

BLOOD MONEY: Furquan Stafford's Journey to Seek Color in the Blood Plasma Industry Continues

BY DOMINIQUE HUFF

African Americans have always played a significant role in the foundation of the United States of America. Our community is a significant contributor to the economy on many levels from consumer buying power to business ownership. When one thinks of black entrepreneurship, the blood plasma field probably escapes the mind of most.

The late Dr. Charles R. Drew (1904-1950) was the first African American who developed the procedure for extracting blood plasma. Dr. Drew's system for the storing of blood plasma revolutionized the medical profession. He also established the American Red Cross blood bank, of which he was the first director, and he organized the world's first blood bank drive, called "Blood for Britain."

In 1941, the American Red Cross announced that it would no longer accept blood donated by blacks because "white men in the service would refuse blood plasma if they knew it came from Negro veins." Dr. Drew donated his blood and when it was segregated he resigned from the American Red Cross in protest. The United States military segregated blood supplies until 1949; the American Red Cross did so until 1950.

Time Magazine reported in July 1963 that a drug trial program at the Oklahoma State

Penitentiary was being "drastically overhauled." The prison's medical director, Dr. Austin R. Stough was paid an estimated \$300,000 annually by pharmaceutical companies to use African American prisoners as guinea pigs. During the era and previously, the African-American community

members were used as testing subjects for many medical procedures.

He also ran a profitable prison blood plasma collection operation. Dr. Stough's plasma studies were experimented on black prisoners, raising concerns of racism. Dr. Stough was expelled several times from hospitals and prisons after his experiment caused the death of black inmates who died from a variety of diseases and netted millions of dollars in profits.

Today, the U.S. Plasma Collection industry has become a multi-billion dollar industry globally that relies on the

plasma production in the United States which African Americans donates the bulk of that production. Grifols of Spain; Baxter International of Deerfield, Ill.; Biotest AG of German; CSL of Australia; Kedrion Spa of Italy; and Octapharma of Switzerland are the global manufactures of plasma products. These companies now own most of their own U. S. plasma collection centers instead of buying plasma from independent collectors which raises concerns about the U.S. antitrust laws, moral and ethnic issues.

Meet Furquan R. Stafford, Sr., a budding entrepreneur in the blood plasma business.

While others wait to work; he has worked while he is waiting for his opportunity to enter into the U.S. Plasma Collection industry. Stafford wants to turn his dream into a



reality. Blood in his body and blood on his mind, he is on a mission to become the first African American to own and operate his own plasma center (C.P. Plasma Center, Inc.)—A center built by blacks in the black community for the purpose of processing blood plasma.

The C.P. Plasma Center objective is to explore the field of plasma proteins to manufacture and supply high quality remedial treatment that elevates and extends the lives of patients throughout the world.

The medical procedure at C.P. Plasma Center is called Plasmapheresis. During plasmapheresis, blood is initially taken out of the body through a sterile needle in the arm. Plasma is then removed from the blood by a cell separator (Plasma Collection System II). Plasma is the clear liquid portion of the blood that remains after the removal of red cells, leukocytes and platelets. It is made up of water, salts, enzymes, antibodies, and other proteins. It is the starting material for a wide range of lifesaving medicines. The center wants to assist in combating Sickle Cell, Hemophilia, Alzheimer's disease, Pediatric HIV and ensuring that donors are treated with respect not as commodities.

Stafford hopes to galvanize Black America to pull its resources and influences together to bring awareness about foreign companies building their companies from the blood of African Americans. Not long ago it was separated but today

it has become "BIG" business? Yet not one is owned by an African American!

Noted people such as Congressmen John Lewis and the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. have endorsed and wrote letters of support for Stafford's vision and in 2011 Congressman Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr. submitted a Proclamation in the U.S. House Of Representatives honoring Stafford's pioneer work in the U.S. plasma industry. Stafford has caught the attention of various media outlets nationally and in Brazil. Nigeria has also expressed interest in his historic venture.

An issue that Stafford continues to combat is racism and discrimination in the industry, he says. His fight has even gone to Washington, DC with correspondence to various federal agencies and the White House.

"The fact that there is a \$12 million deal on the table and the only thing that's in the way of getting this deal done is a contract from one of the global manufactures," Stafford laments. "I believe that [these firms are] discriminating against me. I have provided information indicating that I am qualified and have resources to support the first African American owned plasma center." sclc



Furquan R. Stafford, Sr.

Dominique Huff is the CEO/Founder of the Tenth Amendment Media Group. Dominique worked his way through the journalism sector by being one of the founders of the student newspaper at Camp Creek Middle School, editing several publications including the Signal at Georgia State University. Dominique prides himself in sharing the story of others through broadcasting, publishing and hospitality. He can be contacted at dhuff@tenthamentendmentmedia.com.

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