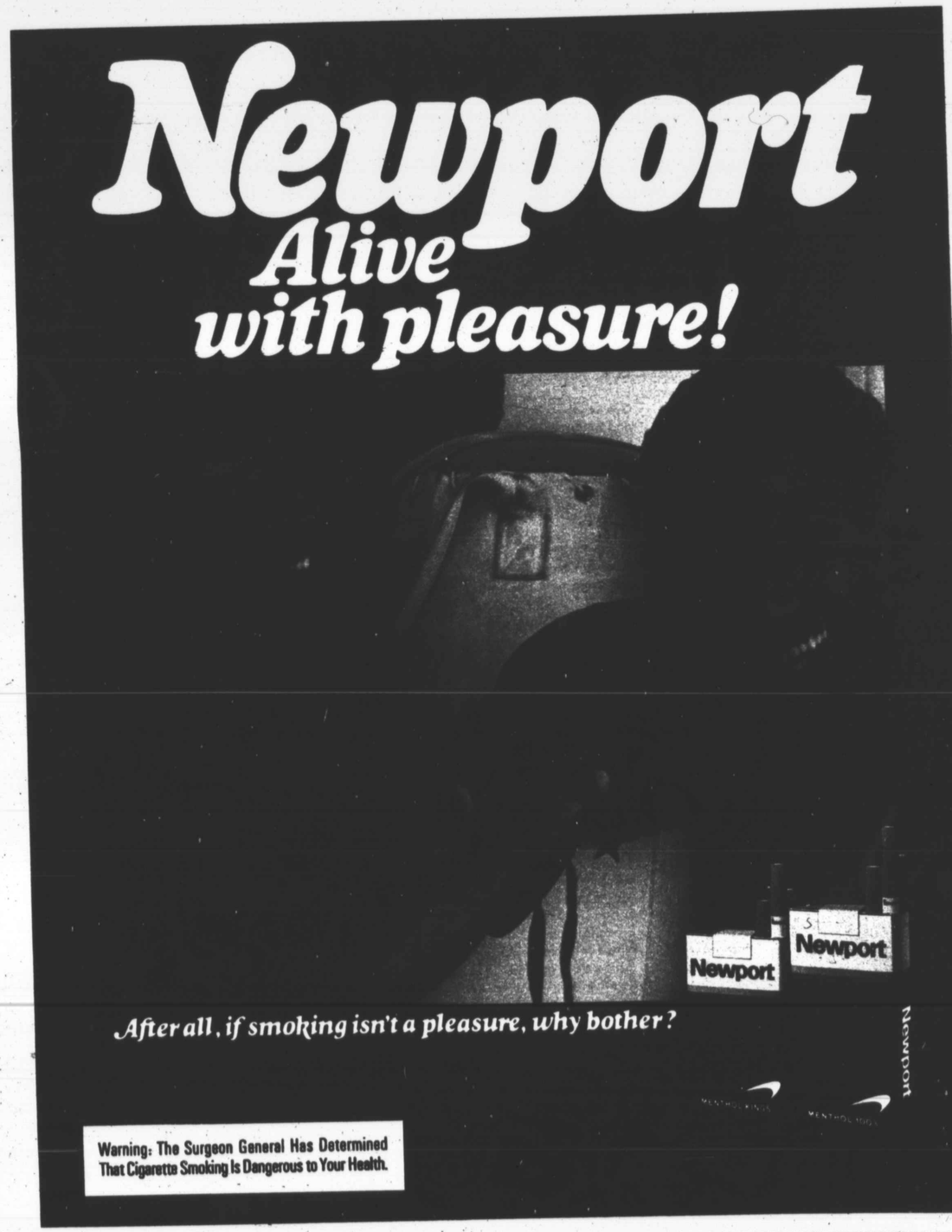


Black Economics and Black America

By P. Ann Tatum

Rufus Shaw Jr. is an educated man. He says he has degrees from Southern Methodist University (SMU), Prison University, and the streets of South Dallas.

Shaw, 32, is divorced and the father of three. He believes in using his education whether it is a Master's Degree in marketing and finance, those courses from Prison U. or his Ph.D. in Hustling from South Dallas' streets.

Self-described, he is a writer, lecturer, a publisher and a venture capitalist. For the past six years or so, his mission seems to have been writing and publishing a triology of books aimed at showing blacks the economic light.

Shaw says his triology is a first in black economics, The titles of his controversial and groundbreaking paperbacks are "How To Be A Rich Nigger"; "Hustling: The Art of Black Financial Survival"; and "Street Economics: The Realities of Black Economic Development, Love, Sex and Drugs."

His lifestyle is flamboyant. He lives in predominantly black South Dallas, has owned a wild boar for a pet and has raised pit bulls and chow dogs, Shaw brags how he has already spent as much money as the average man can make in a lifetime."

His background is varied. It includes growing up in the Oak Cliff section of Dallas, graduating from his high school class as valedictorian. At SMU, he was on the dean's list and graduated with honors.

Not content to be an egghead, Shaw also was a three-time High School All-American in track and was a two-time Collegiate All-America in the same sport. He also played SMU football.

While a college student he co-founded a community school athletic program; he later wrote reading programs for South Dallas under privileged youth—1972. Shaw was a reading tutor, he worked with high school students for three years until 1975.

In 1978, Shaw caught the eye of former Texas governor William Clements. He served on Clements' Urban Affairs Advisory Committee until 1982.

But there is more to Rufus Shaw Jr. He is a businessman. He once served as a financial advisor to the Interracial Council for Business Opportunity.

Shaw, at a Dallas radio station, was a sales executive, a talk show host and a sportscaster for five years until 1980. In 1977, he went into business for himself by forming Rufus Shaw Productions. His specialty is the entertainment business. He also produced records by way of Rufus Records.

Also during 1977, Shaw formed an entertainment managing firm and two years later he formed Rufus Shaw Music to accompany



Rufus Shaw, Jr.

Rufus Shaw Management.

Rufus Shaw Publishing saw the light of day in 1979. It also was the year he was hired as a writer and a co-host of 22-segments of NBC's "Midnight Special". Shaw says he wrote for Sepia Magazine for three years until 1983 and he also wrote a local column for Dallas' **Metroplex News.**

However, back in 1978, Shaw ran into trouble. Serious trouble. A Dallas jury convicted him of delivering cocaine and sentenced him to serve 15 years in prison. That conviction later was overturned by a technicality.

Shaw says it was the spector of prison which turned him to writing.

"When I was looking Prison University in the face, I began to write because I figured that was the most productive profession I could be in if I was going to be behind bars. I realized that I'd have all kinds of time to write."

Looking back, he says the experience was worthwhile.

"I wouldn't trade that experience for anything in the world. I never would have started writing." His works are created with blacks in mind, but he admits his books also have a large white audience.

About his second book, "Hustling" Shaw says, "More white people will buy this book than black people. Because of the economic nature of the current economic climate, there are a lot of former rich people who are going to find out what it means to be a 'nigger'".

When using the word "nigger", Shaw says he is not making a racial slur, but is using the term of a white writer who in the early 1970s wrote "Students as Nigger." According to that writer, students as a group were treated like slaves by college administrators and as a whole were a group of disenfranchised powerless people.

He says he borrowed that definition for his first book on black economics, "How to be A Rich Nigger." Shaw's writing style is a mixture of poetry, humor and profanity. He cites the philosophies of Machiavelli and Sun Tzu in his books while offering some solid advice to black people on how to survive and prosper.

Shaw says his books are like no economic books ever written and for good reason. He does, however, caution readers not to mistake his ideas as simple because even though the reading is easy, his thoughts and ideas are complex.

"Black people don't read," he says. "I can write standard journalistic prose—I've written for black newspapers for years. But you've got to communicate and that's why I write the way I do."

An example of his writing style, taken from his latest books " Street Economics" is a poem about business and friends: "Business and friends don't mix/Friends are friends/But business is business/If you want to lose both/Mix friends and business/And see won't you be mad and broke."

His philosophy: "You'll never get rich working for someone unless you have a piece of the company. You get rich by working for yourself. You also get broke working for yourself. The risks come with the choice."

And, "Marriage is a business deal. Forget all that other jive."

"It is never too late to go back to school ... Without some form of education, you're lost. Racism will slow you down, but ignorance will knock you out."

Shaw says he finds it amazing there has not been any books on basic economics for blacks until his. He says blacks in American have been concentrating in the wrong areas.

"We're living in a Horatio Alger society, but blacks haven't concentrated on business and economic subjects," he says. "They've been sociocrats rather than becoming concerned with economic development."

He says racism is not all that is keeping blacks from getting ahead.

"Blacks have been playing socialism in a capitalistic system. It's not a matter of racism, but a system problem—the capitalistic system is not designed to take care of people; it's designed to make it possible for them to take care of themselves."

In his latest book, Shaw proposes how blacks can take care of themselves. His is a plan for economic development of blacks in America. He says he recognizes he is going out on a limb by doing so, but says somebody has to take the weight.

He calls for the creation of a National Community Development Bank. It is modeled after the World Bank. Shaw calls for using billions

(Continued on Page 22)