

Point of View

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TO BE EQUAL

THE COSTS OF RACISM

By John E. Jacob

Study after study shows that racism costs the nation billions in lost productivity and social disorganization. But all those studies put together will sometimes have less effect on the discriminators than a few well-placed lawsuits or public scandals.

Just recently, for example,

we had the highly-publicized incident where the owner of the Cincinnati Reds, Marge Schott, was subject to public humiliation and suspension from organized baseball for a year.

Her peers in the executive suites of organized sports probably breathed a sigh of relief that it was she who was caught, not them.

It's generally known that racial slurs are common among baseball's top brass, although it seems that Ms. Schott's comments were a lot more colorful than most, as well as being directed at just about every available racial and minority ethnic group around.

But I'm less exercised about what Ms. Schott said than about

how she acted — virtually barring African Americans and other minorities from jobs in her organization.

She had to grudgingly hire African American players since no team could win without them. But while those black and minority players drew fans and enriched the team's coffers, their brothers and sisters were de-

nied employment opportunities in the front office and in the dugout.

As part of the "price" of settling the scandal caused by her slurs, the Reds reportedly have instituted an affirmative action program, and they now have a Latino manager.

Ironically, the ultimate result is to strengthen the Reds organization since it can now draw business talent, as well as playing talent, from a more diverse population.

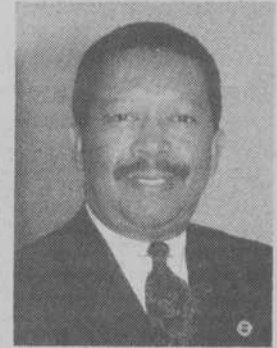
But organized sports can't take refuge in handling out light punishments to individuals caught in public scandals, for the real issue is fair hiring and promotion practices.

Professional sports are big business. If major companies can find, train and promote minorities throughout their organizations, so can baseball and football teams.

The net effect of the Schott scandal is healthy — it sensitizes people to racism in high places and forces a closer look at the discriminatory hiring patterns that pervade professional sports.

If momentary public embarrassment is the price organized baseball has paid for Ms. Schott's racism, some companies are finding that racism has an immediate monetary cost, as well.

While the Reds' owner was suspended, a court awarded \$105 million to African American



JOHN E. JACOB

victims of job discrimination by Shoney's, Inc., the restaurant chain.

Not only does Shoney's have to cough up that large sum, it also will be under court supervision for ten years to ensure that it adheres to fair employment policies and practices.

According to testimony, the former chief of the company was so prejudiced that when he visited the company's restaurants, managers told black employees to hide until he left.

The company used color-coded employment applications to track the race of applicants, and when blacks were hired they were stuck in kitchen jobs and denied promotions.

The court's decision sends a signal to other companies that discriminate — racism has real bottom line costs that no company can afford.

It also has costs the nation can't afford — huge costs to productivity and to the social fabric. America won't be able to compete successfully if it refuses to make full use of the potential and the abilities of all of its people.

And that reality holds for a ball club, a restaurant chain, a multinational giant, and the total economy. Racism costs, and even in 1993 that lesson still has to be learned by too many employers and citizens.



POLITICAL POINTS

By Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams



AIN'T NOTHING LIKE A SISTER

I must of missed it, but I could have sworn the annual "Miss America Pageant took place last Friday evening. In fact, early Saturday morning my son informed me that he stayed up the night before and watched it. My son does not get excited about much, but this was one of those rare occasions when he could not hold back his glee that the newly crowned titled holder of Miss America was an African-American. A short time later I caught the end of a news spot on CNN that allowed me a glimpse of the nubian, but was unable to catch her name, other than she was from Michigan.

Keeping in mind that having the 4th sister to win Miss America since 1983 when Vanessa Williams became the first titleholder of African descent, was special, especially when it happens during African-American History Month. This caused me to become even more excited to find out her name and more things about the queen. However, five days have now passed and I still don't know her name. And please believe that it's not because I have not tried.

As I picked up, the Satur-

day, morning edition of the Review Journal I became disappointed not to find the picture of the placing of the crown on the noble head of the new queen by her successor. After I thought about it a few seconds I came to the conclusion that press deadlines probably caused the omission of a story on the new Miss America. At that time point I could hardly wait until the next day to see a detailed report in the Sunday R.J.

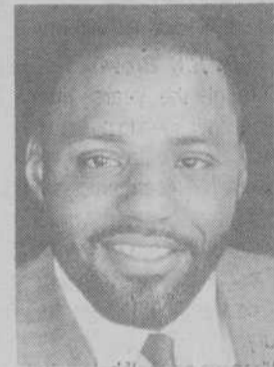
In the meantime, I began to think about how not only did she win during African-American History Month, but February is also Women's History Month. Ahh, how great Black women are I thought as I began to think about other great women who set the stage for the new Miss America, and how many of them too were omitted from major news. Even here in Nevada. Women like Alice Smith who spent 50 years working for equality before her death in 1990. A co-founder of the Reno-Sparks branch of the NAACP, she knew all about equality and inequality. An incident that she never forgot was of sitting on the steps of the Reno Veteran's Hospital, cradling her husband Alfred's head in her lap. He had been denied admittance twice. He finally was

admitted, but died soon after. Born in 1902, a great-grandchild of a New Guinea slave, bred to a Black Mohawk Indian and a white man. She found strength in the racism that was forced on her and helped build the Reno NAACP that is still operating today.

People of Nevada should also know about Maggie Johnson a pioneer Nevadan who entered a world that had been largely the domain of men. Johnson was a miner who discovered a number of successful mining claims in the late 1800's. She had a gift for finding gold. She spent most of her life in Elko, Eureka and Lander counties. She once sold one claim for \$7,000 in cash, a fortune in the days when five cents bought a steak dinner with all the trimmings. In fact Maggie Creek, located in the Tuscarora Mountains about 11 miles northwest of Carlin, is named in her honor.

Anyway, early Sunday morning I walked outside to get the Sunday paper, anxious to read about yet another trailblazing sister, the new Miss USA. As I turned every single page of the paper, I couldn't believe that she was not there. But true enough she was nowhere to be found.

On Monday, after getting



Assemblyman
Wendell P. Williams

back here to Carson City I went out and picked up copies of the Reno-Gazette-Journal-nothing! USA TODAY - nothing! Carson City Appeal - nothing! San Francisco Bee - nothing! San Francisco Examiner - nothing! Now I'm beginning to wonder if this so-called Miss America Pageant really took place.

I guess this is a good example of how Black women have stood-up to countless numbers of challenges in spite of great odds and decades of being ignored.

Miss America, who ever you are, stand tall and remember that you join the ranks of many others like Marian Anderson, Ida B. Well, Maya Angelou, Daisy Bates, Carol Mosley Braun, Fannie Lou Hamer, Dr. Mae Jemison, Sarah Vaugan, Rosa Parks, Leontyne Price and hundreds of other strong African-American women who not only craved an unparalleled trail for Black women, but you also help make Black men and the world what it is today and in the future. So as we close-out Black History Month for 1993, the proof is in the pudding that **Ain't Nothing Like A Sister.**

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