

Success Formula of Black Economist

A PERCEPTIVE observation regarding economic advancement of black people was published in a recent issue of U.S. News & World Report. It was made by Thomas Sowell, described as a noted economist and a leading conservative thinker. He is a black himself.

Sowell said there is a tendency to overemphasize the role discrimination plays in holding back ethnic groups in America.

"Because discrimination is very repugnant morally, many people assume that it's an important causal factor," Sowell said in the interview reported. "But if discrimination significantly impedes a group's progress, you would not see the Jews and the Japanese at the top of the American income pyramid."

Then he drove home his point with this comment that may apply to people of black, white, red or "sun-lamp tanned" skins: "To get ahead, you have to have some ability to work, some ability at entrepreneurship or something else that the society values."

In the 1960s, following enactment

of significant "equal rights" laws, there appeared to be a widespread but fallacious belief that those laws would bring about complete and instant equality.

Many were led to expect instant education, instant culture, instant social status, instant economic equality and instant political recognition. Most were disappointed and some became bitter about it.

Others saw that equal rights only opened doors to opportunities and that effort on their part was required. Many of these have succeeded in business, politics and life, but not all. Neither do all members of any other race reach their goals.

Government is the largest employer of middle-class blacks, but increasingly those who are qualified are finding opportunities to move up the ladder in private businesses and industries.

Quite a few have made it big in business for themselves. George Smith, Houston, a black oil field worker, saved up \$4,000 and went into the oil field well servicing business. Smith told a reporter he went

to one company 17 times before he got an order. The 18th time he got a \$250,000 order.

"I built my companies without having to get loans from banks or the Small Business Administration," Smith said. "I wanted to stand as an example to black people that you don't need to borrow to be a success. If I made it, it would be because I did it, not me and the bank, not me and the government."

Milton C. Jordan, a black high school dropout who has written frequently about education, stated: "When blacks fail, blacks suffer . . . We must accept full responsibility for our failures and stop blaming the system. Only then can we begin accepting full credit for our successes. Instead of opposing the competency tests, let's conquer them. Let's make sure our children pass them. Black people simply can't afford to enter the 21st century rated 'incompetent.'"

Neither can people of any other race. Where opportunities are available success is not just a racial matter.