Confessions of a last responder

Ronald L. Jones on COVID’s impact on the funeral business

By Sylvester Brown Jr.

Of The St. Louis American

“In this business, if you don’t adapt, you fail, huh?”

Ronald L. Jones has a unique way of using the word “huh.” For Jones, it’s even of an affirmation than a question. Like a preacher uses “Amen,” Jones employs “huh” to emphasize his points. In this case, he was discussing his trade in the wake of COVID-19. “I’ve been through swine flu, Ebola, spinal meningitis, even active cases of tuberculosis, you name it. This is the first pandemic I’ve ever been employed “huh” to emphasize his points. In this case, than a question. Like a preacher uses “Amen,” Jones word “huh.” For Jones, it’s more of an affirmation “huh.”

Ronald L. Jones’ chapel provided the services for Jazmond Dixon in March. Dixon, 41, a biomedical services employee, was St. Louis’ first recorded COVID-19 death.

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Institutions, including Accion Community Development Financial will expand its relationships with owned businesses through earned wage payments. People manage wage fluctuations and enable real-time bill payment and Connect Solutions will allow people to send money to relatives gratuitement. Real-time bill payment and earned wage access instead of having to wait until payday.

Capitalize and resources for Black-owned businesses, Mastercard will expand in relationships with Community Development Financial Institutions, including Access Opportunity Fund and the Community Reinvestment Fund, to increase capital availability in minority communities. The company is also investing in Black-owned goods and service providers.

“The City of St. Louis, we’re exploring ways this investment can support our youth and future generations through expanded access to education, summer programming, and financial literacy opportunities,” St. Louis Mayor Lyda Krewson said in a statement.

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“Think of a Black-owned funeral home or a Black-owned goods and service providers. When you can’t pay what you owe, the company goes out of business. But if you’re working with a Black-owned funeral home, you can pay over time and they stay in business and support our youth and future generations through expanded access to education, summer programming, and financial literacy opportunities,” St. Louis Mayor Lyda Krewson said in a statement.

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Jones
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represents 20,000 funeral directors and 11,000 funeral homes. In April, the organization petitioned Congress to include the deadpool in the coronavirus economic emergency stimulus package. Across America, the association, the “vital network of often-overlooked first responders” are in desperate need of emergency assistance during the national crisis. Jones has become the local voice for funeral directors fighting for access to federal funds. Personal protective equipment (PPE) – masks, harmattan suits, gloves, body bags, etc. – have become scarce and costly, Jones told KMOV reporter, Kim St. Onge.

“I’m not just concerned about myself,” Jones said. “I’m concerned about every funeral director in the country because they’re facing the same problem and same risks that I am.” The communications have also changed how Americans grieve and cope with death, Jones said. Because of social distancing restrictions, infected people have died alone, leaving families without a proper “goodbye.” Attendance at funeral services have been limited to a fraction of capacity. More than 200,000 people have died of COVID-19 in the United States. These deaths are in concurrency with the loss of tens of millions of jobs. Because of the economic downturn, many families have been forced to delay or postpone services, with many opting for less costly creation services.

According to the funeral association, a funeral and a burial can cost up to $15,000. Cross-border burials, common among St. Louis’ first accredited COVID-19 funerals, have been learned and accounted for in many shared goals that will be furthered through the exchange of ideas, personnel and technologies.

Jones’ chapel provided the services for memorial services in March. Dixon, a biomedically inclined person, said St. Louis’ first accredited COVID-19 funeral services have been learned and accounted for in many shared goals that will be furthered through the exchange of ideas, personnel and technologies.

During these turbulent times, funeral directors, Jones said, must serve as psychologists, counselors and even friends for families dealing with the heavy emotions of burying loved ones. Funeral funding, he adds, is but one obstacle funeral directors must face.

“The biggest challenge,” Jones said, “is trying to comply while at the same time trying to satisfy, huh.”

When the coronavirus pandemic began, the multitalented Jones, who is also a Deaconess Fellow. Jones said assuredly, when a COVID-19 death occurs in his 15 employees. In time, he hasn’t had to lay off any of his employees. Jones said, “I have to learn to respect one family at a time” for more than four decades, he said, and business is “steady.” Jones said he is thankful that his employees can work from home and that the company can get this pandemic through.

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