The Cambridge Guide to African American History

RAYMOND GAVINS

Duke University
Further Reading


GRAVES, EARL G. ENTREPRENEUR

Born: January 9, 1935, Brooklyn, NY
Education: Morgan State University, B.A., 1958

A leading spokesman and publisher on black business, Graves created a conglomerate of market research, broadcast, and beverage corporations.

He pursued opportunities. Raised in Brooklyn, he reached adulthood during the civil rights struggle, terming it "the beginning of the end of a system that pushed African Americans to the bottom but refused to let us call them" (www.thefreelibrary.com/Putting+together+the+Top+100+blacks+in+sports.a0129169811). College prepared him for key jobs: army officer, treasury agent, and member of Senator Robert F. Kennedy's staff. After the senator's assassination, he used a grant and Small Business Administration (SBA) loan to start what became a $53 million media empire by 2002.

Its hub is *Black Enterprise* (BE), the premier magazine about black-owned businesses and market activity. It has 475,000 subscribers and an international readership of more than 4 million. Readers include 300,000 members of religious, civic, and economic organizations, including the NAACP, National Urban League, and National Bankers Associations. BE annually ranks the top-100 black companies and analyzes policy issues facing the Minority Advisory Council of SBA. It reports consumer income and spending trends by race, class, gender, and region. Its growing network of supporters includes *Fortune* 500 corporate executives, social philanthropists, sports figures, and others who help to underwrite "equality of opportunity."

Further Reading


GREAT DEPRESSION

The stock market crash of 1929 fueled America's worst depression, which lasted until the World War II recovery.

As commercial, industrial, retail, and service companies failed or cut production, unemployment spiraled upward. Masses of the unemployed joined bread lines; racial and ethnic minorities faced much discrimination. When the Roosevelt Administration began the New Deal (1933), median family income was half its pre-crash level and one in four bread winners had no income. Black joblessness exceeded 50 percent in large cities. Three in ten black families were destitute.

Like business, industry, and labor, blacks lobbied the government. They sought equity in federal relief and jobs programs, but reform was slow. Social security benefits, for example, did not include sharecroppers and tenant farmers, the supermajority of black workers. Also, under the Agricultural Adjustment Administration's crop reduction program, farm owners signed contracts and received cash payments to reduce planting acreage as much as 40 percent, resulting in rampant black evictions. Some evicted families secured low-interest loans to buy farms via the Farm Security Administration. Its Subsistence Homestead Program resettled many of them in rural communities. It also subsidized migrant farm worker camps. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) segregated black youths, who flocked to CCC educational, public works, and residential sites. The National Recovery Administration's wage codes were the lowest for blacks in all occupations.

Blacks pushed for equality nonetheless. Black voters consistently supported President Roosevelt, who appointed a Federal Council on Negro Affairs, known as the "Black Cabinet." Led by National Youth Administration director Mary M. Bethune, members coalesced with the NAACP and Urban League to pursue civil rights and equal opportunities. At the same time, more and more elite and ordinary blacks enlisted in civic organizations and labor unions (along with white liberals, socialists, and communists) to launch protests against race and economic inequality. [See also Agriculture; Labor.]

Further Reading
