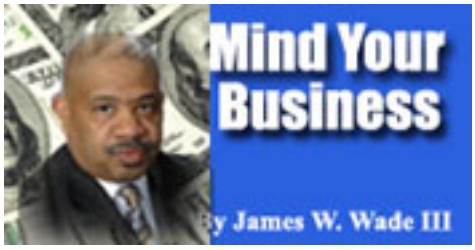

Find out by asking friends, contact an African American business organization, or casually inquiring at a venue about its ownership. Once you identify Black-owned businesses in your community, encourage others to support them too.

Advocate buying Black

It was really good to see a lot of friends and former co-workers come out to help the Call & Post celebrate their 95th Anniversary. This was a great night for reflections of how far the newspaper has come.

Staying in business is not an easy task but I wanted to salute a Black owned business in my column that has been around for 50 years...

Pinkney-Perry began as a partnership in June of 1961 between Arnold R. Pinkney and Charles B. Perry. Incorporated under the laws of the State of Ohio in 1965, Pinkney-Perry is now the oldest and largest minority owned insurance agency in the state.

From its humble beginnings as a writer of primarily homeowners, auto and life insurance, Pinkney-Perry has evolved to one of the areas premier business insurance agencies.

Pinkney-Perry has provided insurance and risk management services to many of the regions

most prestigious organizations and institutions, while never wavering from their commitment to the Northeastern Ohio area's "small business" insurance needs.

Pinkney-Perry Insurance Agency has adopted the principle of serving the needs of their clients while identifying solutions to the challenges they face. They accomplish this by recognizing that their concerns affect them individually, their families, and their businesses.

Although they will be featured in the business section later this month, I wanted to give a special shout out to them for the 50 years. No matter what type of business you own, it's hard to stay afloat.

While at the 95th Call & Post celebration, I went down memory lane. Remember Boot n Shoe and King's Mens Shop in the Lee Harvard Plaza? Or Jerry Mills and the Fly Shop in downtown Cleveland
?

Red Devil's with those gigantic Trotters and Scaps or Jerry's BBQ in the Quincy-Woodland area. Now matter what side of town you were on, you could see Black business owners.

Well, when I was young, it seemed like Cedar Avenue was the place to be. Now, I only got to visit that neighborhood on my way to church (laughing) until I got older. But, I remember hearing about the Clarke School of Dressmaking and Fashion Design at 9202 Cedar Avenue.

The school, named after Amanda (Hunt) Wicker Washington, DC mentor, became an integral part of the largely African-American neighborhood. The Clarke School produced student fashion shows at Central Senior High School, and offered scholarships to young women who were recommended by their high school sewing teachers.

The Cleveland Business League, a business association for minorities, traces its origins back to the Cleveland Businessmen's Association, founded in 1925 by Herbert Chauncey. This organization continued until the formation of the Progressive Business Alliance in Feb. 1939.

The latter was formed to promote “closer cooperation among a group of the city’s business and retail men as well as to stimulate business.”

It later expanded to offer a wide variety of services to its members and their families. The alliance sponsored the Negro Business Hour, a Sunday morning radio program, as well as a yearly trade exhibit. The organization also had a Women’s Auxiliary.

As the Cleveland Business League, the organization was known as the area’s “Black Chamber of Commerce.” Its goals were to foster economic development in the African American business community through advocacy, training, and a variety of programs. The league also maintained contact with legislators and offered a health care plan. It has undertaken special projects over the years, such as a contract in 1980 with the City of Cleveland in which the league provided training and managerial assistance to small and minority business enterprises.

Throughout the years, other organizations formed to assist in the Black community. The Greater Cleveland Roundtable, a nonprofit private organization was founded in 1981 by leaders from the business, education, labor, civic, and religious organizations to improve multicultural and multiracial relations in the city of Cleveland and facilitate minority economic inclusion in Northeast Ohio.

At its inception, the Roundtable’s Board of Trustees, chaired by E. Mandel de Windt, hired Sarah Short Austin, formerly with the National Urban Coalition, as executive director. The membership of the privately funded Roundtable was composed of 60 leading representatives of business, labor, churches, suburbs, neighborhood organizations, social agencies, and the Black community who were committed to shaping an inclusive urban community, one that invites the social and economic participation of all racial and ethnic groups in Cleveland.

Accordingly, the Roundtable discussions centered around five major problem areas: public education, economic development, housing, neighborhood development, and race relations.

Among the causes the group supported were the 1984 Cleveland Public Schools levy (the first successful one in 12 years), the need for a domed stadium, and the management crisis at the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority. In 1993, the Intercultural Community Council was organized by the Roundtable to promote intercultural dialogue and cooperation through

education.

The Roundtable adopted a more proactive outlook in 2003, seeking to institute constructive change in the community through public discourse and training. In 2004, the Greater Cleveland Roundtable joined the Greater Cleveland Growth Association and Cleveland Tomorrow in forming the Greater Cleveland Partnership, an organization focused on improving the local economy and fostering racial harmony.

It's good to still see Black businesses in the neighborhood like Henry's Dry Cleaners on East 116th and Kinsman who serves the community with great customer service. Mostly every corner store or deli that was Black owned is now owned by other cultural groups.

You may be surrounded by Black-owned businesses and not even know it.

Find out by asking friends, contact an African American business organization, or casually inquiring at a venue about its ownership. Once you identify Black-owned businesses in your community, encourage others to support them too.

It is disturbing that, although African Americans are the largest consumers, they aren't spending money with African American vendors and business owners. We must once again be an advocate of buying Black.