

COMMENTARY

# Texaco steadily progressing toward diversity

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

Last November, Texaco, Inc., the nation's fourteenth-largest company, drew a sharp blast from African-Americans and others, damaging coverage from the media — and a significantly negative reaction from investors — when it became apparent that, despite its public statements, equal opportunity was not a reality there.

The now-infamous Texaco tapes broke open the racial discrimination lawsuit that several of its African-American employees had been pursuing against the company, prompting the company to quickly settle the case before it went to trial.

In its wake, Peter I. Bijur, Texaco's chairman and chief executive officer, who had vigorously condemned the blighted attitudes that led to the suit, pledged to change Texaco's corporate culture for the better.

I wrote back then that "the evidence indicates that he has a great deal of work to do there."

I can now write that early evidence indicates Texaco is en route to becoming a better, stronger company.

Notice what I have said here: a better, stronger company. For the evidence, now being marshaled at

Texaco, and already proven elsewhere, shows that the allegiance to equal opportunity is good for business.

It's good for business because it opens up the avenues of advancement within a company to new talent, which enhances its internal strength. And it's good for business because it enables the company to more skillfully pursue customers across the breadth of the consumer marketplace.

That is illustrated by the document Texaco produced this summer: *Equal Opportunity and Diversity at Texaco: 1997 Report*.

This 29-page document is loaded with charts and graphs about the Texaco workforce, details on what current programs have accomplished, and specific pledges that the company intends to honor within five years.

For example, Texaco states that in "striving to achieve business goals, not meet inflexible quotas," it expects its workforce to increase from nearly 20,000 to more than 22,000 in three years. Of that number, it forecasts that women employees will increase

## To Be Equal

By Hugh B. Price  
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to 35 percent of the workforce, up from the current 32 percent, and that African-American and Hispanic-American employees will increase from 9 to 13 percent and from 8 to 10 percent, respectively. Overall, Texaco said that women and people of color would comprise 29 percent of the company, up from 22 percent now.

The report also names more than a score of internal and external programs the company now sponsors or supports and ones it will establish to open up the corporate ladder within the company and open wider the pathways into the company from the outside.

They range from internal mentoring programs to improving employees' opportunities for

advancement to scholarship and internship programs to encourage African-American, Hispanic-American and Native-American high school seniors entering college to major in such fields as the physical sciences and engineering.

In addition, Texaco promises that within five years it will be doing more than \$1 billion worth of business with women- and minority-owned companies and professionals in engineering and construction firms, law, advertising, accounting, and government and public relations firms.

It said it has already increased the number of women- and minority-owned banks with which it does business from 21 to 50 and that it will expand its use of other banking services and money-management activities with women- and minority-owned financial firms. And it intends to double the number of minority- and women-owned wholesaler marketers from 43 to 85, 11 percent of its network, by 2002.

There are far more facts, figures,

programs and pledges in the report than I can mention here.

The important point is that the document shows Texaco's willingness to provide statements of its intentions — and measurements of its performance.

No doubt, that's because Texaco is confident that its efforts are morally right and beneficial to its bottom line.

"By cultivating the workforce that reflects the diversity of our customer and supplier base, we can gain access to new markets and seize business opportunities," the document declares.

"We clearly understand that providing opportunities for people of all backgrounds increases our creativity, our ability (to be innovative), and our human potential, ultimately helping us out-compete the competition so we may provide a superior return to our shareholders and greater opportunity for our employees."

Of course, Texaco still has a long way to go to reach its goals. To its credit, the company has embarked upon the journey, one that other corporations should follow.

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### VOICE FROM THE HILL

## Campaign finance madness

*By George Wilson*

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

One good thing about being on Capitol Hill is that you get a front row seat to events that occur on these hallowed grounds.

At the bottom of that list is the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee's ongoing examination of campaign finance irregularities allegedly committed by Democrats.

Members of the Republican Party are bending over backwards to find a way to make President Clinton and the Democratic Party look bad. The GOP has thrown so many bricks that it has shamed Attorney General Janet Reno into considering the appointment of a special counsel to examine the practices of some Democrats.

Once a Special Prosecutor is appointed, more money will have to be set aside for the investigation.

The sad part of this whole affair is that the Special Prosecutor would be asked to do only half a job. The scrutiny is only aimed toward Democrats while Republicans are claiming some type of moral high ground, as if all of their money is raised within the rather broad rules which govern fundraising.

A report recently released by the

Federal Election Commission indicates that the Republican Party continues to outraise and outspend the Democrats. It also noted that contributions from individuals comprised the majority of receipts for both parties.

For the first six months of this year, Republicans raised more than \$51 million from individuals and more than \$2 million from Political Action Committees (PACs). Democrats raised \$23 million from individuals and almost \$5 million from PACs.

The point is that the Democrats are being made to feel guilty about a process from which both parties benefit. Democrats are uneasy about coffees, or photographs with the President in exchange for contributions and phone calls to potential donors.

On the other side of the aisle, there seems to be much less shame. A good example can be found in the flap over a tobacco settlement. It seems that a deal was agreed to that would give tobacco companies a \$50 billion break.

Only after the tentative agreement was it learned that an amendment, which was slipped into the bill, had been written by lobbyists for the tobacco industry. It is not coincidental

that the tobacco industry makes substantial contributions to the coffers of many Republicans and some Democrats. So, where is the outrage about this?

A recent conversation with a member of Congress who chooses anonymity, shed light on the subject. The member noted that "if you went down the list of Republican contributors and looked at who got contracts or legislation written in such a way that they or their business benefited, you would see that the Republicans deliver when enough money is on the table."

As long as inordinate amounts of cash are involved in politics on the federal level, we will continue to hear about abuses from both major parties. The funny thing is that whenever there is a push for legislation to dramatically change the rules of campaign finance, opposition comes from both parties who like the system just the way it is.

The bottom line is that Republicans want to do whatever they can to sully the reputation of the President and his party in hopes that we will think only they are capable of playing by the rules.

*George Wilson is a 16-year Capitol Hill correspondent of the American Urban Radio Network.*

### Carl Rowan's Commentary

## Clinton blows smoke on tobacco situation

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

I recently had a dream/nightmare in which an emaciated young couple with two hunger-crazed children are roaring down a dirt road in a jalopy and in a cloud of their cigarette smoke.

The two 19-year-olds had just paid \$12 (\$11.95 in taxes) for a pack of cigarettes and thus had no money with which to buy food that might silence the hunger pains of their kids.

Furthermore, the teenage parents were on the lam, fugitives from the now-huge posses of "revenuers" who were at war with America's nicotine black marketers.

The teenagers are desperate to get to almost any other country because almost everywhere else people young and old are puffing away their days — and lives — on nicotine-powered tobacco pellets, most subsidized at least indirectly by the United States government.

This awful "dream" took place in the midst of a speech in which President Clinton said nothing to move America closer to a solution of its tobacco tragedy.

All the president did was wring his hands about the 4.5 million children aged 12 to 17 who are now hooked on cigarettes and may become the new fugitives. He said that the recent "compromise" between the tobacco industry and several state attorneys general and other public forces is not good enough because it offers insufficient protection to tomorrow's children.

It looks as though the president was simply saying, "We've finally got big tobacco on the run. Now we're going to stall until they really capitulate."

But what does capitulate really mean for this president. He did not deal straightforwardly with the issue of plainly outlawing tobacco products with nicotine content even though the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) may say that nicotine is an addictive drug. Is he afraid to go that far because of our history with alcohol?

Mr. Clinton dodged the truth that as long as addictive tobacco products are legally available, no matter how high the taxes and overall cost, American teens will buy them.

Clinton called for "comprehensive tobacco regulation," but did not suggest authority for the FDA to ban tobacco products. Clinton was duty-bound to offer us more than a superficial cop-out speech in which the theme was "tax cigarettes until kids can't buy them."



CARL ROWAN

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