Federal official pushes minority business growth

SBA's Henson on front lines of fight to boost opportunities

Portia E. Badham
AFRO Staff Writer

"You have to understand one thing about the Small Business Administration, we are one of the few federal agencies that delivers services directly to the public."

This was the statement made by Daniel P. Henson, regional administrator for the Small Business Administration.

Henson, assigned to Region Three is responsible for West Virginia, Washington, D.C., Maryland, Delaware and Pennsylvania.

The Small Business Administration was mandated by Congress in 1953 to assist and counsel millions of small businesses which are the backbone of the economy.

In 1968, the Minority Enterprise division was designated to insure that minority businesses were getting the assistance and financing needed for starting an enterprise.

Henson who works out of the Philadelphia SBA office was recently questioned by the AFRO while working in the Washington, D.C. office.

Here he discusses black economic development and how his agency plays a role.

AFRO: What are your duties as regional administrator?

HENSON: Regional Administrative sets policy, and policy is set here in the central office, policy as to how we are going to carry out the programs that are (1) by Congress through small business administrations.

AFRO: Where is black economic development at this point?

HENSON: As economy starts to level off and starts a slight downturn, right now minority enterprises is second.

We don't have a lack of it from our point of view was three years ago and that's the president's goal to triple it. Our base year is up by 77 and our goal is to go from $one billion in government procurement to minority entrprise to $3.3 billion. I think we are going to meet that goal.

In terms of progress, obviously there's been progress, but I guess the question really should be whether or not the progress is consistent with the progress in the rest of the country. In other words whether or not we are keeping pace.

No we are not keeping pace because the minority enterprise right now in terms of its contribution to the gross national product is filled somewhere in the neighborhood of less than 2 percent.

Population wise, we are 18 percent, so obviously we are sliding back a bit in terms of the overall gross but obviously there has been progress in terms of numbers. But there is something that the minority has to understand. Government can't do everything for them.

This agency, Office of Minority Business Enterprises and other federal agencies are overburdened. We need the cooperation of the banking community, the cooperation of equity capital people, and large corporation in purchasing products that the minority businesses.

Government can't do it all, the attitude in the country has to change.

AFRO: Why don't you just outline step by step how one starts in business.

HENSON: You have to have a remarkable idea, first of all. Then you have to have the message of putting that idea together and marketing it.

A good example would be somebody who learned before hand what they needed to know to go into a particular kind of business.

AFRO: What are the major problems in going into business?

HENSON: Lack of knowledge, lack of preparation. The biggest problem we find right now is people who don't prepare themselves to go into business. At best 8 out of every ten small businesses that went into business in June 1979 are going to be out of business by June, 1980.

Our job is to cut those odds. Our job is to get it down to less than seven out of 10. It is a risky enterprise.

In terms to what the government can do, it can provide the training. Once you get the business open, it can provide technical assistance and continue training. It can provide assistance in helping you to sell the product either to the government or to private industry or to the consumer and it can provide financing.

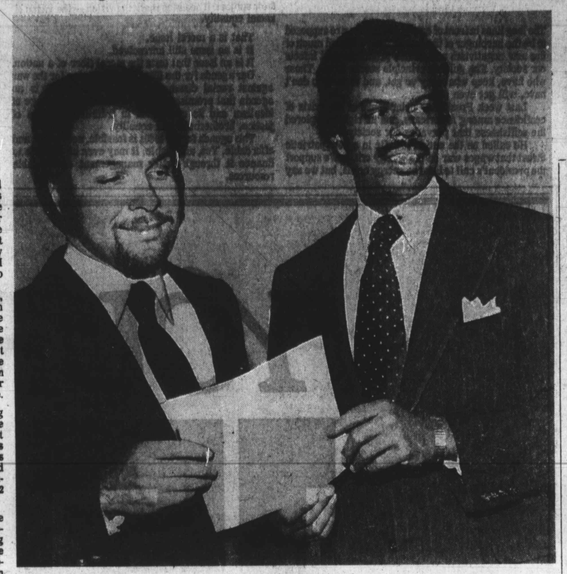
AFRO: So the help is available?

HENSON: Yes, the help is there. But a lot of people don't seriously prepare themselves to go into business.

Then a lot of people who think that they have prepared themselves are resistant to suggestions.

Now in terms of major problems, there is a major problem of the availability of that kind of knowledge. If you are Jewish for example, when you are young you sit at the dinner table and hear about the inventory control, retained earnings, income averaging, and you hear about the appreciation of the equipment.

We don't hear about that, we hear about the welfare man, and about all these other problems going up in the Ghetto.



MINORITY CONTRACTS INCREASED — Under the guidance of Daniel P. Henson, regional director for the U.S. Small Business Administration, a dramatic increase in minority contracts have been witnessed over the past two years. Henson received award from William A. Clement Jr., associate administrator for Minority Small Business and Capital Ownership Development, one of the agency's highest awards for his leadership in minority small business and expansion of the procurement assistance program.

Nationwide loan programs

Assistance provided by the Small Business Administration (All programs excluding disaster loans)

	Total agency		Minorities	
FY	number of loans	$ value of loan	number of loans	$ value of loan
1970	15,102	709,610,267	6,262	160,366,601
1971	21,494	1,122,185,853	7,776	213,781,904
1972	28,026	1,573,804,045	9,016	258,248,970
1973	33,948	2,196,157,576	9,074	333,962,591
1974	27,485	1,947,769,852	6,876	288,520,440
1975	22,349	1,549,331,724	5,386	224,681,059
1976	25,926	2,059,471,690	5,539	262,055,591
1977	31,793	3,049,420,726	6,180	352,335,148
1978	31,727	3,289,538,167	6,118	401,588,539
1979*	19,361	2,131,628,100	3,517	267,382,621

Total — *May 30, 1979

and we don't have a lack of applicants. But we do have a lack of good ideas.

Good ideas are getting hard to come by. The reason is that there is a lot of people who understand what the problems of going into business are, particularly right now, they're moving off. And we just aren't seeing the good ideas that we use to see years ago.

We are doing some things now to try to stimulate those kinds of things.

AFRO: Going into the 80s, how does black economic development compare to when we were going into the 70s?

HENSON: There is no doubt that there has been a lot of progress. I would say that if you check the black enterprises you will see that probably the total is twice as much as it was ten years ago.

That is the total gross sales, at least twice as much. If you check government procurement which is a major market for minority enterprises, right now and getting better, it's tripled what it

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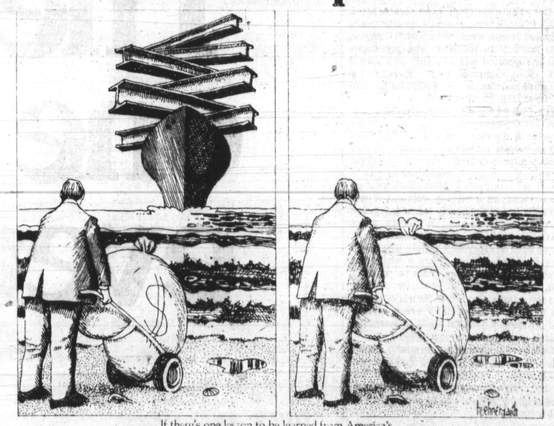
Who's going to meet the growing need for steel in this country– and at what price?



If there's one lesson to be learned from America's oil crises, it's this: You can't always depend on foreign sources to supply how much of what you want, when you want it, and at a price you can afford to pay.

Unless we soon start expanding our domestic steelmaking capacity, 25 to 30 million tons of steel imports could be entering the U.S. market annually by 1985. (Compared to 12 million tons in 1978.) And then America could find itself at the mercy of foreign steel producers, as it is at the mercy of foreign oil producers.

What's needed to meet the growing need for steel in this country with *domestic* steel? Governmental policies that will allow the American steel industry to generate the additional funds needed to modernize and expand.

Bethlehem
Bethlehem Steel Corporation, Bethlehem, PA 18016

Meet Mondawmin Mall's Marian Wesley

Woman is boss of $multi-million shopping center

ONCE A SECRETARY Marian Wesley moved up through the ranks at the Rouse Company to become the first black female manager of a shopping mall.

JUST 22 YEARS AGO Mondawmin Mall was the scene where picketing went on due to the racial discrimination community residents faced at one eating facility. Picketers in this 1957 AFRO file photo contrast the changes that have taken place over the years, the Mall is now managed by a black female.

By Portia E. Badham
AFRO Staff Writer

The office is filled with books and manuals, a large desk swamped with papers, pictures and maps cover the walls. All the usual things one might expect to find in a shopping center manager's office.

However, other than a name plate, there isn't much to let you know that this manager is not what you might expect.

Instead, this office located on the lower level of Mondawmin Mall is occupied by a black female, Marian Wesley, an employee with the Rouse Company who has taken on the mammoth job of mall manager.

In her day - to - day supervision, Mrs. Wesley is responsible for the entire operation of the mall which includes leasing of space, preparation and implementation of the budget, advertising, cleaning and security.

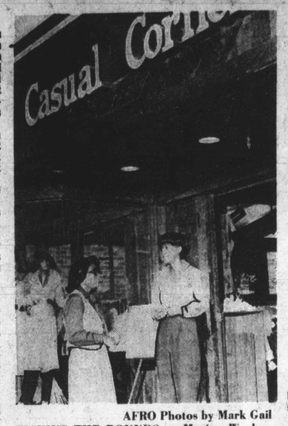
With a staff of 22 people, Mrs. Wesley has worked as mall manager for nearly two years.

"The purpose of my being here was to oversee the renovation and rebirth of the mall. The goal was to turn the mall around," explained Mrs. Wesley.

Mondawmin Mall located in the heart of West Baltimore had been plagued with several problems including drops in sales and a loss of clientele over the last 10 years.

Mrs. Wesley who began her career with the Rouse Company as a secretary and worked her way up through the ranks, stated, "After working for the Rouse Company for 10 years, I decided I wanted to go out into the field and work in managment."

At that time she was assigned assistant manager of Plymouth Meeting Mall in Plymouth Meeting, Pa. which is a suburb of Philadelphia.



AFRO Photos by Mark Gail

MAKING THE ROUNDS — Marian Wesley, Mondawmin manager makes frequent visits to businesses in the shopping complex to keep abreast of any problems or concerns merchants may have. Here she chats with Gerri Thomas.

After holding that position for almost two years, she was assigned to Mondawmin when the Rouse Company took over its management. She is the only black female mall manager with the Rouse Company which has taken on such ventures as Columbia Mall and Harborplace in downtown Baltimore.

Just 22 years ago, Mondawmin Mall which opened in 1956, was the scene of protestors who picketed against discrimination against blacks who were not allowed to eat in one of the Mall's eating establishments. At that time 60 stores occupied the mall.

Now 75 stores occupy the three - level complex and more than 10 of those are minority owned.

When asked if the mall seeks to increase its minority businesses, Mrs. Wesley said, "Finding black people that have the capital and experience to go into and operate a successful business is difficult.

"But we do promote minority business and we expect to open two new minority businesses within the next few weeks."

Mrs. Wesley who spends an average of eight to 12 hours in her office as many as six days a week, is also a wife and mother of two daughters.

When asked if managing her home and carrying out a sometimes demanding job presented any problems, she quickly replied, "Well, I've been doing this for 16 years and I haven't had any problems yet."

Mrs. Wesley, a graduate of Dunbar Senior High receives nothing but praise from merchants who welcome the facelift the mall has undergone.

The bare floors have been carpeted, once open space has now been used for small businesses and a wider variety of businesses are offered.

Fred O'Neal, owner of Mondawmin Photo, one of the oldest black businesses in the mall, said, "Everyone feels a certain amount of excitement, this is due to Mrs. Wesley and her efforts.

"She's firm but gentle in her dealings with the merchants and she stands for discipline."

Almost echoing those sentiments was Joe Sachs, who owns Sachs Shoe store on the second level of the mall. Sachs is one of the long - established white businesses in the shopping center.

"Mrs. Wesley has contributed greatly to the change here at the mall. She's a professional person, she's tough but she's also fair," said Sachs.

Two newer merchants to the mall, Barry Friner and Ralph Klein who own Klein's men's store, said they opened their new store in the mall because "we knew the Rouse Company was coming."

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