



## ‘Woody’ Woodard: Master Barber, Irrepressible Commentator

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by **Cassie Hepler**

“Barbers were the original doctors,” said Robert “Woody” Woodward. “They would heal people – mentally, spiritually and physically.”

Woodard would know a thing or two about being a barber after 20 years at Woodard’s Barbershop, located at 5031 W. Diamond Street.

“Most customers talk to you about anything,” he said. “And I ask them, ‘How do you see race?’ At first they say, ‘I’m not talking about it.’ But we are all family. I like to take people back to childhood and ask them, ‘When did innocence first escape you?’”

Woodard encourages people to go online and take his race test at <http://www.barbershoptalkhfd.org/> to open up the race forum and bring it to light.

“We’re all living spirits after all,” he said. “The spirit follows you whether you like it or not. The human family is related at birth.”

He communicates issues well through the barbershop community, which serves as a hub of information sharing, enlightenment and impromptu therapy sessions.

“It all started because we believe in one race – humans,” he said. “I honor that, this place called earth. I want peace and harmony instead of guns and violence.”

Woodard doesn’t just talk the talk. He promotes education among youth “with jobs to hold onto.”

“Without proper education, it’s the prison life,” he said.

He trained his brothers to be barbers, who are now sprinkled throughout the city.

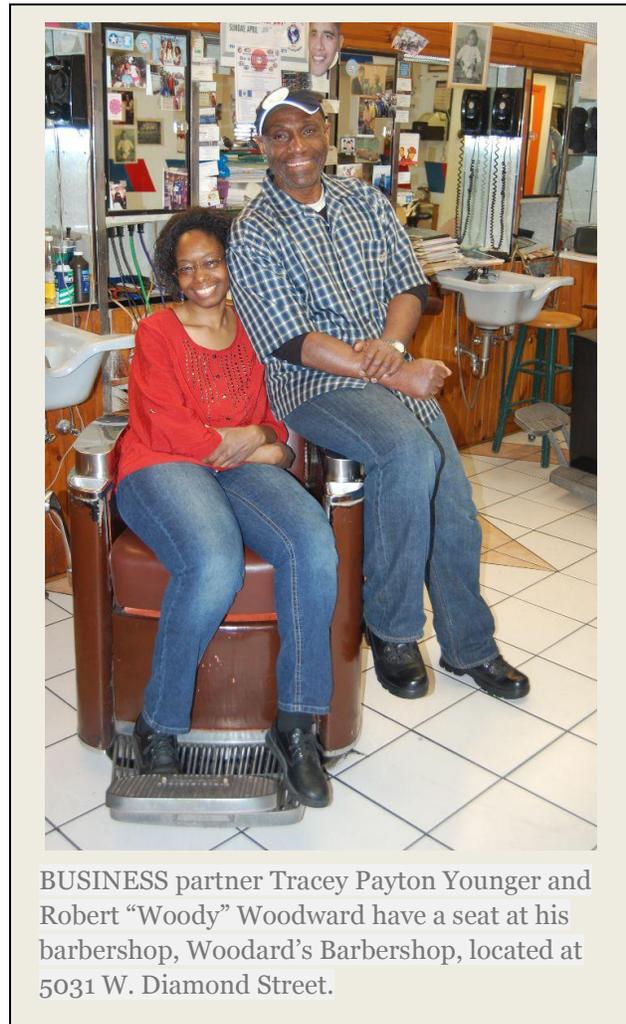
“I showed my brothers how to learn a trade,” he said. “One is at 19th & Carpenter near my (late) father’s cleaners. It used to be all Italians, now it’s all whites. But from 19th & Carpenter to Monroe, we Woodards own all of the buildings.”

The barber also believes in the positive connection between mind, body and spirit.

“I used to weigh 300 lb. and went from vegetarian to vegan,” he said.

His business partner in the upcoming “Be a Life Saver, 15th Annual Human Family Day Celebration” on Sunday, Apr. 26, 3-7 p.m. at Union Baptist Church, 1910 Fitzwater Street, Tracey Payton Younger, is also a health-conscious convert.

“She has gone from many medications to none,” he said, beaming at her. “And lost over 70 lb.!”



BUSINESS partner Tracey Payton Younger and Robert “Woody” Woodward have a seat at his barbershop, Woodard’s Barbershop, located at 5031 W. Diamond Street.

To Woodard, racism doesn't exist – it's the other forms of hatred (bigotry, etc.) that need to be solved.

"We need to be digging out the problem from the past," he said. "Ignorance is an ailing social environment."

Honoring the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the man himself, Woodard will be discussing his legacy and sacrifice to help bring cultures together at the 15th Annual Barbershop Talk Human Family Day press conference where Mayor Michael Nutter will be reading a proclamation at City Hall.

Set for Monday, Apr. 6 in the Mayor's Reception Room, City Hall Room 202, 12:30-2 p.m., Woodard plans on celebrating diversity, cultures and where we are today. For more information, call (215) 879-9935, email [BarbershopTalk.org@gmail.com](mailto:BarbershopTalk.org@gmail.com) or visit his website at <http://www.barbershoptalkhfd.org/>