

PUBLIC STATEMENT

by Paul R. Goodwin

Editor's Note:

The following public statement was written by Dr. Paul Goodwin Associate Superintendent, Alternative Education Division, Clark County School District. The statement was written to clear the air of unfounded and untrue allegations that the hiring practices of the school district favors blacks.

Recently there have been comments in the media comparing the number of black employees in the Clark County School District to the number of district employees in "other minority groups." The people who are making these comments are either uninformed or they are dishonest and purposely attempting to mislead.

A true informed person would know that for many, many years, qualified blacks have had to turn to the government or public service to get a fair break. Not only in employment, but in other areas as well. For years, private agencies and/or corporations would not hire blacks, and to a degree, that practice still exists. However, government leaders and the chief executive officers of public agencies have been more receptive to hiring blacks, women, and other groups who have borne the brunt of discriminatory practices.

As a result of discriminatory hiring practices, blacks who attended colleges and universities majored in the fields where the chance of receiving a job

in their chosen careers are greatest. Therefore, a disproportionate number of blacks become teachers because early on in life they realized there would be career opportunities in this area. After all, due to segregated schools, blacks had a "corner" on part of the public education market.

Additionally, early on in life, blacks were taught that if we were to improve the status of our race, we had to provide much of the education and leadership ourselves. We should not, nor could not, depend solely on others. We had to dig in and do it ourselves. Hence, early on in life, we were encouraged to become teachers, and for many, many years the vast majority of the professional role models, and in some communities the only profession we saw, were black educators. Hence, the past to success and to helping our brethren was obvious. Become a teacher!

Hence, for these reasons, and certainly there are others, there is a disproportionate number of blacks who are in the field of education.

For some reasons, there are fewer blacks in other professions, such as the legal profession. According to a recent publication by Dr. and Mrs. Porter Troutman, there are less than 30 practicing black attorneys in Clark County. If the legal field and the many legal firms we have in Clark County were to discriminatory hiring practices that jobs would be available, then more and more minorities would enter this prestigious but highly sheltered field.

The legal profession is being used as an example of possible discriminatory hiring practice because one of the community activists who has spoken to our Board of School Trustees, our Superintendent of Schools, and the community at large, and has accused the administration in the Clark County School District of being prejudicial or discriminatory in its hiring practices for failing to have work force which reflects our community makeup, is an attorney. His contention is that blacks are over represented in the school district. Blacks may be over represented in the school district because other avenues of employment are closed to us. Look around! How many blacks do you see in major corporations or firms in our city? You can bet the mortgage that blacks are not represented nearly as well.

Proof? Look at the unemployment rate! Proof? Look at the law firm Lionel, Sawyer, and Collins, the firm where Attorney Mark Goldstein is employed! Please keep in mind that Mr. Goldstein is the activist who has advocated cultural diversity in the Clark County School District's hiring practices. He has written many letters to the Board of School Trustees, on his firm's stationery, demeaning several of our employees, threatening legal action, and advocating cultural diversity in their work force. At last count, out of 53 attorneys, one is black, one is Hispanic, and at least five are Jewish. These numbers were given to me by Mr. Goldstein.

Mr. Goldstein quickly pointed out that they are a private corporation and not a public agency, therefore, they do not have to follow the same rules when hiring personnel. My answer to him at that time, and still is, if cultural diversity is right and if public agencies strive towards a work force which is reflective of the community, then why isn't it (cultural diversity) the right thing to do for private agencies and corporations as well? If minorities are qualified to work in public and governmental agencies, are not minorities qualified to work in private agencies and corporations? Mr. Goldstein's reply was that as a private corporations, his firm does not have to follow the same rules. Basically, he gives credence to that old saying: "OK over there, but not in my neighborhood."

If we have a school or department in our district with a staff of 53 and two of those 53 are minorities, that would be unacceptable to me, unacceptable to Mr. Goldstein, and, hopefully, unacceptable to our Board of School Trustees and our community. Mr. Goldstein's comment that his law firm is private and does not have to follow the same rules as a public agency, clearly demonstrates the point that I made earlier. That point is, blacks and other minorities have had to look to government and public agencies for employment. Hence, blacks may be well represented in the Clark County School District because corporations have closed their doors to us. The public sector is where we get our fairest shake. As to Mr. Goldstein's allegations that I, Paul Goodwin, "contributed

to Jewish applicants not receiving promotions," my reply is that he is telling a blatant lie and he knows it. Fortunately, many employees in our school district are also aware that Mr. Goldstein's statement is a vicious lie. Mr. Goldstein is aware that I have been fair, honest, and professional. It is unfortunate that Mr. Goldstein and those school district employees who have employed him to represent them have chosen to play dirty politics. However, that may be their style.

As stated earlier, blacks and other minorities have looked to public and governmental agencies for employment since the doors of opportunity have been closed in the private sector. The one exception in the public sector that I have noticed in Clark County is the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. Yet, on several occasions, including the June 1, 1989 meeting of our Board of School Trustees, Mr. John Lujan, the affirmative action officer for the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, gave testimony to the Clark County School District's Board of School Trustees and to our community that the previous Superintendent of Schools and his staff did not address cultural diversity nor affirmative action guidelines in their hiring and promotional practices.

To hear Mr. Lujan degrade our former superintendent and his staff is personally repugnant and unacceptable to me. The Clark County School District does not have, nor have we ever had, a full time affirmative action officer, as the University of Nevada at Las Vegas does. The affirmative action officer for the University of Nevada at Las Vegas is John Lujan. In the Clark County School District, that responsibility had been given to Mrs. Eva Simmons who also had the time consuming tasks of negotiations, contract compliance, employee grievances, sexual harassment charges, administration selection and promotion, and several other duties. Even though each of these duties is time consuming, Mrs. Simmons, Dr. Wentz (the former Superintendent of Schools), and the other members of his staff for the Clark County School District made significant progress towards reaching the district's affirmative action goals. Mr. Lujan is aware of this but chooses to ignore it and continues to distort the truth.

Based on Mr. Lujan's testimony, if one compares the affirmative action results achieved by Mrs. Simmons and the former superintendent's to those of Mr. Lujan's and the chief

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NAACP Sets August 26th For 'Silent March' On Supreme Court Decisions

A "Silent March" protesting four recent adverse decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court on civil rights and affirmative action, and calling on Congress to undertake legislative remedies, has been scheduled by the NAACP for Saturday, August 26, 1989, at noon in Washington, D.C., according to Dr. Benjamin L. Hooks, Executive Director, NAACP, and Dr. William F. Gibson, Chairman, NAACP National Board of Directors.

The route and other details of the march remain to be worked out, but Dr. Hooks said it would closely resemble the famous "Silent March" of 1917 when over 5,000 men, women, and children headed by Dr. W.E.B. DuBois and James Weldon Johnson of the

NAACP, marched in silence down New York City's Fifth Avenue, protesting "Jim Crowism", lynching, segregation, disenfranchisement and race riots in Waco, Memphis and East St. Louis.

"Our silent march will be concerned with one issue alone -- the Supreme Court and its recent hostile decisions. We will be sending a message primarily to the Administration, Congress and the American people that the decisions of this Court are harmful to the body politic of this nation and prompt action must be taken to reverse them through legislative means," Dr. Hooks said at a press conference in Washington on Thursday, July 20th.

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