



BlackEconomics.org

“Destructive Competition”

Famous economist Joseph Schumpeter coined the phrase, “creative destruction.” By it he meant that destruction can be turned on its head and made to be creative. That is, after destruction there is a need and an opportunity to create replacements (rebuild), which can produce economic expansion.

The US capitalist economy is becoming increasingly monopolistic (one seller), duopolistic (two sellers), or oligopolistic (a few sellers). However, during various historical phases, the US economy has been quite competitive. In a competitive environment, one must be aggressive to be successful. We have all heard that under competition, “it’s a dog-eat-dog world.” In fact, in an extremely competitive environment, it is not uncommon for one competitor to attempt to destroy his competition. One might argue that this could be labeled “destructive competition.”

But this commentary concerns another form of “destructive competition.” It concerns the fact that sports that feature competition between young Black American athletes can destroy what should be a natural inclination to collaborate in business to grow and advance the economics of our areas of influence (communities).

We are not here referring to competition at the professional sports level, which is all about business. Black athletes operating at the professional level are increasingly finding ways to use their incomes and wealth to engage in collaborative entrepreneurial and investment efforts. When they walk off the field or the court after heated competition, they all smile because each one is a winner who just got a paycheck.

However, at the high school and college levels, we find animus arising increasingly between competitors who are competing for college scholarships or an avenue to the professional ranks. The anger and fury that develops and is displayed through rounds of competition at this level foments hate that can be hard to overcome after opportunities to engage in competitive sports have long ceased.

This hate for crosstown, intrastate, or interstate rivals can be the very reason why certain Black businesses fail to grow and prosper. Imagine that years after competing at the high school or college levels, Black individuals or areas of influence (communities) have an opportunity to

initiate or expand business, but the old sports animus, which is difficult to forget, prevents the initiation or expansion of the business.

Too often, White coaches are the puppeteers in all levels of sports. They play a role in fomenting hate between Black sports rivals. These White coaches are no where to be found when the hate that they helped to foment prevents Black individuals and/or areas of influence from collaborating in business and maturing and achieving a higher level of economic well-being. In this scenario, the “master/colonizer” is successful again at thwarting Black progress from afar.

Knowledgeable Black American already know that we have “someone else’s ice is colder” and “internal distrust” problems.¹ We should be careful to not permit animus due to sports rivalries to be another factor that prevents us from building our economy, increasing our income and wealth, and ensuring a higher level of well-being.

As we enter March Madness and high schools and colleges/universities end their basketball seasons, let us be certain to observe how Black athletes perform and determine whether we can identify the fomenting of animus between rivals that can later come back to haunt us in the form of failed opportunities to do business and grow our economy.

If you see such developments, then it is incumbent upon you to intervene with Black athletes and inoculate them against hatred for their brothers. Your actions can heal another purposeful effort to divide us and bring the Black American nation closer together for future development.

B.B. Robinson
03/03/21

--

¹ In this regard, please see point 13 in our “22 Reasons Why Black Businesses Fail;” <https://www.blackeconomics.org/BELit/22reasons.pdf>. One might argue that this essay describes a 23rd reason why Black businesses fail.