I use to spend a lot of summers in Chicago with my grandparents and spent a lot of their money in the famous area named Jew Town. Many Black Americans who refuse to buy at Black businesses claim prices are too high, the service is inferior, or the products are below par.

Support Black businesses, they'll support you

Being raised in a **Black community,** I can say with certainty that my concepts of success in business stemmed from seeing Black businesses in the neighborhood. Mr. James' stores, Mr. Stevens' store, and Hank's Barber shop were all right in the community.

The Black business community has changed over the years in the city of Cleveland. Some may say it was for the good and some may say for the worst. It seems hard for a business owner to stay afloat in these bad times with more and more robberies and theft.

Not only is it hard to get capital to start a business, you must now worry about your life. The respect for elders is long gone with this new era. Not only will they not get up for a senior and give them their seat on the bus, they will also rob and attack them.

Remember the days when you had your own deli, corner store, drug store and movie theater in your own neighborhood? Entrepreneurship was present in the Black community.

The best way to encourage entrepreneurship and economic empowerment in the Black community is to make *successful* business ownership routine. It needs to become an everyday, expected, normal part of our way of life.

Maybe some of you can remember East 105th and Cedar Avenue, when they were booming with businesses. If that's before your time, what about the area on Euclid Avenue where The Scrumpty Dump Movie Theater and Playland was located?

The Black community had places you could patronize all week, Arts Seafood, Lancers, Gleason's, and Scatters to name a few. For years, it has been talked about for consumers to be conscious about where they spend their economic dollars, encouraging them to make sure they are circulated in their communities and especially among Black businesses.

Many are fearful of businesses that take our money but could not advertise with their Black newspapers, do business with Black businesses, or hire Black people. I am concern about the j obless rate in America which is more than nine percent but, in African-American communities, it's back at Great Depression levels – sixteen percent and even worse for Black males.

The sectors hardest hit in the recent recession important to African American workers in particular include construction, manufacturing, and government. It's hardly a new problem but, with the economy sputtering, the outlook has rarely been so bleak. In some cities, Black unemployment is expected to stay in double digits for another decade.

Like many, you may desire to spend all of your money in the Black community. Let's face facts. It would be nearly impossible to achieve this goal. Consider that manufacturing and supply chains are rarely operated by Blacks.

Even more prudent is the fact that our lack of investment in the innovation and entrepreneurship may leave the Black community out of the future job market due to the fact that we are not involved in creating high-growth companies that create employment opportunities.

It is way past time for Blacks to support and help build a better economic structure for

themselves in America, one that will keep us competitive in this ever-changing capitalistic world. It boils down to survival of the fittest and right now we are barely competing on a level playing field let alone surviving.

It is said of *all* new businesses started in America, 96 percent of them fail within 10 years. While that rate of failure cuts across the board, African-Americans are disproportionately affected because we lag behind all other racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. for wealth creation.

And successful business ownership is the number one way to create first generation wealth that can continue throughout the years. I enjoy my relationship with my father and often wished he had owned his own business for us to work together.

Pinkney & Perry Insurance now have Charles Perry's sons taking the helm and Pernel Jones,' of Pernel Jones and Sons Funeral Home, sons working by his side. This means another Black business to stay in the community.

Non-Black business owners know they will find loyalty, fewer competitors, if any, and a steady source of revenue from Black consumers. Although the Black community has less discretionary income to fund long-term investments, own fewer homes, as well as businesses, and have the least amount saved in retirement accounts, the Black community manages to spend more with other ethnic groups than their own.

The problem with African Americans is that they respect and recognize other ethnic groups when in turn, those ethnic groups support their own, like Little Italy, Chinatown and the Jewish community to name a few.

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However, the only way Black American businesses can improve is if they attract more consumers. The only way to provide more jobs for the community is if they patronize local

businesses. The wealth of a community depends upon how many times money circulates or recycles within the community.

Other ethnic groups spend and recycle their dollars then set up their community and encourage recycling through various means of communication such as signs, billboards, and cultural symbols. They also they set up small businesses to serve each other and spend with each other first before spending with other ethnic groups.

We **need** to be able to invest in and develop **manufacturing capabilities** that allow us to offer products that our community and the Global community will be willing to purchase. The effect on our psychology will be a form of
rehabilitation
.

Our kids will grow up watching their parents work for and spend money with Black businesses. The adults will attribute their ability to pay bills and enjoy their communities to Black businesses. We can begin to trust our communities and our communities will begin to trust and depend upon their successful businesses.