

# How Many Blacks Have You Seen Endorsing Products?

When the mighty Jack Johnson beat everyone in (and out of) his weight class in boxing, the immortal majority searched desperately for the "Great White Hope". This, of course, became the search for the "Great" one who could beat the arrogance right out of Johnson.

There were even 'warnings' that the blacks were exceeding in sports and something must be done about it.

This did come into existence. Blacks now dominate certain fields of sports.

Another note worth mentioning: During the recent Super Bowl, the media talked about the winning team's quarterback and how much money he would make after the game. How? Through the endorsement of products of course.

I mention these facts to make a point. How many black athletes have you seen endorsing a product? Especially those of recent Olympic fame? Well, there is O.J. Simpson, Sugar Ray Leonard, Muhammed Ali and Wilt Chamberlain.

Where is Carl Lewis and Edwin Moses (oh yes, I did see in the papers where Moses was accused of soliciting a prostitute, but he was acquitted). How about Valerie Brisco-Hooks, who left track for two full years



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after her son Alvin Jr., now three, was born. She came back in 1984 to win three gold medals (200 meter, 400 and 4 x 400 relay) at the Los Angeles games.

On the other hand we see Mary Lou Retton flashing her smile for the wholesome cereal, another Olympic swimmer flashing his smile for a shampoo and yet another gymnastic Olympic male starring on a recent TV program. And of course the plot was around his terrific athletic ability. Wait, there is more. How about the two look-a-like Olympic wrestlers? These real-life brothers have been featured in one television series and one motion picture movie.

Am I being naive to think that any American child would buy that same cereal if Carl Lewis or Valerie Brisco-Hooks endorsed it? Would people stop buying

that certain shampoo if Edwin Moses smiled and said "Your hair can look as neat as mine"?

However, it seems to be business rationale which prompts the prominent executive decision makers to choose the "all American type" for certain endorsements.

How narrow minded it is to assume that blacks can only sell a product to another black. It's so evident though...so blinding that whenever there is a black program on the air it is filled with commercials with black people...commercials never seen before and usually never seen again until another black show

airs.

Sarcastically speaking, after we rattle off about 10 black names who have been successful at selling a product, we can assume that the only 'use' in featuring a black on a commercial is to obtain the minority audience.

If we are so powerless then we are still invisible.

Am I prejudiced? No. What I am is amazed. If someone as remarkable as Carl Lewis can win four gold medals I am sure he can pick up a product, point to it and smile.

We already know that all of us eat the same way - through our mouths; all of us put on our clothes the

same way. When we stop noticing the skin color to observe the person within, the American can then lead a much more pleasurable existence.

Did you know that Carl Lewis has had a single record out since last summer entitled "Going for the

Gold"? It was produced by Narada Michael Walden. Sports Illustrated writer Craig Neff gave the 45 the following comment: "Wal-


den, if you've forgotten—and you're lucky if you have—produced Lewis's single of last summer, "Going for the Gold".

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