

Turning Away Black Business: Black-Owned Nightlife Venture Shutdown In KC's Current Landing



By Andrew Banks
CALL Columnist

Casio McCombs did what many of us strive to do in a lifetime. The Kansas City musician and DJ had a grand idea that could change lives.

Having a Black-owned business is not only a badge of honor but also opens doors and avenues for more Black ownership to take shape.

The chance to build a Black business in Kansas City at the scale McCombs had in mind is extremely rare.

Like a diamond, Black business is precious and deserves to be preserved and celebrated at all costs.

McCombs envisioned bringing a hi-fi lounge to Current Landing next to the CPKC Stadium, but the KC Blue Crew, a fan club for the KC Current, impeded his plans.

The concept centered on music and culture, as well as the transition from day to night.

Sundown HiFi was the name that caused outcry from a group of white women who follow Kansas City's professional women's

soccer team.

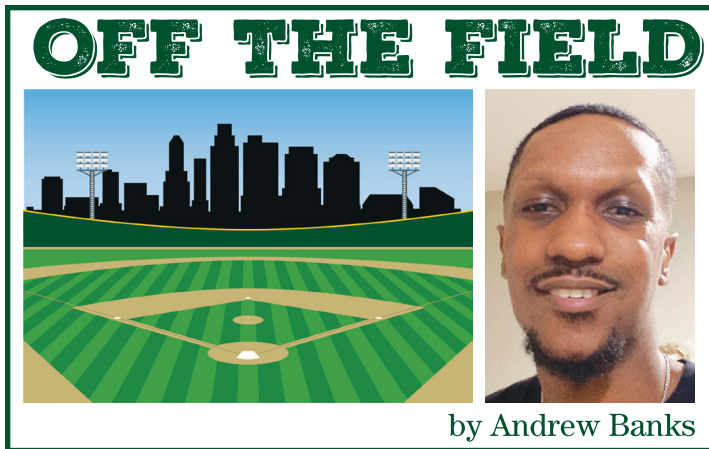
"In the year 2026, the history of America and its African American population is not unknown. The use of the name 'Sundown' for a dance club is not only racist, but incredibly insensitive to the history of the area in which this team resides," the group said in a statement.

"Missouri has had a particularly violent history of sundown towns, so it is especially disturbing for a team located in Missouri to choose to name a nightclub establishment for people to gather at on its grounds, after dark, Sundown Lounge."

McCombs was justifiably devastated that his project lost footing as it was close to becoming a reality.

"With Black ownership in Kansas City's hospitality space sitting at roughly 4% or less, the opportunity to build something at this scale is rare, said McCombs in a statement on Instagram. The barriers to entry, especially access to capital, are real and well-documented. This project was not just about opening a bar. It was about representation. It was about creating space. And it was about reclamation."

"In less than 72 hours, a concept I spent years developing was reduced, misinterpreted, and ultimately stripped away, largely by



by Andrew Banks

voices outside of the community it was meant to represent."

The bar was announced on March 27, and by March 30, it was shut down.

It was set to be a part of the \$1 billion Berkley Riverfront district announced on March 25.

The domino of events is unfortunate and frustrating. The opportunity to capitalize on the rapidly growing Northland was golden. It's discouraging to see a Black businessman turned away from that opportunity.

At the same time, we have to acknowledge that the name was radical. In a society that will cancel you in a minute and poke holes in anything, it was highly

unlikely that a business would be accepted that ties together a painful memory like sundown towns do.

These were legal and conventional practices that restricted the safe mobility of Black communities. If you thought the aftermath of that injustice had dissipated, think again.

A study conducted by David Rigby (Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan), Michael H. Esposito (Department of Sociology, University of Minnesota), Tyson H. Brown (Duke University), Hedwig Lee (Duke University), and Sierra Clark (Department of Sociology, University of Minnesota) it

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Convenience, Liquor Store Owners Gather To Ask the Question 'Why Not Include Us' When it Comes to Proposed Ordinance



By Trevor Powell
CALL Staff Writer

While the Kansas City Council debates soon on whether to approve a liquor ordinance that would change whether some citizens could purchase what is known as "mini bottles", at area convenience and liquor stores around the area, there are those who have differing opinions about what they believe will ultimately create harm for their businesses.

On Monday, March 30, the community leadership and store owners gathered at the corner of 27th & Brooklyn to sign an agreement proposal which opposes the retail alcohol impact area plan ordinance that forbids small single-serve alcohol sales and large quantities of malt liquor. The agreement proposal is a structured memorandum of understanding for neighborhood well-being.

The memorandum aims to establish a partnership between store owners with the intent to advocate a safe, healthy, and vibrant neighborhood environment for all residents.

Several liquor store and convenience store owners including the owner of WW Crown Convenient Stores K. White said she stands firm with her constituents on opposing the alcohol sales restriction proposal in which she feels store owners such as her, should be allowed to sit at the table and have a voice on the matter as opposed to store owners being confused and kept in the



dark when it comes to legality.

"I stand with my constituents where, when we are issued liquor licenses, the community has a voice and a say rather than we get that or not; but the community does have a say rather things and decisions are made," said White.

"I'm just confused that the very people that the community voted in, and our tax dollars are paid towards our communities and we don't have a voice? We're just asking to be heard, we're asking to be at the

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Patrick Mahomes, Kansas City Chiefs star quarterback took time out to read to thousands of children during the 15th year of Lead to Read KC, which held a rally for literacy at the T-Mobile Center on Thursday, April 2. -- Credit/ Hillary Fuller Images

More Than Just a Quarterback; Chiefs Mahomes Challenges Children to Take Literacy Seriously

By Bransen Harper
CALL Staff Writer

On Sunday's during the football season, he's considered one of the best quarterbacks to ever play the game. But on Thursday, Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes was just another guy hanging with the "little ones" hoping they would take his message of literacy to heart.

Mahomes, who has thrown for thousands of yards not to mention lead Kansas City's favorite sports teams to world championships and international fan love, was on hand as Lead to Read KC hosted its annual Reading Rally at the T-Mobile Center with approximately 3,000 students from 30 schools across the Kansas City metro area for an exciting, high-energy celebration of literacy.

This marks the fourth year of the Read-

ing Rally, which is a significant event in the greater Kansas City area.

A highlight of the event was Mahomes reading aloud to students and sharing how reading has influenced his success both on and off the field. He emphasized that literacy can be a powerful tool for shaping an individual's future. Students also enjoyed performances from a drumline, cheerleaders, KC Wolf, and a featured local author, creating an engaging and memorable experience centered around the joy of reading.

The Reading Rally is a key event in Lead to Read KC's year-long Read for 15 partnership with the 15 and the Mahomies Foundation, which encourages students to develop strong literacy skills and reading habits.

"Literacy is correlated with positive outcomes for kids and society in general. It is

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Op-Ed: This Is What an Attack on A Female Candidate Looks Like

As women leaders, we are speaking plainly because the facts matter.

The recent headlines accusing Mayor Pro Tem Ryana Parks-Shaw and "pay for play" are egregious, slanderous, and deeply misleading. That language suggests criminal corruption. It invites the public to assume wrongdoing. But the central fact remains unchanged: the subpoena that has been cited does not list Ryana Parks-Shaw, nor does it list Ryana's husband, Michael Shaw.

This is not only irresponsible journalism, it is strategic. No substantiated public facts have been presented tying Ryana Parks-Shaw or her family to the accusations being implied. None. That is why this looks less like accountability and more like an effort to manufacture suspicion. At a moment

when Ryana Parks-Shaw is running for Mayor, these slanderous headlines function as a political weapon. Their purpose is to confuse voters and damage her credibility. And that is not happening in a vacuum.

Research shows that women in public office face disproportionate levels of harassment, intimidation, and gender-based abuse. The Brennan Center found that abuse directed at women in office often carries misogynistic content, that women were three to four times as likely as men to experience abuse targeting their gender, and that about half of women local officeholders said abuse made them less willing to continue serving. The same report found that larger shares of women and people of color in local office experienced abuse related to their families as well.

That broader context matters here. When a female elected official is targeted with explosive headlines, it fits a pattern Americans are seeing more and more often. The goal is not simply to inform the public. The goal is to attach scandal to a woman's name, force her to defend herself against insinuation,

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Black-Owned Business Continued from front page

showed that the residue from that ugly era in our history still stains Missouri. In an abstract from the article Ethnic and Racial Studies, the authors give an honest account of their findings. "We find that racial disparities in park visitation are exacerbated in former sundown town areas - with already disparate park visitation rates between majority Black and majority White communities widening significantly when the destination park is within the bounds of a former sundown area." "Overall, our findings illustrate the diverse and persistent ways that historical regimes of racial control shape even mundane behaviors in contemporary society." We understand that the term "sundown" does not evoke warm, fuzzy feelings. McCombs explained his reasoning behind the name and what it represented to him. "The name Sundown was chosen intentionally. Not to ignore history, but to confront it. To take a term rooted in oppression and reshape it into something that reflects presence, creativity, and ownership within the very community it once targeted", McCombs said. "But it's clear that the concept of reclamation is not widely understood, or accepted, by May of the same people who claim to value equity and inclusion." I commend Mr. McCombs for his attempt to reshape something vile into something beautiful. He was courageous to put his heart and soul on the line, even if it was controversial to some.

Convenience Store Continued from front page

tables when there's a bigger problem here," said White. "There's KCATA, there's the Kansas City Police department, there's the business owners, but they allow these people to sit there and feed them, house them, and clothe them and no one wants to talk with us. They just want to point a finger and make a decision. So, we're just asking 'come to the table with us,'" said White. "Our community wasn't heard, our community leaders weren't at the table and we have a voice, we would like to just be heard." "As a convenient store owner, I feel like it's very unfair, it's unfair that we have to pay taxes. We were apart of voting the City Council into place and our community dollars or our tax dollars, and to deny us certain sales when another store's not denied, just blocks away. I feel like it's red lining, discriminative and very unfair", she said. "When you deny a small convenient store where there's a food desert, we don't sale liquor. I have never had to call, I have never had a problem on my lot. I have never had any issues in my store, that corner employs 25 people," she said. "That means a reduction in hiring people, and people have to look for other jobs and it doesn't help my community where dollars get to circulate within my community more than 6 hours," she said. "The average African American dollar circulates 6 hours oppose to other nationalities and so that's going to be a great impact. But where did we get to the point where the City Council is supposed to represent the full community and not just come to the table and say 'hey, we got some issues," she said. "Lets talk about solutions. What do y'all want to talk about? The owners were not at the table, the community leaders were not at the table, the people of the community weren't at the table," she said. "These were closed door decisions with no real facts of a shot, a half pint or malt liquor is a problem in the root cause of crime when KCATA's not here at the table with us and they're sitting on their bus stops. "KC police eminent domain -- everybody from 27th & Prospect to 27th & Benton -- said with that new police station being here, it was going to reduce crime. Well crime is on there lawn everyday, so tell me how is it that a store owner's issue of liquor. No, the root cause is mental illness and drugs. I've never seen a shot commit due to domestic violence. I've never saw malt liquor commit domestic violence or shoot anyone, so why are we not at the table saying this is a collaborative issue. We all play a role in crime and it's 'gonna take everybody to get rid of the crime," said White.

Brain & Gut Continued from page 6

There is an emotional-physical feedback loop between the brain and gut. Research shows that brain-gut communication may affect:

- Food sensitivities and intolerances
- Digestion
- Food preferences and cravings
- Gut motility (muscle movements)
- Mood/behavior/stress levels
- Metabolism
- Immunity
- Cognitive function
- Pain sensitivity

The bacteria that live in the gut are also involved in the brain-gut connection. Gut microbes help produce many of the neurotransmitters that relay messages between the brain and gut. The brain and gut can also affect the gut microbiome by altering its environment. The gut microbiome may be involved in various neurological, mental health and functional gastrointestinal disorders. Functional disorders cause persistent symptoms but do not have obvious physical cause. Anxiety could be a product of this connection. We can apply this brain-gut connection

information to design treatment plans involving the gut microbiome. Animal studies have suggested that a healthier variety of microbiota in the gut may help to relieve gastrointestinal, neurological, inflammatory and emotional stress symptoms. Scientists are examining the use of probiotics, antibiotics, and fecal microbiota transplantation. Functional gastrointestinal disorders may benefit from mind-body therapy.

Because the vagus nerve transmits information between the brain and gut, good vagal tone is necessary. Some suggested techniques to assist this are deep, slow breathing, humming/singing/laughing (throat vibration stimulates the vagus nerve), exercise, and prayer/meditation.

We, ourselves, can start taking better care of our gut and brain health by maintaining a balanced diet (discuss taking pre and probiotics with your doctor), and be aware of stress and how it can be managed, which is no easy task! Sleep and exercise support gut microbiota diversity as well.

So, the next time you have a "feeling in your gut" response to a situation, don't ignore it!

Centering and Cultivating Continued from page 4

to clear space for our love to grow, to transform ourselves so that we feel and fit right and rightfully together and to take collective responsibility for the good and bad, right and wrong, the beautiful and ugly that strengthen or undermine our relationships.

Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics) teaches us the principle and practice of shared work and shared wealth, that we not make money the measure and central meaning of all things and to reject debilitating disputes and disagreements about it. And it requires us to avoid materialism and consumerism of the dominant society, value each other more and those qualities that reflect strength of character and depth of commitment.

The principle of Nia (Purpose) teaches us that we must live purposeful lives, share goals, aid each other in realizing our different yet interrelated goals and work toward things that strengthen each of us. At the heart of this practice must be the goal of building a friendship defined by our thinking good of each other, wanting and working for the good of each other, doing good to and for each other, and sharing good with each other as a fundamental principle and practice of love and life.

Kuumba (Creativity) urges us to pursue the positive, avoid the negative, to constantly reaffirm the dignity and worth of each other, and our need for each other and to avoid all conversation and acts that degrade and violate the sacredness of each person and the relationship itself. And it means that we, as the ancestors taught in the Husia, must strive always to quickly and eagerly to raise up what is in ruins, repair what is damaged, rejoice what

is severed, replenish what is depleted, set right what is wrong, strengthen what is weakened, and make flourish what is insecure and undeveloped in our relationships.

Finally, Imani (Faith) urges us to trust and believe in the good, and in our capacity to create it and share it. It encourages us to produce a new paradigm and practice of Black love and live it as a conscious need and undeniable necessity of life. And this means bringing into being a new man and woman who truly live for and through each other and pass on this lesson and legacy to future generations.

More Than Just a Quarterback Continued from front page



KC Wolf, the Kansas City Chiefs mascot, took time out to encourage children during the 15th year of Lead to Read KC, which held a rally for literacy at the T-Mobile Center on Thursday, April 2. -- Credit/ Hillary Fuller Images

sential for any job, college, profession, or daily life. It leads to higher income brackets and less poverty as well. Even something as simple as being able to read your own prescribed medication becomes much easier when you are literate. It is a make-or-break skill in so many ways. One of our key goals is to make reading fun for every student, where they can explore being wizards or adventurers, travel to the stars or the moon. Reading allows people to dream big. That is why we must continually engage kids with reading, especially in an increasingly digitized world where screens and tablets are more readily available," said Rhea M. LeGrande, Executive Director of Lead to Read KC.

"This event is about joy, community, and showing students that Kansas City and the Chiefs' own hero, Patrick Mahomes, supports them as readers." She added, "Young kids have shorter attention spans nowadays due to constant distractions at every corner. This is why Lead to Read KC has a program where students read with an adult buddy for 30 minutes a week. I firmly believe that the digital world diminishes the ability to stay focused."

"Reading can be a precious bonding time for parents with their children. Additionally, reading is an investment in the community that helps maintain a literate and well-informed nation. We need more pop culture icons to advocate for this, just as Patrick Mahomes is doing with us. Most importantly, we need schools to be well-funded, libraries to be fully stocked, and to teach kids that reading is not just something that Grandma does but something that positively shapes everyone's lives. Right now, only 1 in 5 kids, or 22% of third graders nationally, can read at grade level. It is our mission to combat this and make reading something to be cherished again."

Lead to Read KC mobilizes thousands of volunteers to read one-on-one with elementary students each week, helping build their confidence, literacy skills, and a lifelong love of reading. The 15 and the Mahomies Foundation is dedicated to improving the lives of children and supports initiatives focused on health, wellness, and communities in need of resources, along with other charitable causes.

This is an Attack Continued from front page

and weaken her standing with voters.


Kansas City voters should reject that. They deserve facts, not innuendo. They deserve evidence, not implication. And they deserve a mayoral election decided on truth, record, and vision, not on slanderous headlines designed to take a woman out of the race.

Ryana Parks-Shaw has earned the right to be judged on her service, her leadership, and her vision for the future of this city. Her work speaks for itself. She led the Housing Gateway Program, the city's first public-private partnership with the business community to help more Kansas Citians access stable housing and navigate resources. She established the city's \$30 million Violence Prevention Fund, investing in community-based strategies that are working to reduce violence and save lives. And she has consistently fought to strengthen neighborhoods by working directly with residents, and ensuring that every part of the city is included in Kansas City's growth.

This is bigger than one headline. It is about whether women in leadership can be pushed aside by smear, suggestion, and distortion. We will not accept that standard. And Kansas City should not either.

- Lisa Pelofsky**
- Senator Barbara Washington**
- Jean Peters Baker**
- Lana Ultican**
- Gayle Holliday**
- Judy Morgan**
- Rebecca Richardson**
- Marquita Taylor**
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