

Forum

Affirmative Action model shown

In 1963, many years before the term "Affirmative Action" was coined, one of the best and most effective examples of affirmative action took place in the Churchill Downs city of Louisville, Ky.

The initiator of the action was a soft-spoken multimillionaire admired by the NAACP and the Urban League — a man known as a

friend of the black community. He gave good advice, and sometimes cold hard cash, to aid blacks.



MINORITY REPORT

By JAMES E. ALSBROOK, Ph.D.

And this man could help. He was a friend of the Kennedys and of Lyndon and Lady Bird Johnson. With his cash and his clout, when he spoke, bigwigs and littlewigs near and far listened carefully.

He was Barry Bingham Sr., owner of the esteemed *Louisville Times*, an afternoon newspaper, and its morning counterpart, the *Louisville Courier-Journal*. This newspaper was ranked repeatedly among the top ten in the United States. Among Bingham's numerous assets were WHAS radio and WHAS-TV, a network affiliate.

The person integrated was a black reporter who had worked for the *Kansas City Plaindealer*, the *Kansas City CALL* and the *Baltimore Afro-American*. He was getting his master's degree in journalism at Kansas University.

One day a senior faculty member at K.U. rushed to the black reporter and told him, "You're wanted by one of the best newspapers in the nation, the *Courier-Journal*." Surprised, the black reporter was soon on a plane to Louisville for the Fall of 1963

employment interview during which he accepted the job and went to work February next.

What was so unusual about his getting a job as news reporter and feature writer for the *Courier-Journal*? At that time, there were perhaps fewer than 10 black writers in the daily paper newsrooms anywhere in the country. But even more unusual was the bells-and-whistles way Bingham used to introduce the new reporter to his empire.

Shortly after the reporter began working in Louisville, the city editor asked him to attend a special event at the Brown Hotel. The request seemed to be a routine news coverage assignment, but in a few minutes the managing editor made the same request. As if that weren't enough, the executive director and then the owner's son appeared at the reporter's desk, making the same urgent request. With pressure so strong, the reporter began to wonder.

When he arrived at the hotel, the city editor immediately found him in the parking lot and took him to the lobby where he met the managing editor, who took him to the bar and said, "Have a drink." The reporter drank orange juice and was taken farther inside and turned over to the executive director and his wife. After a brief exchange of introductions and small talk, Executive Editor Norman Isaacs took the black reporter to the owner's son who, with his wife, graciously greeted the new writer.

Introductions and felicitations done there, the son and his wife

took the black reporter to Mr. Louisville, Barry Bingham himself, and his wife, who were standing conspicuously in the center of the ballroom. This being the first time the reporter had met Bingham or his wife, conversation among the three sparkled with the reporter asking and answering questions.

Soon, various persons with drinks and happy talk approached the Bingham with obvious deference. Bingham was indeed gracious, introducing his wife and then the black reporter.

"Mr. so-and-so" or sometimes "John" (or the appropriate name), "I am pleased to introduce Mr. Alsbrook, our new reporter," Bingham said, looking each person squarely in the eyes with a meaningful smile. Most smiled warmly and shook my hand. Others were very polite.

The ballroom was filled with people and Bingham seemed to know all by name. After making several hundred introductions, Bingham returned me to his son and I was taken back down the hierarchical ladder and escorted to my car.

It dawned on me that Barry Bingham, Mr. Louisville himself, had taken me under his personal, protective wing, knowing that racism existed in his empire. He was setting his tone that he expected his hundreds of employees to respect and follow. When I walked through the plant I saw nothing but smiling white faces of welcome and greeting. He had associated me and affirmative action with himself.

If there were persons who did not want me there, they knew they could either accept me or "go to the pay window and leave," the managing editor said. Barry Bingham Sr. fought racism personally and openly. If more employees took the Bingham stand, affirmative action would succeed easily and quickly, and America would be a better place.

The Democrats will have to stop Brown

Republicans often remark that the secret to their domination of The White House is a secret weapon: The Democratic Party. Political observers and two recent books agree that the presidential nomination process among the Democrats is counter-productive. It seems that only the acceptable candidate to Democrats is one out of sync with the electorate in the general election. That thought would not leave

tion by former senator Paul Tsongas that the group renounce special interest money.

Gov. Douglas Wilder appeared to be auditioning for vice presidential consideration. It was refreshing, however, to see that his political needs now necessitate that he address himself to black issues again after a race-free hiatus in Virginia politics.

On the other hand, when a

admits, from Richard Nixon.

Tsongas, who has the best ideas of the lot, can't get anyone to listen to him because he doesn't look or sound enough like Robert Redford. Too bad, because he would make an excellent president.

Harkin was his usual slash and burn self, but omitting his standard profanity. At one point, he took out a dollar bill in a vain attempt at being media hip. The bad news for the black community is that one of these guys is going to get 90% of the black vote just because he's a Democrat. And once again, one of them is going to take black political aspirations down in flames in 1992. Brown probably won't be that man because he's outgrown the Democratic Party. In defiance of them all, Brown held up his 1-800-426-1112 number and asked for small donations of \$100 or less to fight "the corrupt stranglehold" he says monied interests have on both parties. In spite of the derision he received from his party leaders and opponents, 5,000 viewers of "The Democrats: A Presidential Debate" on NBC sent him \$150,000.

And speaking of viewers, the six-pack only pulled 8% of those watching TV. Most of the remaining 92% were looking at *60 Minutes* (35%) and other more inspiring shows. Jerry Brown did inspire with a new message. Now the Democrats will have to eliminate him if they're going to help the Republicans win The White House again in 1992.

politician talks exclusively about black people in a presidential forum, he is not a serious candidate because 85% of the voters are white. It could amount to running to become the winner's running mate by inheriting Jesse Jackson's old job as the premiere black politician. Kerry mentioned his military service in Vietnam no fewer than five times, while defending his passive position on defense and never once mentioning his tasteless lesbian joke.

Gov. Bill Clinton, whose legacy is to keep elected posts for blacks via redistricting in his native Arkansas to minimum, was just as busy pandering to the white middle class. Clinton used "middle class" as often as Kerry praised his war record in language borrowed, he



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me as I watched the recent televised debate of the six contenders for the Democratic nomination. The one with the most hope for his party and the best message for the people was the most ignored and vilified.

Afterwards, true to the script, Democratic party leaders and the other five candidates publicly blamed former California Governor Jerry Brown for preventing them from effectively attacking President George Bush's poor economic performance. Roughly two in three Americans already disapprove of Bush's handling of the economy. But no matter how low Bush's rating goes, the best thing he has going for him is the Democratic presidential process.

Jerry Brown, however, is the best shot they have. They can joke about "Gov. Moonbeam" all they want, but they can't deny that he's fresh and exciting and his charge that the politicians are in the hip pocket of the rich contains more than a kernel of truth. Watching the six-pack on TV, one had to be grateful that Brown was there. And his appeal for donations was as fresh as his explanation for it: Let the people finance politicians directly in contributions of \$100 or less, no PAC special interest bosses. Sen. Bob Kerry and Sen. Tom Harkin seemed alarmed at breaking the umbilical cord to the rich donors and shuttered at the sugges-

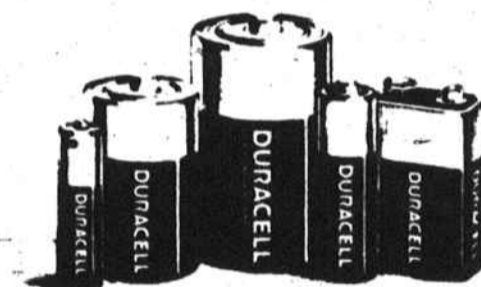


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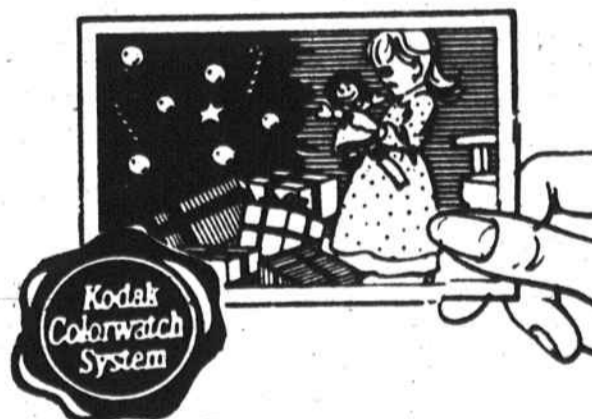
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