

man who will help make crucial decisions for U.S. troops deployed in Saudi Arabia for Operation Desert Shield. It is a black woman who works beside the President to coordinate plans for national security. Blacks have secured these jobs in a presidential administration that has done nothing for the masses of black people. All of these men and women indicate progress for black people because they have blazed trails where other African-Americans had not gone before.

In the area of athletics, African-Americans have made considerable progress over the past 11 years. Although blacks have always dominated many aspects of American athletics, they lagged behind whites in certain sports and at certain team positions. The strides made by blacks in the 1980s is important because black youth need positive role models to admire. For the first time in history, black athletes showcased their talents in several areas that they had not before. Debi Thomas captured America's heart as one of the first black women to compete in the Olympics as a figure skater. Zina Garrison established herself as a world-renowned tennis player during the 1980s. When she reached the Wimbledon finals in 1990, she became only one of a few blacks to achieve this feat besides Arthur Ashe and Althea Gibson. Figure skating and tennis are two sports historically dominated by whites, but these two women continued to break down racial barriers during the 1980s. Black kids knew that African-American tennis professionals were not just a thing of the past. Little black girls don't have to dream about figure skating anymore because they can now too become "soul on ice."

Blacks have also historically been denied the opportunity to acquire management positions with professional sports franchises. However, over the past few years, there have been inroads in the hiring of blacks in professional sports management. In 1989, Art Shell was hired as head coach of the NFL's L.A. Raiders. He became the first black ever to serve as head coach of a team in the National Football League. In 1988, Bob Watson became the first black assistant general manager, when he was hired by the Boston Red Sox. Earlier this year, the Red Sox hired Elaine Watson as their new assistant general manager making her the first black woman to hold this position. These three African-Americans serve as an inspiration to all black people trying to achieve their goals.

Another growing trend has been the emergence of the black quarterback in the NFL. The quarterback is probably the most admired position in the game of football. Black quarterbacks are a rare breed mainly because white coaches have never believed that a black can play quarterback. Many black college quarterbacks are chosen late

in the drafts, which means they will probably never start a game in the NFL. Sometimes black quarterbacks are drafted and changed to new positions such as running back or wide receiver. However over the past several years, there has been a rise in respect for blacks at the quarterback position, which definitely signals progress. During this current NFL season, there are three first-string black quarterbacks in the NFL. When the Houston Oilers run onto the playing field, they are led by quarterback Warren Moon. Moon, one of the highest paid players in the league, has rocked the Astrodome with his rifle arm and passing ability. In Philadelphia, Randall Cunningham starts for the Eagles. Commentators call Cunningham one of the best all-around athletes in the NFL. He combines passing with running to lead the Eagles in the NFC's Eastern Division. In the motor city of Detroit, two black quarterbacks play for the Lions. Rodney Peete, who electrified crowds as a rookie in 1989, serves as the starting quarterback. If Peete gets tired, he can call upon fellow brother Andre Ware to pick up his slack. Ware received the 1989 Heisman Trophy as the best player in Division I college football.

In 1988, Doug Williams inspired people across the globe as the first black quarterback to start in the Super Bowl. And not only did he start, but he set NFL records for passing yardage, while leading the Washington Redskins to victory. Each touchdown he threw, each yard he gained, symbolized a gain for African-Americans. Little black boys now knew that a black man could play quarterback and win one of the biggest events in professional athletics.

Whether you like football is irrelevant, but you must give credit to those who have made substantial gains in the league. At no other time in history have three black men played starting quarterback in the NFL on a given Sunday afternoon. Blacks were always able to play quarterback, but no one was really willing to give them a chance. Black college quarterbacks, such as Virginia's Shawn Moore, can now have hope that they too can become stars in the NFL. That some coach will judge them on their ability to play quarterback rather than the color of their skin. Black people ought to cheer and scream every time the Oilers, the Eagles and the Lions play a game. Black quarterbacks are men of African descent paving the way for future generations. The black quarterback is indicative of the inroads made by black athletes in the 1980s and into 1990.

The entertainment field also showed that black people were making some progress. The entertainment field includes a wide range of African-Americans who have appeared in film and on television. The acceptance of black women as contestants in beauty pageants is also a sign of progress



in the entertainment world. In 1982, Vanessa Williams became the first black to hold the title of Miss America, which is the most beautiful and talented woman in the U.S. She was asked to relinquish her crown after controversy arose over her appearance in nude photographs. However, whether she had to give up her crown is irrelevant because she was still the *first* black woman to become Miss America. And credit must be given where and when it is due. Her crown was given to Suzette Charles, the first runner-up in the 1982 pageant, making her the second black Miss America. In 1989, Debbye Turner became the third black woman to win the pageant. America had not gotten over the shock of Turner's victory, when a fourth black woman won. Marjorie Judith Vincent, a Duke University Law student, was crowned Miss America in 1990. Turner and Vincent's victories mark the first time in history that black women have consecutively been crowned Miss America. Black women completed their emergence in national pageants when Carol Gist made history as the first black Miss USA, who represented the country in the Miss Universe Pageant.

In a span of eight years, five black women have become nationally-recognized beauty queens in contests previously dominated by white women. This is progress. Mothers can take pride in the fact that their daughter might become a beauty queen. Blonde hair and blue eyes are not the sole criteria used to judge beauty. Little black girls know that perhaps fairy tales do come true. Just maybe one day they can wear a glass slipper because a black woman can be crowned the most beautiful woman in the United States of America.

Two black actors became the recipients of Academy Awards for their performances in motion pictures. Numerous blacks have been nominated for Oscars, but only a few

have ever received them. Louis Gossett Jr. received an Oscar for his performance in *An Officer and A Gentleman* in 1982. Denzel Washington received an Oscar earlier this year for his role in *Glory*, the story of the all-black Massachusetts 54th infantry regiment during the Civil War. Gossett and Washington became two of four blacks ever to receive an Oscar. Hattie McDaniel received an Oscar for her role in *Gone with the Wind* in 1939. Sidney Poitier received an Oscar for his performance in the 1963 movie *Lilies of the Field*. Twenty-four years elapsed between the time that McDaniel and Poitier received their awards. However, two blacks have received Oscars over the past eight years, which is a sign of progress. Aspiring black actors know that blacks do not have to play stereotypical characters in order to receive credit for their acting talents. They know that black actors can become widely respected in a relatively short amount of time. Young black actors can point to Louis Gossett and Denzel Washington as symbols of hope in the entertainment world.

Two black independent film makers became well-known during the late 1980s and into 1990s. It is very difficult for independent film makers to finance their own films and get them distributed throughout the country. However, the Hudlin Brothers produced *House Party*, one of this summer's biggest hits at the box office. The film is a sequel to a 1984 movie that did not receive much publicity. The 1990 *House Party* stars hip hop group Kid'n'Play in a film aimed at young black audiences. The movie's success inspired a Saturday morning cartoon starring the duo. Now, black kids can get up and watch positive role models on television. For the first time since the Jackson Five's cartoon of the mid-

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