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Editorials & Opinion: Sunday, November 22, 1998

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African-American Museum -- Museum Project Demands, Deserves Adequate Funding

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I was stunned to learn of the proposed drastic cuts in the city of Seattle's budget for funding of the African American Heritage **Museum** and Cultural Center in the heart of the black community.

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It seems with the departure of Mayor Norm Rice there is no one in the city administration willing to stand up for the most worthy cause in the entire African-American community.

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The old **Colman School** was taken hostage and occupied through a very brief and vain attempt many years ago by a very small and disorganized but boisterous group of radicals.

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How the city of Seattle, the Seattle **School** District, Seattle Fire Department and the Seattle-King County Health Department could allow a rat-infested, pigeon-infested, fire hazard (two major fires), asbestos hazard, toxic dump of the **school** district and greatest eyesore in Seattle to remain in a distressed neighborhood for 13 years is in itself a total mystery, if not a total scandal.

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Now that the building has been cleaned up, to allow it to return to that disgraceful condition is an insult to the citizens and businesses of the Central Area, if not a crime, crying out for litigation against the city, the **school** district and the county.

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The dedicated board members of the center have strived to bring harmony out of confusion and controversy. The board has provided a buffer for the city to deal with a problem and at the same time provide an opportunity for our city to create a **museum** for

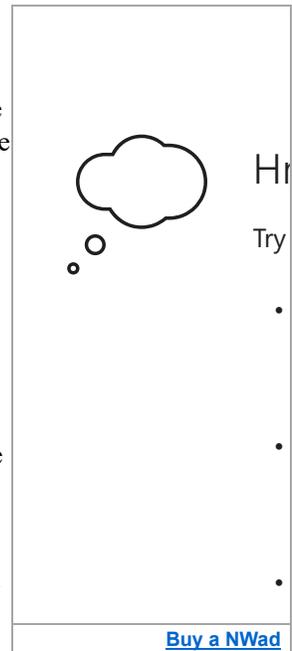
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African-American history, a tourist attraction in the Central Area and an economic generator for a disadvantaged ethnic group.

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In the wake of I-200, this is no time to further deprive the African-American community of the opportunity to improve its economic conditions.

This project needs to be completed. It demands and deserves adequate funding.

With the loss of black representation from Seattle to the Legislature in the recent elections, I am sure the museum's cause will be brought to the forefront in the coming elections.

Danny Picora Board Member, African-American Heritage **Museum** & Cultural Center Seattle

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