

# Blacks And Koreans Meet To Discuss, Work Out Differences

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Larry Grant, President and Founder of the National Cultural Foundation, and Mr. Tong Suk Chun, Grand Master of Chun's Golden Tiger Tae Kwon Do Academy Association, sponsored a dialoguc and roundtable discussion between the leaders of African American and Korean communities.

In recent weeks, relations between Blacks and Koreans have become quite heated across the country. Two cities that have been particularly hot are New York and Los Angeles.

Inglewood had one such incident transpire between a Korean market owner and the 14 year old daughter of Cheryl Ali last May. Ali's daughter was assaulted by the store owner because she went back

Baptist Church. He enlisted the help of his congregation and came prepared with concerns from them about Black/Korean relations.

The first issue that his parishioners raised regarding the problems that exist among Black consumers and Korean vendors was that there was no recycling of the Korean dollars into the Black community. Secondly, they cited unfair hiring practices in that most Korean businesses employ no Black people. A third issue concerned the attitudes that Koreans allegedly display towards Black men.

After expressing these concerns, Rev. Carter offered what he felt might be a viable solution,

"I feel that one of the solutions might be to have the Korean businessmen to get to know all of the pastors in the community within a mile radius of their establishments. Thus, Black churches and Korean businesses can form an alliance to help battle the problems that exist in our communities."

The next speaker was Brad Pye Jr., Assistant Chief Deputy to Kenneth Hahn. After relating two negative experiences that he personally had with Korean vendors, Pye said, "It's just attitude I think that turns a lot of African Americans off. And I think that we can eliminate that if we just learn to communicate with one another."

Phillip No, Chairman of the Korean-American Grocers Association of Southern California (KAGRO), eloquently stated the position of Korean vendors,

"I don't know, you seem to have a lot of complaints against the Koreans, but we have complaints against you too. I own a liquor store and I have been robbed many times. There are good and bad people everywhere, and I know that.



**TONG SUK CHUN**

to add more toppings to her Icee. Ali was outraged and legal actions are currently pending.

The purpose of the dialogue was to try and solve problems that are perceived to currently exist between these two ethnic groups. Larry Grant opened the discussion by asking participants to be as open minded as possible so that progress could be made.

"We can either stubbornly cling to old ideas that will lead us down the path of conflict and violence or come together to find solutions. We must remember that knowledge is easy, understanding is difficult," said Grant.

Master Chun entreated the participants to realize that we have to learn about one another in order to live together. "We have to take the example that our children have set. They are good friends, they go to school hand and hand, and they play together. Open your minds so that we can discuss how we can become a more harmonious community."

With those opening remarks from the sponsors, the discussion got under way. The first community speaker was the Reverend Louis Carter, who pastors Antioch



**REV. LOUIS CARTER**

You also have to remember that we are immigrants so when you complain in the store, some store owners do not know what you are talking about.

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# Blacks-Koreans...

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You ask us to smile, we don't smile unless we have a reason; that's just our culture. And when I am in my store by myself or with my wife, we get scared when several people come in at the same time because if they decide to rob us there are many of them and just two of us."

He went on to address the issue of recycling Korean dollars in the Black community. He said that every year KAGRO offers scholarships to African American as well as Hispanic students.

In terms of hiring Blacks, he said that most of the time you see Korean store owners in mom and pop businesses and they cannot afford to hire outside help.

"We are small and we cannot afford to hire outside. Our families worked together for 16 and 17 hours to make ends meet. Also there have been instances where I have hired young black people and they have robbed me. I am a small business man and I cannot continue in business if I am robbed constantly by my employees."

Mr. No also commented on the perception of Koreans as being rude. He said that KAGRO would inform its members to be mindful of their attitudes when dealing with customers but he also asked Black community members to teach their children to show respect to the stores that they enter as well as to the owners of those stores.

Overall, both groups felt that the dialogue was helpful in dealing with the racial tensions that seem to be plaguing the community. They also said that the talks were only a first in a series to follow in the future.