

Point of View

To Be Equal

Black Media Breakthrough Overdue

By John E. Jacob

A highly publicized lawsuit charging discrimination against one of America's leading newspapers, the New York Daily News, recently ended with a settlement of over \$3 million for the black journalists who won their case.

The significance of that suit will be felt in every newsroom and television station in the country.

The journalists' grievances dealt with middle management harassment and actions that obstructed their careers. Usually such complaints are settled internally, settled before going to trial, or the aggrieved journalists just move on to other jobs.

But this was the first such case that actually went to jury trial, and the successful suit sends a powerful message to publishers and media chiefs that discrimination can be costly. It should result in

promoting and hiring more blacks in the nation's media outlets, and in fairer treatment for minorities.

The media mirror society in that while overtly condemn-



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ing racial discrimination many either tolerate it in their own operations or have abysmal hiring and promotion records.

Minorities are about a fourth of the population, but only about 6 percent of reporters and editors in daily newspapers are minority. The majority of daily newspapers don't have any

minorities in responsible newsgathering and editing posts.

In broadcasting, the situation is much the same. Viewers may think blacks enjoy equal opportunities because of a handful of national or local broadcasts that feature black talkshow

television outlets.

So long as blacks are rarely found in newsrooms, editorial posts, management jobs and ownership positions, the nation's media will be cut off from a significant and rising portion of the population, and their integrity will be called into

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personalities or reporters.

But the reality is that minority journalists are relatively rare in reporting slots, anchor positions, and in the editing and producing jobs that determine what news Americans get in their broadcasts.

Part of that situation derives from the exclusion of minorities from media ownership. Blacks own only about one percent of the nation's 1,138 television stations; about one-and-a-half percent of the 9,000 radio stations, and too few cable TV systems to count.

We can't let the successes of such stars as Bill Cosby and other black artists and writers obscure the reality of black exclusion from the daily press and the nation's

question.

The success of the black press and minority-oriented media demonstrates the wealth of capable journalists, managers and entrepreneurs in the black community. So the majority media can't hide behind the old lie about no qualified blacks being available.

In fact, they are available, need opportunities, and will strengthen the operations of any organization that makes an effort to recruit and promote them.

So this is the time to crack the barriers in the highly visible areas of the media and to finally integrate the institutions that can't really inform us adequately without including all groups in all aspects of their operations.

There is plenty for everyone to do

Government policy cannot do much about teenage parenting, fatherless households and academic nonexertion--the "crisis of the spirit" in the black community, as Robert L. Woodson of the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise terms it. That's a job the black establishment itself will have to undertake, at least in providing the leadership and inspiration the underclass is increasingly without.

In addition, it is up to the black leadership to blaze new directions that do not focus exclusively on discrimination. It is true that most of the ills of the underclass have their roots in racism, but it is also true that ending racism will not solve those problems.

Only black people can effectively translate that analysis into concerted action that can address real problems.... Instead of arguing about whether the government or blacks themselves are principally responsible for the leadership the desperate situation of the underclass requires, it might make more sense to consider a division of labor, with each party doing what it alone can do.

As Woodson puts it: "What is desperately needed is for all who seek to improve the plight of the nation's poor to join hands with black Americans in spearheading a self-help renaissance--the next battlefield in the struggle for equal rights."

- William Raspberry, *Daytona Times* [Fla.], February 12, 1987

FROM CAPITOL HILL

U.S. Leadership Is Responsible For Black's Alienation Feelings

By Alfreda L. Madison

As a Black reporter assigned to the White House and Congress, I feel like an alien in my own country. I've held this position since 1977, and I visit offices of the various members of Congress. With exception of the Black Congressional Caucus and committees chaired by them, it really takes a high-powered microscope to find Black workers.

Even in the congressional press offices, the staff members are all White. At the Reagan White House, there is not one Black on the press office staff. The only Blacks seen around there have a mop or broom. At the daily White House briefings, the big White press dominates -- rarely ever mentioning issues that have a special relevance to Blacks. Bob Ellison, who works for Sheridan Network, a Black radio station, and I have to bring these issues to the at-

tention of the press secretary, who shows little knowledge or even concern for our questions.

The Carter Administration had three Blacks on the press staff. He did give the Black press an interview, and Blacks were invited to the breakfasts that he had with reporters. Reagan has not granted Black reporters an interview, Blacks are never invited to meetings that are had between White House officials and reporters. I requested presence at some of the meetings that White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan often had with reporters, but my request was ignored. At the President's press conferences, where alternative seating is supposed to occur, I'm always seated on one of the back seats on the side rows, where, if the President should incidentally look that way, I'd be hidden from sight.

The hiring and appointment of qualified Blacks by

both the Legislative and Executive branches of the United States is a despicable commentary on a nation which boasts of being the world's leading democracy.

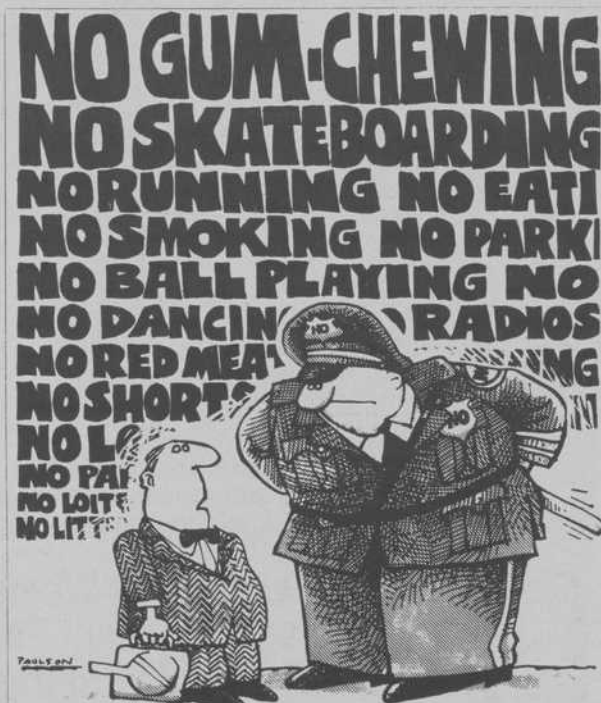
The Joint Center for Political Studies recently published a report on Blacks in top jobs in these two branches of government, and New York State. Especially disappointing is the U.S. Senate because the now Democratic-controlled Senate is due in large part to the Black vote, but no hiring changes have been noted. This reported asked Majority Leader Robert Byrd (D-W. Va.), just after he had gloated over the Democratic victory, if he was going to try to get more Blacks hired on committee staffs. His response was that he hired people on merit, but he failed to respond to the question that there are many meritorious Blacks around and if he would make an effort to employ them. Jobs in the Senate -- the world's

most exclusive club -- are for the most part outside the reach of Blacks.

Out of the 2800 policy-making staff positions in the Senate, Blacks make up 38 of them; slightly more than one percent. Seventy-five senators, including three who received 80 percent of the Black vote in '86, have no Blacks on their staff. The Senate Black Legislative Staff Caucus circulated a letter which said, "This imbalance may not be the result of either discrimination or a lack of interested and

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"I FORGOT JUST WHAT IT IS THAT I'M ALLOWED TO DO..."

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