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## CCAACC Now and Then: 1982 to 2012

Celebrating 30 Years of Commitment to the Austin African-American Community



RAPPIN'

Tommy Wyatt

### Remembering our History...

February is Black History month that is celebrated all over America. It is a time to reflect on the contribution that the African American community has made to this country. Those contributions are not adequately reflected in our history books.

I was once told by a collector of history that "History belongs to the ones who is willing to pay for it." As he collected the history of Texas and attempted include Blacks at a cost, he discovered that there were not many takers on his project. Blacks were not willing to pay to have their names and contributions listed in his publication.

The other problem is that African Americans were not given credit for the many inventions and other contributions they made. And that continues today. Someone recently told me that an African American invented the cell phone. However, the credit was given to the company that he worked for and not to any one individual.

One of our most outstanding scientist was George Washington Carver. Carver was a former slave whose most famous work is his discoveries from the peanut. He made many items, including peanut butter. Carver would not have received credit for his discoveries has he continued to be a slave.

Each year, we try to give coverage to the men and women who have made contributions locally. While they may not be known nationally or internationally, they paved the way for many of us to have the opportunities that we have today.

While we will not be able to recognize all of them, we will try to cover a wide range of individuals who walked through the doors of segregation and held it open for the rest of us to follow. We need to follow their examples

In 1982, eleven Austin business and community leaders convened to address the lack of representation of African-American's in Austin's convention, hospitality, and tourism industries. Their primary objective: catalyze the reallocation of convention and visitors bureau dollars to stimulate investment in the African American travel and business community. The individuals were: Tommy Wyatt, Andy Anderson, Kenny Sneed, Freddy Dixon, Juanita Ross, Mildred Sneed, Arthur M. Sauls, Carol Hadnot, Bertrand Adams, Larry Beck Jr., and Norris Carr.

This was exactly 30 years ago and many things have changed regarding the business climate, the role of the Chamber and the quality of life for African Americans in Austin. As the African American population declines, it has become clear that as it was in 1982, the role of the CCAACC has become more necessary and vital than ever before.



The CCAACC Board of Directors are poised for the future.

Originally headquartered on Manor Road, the Chamber is anxiously preparing for its upcoming relocation to East Austin's 11<sup>th</sup> street corridor. This facility, currently under construction, will also include the opening of an African American history and cultural center to be managed by the CCAACC to help preserve

legacy and stimulate tourism and traffic to East Austin's African American community.

Guided by new leadership, the primary objective of CCAACC and its executive team is to re-establish stability and impact of the Chamber – integrating the history of the community with the future direction of the

city. To do so, over the last few months, CCAACC has undergone considerable strategic planning, board development, and program enhancement to better serve and maintain the Chamber's relevance within the Greater Austin Region.

CCAACC will celebrate its rich legacy on February 9, 2012 at its 30<sup>th</sup> An-

niversary Awards Gala. At this awards ceremony, CCAACC Founders will be presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award for their contributions to Austin and the African-American Business community. For more information please contact CCAACC at 512-459-1181 or online at www.capcitychamber.org.



### 'Red Tails' Takes Second Place at Box Office

According to the Hollywood Reporter, "Red Tails" brought in \$19.1 million for a solid number 2 placing at the box office in its opening weekend. The film finished closely behind "Underworld Awakening" – which took in \$25.4 million.

Producer George Lucas spent 20 years pursuing the project that

chronicled one of the many storied experiences of Tuskegee Airmen. Lucas revealed he couldn't get any studio to finance the film because of the storyline and the all-black cast. He finally decided to put up the money himself – which cost him \$58 million on the production budget and another \$35 in distribution costs.



WASHINGTON (FinalCall.com) – Black faith leaders used the celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday, Jan. 16, to join the Occupy Movement with Occupy the Dream. They demonstrated at each of the 13 Federal Reserve Banks around the country.

Hundreds came out in the cold, young and old, with signs and chanted, "The banks got bailed out, we got sold out!"

Occupy the Dream co-chair Rev. Jamal Bryant of Empowerment Temple in Baltimore explained why

they were demonstrating. "We want an increase in federal grants for university education, an end to home foreclosures and a \$100 billion fund from Wall Street banks for new jobs and neighborhood investment."

He told The Final Call this was only the beginning. On Feb. 14 the group plans to organize another protest. Rev. Bryant called for 750,000 to one million people to take their money from big banks and open accounts in small community banks and credit unions.

## Community Conversation Held To Discuss Proposed Utility Rate Increase

By Angela Wyatt



(L to R ) Mayor Pro Team Sheryl Cole introduces panelist Steve Smaha and Dan Pruett. Photo by Angela Wyatt.

Saturday morning, City Council Member Sheryl Cole hosted a community conversation meeting on issues regarding Austin Energy's proposal for raising utility rates on customers. Mayor Pro Tem Sheryl Cole and a panel of experts engaged the public on rate changes. The meeting was held from 9a.m. to 11a.m., at Austin Community College's Riverside campus. There was much to discuss regarding the utility, including its annual payments to the city's budget. For 2012, that totals about \$158 million.

The panel of experts included Steve Smaha of the Electric Utility Commission, Dan Pruett of One Voice and Meals on Wheels, Roger Duncan a former Austin Energy director and former Council Member, Betty Dunkerley former City Council Member. Also in the

audience were Council Members, Laura Morrison, Kathie Tovo, and eventually Chris Riley, Akwasi Evans of NOKOA Newspaper, Susana Almanza of PONDERR and (Member of Montoplis community board), Dean Rush of First Evangelist Free church and many concerned citizens of Austin, surrounding and outside cities.

Cole's purpose of the two hour meeting was for a Question and Answer session, but throughout, it was continuously disrupted and taken over by citizens. While there was much general anger about all bills being too high, an uneven consensus conceded that after 17 years with no bump in rates, some increase is inevitable. Cole and others insisted that whatever comes out of the discussion, the city will do its best to reduce the impact on

low-income citizens, churches, and schools. It's still very unclear how that will happen, but it's also clear that the Council, while scheduled to address the matter in the next couple of meetings, is nowhere near a vote yet on an actual rate schedule.

Responses to audience questions about overall Austin Energy rates and expenses, the panel members, were in the unlikely position of defending the utility. Duncan acknowledged that the rate proposal might seem drastic because of the long interval since the last one, but that over the years, when Austin Energy came to Council with proposals, they were repeatedly given the thumbs down because, the utility was not at crisis or in

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