

Minority coaches deserve chances to shine

By Marc H. Morial
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Now that the Thanksgiving holidays are within sight, the annual fall frenzy surrounding college football has shifted into high gear.

On the well-manicured playing fields of big and small colleges alike, college football, whether played before crowds of a few thousand nestling on wooden bleachers or a hundred thousand roaring fans packed into gigantic stadiums, goes a long way toward displaying the variety of the American populace itself, and the variety of its sources of talent, too.

Unlike the past, when Black players were almost universally barred from the two leadership "thinking positions" in football — quarterback on offense, middle linebacker on defense — today, it's largely talent that wins out. The guy out there

on the field calling the formation's signals is likely to be Black as well as white.

Statistics help tell the story: forty-three percent of all varsity players in Division 1-A, comprised of the largest 117 colleges, are Black; and their numbers are rising.

That's on the field.

But on the sidelines, where the head coaches and the assistant coaches pace up and down watching their teams' fortunes rise and fall, it's quite a different story.

On the sidelines, and in the offices of collegiate athletic departments, it's still largely a matter of the leadership positions being reserved for white males.

That's unjust, and inexcusable.

Among those making that change — and wanting to change things for the better — is Myles Brand, the new

To Be Equal

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president of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the giant association overseeing intercollegiate athletics.

Brand, the former president of the University of Indiana, says bluntly that too often, "qualified minority candidates who have demonstrated ... talent, determination, and effort have been figuratively stiff-armed by a process that prevents them from competing for head coaching positions or jobs in senior athletic administration."

tion."

Again, statistics help tell the story, and they are starting.

Brand points out that only four of the 117 head coaches in Division 1-A are Black, and, excluding the historically Black colleges and universities, just 15 out of 547 collegiate head football coaches are African-American.

The dearth of Black (and Latino) coaches doesn't just exist in football. Of nearly 14,000 head coaching positions (excluding historically Black colleges and universities) in the NCAA, fewer than 800 are African-American males and fewer than 200 are African-American females.

Furthermore, excluding the historically Black colleges and universities, there are only 29 African-American male and three African-American female directors of athletics among institutions in all NCAA divisions.

"Without question," he adds, "there's enough talent among minority coaches throughout college sports to

begin making a difference immediately. It is shortsighted to assume that the coaching staff at the top historically Black colleges and universities could not improve the win-loss records of most programs in Division I. And yet, the names of those individuals rarely appear on the lists of candidates many athletic directors begin carrying around this time of year."

Brand says that much of the problem is rooted in the hiring process for these positions, which now is heavily dependent on a limited, old-boys network and is often done "in a week or a weekend from a short list of candidates known only to a closed circle of confidants."

College presidents, he says, are the ones to change that process. They "must not yield to the pressures of making quick decisions, even when media coverage is intense, if that haste excludes a full and fair hearing for qualified minority candidates."

His proposal is that the hiring, for example, of a head football coach should involve a search committee representing the athletics department, faculty, administrators, and perhaps alumni and others from outside the institution. Its job would be to develop a diverse pool of candidates, and recommend the three or four best qualified to the president.

The president would then

interview the finalists and, in consultation with the institution's athletics director, either make the final decision or recommend that candidate to the institution's trustees.

This process, Brand says, shouldn't take more than a few weeks to complete.

Brand also supports the five-part evaluation system to judge hiring practices in Division 1-A football being developed by the Black Coaches Association as part of its effort to expand the competition for collegiate coaching positions.

The NCAA itself now funds a total of 16 programs to help minority men and women gain the skills to assume leadership within college sports. But, of course, the association is not involved in hiring decisions at the campus level.

Brand readily acknowledges that there's no guarantee that his proposal would guarantee a significantly more diverse group of head coaches and athletic directors than exists now.

But his point is that something must be tried now. African-Americans have long shown they can star on the playing fields. They deserve the chance to star on the sidelines, too.

As he says, "This is not a problem to be addressed next year. It is a problem for each campus to address now. We've waited far too long."

Curry

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"As an appellate court judge, you ruled that paint companies could use Proposition 13 as a shield to avoid paying fees per the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Act—a critical law used to evaluate, screen, and provide medical treatment for children at risk for lead poisoning. The California Supreme Court reversed you unanimously."

And that's only part of her sordid record.

Even California Chief Justice Ronald George, a Republican appointee who sided with Brown in an anti-affirmative ruling ("Hi-Voltage Wire Works, Inc. v. City of San Jose"), said her written opinion in the case minimized the existence of racial discrimination.

"The general theme that runs through the majority opinion's historical discussion—that there is no meaningful distinction between discriminatory racial policies that were imposed for the clear purpose of

establishing and preserving racial segregation, on the one hand, and race-conscious affirmative action programs whose aim is to break down or eliminate the continuing effects of such segregation and discrimination, on the other hand—represents a serious distortion of history and does a grave disservice to the sincerely held views of a significant segment of our populace," he wrote.

Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) argues that Brown "is a conservative African-American woman, and for some, that alone disqualifies her nomination to the D.C. Circuit."

No, she is unqualified because she has demonstrated that she is unable to put aside her conservative political views and fairly uphold the law.

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Overstreet

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corruption in Southern Nevada seems to justify the critics' fears."

For the first time and simultaneously, the two white dailies got it right about people's fears. Your boy's fear is based solely on being a real big fan of the Bill of Rights.

In Article IV of X, it reads: "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall be issued, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons to be seized."

Boy, old English and all, number IV sure sounds good to me.

Strange as it may sound, if the indicated politicians can afford a good constitutional lawyer, unlike Dred Scott back in 1856, they may just go "Scott free" based on their constitutionally guaranteed rights being violated. This was not so 147 years when the Dred Scott decision handed down by the nation's

highest court. The FBI could have saved two years and hundreds of thousands of dollars just by talking to anyone close to the political scene in Las Vegas.

On Oct. 2, there was TYS III.

I wrote that political influence peddling enjoyed "art form status" in Las Vegas. Couple this fact with the often shared belief that the "body politic is Hollywood for ugly people" and Las Vegas is also known as "Sin City," then can there be any wonder that the potential for violating the public trust would exist? Violating the public trust is one thing, taking away the personal freedoms of citizens is another thing all together.

By now, I hope you, like me, have come to the conclusion that the only thing good about the Patriot Act is that it contains a sunset provision in 2005.

It is going to be interesting to see what males or females, running for national elective office in 2004, have enough brass to say they will support voting the Patriot Act out of existence in 2005.

Walters

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the state and in the city of Richmond. He recently championed a measure to make the Richmond mayor, who is now appointed by the City Council, elected at large by the voters.

It was a resounding defeat for Blacks who had lined up against Wilder such as Congressman Bobby Scott, the venerable Black organization, Virginia Crusade for Voters and the NAACP. Blacks in the City fear that electing the mayor at large would reduce the voting power of Blacks and

thus, the measure might be subject to challenge on the grounds that it violates the Voting Rights Act. So, it may be subsequently challenged by the Justice Dept.

Overall, this is not great news for the Democrats, but will be trumpeted as for Republicans. I tend to think that it gives us little perspective on what will occur in the months ahead.

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Clingman

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challenge is always centered on the "doing," the positive action that emanates as a result of the many meetings we have. As far as economic empowerment conferences are concerned, it's one thing to practice it during the conference, at the vending tables, in the workshops, and during the book signings, but it's a different thing to leave the venue and really get involved in day-to-day economic empowerment. It's another thing to make it a habit to support Black owned businesses, to grow and expand our businesses via strategic partnerships, cooperative purchasing, and mergers. In other words, it's one thing to talk about it

and another thing to do it.

While I thank Jennifer Parker and everyone else who attended the conference, I encourage us as well to follow up and follow through on what we learned there. I pray that we will do what we say, practice what we preach, and walk our talk when it comes to economic empowerment and entrepreneurship. We cannot afford to keep going to meetings only to return home and do nothing with the information we gleaned from those meetings. Let's get busy y'all.

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