollar being withheld, caught the attention of those that had been so accustomed to receiving it without consideration.

Many members of the black community, regardless of socioeconomic or social status, should not be just interested in receiving quality service, they should also be interested in what happens to the dollars they spend after they spend them. They should be concerned about whether their dollars are being reinvested into the black community to support other local black businesses, invest in community educational programs, create jobs for many of those black consumers or support community organizations that seek to better the neighborhood and community.

If black consumers want quality service and hope to be treated like they want to be treated, they must support local black businesses and demand that those businesses provide the quality service that you deserve as a consumer? If you truly care about the state of black America, put your money where your mouth is.

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