

## **The Beauty Shop and Barber Shop Initiative for Economic Empowerment**

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By Syndicated Columnist Cathy Harris

One thing is for sure. There is no way that we, African Americans, are going to be able to get black people out of beauty and barber shops. Therefore, let's use these same facilities to educate, inform and empower the African American community.

In some states lawmakers and cosmetologists are all tangled up over legislation that would relax rules for hair braiders. The bill would alter requirements for people who braid, twist or add extensions to hair without chemicals.

There are many different types of hair salons that one can choose to go to. There are the traditional walk-in salons where you do not have to make an appointment. You just walk in and wait for the next available hairdresser. Another option is to call a full-service hair salon and make an appointment with a stylist of your choice. Some hair salons specialize in certain areas such as coloring, up-dos for formal occasions, cutting or styling. Which salon one chooses will determine the level of expertise being performed for the service.

Having your own hair salon or barber shop is a very lucrative business that you can run from your home or a shop. If you start this business out of your home, your goal should be to get your own shop within a year. Remember businesses are designed to create jobs. If you have a business that does not hire people, you might not have a business, you might have a hobby.

You want to be careful where you place your beauty or barber shop. Make sure these shops are easily accessible from the freeway with lots of parking in crime free neighborhoods. You can use coupons and discounts and the proper signage (flyers in subdivisions, signs on your vehicles, billboard ads, etc.) to bring in customers.

Most beauty or barber shops need to make sure that they are legitimate. Those interested in opening up their own shop, should check out the 4 business stages at <http://www.angelspress.com/businessstages.html> to learn how they can legitimize their business. It's unfortunate that most blacks will never reach the third stage, the legitimacy stage, simply because they don't conduct the proper research to become successful business owners.

Even though over 80% of all businesses are sole proprietorships, it should be the goal of beauty and barber shops to open a Limited Liability Company (LLC) also called Corporation or to get incorporated. If you are involved in a business where

you can be sued, then you at least need to have a LLC. This way if you are sued, they sue the company and not you, so they can't take your house, car and other possessions.

Unlike traditional thinkers, be unique and think outside the box. Instead of just a regular beauty shop or barber shop:

- 1) Open a school (4 or 5 chairs) in the back of your shop for young and upcoming beauticians and/or barber shop owners.
- 2) Sell beauty products and supplies including wigs on the side of your business instead of having the community go other beauty supply stores.
- 3) Rarely do beauticians tell you how to take care of your hair, so put out your own e-newsletter or print newsletter on the proper way to take care of hair.
- 4) Because of the economy, many people are losing internet support and lines in library are increasing so set up an internet satellite center in your shop.
- 5) Set up a library for non-fiction books or sell non-fiction books on the side in your beauty or barber shop.
- 6) Place a community bulletin board in your shop with entrepreneurship and job opportunities especially for young people.
- 7) Allow the community to give in-shop business seminars on the side.
- 8) Form partnerships with business owners and allow them to set up tables to recruit and mentor young people through "Youth Entrepreneurship Clubs."

Any of the ideas will make your business look very attractive to investors especially if you are giving back to the community. Your next goal is to put together a great business plan and start approaching potential angels and private investors.

Education is the key to any type of initiative we take in the community. Education is not always learned in colleges and universities. In order to become empowered, everyone essentially have to self-educate themselves through their own experiences and education, public libraries, and special training courses through night schools and home study schools in particular.

There are young people with Master's and Doctorate degrees coming out of institutions that are standing in the unemployment lines with all the other unemployed people.

Like many people in the mortgage industry where over 119,000 blacks nationwide were laid off, these former students need to open a business.

The first wave of lay-offs in the mortgage industry was in August and September and the next wave will be in January and February.

A black depression is coming; there is no doubt about it. The question is what types of initiatives can we take to meet it head on? The beauty and barber shop initiative can be a good first start.

Economic empowerment is going to be vital for the survival of the African American community. With inflation continuing to rise each year, the typical American family now requires dual or supplemental incomes.

Political empowerment will also play a major role in turning the community around and that's why it's important for young people as young as 18 to be mentored and groomed to run for office.

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