

## **Overground RR!!®**

Mission: The mission of the Overground RR!!® is the economic freedom of the Black community. Specifically, the mission is to empower the Black community by increasing the share of its own economy controlled by the Black community. As of 2008, according to the Selig Center of the University of Georgia, Blacks spent approximately \$845 billion, but the gross revenues of Black businesses approximate only 15% of that amount.

[Insert text and table]

As shown by its name, the mission is a continuation of the Underground Railroad – that is to deliver Black people to freedom. This leg of the journey is aimed at economic freedom, instead of physical freedom. It is overground because we no longer have to meet in the dead of night, down by the riverside, speaking and singing in secret codes.

Strategy: To accomplish the mission, the economic infrastructure of the Black community must be built. The economic infrastructure of a community provides an effective and efficient means by which consumers can identify and access resources, i.e., products and services, to meet their needs. For historic reasons, both recent and ancient, the Black community in the United States is the only community without an economic infrastructure.

Businesses deliver products and services to the community and are the only means by which a community produces income. All other sources of economic receipts are charity or governmental benefits, leaving the community perpetually dependant upon, and at the mercy of, the charity of others or the government for its survival.

Tactic: The primary tactic for implementing the strategy is to connect consumers with Black businesses primarily through Black churches, and secondarily through institutions owned and controlled by the Black community.

This tactic addresses one of the two fundamental problems facing Black businesses:

- 1) Lack of awareness by consumers that the Black businesses exist, and the
- 2) Perception that the products and/or services of Black businesses are inferior.

The consumers that businesses need and want to reach to a large extent are located in churches on a weekly basis. Practically every Black attends a worship center or is part of a family (immediate or extended) in which members regularly attend a faith center. Because churches are overwhelmingly the place of worship frequented by Blacks, and the Black church historically has been a key force for change in our community, it will be referenced generically herein for all places of worship in the Black community. However, Black Islamic and other faiths are welcome on the ORR.

When Black churches take a serious, continuous active role in connecting their members with Black businesses, the likelihood is improved substantially that consumers will become aware of and try to find businesses in our community to meet their needs before spending elsewhere.

**Business**

**Directory:**

The primary vehicle for Black businesses being identified and located by consumers is the Overground RR!!® Business Directory. It is carried and/or prominently referenced in the publications of the ORR. The ORR organization is designed to get consumers to use the directory to meet their needs.

**Organization:**

The ORR consists of three major components: Businesses, Churches and Community Organizations. Every aspect of the Black community is part of and/or directly impacted by one or

more of these components. The first two are readily recognized. The last one, Community Organizations (hereinafter referenced as “C0s”) are all of the Black institutions and organizations in the community, such as the Atlanta Business League, 100 Black Men, 100 Black Women, GABEO, Concerned Black Clergy. Therefore, the ORR encompasses the entire Black community.

**Church - ORR:** The most significant component of the ORR is the relationships with churches. The ORR is a part of the churches’ ministry. Most often the ORR works with and through the churches’ business auxiliaries. The ORR is committed to furthering the Churches’ mission of empowering its people, spiritually, mentally, emotionally physically and **ECONOMICALLY**.

And the Churches’ ministries are a part of the ORR’s ministry.

For the momentous task of achieving economic freedom for the community, nothing less than a divine call to minister to the community is necessary. And that is exactly what the ORR has.

Through the relationship with Churches, the ORR provides venues and channels to promote the businesses of its own members within their own church, the other ORR churches and the community at large.

Additionally, the ORR promotes the Churches’ pastors, officers, auxiliaries, worship services, events and activities within the individual churches, the other ORR churches and the community at large.

The relationship is promoted through the ORR print, mass media, and internet publications, ORR events and activities.

Through these relationships the ORR serves the churches by publicizing their news, calendars and activities throughout the community.

The churches are encouraged to use the ORR Business Directory for their own purchases. They also introduce their congregants to

the ORR Business Directory as the central business directory of the Atlanta Black community.

#### Business - ORR

**Business access to consumers.** Through the ORR, businesses have unprecedented access to consumers in the churches, community organizations and the community at large. The ORR has created a **brand** to directly benefit Black businesses. The ORR movement is being embraced by churches and the Black community at large. It is educating the community regarding the importance of recycling the Black dollar. And it is providing the system to do the recycling.

ORR business membership gives each qualified business a listing in the ORR Business Directory. ORR businesses are featured in ORR print, mass media, and internet publications, ORR events and activities. To have the pastors and community leaders encouraging their members and constituents to utilize the ORR Business Directory markedly enhance each business' likelihood of increased revenue opportunities.

**Business to Business.** Each business, being a consumer itself, is encouraged to utilize other ORR businesses, which gives the purchasing business the opportunity to sell its own products and services. Additionally, businesses owners (if they attend church) should be active in their own church business auxiliary, building the ORR around it and throughout its employee and customer base.

By keeping the dues, advertising, and sponsorship rates low, all serious and qualified community businesses willing to be accountable for their services and products, can be a part of the movement. **Each business as a demonstration of its commitment to provide quality services and products, agrees to binding arbitration in the event of a consumer dispute<sup>1</sup>.** **Businesses which fail to operate in an honest and**

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<sup>1</sup>Torts and banking disputes are not included.

**professional manner are subject to suspension and/or disbarment from the ORR.**

**COs - ORR**

COs are community organizations. They include organizations such as the Concerned Black Clergy, The Peoples' Agenda, Atlanta Business League, SCLC, NAACP, and many others.

The ORR relationship with the COs completes the circle of the ORR's reach throughout the entire Black Atlanta community.

The COs are important centers of influence in the community, as well as centers for community members who are consumers. Through these relationships the ORR serves the COs by publicizing their news, calendars and activities throughout the community.

COs are encouraged to use the ORR Business Directory for their own needs. And COs introduce their constituent consumers to the ORR Business Directory as the central business directory of the Atlanta Black community.

**Publications:**

The publications of the ORR open up the churches and community organizations to, and keep them in contact with, the community through electronic (Overgroundrr.com, - the website, and SPARKS®, e-newsletter) and print (Conductor® - bi-monthly newspaper, ORR Church Bulletin, and ORR Freedom Stand) media.

**Overgroundrr.com** is a world class website which publishes the ORR business directory. Additionally, each business, church, and CO has its own web page on the ORR website.

Each business is promoted on the website. The contact information for each business is provided, along with photos, text and videos. Additionally, Google™ map directions are provided

to each business.

Each church is promoted on the website. The contact information for each church is provided, along with photos, text and videos. The available sermons of each church is webcast. Additionally, Google™ map directions are provided to each church.

Each CO is promoted on the website. The contact information for each church is provided, along with photos, text and videos. Additionally, Google™ map directions are provided to each CO.

During 2009, Overgroundrr.com received more than 800,000 hits. In addition to the directories, it publicizes business, church and CO articles and videos. This gives an event life long after it has ended. Through the active relationship with the churches, businesses and CO s, the ORR provides a system for driving users to the website.

**The Conductor®** has become one of the fastest growing publications in Atlanta. Since 2003 it has been published quarterly. In 2010 it became bi-monthly. It started as a 4-page paper. In 2010 it'd grown to 28 pages and continues to grow.

During 2009, each issue printed between 50,000 and 100,000 depending on the time before publication of the next issue. Daily new circulation points are added. As of January, 2010, ther were more than 470. The ad space is in high demand with ads being purchased far in advance to secure the space.

At the current rate of growth, the Conductor® will have 1000 distribution points within 1 to 2 years with a minimum print of 100,000 copies per issue.

But that is not all, the Conductor® is also found on Overgroundrr.com.

**SPARKS**, the e-newsletter keeps the ORR community in touch between the issues of the **Conductor**. It is published at least

twice a month. It publishes announcements, excerpts of articles and calendars about ORR churches, businesses and COs, linking to more complete texts on the website.

The **ORR Church Bulletin** provides a communication medium into the churches. Each ORR church station has its own ORR Church Bulletin. It calls attention to announcements approved by that particular ORR church station.

The **ORR Freedom Stand** uniquely identifies an ORR church station of a special calibre. It identifies the pastor of the ORR church station as the conductor of that station. The stand serves as a newspaper stand for the **Conductor** in addition to providing a continuous presence for the special sponsor businesses, community organizations and media partners. By this innovative medium, church attendees are reminded of the special mission of the ORR and the historic role that particular church is playing to deliver our people to freedom.

#### **Membership:**

The ORR is a community membership based organization. This is similar to the Korean \_\_\_\_\_, Korean Grocers \_\_\_\_\_, Indian \_\_\_\_\_, Asian \_\_\_\_\_, Jewish \_\_\_\_\_, Italian \_\_\_\_\_, Cuban \_\_\_\_\_, Greek \_\_\_\_\_, Blacks constitute the membership of the ORR.

Under no circumstance is the ORR against any other community. The ORR is a member of and/or supports COs which work with businesses and organizations of other communities. Indeed the opposite is true. In order to have healthy partnerships with other communities, the Black community must be healthy and self-sufficient. Then the Black community can be true partners with other communities instead of being financially dependent on other communities.

The ORR does not advocate that Blacks do not do business with other communities. The ORR itself does business with other communities. It simply teaches Blacks to first attempt to meet

their needs in our own community before we look elsewhere. This is what all other communities do except for us as shown by the plain statistical facts in the following table:

[Insert Table]

For a church or community organization to be a member of the ORR, it must consist predominantly of members of the community.

Businesses must be owned at least 51% by members of the community to be a member of the ORR.

Provision has been made to avoid excluding businesses owned by non-Blacks who are members of ORR churches. If a non-Black business owner is a member of an ORR church or a predominantly Black church seeking ORR membership, he/she qualifies to be considered for ORR membership. This accommodation has been made in recognition of the fact that there are a few non-Blacks who are integrally tied to and are genuinely a part of the Black community. These non-Blacks tend to be, except for their genetic race, completely a part of the Black community. For this reason, such church members are included in the ORR.

Membership must be approved by the board of directors which can approve, decline or revoke membership at its sole discretion. However, the board of directors cannot waive the requirement that the prospective member is Black, except for the highly unusual circumstance of the non-Black business owner which is a member of an ORR church or a predominantly Black church seeking ORR membership.

## **Membership**

### **Dues:**

Only businesses pay for membership in the ORR. Churches and COs do not pay for membership in the ORR. The reason that businesses pay and the others don't is that the churches and COs bring their constituencies into the ORR giving the businesses access to their respective constituents.

There are two business membership categories. [Insert from brochure]