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Who owns Black hair?

Group wants to regain control of ethnic hair supply businesses, mostly owned by others

By Ayana Jones

Tribune Staff Writer

While there are numerous African-American owned salons in Philadelphia, there seems to be a dearth of Black-owned hair and beauty supply stores in the city, according to Black hair insiders. Many African-American women are turning to Korean-owned hair and beauty supply stores to maintain their hair weaves, perms or braided styles.

After Norm Bond, president of the Philadelphia Chapter of the National Alliance of Market Developers, Inc., learned about the Korean domination of the Black hair industry, he decided that the organization should take it on as an issue.

“When I first saw the information about the Korean domination and how Korean businesses receive 90 percent of the money in the Black hair industry, although 100 percent of the consumers are Black people, it didn’t sit well with me,” he said. “I wanted to be able to bring this information to the public and be able to come up with ways to put some solutions in place so that you don’t just have people running around mad.”



– Submitted photos by Carlos Payne / Photographer and President of National Solid Gold Hair Magazine

While some may feel that it’s too late for the African-American community to gain ground in the Black hair care market, Norm Bond, president of the Philadelphia Chapter of the National Alliance of Market Developers, Inc. feels that it can be done through hard work.

The local chapter of NAMD wants to get people engaged around the idea of gaining a solid, economic foothold in the estimated \$8 billion Black hair industry.

The group is gearing up to host a seminar and workshop titled “The Business of Black Hair, Part II, Regaining Control of the Black Hair Industry” on Feb. 12 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at First District Plaza, 3801 Market Street.

The upcoming seminar will feature Sam Ennon, founder of the Black Owned Beauty Supply Association (BOBSA) and African-American Chamber of Commerce Chairman Delilah Winder.

Ennon will share information on how people can acquire their own beauty supply stores. He has estimated that Koreans own about 8,000 beauty supply stores across the nation, compared to African-Americans owning 1,000 shops.

BOBSA is striving to increase the number of Black-owned retail and online stores.

“The Black Hair” DVD will be shown during the seminar,” Bond said. “The DVD highlights the Korean domination of the industry from the wig and extension manufacturers to the distribution businesses that sell to beauty supply stores.

“What happens is a lot of times people watch the DVD and they talk and they get angry and say ‘we should boycott them.’ We need to actually build our own capacity as Black people, our own infrastructure so that we can give alternatives to people who are receiving these products from these Korean owned businesses.”

Bond was further spurred on by reading Dr. Claud Anderson’s book “PowerNomics,” which encourages African-Americans to gain economic power by focusing on industries where they are the disproportionate consumers.

“When I look at the Black hair industry, I said, ‘well this is the perfect industry.’ This is a market that we should target because we are the dominate consumer and then be able to build around our consumer base, so that we aren’t just consumers, but we are the manufacturer, the distributor, the producer (and) the retailer,” Bond said.

While some may feel that it’s too late for the African-American community to gain ground in this market, Bond feels that it can be done through hard

work.

“This is not something I think we’re going to turn around overnight but I think that we as a people have to build some type of economic foothold in America,” he said. “We don’t have any real industry that we dominate right now in terms of production and manufacturing.”

“To me, if we don’t take the ownership of manufacturing, distribution and building alliances around it then I think that we’re really going to continue to scramble and be at the bottom economically.”

The upcoming seminar will address a number of topics including how hair care retailers can gain access to products through African-American channels, an update on the new Pennsylvania’s braider’s law and money management skills.

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