

Comer Cottrell Jr.

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Comer Cottrell Jr. is president and CEO of Pro-Line Corporation, a business he founded in 1970. Pro-Line Corporation manufactures and distributes hair care products and is on the *Black Enterprise* list of 100 African American owned firms in the United States.

As a former manager for an Air Force military exchange, a major retail outlet for the military, Cottrell knew there was a need for hair care products for African American servicemen and women and their families. He was one of the first to open the market for African American cosmetics in military exchanges. In 1976, Pro-Line relocated from Gardena, Calif., to Dallas, Texas, and is now the largest African American-owned manufacturing facility in the Southwest. Pro-Line Corporation also has plants and distributors in Nigeria, Kenya, the Ivory Coast, South Africa, Brazil, the Caribbean Islands, London and Paris.

A man of many interests, Cottrell is a partner/owner of the Texas Rangers baseball team, making him the first African American to hold an equity stake in a major league team. He also is a member of the U.S. Foreign Commerce Service Commission and the U.S. Trade Commission's Advisory Board. He owns the Spectre Auto Center in Dallas, is a partner



in the Hamilton Financial Corporation and Southwest Affordable Housing.

He serves as a director to many other organizations and businesses, including the Better Business Bureau and the Texas Commerce Bank. Cottrell's philanthropy is focused on building an educated work force of African Americans skilled in technology and the sciences. He took a giant step in that direction by purchasing the land and building of bankrupt Bishop College in Dallas for \$1.5 million. Then, in 1990, he relocated the 108 year-old historically black Paul Quinn College from Waco, Texas, to the Dallas campus. He invested another \$1.7 million for renovations and has pledged additional funds to cover a portion of the college's financial obligations until it becomes self-supporting.

His community activities have included work with the Boy Scouts, the NAACP and the Texas Youth Commission. He holds a number of honorary degrees, as well as awards and honors for his work, including inductee, Texas Business Hall of Fame; Dow Jones/Our World News Award for Entrepreneurial Excellence; an honorary citizenship award from the township of Soweto, South Africa; and a Congressional Record Award from the White House. Cottrell is the father of five children, Renee Brown, Aaron, Comer III, Bryce and Lance.