

Blacks

(Continued from Page 1) showed that Bush awarded more than half of his political appointments (54 percent) to White men, while Clinton awarded 57 percent of those appointments to women and people of color.

The GAO report, ordered early last year by several members of the Congressional Black Caucus, including Norton and U. S. Rep. Danny K. Davis (D-Ill.), showed that the senior executive level of the United States Government was more than 91 percent White, with little hope for change.

"More than half of the 6,100 career SES [people serving in leadership, management or director positions] employed on October 1, 2000, will have left service by October 1, 2007," the GAO report projects. "Using current SES appointment trends, the only significant changes in diversity will be an increase in the number of White women and an essentially equal decrease in White men."

President Bush frequently points to Powell and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice — both serving in roles that have not

traditionally gone to African-Americans — as examples of his having a diverse Cabinet. However, the reports paint a different picture.

The OPM data shows that Blacks comprise 7.9 percent of all senior executive personnel of cabinet-level agencies while Whites comprise 85 percent. The overall federal workforce comprises 41 percent White men, 26 percent White women, 8 percent Black men and 11 percent Black women, according to the EEOC.

Ironically, Secretary of State Powell, the head of the State Department, boasts of the department's diversity, even though it has the fewest number of top-level Black officials.

"We have the most incredible diversity in the world," Powell states in a "Message from the Secretary" posted on a State Department Web site titled "Careers Representing America."

Powell continues, "At U. S. Department of State, we make the most of this strength. The Department strives to reflect the wide diversity that is America. Today, the stage of diplomacy can only be set with the drama

of our democracy's diversity, and we are committed to hire, train, mentor, sustain and maintain the diversity of America to present to the world the foreign policy of the American people."

At the time of the GAO report in January 2003, the number of White men at career senior executive levels in the State Department was 68 (67 percent) with 67 (67 percent) projected after replacement in 2007. The number of White women senior executives was 28 (28 percent) with 30 (30 percent) projected after replacements in 2007. If current hiring and attrition trends continue, the report notes, in three years there will be no Black males and only one Black female still working in the senior levels of the State Department.

Using more current figures, OPM now reports that there are three Black men (1.4 percent), three Black women (1.4 percent), 49 White women (23 percent) and 110 White men (50 percent) at the senior-level of the State Department.

This means that over the 22 months that it took the State Department to hire 42 White men and 21 White

women in SES positions, the department hired only three Black men and two Black women.

The lack of progress does not please Representative Davis, the ranking Democrat on the House Subcommittee on Civil Service, which has held several hearings on the issue since the GAO study was released.

"We have to learn how to practice what we preach," Davis says. "Our government, unfortunately, has been fraught with contradictions. That is, we say one thing and do another. We talk peace and practice war. We talk diversity and yet can't find a way. We talk small business development, but continue to put emphasis on contract bundling. Those are kind of mixed signals. I guess as the Indians would say, 'We speakum with fork tongue.'"

State Department spokeswoman Brenda Greenberg says the department is trying to improve.

"We are reaching out to African-American professional organizations and also historically Black colleges and universities to increase their awareness of career opportunities at the State De-

partment. And we are also reaching out to other colleges and universities as well," Greenberg says. "And we are seeing the impact of this aggressive recruitment strategy."

However, critics say these are not new overtures and call on the State Department to do more.

"Those people with that talent have to be spotted and in fact groomed for the [senior executive jobs] or else you're going to continue to have White males dominating," Norton says. "There are many agencies where Blacks are in fact at the 13th and 14th level where you would expect that the senior executive service would have a pool from which it could draw and clearly is not drawing."

Plans for diversity improvement programs could be hindered by new Bush administration guidelines that deemphasize the collection of numbers and statistics.

The guidelines, approved a year ago by the EEOC, instruct managers to de-emphasize the statistical makeup of their workforce while pressing to eliminate barriers to the advancement of women and minorities. Prior direc-

tives had called for federal agency managers to consider the statistical makeup of their staffs as a tip-off that people of color and women might be under represented in the workplace.

"Conclusions concerning the existence of workplace barriers cannot be drawn from gross numerical assessments," the directive states. "Rather, the identification of workplace barriers will require a thorough examination of all of the circumstances."

Norton says numbers alone have never been the sole determiner of racial under representation and various other factors must be included in order to determine possible barriers. But the directive, as stated, appears to undermine the importance of numbers, she says. "It gives the impression that numbers are irrelevant and numbers are very relevant."

The bottom line is the growth of affirmative action, Norton says: "There was a time when the federal government literally set the example for the private sector — although never at the top. If the government doesn't set the example who will?"

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