

## Excuse Me, Do You Work Here?

### The Ray Willis Report

By: Ray E. Willis

If you're a black man who has ever gone shopping with a tie on then you have most likely experienced what today's column is about. Picture this. A well-dressed black man walks into a store at a local mall. Like those around him, he is browsing through various merchandise and sizing up possible purchases.

Like all the other patrons, his attention is focused on the item he is inspecting for potential purchase, and he never makes an attempt to establish eye contact with others in the store.

Then it happens. All of a sudden his personal tranquility is disrupted as he is approached by a shopper. "Excuse me," the shopper asks. "Do you work here? I need some help with a purchase?"

There was nothing to indicate that the black man was an employee of the store. He wasn't wearing any special insignia, nor did he display a company badge identifying him as an agent of the business. Yet the shopper "assumed" the black man worked there.

With agitated but controlled politeness, the black man tells the shopper, "I'm sorry I don't work here."

Without a hint of embarrassment at having wrongfully assumed the black man worked there, the woman says, as if to qualify why she approached the man in the first place, "Oh, you just looked like you worked here." And with that, off she goes.

If this scenario had been an isolated one, it would not be worth nothing here. Yet,



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it does transpire on a rather frequent basis. Women are not exempt from this kind of treatment either. Could it be because they too suffer from a less than equitable image?

Exactly what do incidents like this tell us about ourselves and about how white America perceives us? On one level it reinforces the degree to which prejudice still exists -- both consciously and subconsciously.

On another level it demonstrates how blacks are viewed as being self-limited. No disrespectes how blacks

No disrespect for the many fine black individuals who work as salesclerks and who hold other responsible positions in the retail merchandising business. However, this kind of treatment strongly suggests that many whites see blacks in a one-dimensional way.

Unless attitudes about race and gender change radically in this country, assumptions like this will continue to be made about people based solely on color, and influenced to a lesser degree by appearance.

At this point I'm tempted to conclude my column with the old cliché, "America

## Dr. Paul Meacham Stands On Record and the Facts

Aug. 9--In an exclusive interview with the Sentinel-Voice today, Dr. Paul Meacham, president of Clark County Community College, categorically denied allegations by Review-Journal editorialist Jon Ralston and a few others that he disclosed to anyone that Ronda Lurie, daughter of Mayor Ron Lurie, did not meet the minimum eligibility requirement, which was a 2.75 grade point average. Ronda Lurie was not admitted to the Dental Hygiene Program at the college.

The attack on Dr. Meacham began as a result of the discovery that the Mayor's daughter, along with several other students, had not been accepted into the Dental Hygiene Program.

Actually it was discovered last April that misinformation given the students by the Admissions Counselor, had rendered some of them ineligible for consideration to enter the program according to the published guidelines. The mayor's daughter was among that group of students.

Members of the Board of Regents were notified of the problem, as well as the accreditation agency which

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may not be the best country in the world, but it's a damn sight better than anywhere else in the world." But I won't. Instead, I'll leave you with this one. Black men, take my advice. Don't wear a shirt and tie when you go shopping and you'll avoid a whole lot of unnecessary confusion.



Retiring Washington, D.C. police chief Maurice Turner, a long time Democrat, is welcomed to the Republican Party by President George Bush during an Oval Office meeting.

## D.C. Police Chief Turner Announces Switch To Republican Party

Retiring District of Columbia Police Chief Maurice T. Turner, Jr., a lifelong member of the Democratic Party, today announced his decision to become a member of the GOP. Turner Cited President Bush's personal commitment to a kinder, gentler nation and a new day in civil rights, and specifically lauded the President's tough stance against crime and drugs and the party's commitment to policies which encourage minority entrepreneurship.

"Under Democratic leadership, the problems faced by urban America have continued to worsen," said Turner. "The Republican Party is a progressive party with new ideas and is now the best able to bring America's cities back to life. It's time for a change, and it's a change in which I want

to participate."

"Turner, whose tenure as Chief of Police was highlighted by the successful implementation of the Repeat Offender's Program which targets career criminals and organized crime, joins more than 120 state and local elected officials from across the country who have switched to the Republican Party in recent months. Republican National Committee (RNC) Chairman Lee Atwater hailed Turner's decision, and praised the chief for his "political courage" and his long-standing commitment to law-and-order and civil rights.

"Maurice Turner's decision to switch to the Republican Party shows that we are the party best equipped to meet the challenges facing America's cities," said Atwater. "His commit-

ment to his ideals should serve as an inspiration to others ready to join our cause."

Turner, a lifelong DC resident and third-generation Washingtonian, joined the District police force as a foot patrolman when black officers were not allowed to ride in patrol cars. He has long been recognized as one of the city government's most devoted proponents of civil rights. During the civil unrest of the late 1960's, he served as a department liaison to the protest's leaders as one of the few officers allowed regular access to them, and was one of the keys in resolving the 1977 Hanafi Muslim takeover of the local B'nai B'rith headquarters.

Turner, who was appointed Chief of Police in 1981 af-

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