

C O M M E N T A R Y

Race, gender and corporate America

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

There is undeniable evidence that African-Americans have made impressive progress in Corporate America. Kenneth Chenault is chairman and CEO of American Express. Richard Parsons is chairman and CEO of AOL Time Warner. E. Stanley O'Neal holds a similar title at Merrill Lynch & Co. Aylwin Lewis is president and CEO of Kmart. Ann M. Fudge holds the same titles at Young & Rubicam Brands.

A report just released by the Executive Leadership Council in Washington, D.C., offers more encouraging news. According to its findings, African-Americans now hold 8.1 percent of the board seats on Fortune 500 companies.

What that means on an individual level is that some African-Americans are finally being allowed to advance to a level commensurate with their talent. Collectively, it means that young Black kids can now model their lives and careers after Black corporate superstars rather than professional athletes and entertainers.

As much progress as we've made in this area, there is still plenty of room for growth.

While it is impressive that Blacks hold 8.1 percent of the board seats on Fortune 500 companies, that's about double the African-American representation in the executive

suite. In other words, it's twice as easy to be an outsider elected to set policy for a Fortune 500 firm than it is for a Black to rise to the top from within the company.

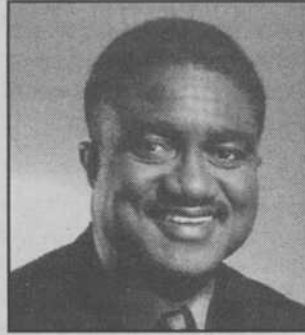
A 1995 report by the federal Glass Ceiling Commission observed, "At the highest levels of business, there is indeed a barrier only rarely penetrated by women or persons of color. Consider: 97% of the senior managers of Fortune 1000 industrial and Fortune 500 companies are White; 95 to 97 percent are male.

In Fortune 2000 industrial and service companies, 5 percent of senior managers are women — and of that 5 percent, virtually all are White."

The Glass Ceiling report observes, "...The world at the top of the corporate hierarchy does not yet look anything like America. Two-thirds of our population, and 57 percent of the working population, is female, or minorities, or both."

The commission projects that this year, people of color and women will make up 62 percent of the workforce.

U.S. Census Bureau projections show that over the next 50 years, the U.S. population will grow by 50 percent, with 90 percent of



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that growth occurring among people of color while the White population increases by only 7.4 percent. Given these dramatic changes in the population and the workforce, White males can't continue to enjoy the virtual monopoly they've held on the top jobs in Corporate America.

The Executive Leadership Council represents African-Americans at the senior level in corporations, two or three rungs below the CEO. What is striking about its inaugural report on Black board directorships is that while 67 percent of the Fortune 500 companies have at least one Black on their board, one-third (33 percent) have no African-American directors.

There are 5,572 total board seats for Fortune 500 companies. Of those, 449 (8.1 percent) are held by African-Americans. Black men hold more than three times as many seats than African-American women. Black men hold 344 of the total board seats, or 6.2 percent, and Black women hold only 105, or 1.9 percent.

Interestingly, there was a major difference between the top 100 members of the Fortune 500 and the bottom 100. Of the top 100 companies on the Fortune 500 list, Blacks held 10.9 percent of the seats.

For the 100 at the bottom of the list, Blacks were only 0.6 percent of their directors.

What was surprising was the number of firms that have no Black directors yet expect African-Americans to continue supporting their products.

They include: Safeway, Inc., Intel Corp., Kmart Holding Corp., Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Co., Lehman Brothers Holdings, Inc., Rite Aid Corp., Qwest Communications International, Humana, Inc., Whirlpool, Capitol One Financial Corp., Centex Corp., Pulte Homes, Guardian Life Insurance Co. of America, American Standard Cos., Boise Cascade Corp., Newell Rubbermaid, Inc., the First American Corp., Apple Computer, Land O'Lakes, Southwest Airline Co., N.C.R. Corp., Barnes & Noble, Mattel, Maytag Corp., Caesars Entertainment, Dole Food Co., Goodrich Corp., Jones Apparel Group, Levi Strauss & Co., Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Ross Stores, Host Marriott Corp., and Gateway.

If those companies don't think enough of us to have an African-American on their boards of directors, we should think enough of ourselves not to spend our money with them. And we should let them know why we're taking our business elsewhere.

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Blacks as masochists: Protests no way to fight abuse

By James E. Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

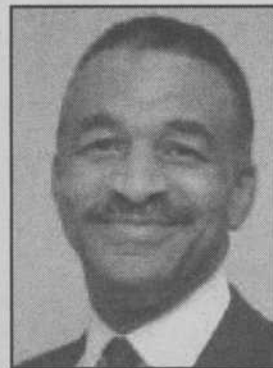
"How strange it is to see men of sound sense, and of tolerably good judgment, act so diametrically in opposition to their own interest." — From David Walker's speech to the Massachusetts General Colored Association, as printed in *Freedom's Journal*, December 19, 1828.

It would not take much more for me to conclude that our people willingly submit to mistreatment, discrimination, and abuse by the establishment. Police brutality is running rampant across this land, from the brutal murders of Amadou Diallo and Patrick Dorismond in New York, Roger Owensby and Nathaniel Jones in Cincinnati, and the

latest outrages, the killing of Kenneth Walker in Columbus, Ga., and 13 year-old Devin Brown in Los Angeles.

Economic apartheid shows itself as "normal business practices" in our cities, as stadiums are built for millionaires, in our state highway and school construction projects, and in our federal government as it goes about its business handing out no-bid contracts to Halliburton and Armstrong Williams.

Every week, Blacks are treated like common animals, being beaten, choked, electrocuted, maced, cheated, exploited, and abused



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in any number of ways. Our solution is to march, protest, or start a protracted legal case that takes years to settle, despite the blatant guilt of the perpetrators.

The latest in this tragicomedy is the outlandish scenario that took place in Inglewood, California, where a White cop was awarded \$1 million after he physically abused a young Black man — on television no less.

Here in Cincinnati, the City Council debates whether the cop should be allowed to electrocute 7-year-old children with their new toys: Tasers. Can you imagine that? They actually have to decide on shoot-

ing 50,000 volts of electricity through a 35-pound child, and since the overwhelming majority of those youth who have already been Tasered are Black; you know what that means for our 7-year-olds.

Note: Black conventioners, Black college football teams, and music festival patrons coming to Cincinnati despite the boycott, leave your children at home. You may be able to survive 50,000 volts, but not your children.

Remember, this is the same city administration that participated in putting 500 Black families out of their homes under false pretenses and rationalized the killing of Nathaniel Jones. If they would do this to their own
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La Grande

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or reconstructed public facilities and infrastructure — roads, fire stations, libraries, youth and senior centers, etc.

- CDBG funds assisted over 23 million persons and households last year.

- The program directly contributed to the creation or retention of 78,000 jobs that same year.

- More than 1.5 million youth were served by after school enrichment programs, and 100,065 children in 205 communities across the country were provided with childcare services enabling their parents to go to work during 2004.

Another noteworthy statistic shows that over 80 percent of businesses assisted by CDBG were still in operation after three years.

The replication of HUD's CDBG program within the Department of Commerce (another change suggested by the Bush administration) will require rebuilding HUD's infrastructure and will result in inefficiencies, greater complexity and less aid to fewer

cities.

Under the Department of Commerce it would be a competitive process, as opposed to CDBG now, which is an entitlement grant where you know the monies will be there, and there is a political constituency to argue for the funds.

How can service providers plan, put energy into the application process when there is uncertainty if there will be money annually or for the project down the road?

The success of CDBG has been its locally focused, citizen participation, local elected official driven process, as opposed to a federally driven process, which selects the activities that communities must fund. The locally driven process provides flexibility and does not take a "one size fits all" approach.

Instead of attempting to consolidate and cut badly needed economic development programs, the focus should be to make the federal government's economic development programs complement each other, which would produce a win-win for government, as well as the individuals that are served.

CDBG is a program that works — a program that should be built upon, not torn down. It has a proven record of flexibility and the ability to fit with locally determined needs.

Some people think that CDBG can't be eliminated, but it is possible.

Both houses are controlled by republicans, and all it takes is an up or down vote. It's crucial that we remind them why CDBG was instituted by Nixon and signed by Ford in the first place.

Act now to prevent losses to Nevadans:

- The elimination of CDBG, to the state of Nevada alone, will result in lost revenues of \$22.4 million dollars a year or \$112 million dollars over five years.

- The five year capital improvement projects that the County has put in its five year plan wouldn't be funded beyond 2006, when the proposed cuts would go into effect.

- For example, in the five year plan, a food bank to be built in Laughlin to serve the poor people there, wouldn't happen.

- Nonprofits who provide services to the people at 80% or less of median wouldn't be

able to provide much needed services; sub recipients that the County has interlocal agreements with won't be able to serve their communities.

- In Henderson there are plans to build a Nathan Adelson Hospice on the community college site, that wouldn't happen.

- None of the proposed recreational facilities to be built in unincorporated Clark County would happen if CDBG is cut.

The proposed elimination of this program constitutes major surgery; it is going to cut at the very heart of our communities. If we were ever going to come together collectively to save a viable program, the time is now.

Take action, don't wait. The budget process will begin next Monday and run through mid-April.

Take this opportunity to call and ask your representatives to save CDBG — one person, one house, one block, one street and one community at a time.

Voting against President Bush's proposal will ensure that low to moderate income Americans will still have a fighting chance.