

Black contractors and workers protest exclusion from project funded with \$123 million tax dollars

sfbayview.com

September 29, 2017

By Norman K. Edwards, American Center for Economic Equality-Black Contractors Group

Open letter to Seefried Industrial Properties, Inc., Executive Chairman Ferdinand Seefried:

The purpose of the American Center for Economic Equality (ACEE) and the Black Contractors Group's (BCG) is to be the voice of legitimate Black and minority contractors. We represent construction workers who have been denied contracts and jobs on construction projects.

Legitimate Black and minority contractors are entitled to an equal opportunity. They have been crushed and broken by the one-sided, criminalized, majority dominated and oppressive system which has neglected and/or confined Black and minority contractors and construction workers to just the crumbs of the multi-billion-dollar construction industry in the Greater Cleveland-Cuyahoga County area.

There are some who would say, and I understand that it may be the opinion of yourself, Mr. Seefried, and those associated with the Randall Park Mall project that I am attempting to steer contracts. If that is your belief, then you are correct because with my every breath I attempt to steer contracts to those who would otherwise be "run over" and left for dead by the discriminatory and racist system that we are forced to fight against daily.

However; Mr. Seefried, I also attempt to steer those "corrupt" politicians, executives and developers who refuse to do the right thing as well as those "blind" and well-meaning politicians, executives and developers who give only "lip-service" to the cause of diversity and inclusion. Meanwhile they throw out minuscule crumbs, watching us scramble for the opportunity that is only a teaser of that to which we are entitled.

With my every breath I attempt to steer contracts to those who would otherwise be "run over" and left for dead by the discriminatory and racist system that we are forced to fight against daily.

I hope to steer those who have apathetically sat on the sidelines or in their corporate boardrooms or in our legislatures, keeping their silence while witnessing the injustice of the blockade of opportunities that excludes Black and minority contractors and construction workers.

How could I do any less? Mr. Seefried, we may have "right" on our side, but you have "power" on yours. We are only asking that you use your "power" to make things right.

The American dream is a reality; however, at the present time, it does not exist on your Amazon Project site in North Randall, Ohio. It is understood that you have received \$123 million in taxpayers' dollars from our Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority and a state of Ohio grant and that both are being used to help finance this \$177 million 855,000 square foot project.

Mr. Seefried, we may have "right" on our side, but you have "power" on yours. We are only asking that you use your "power" to make things right.

Mr. Seefried, we are putting you on notice that if we do not have a firm commitment to a plan of diversity and inclusion of Black and minority contractors and construction workers from you in writing by 12:00 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 29, we will proceed with a protest and demonstration on Monday, Oct. 2, at the construction site.

Sincerely,

Norman K. Edwards

Norman K. Edwards is president of the American Center for Economic Equality-Black Contractors Group, 16781 Chagrin Blvd #525, Shaker Heights, Ohio 44120, 216-355-0535, www.americancenter.com. This letter was sent Sept. 25, 2017, to Seefried Properties at 3333 Riverwood Parkway, Suite 200, Atlanta, Ga. 30339.