

“Making Our World”

The late and great historian John Henrik Clarke said:

We have forgotten state formation. Entrepreneurship is part and parcel of the state and we have forgotten state formation and management. If you forget how to run a state, then you will forget how to run a candy store. One thing relates to the other. If the mind can conceive of one, then it can conceive of the other.

Clearly, we have not forgotten how to run candy stores. We have “Mom & Pop” candy stores, we run church operations excellently, and we have a few sizeable corporations in America. However, the reality is that less than 10% of Black (African) American businesses actually have employees (other than the owner). Moreover, we have forgotten the connection between enterprise and state; i.e., we do not clearly comprehend the link between strong businesses in our communities and independent control and management of our communities. If we do not control and manage our communities—that is, supply jobs and business opportunities for members of our community—then we will not ensure that our communities are safe, that our youth are educated, and that our communities are clean—mainly because we do not develop the wherewithal to do so. Consequently, others are called upon to fulfill these functions. History is sufficient to tell us that no one will take care of one’s affairs in the most favorable way other than one’s self.

All of that is to say that developing a long-term strategic plan (LTSP) for “making our world” involves deciding on the framework in which we make our world. No question about it, Black (African) Americans cannot begin tomorrow to manage their own country. We are neither separately located nor separately organized. However, as we make plans for the future, one key consideration is whether Black Americans should seek separate status as a nation. Why? Because we did not arrive in America on our own volition; it has taken us nearly four hundred years to achieve a sufficient state of cognition to be able to formulate the consideration properly; we now have the expertise to operate our own nation; and because we have not received, and will not receive, fair treatment in America—even given the current Obama presidential bid.¹

However, as we formulate plans (or at least consider formulating plans) for separate status, Black Americans should continue developing enterprises. In the context of a LTSP, we propose the following framework for making our world in the next century or two ahead.

- A. In recognition of the W.E.B. and Booker T. controversy, we suggest adopting a dual track approach to entrepreneurship.

¹ We should never forget that Barack Obama is not a Black American (ethnically) and that he does not and cannot represent, completely, the best interest of Black America. If anything, he must be an American president.

1. Black Americans who have the inclination and proclivities to work in technical fields (manufacturing, retail and wholesale trade, skilled trades (mechanics, plumbers, electricians, painters, etc.), agriculture, etc.) should pursue roads that arrive at these outcomes.
 2. Black Americans who are inclined to be professionals (bankers, investors, doctors, lawyers, dentists, professors, scientists, and engineers) should pursue avenues to achieve this outcome.
- B. To spark and extend entrepreneurship, the LTSP should call for the formation of micro-credit operations or financial circles where regular and relatively small contributions can be leveraged into sizeable sums to initiate, maintain, and grow Black Businesses. Such operations assume trust—something that has not existed within the Black community since Willie Lynch. However, knowledge that we are all operating under a strategic plan with common goals and objectives should help create and reinforce trust. All else failing, we should not overlook the use of force to engender trust and compliance. Remember, it is difficult to rule and control successfully with clean hands.
- C. To spark entrepreneurship among Black American youth, the LTSP should include a component that calls for Black businesses to collaborate with business colleges and schools at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and elsewhere to support and promote business plan competitions and other exercises that provide opportunities for students to develop business concepts and plans and to practice what it means to be an entrepreneur.
- D. Given entrepreneurs, the LTSP should include efforts to actively promulgate business in Black American communities.
1. The LTSP should call for a concerted effort to develop a program of “Buy Black” in much the same way that the textile unions developed a “Buy the Union Label” program in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s. We need a program to help us comprehend that if we don’t take care of our own, then no one else will. In our view, as long as the quality of products and service is good, Black Americans should patronize Black American business—even if there is a marginal price difference. We suggest that advertisements be used to sell this concept nationwide; “Buy Black.”
 2. Internet registries of Black American businesses that are committed to excellence should be developed and maintained, and a system for grading these businesses should be operationalized so that we police our own businesses for quality of service.
- E. Given globalization, and after Black businesses have gotten a foothold in the United States, the LTSP should call for Black entrepreneurs seeking opportunities to trade their goods and services on an international scale—including establishing subsidiary operations overseas. Black Americans have

an affinity with people of color the world over, and we are likely to find it beneficial to build business abroad.

- F. The LTSP should urge Black entrepreneurs to bring up their children, grandchildren, cousins, nieces, nephews, and family friends in the way of business so that business operations continue under excellent leadership from one generation to the next. If we can do it in churches, we can do it in business.
- G. The LTSP should suggest that the most important “Black Social Club,” churches, be used to promote business within Black communities. Churches can play a critical and successful role in fostering a mentality of “We can do for self” in Black communities. This applies to all churches in all Black communities.
- H. Other Black Masonic and fraternal organizations may also be called upon to raise appropriate banners to infuse Black communities with a spirit of independence. We must all recognize that “if ‘I’ don’t do it, then it may not get done.”
- I. In the spirit of “charity,” the LTSP should call for Black businesses to devote a reasonable portion of their wealth to building Black communities. Consequently, business in Black communities should not be simply a taking proposition, but a giving one as well. While the LTSP may not reflect a mandate that Black entrepreneurs live in the communities in which they operate their business, it could certainly be encouraged.

The LTSP framework should also include mechanisms for balancing Black businesses that are formed; i.e., Black businesses should span the spectrum of possibilities and should not be overly represented in a few industries or sectors.

In an effort to assist Black business in remaining updated on the most recent technologies and operational methods, the LTSP should call for the formation of appropriate trade groups and associations that meet periodically to help keep Black entrepreneurs coordinated in their efforts and informed in these areas.

Finally, the LTSP should require that Black business and economics professors meet periodically to assess the status of Black American business and to develop a “way ahead” so that Black business can remain on the cutting edge and moving forward in America and elsewhere around the world.

The LTSP should organize all of these principles into a consistent framework and formulate programs/timetables for the fulfillment thereof. As a warning, Black (African) Americans should be careful to avoid developing business obsessions and becoming overly materialistic in nature, and should view enterprise as a means to an end (state formation and maintenance), not an end in and of itself.