

# Unions + rights groups = poor match

By Harry C. Alford  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Since the beginning of the idea of integration and business development within African-American communities, construction unions have been livid and contentious against the efforts.

When the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was enacted, construction unions did their best to woo civil rights groups from fully implementing the law. That's why it caught them all by surprise when the first signs of implementation came from the conservative Republican camp.

Dr. Arthur, "Art" A. Fletcher started the implementation out of President Nixon's Department of Labor. First was the Philadelphia Plan, which integrated and set rigid goals for the activities of the Philadelphia shipyards.

It shocked the unions into a crisis mode but there was nothing they could do. Next came the Chicago Plan and the unions there dug in. When Art entered the Palmer House Hotel and began his briefings, the head of the Chicago unions called Secretary of Labor Schultz and exclaimed, "It's bad enough you are starting this stuff but did you have to send a n\*\*\*\*\* to present it?"

The union workers swore that Fletcher would not leave the Palmer House alive. They surrounded the hotel and a few broke through security going door to door yelling "Where's

Fletcher?!!!"

Art and his secretary secured his hotel door with all the furniture they could move. The riot outside and the vigilante action inside did not stop until President Richard Nixon called Chicago Mayor Richard A. Daley Sr. and stated, "I have put the 101st Airborne on alert. You hurt my guy in any way and they are going to take over your city within 24 hours."

Daley called off the goons. But it wasn't totally over. The close friend of the Chicago construction unions at the time, the Mafia, put a contract hit on Art. It took Nixon's order to the FBI to make this go away.

The unflappable Art continued with his mission — to present Affirmative Action to the United States. Constantly, he met adversity from liberal civil rights groups who could not understand how he could do this without their permission. There were congressional hearings and they would come in opposing his views and ideas.

The unions decided to "buy" influence within these groups and, perhaps, slow or even dismantle his efforts. Year after year Art would go to the annual convention of the NAACP and request a resolution of support for Affirmative Action.



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And year after year the union influence would forbid the management of the NAACP to raise the issue. In fact, it wasn't until 1990 that the NAACP proposed and passed a resolution supporting Affirmative Action, 21 years after the Philadelphia Plan.

It's much worse today. It saddens me to see the NAACP back in the fundraising doldrums again. The fat unions will circle around like vultures in the Savannah and inject more of their money and vicious influence on them even more. They are going to be there like never before pushing for construction union proposals that will cause great disparities in hiring and training for African-Americans. Construction unions have employment disparities that are totally counter to the Civil Rights Movement and the views of its pioneers.

It is sad we have come to this point. It takes groups like the National Association of Minority Contractors and the National Black Chamber of Commerce to fight these assaults. One would think we could just watch and thank our brothers in the Civil Rights arena to do this but instead we find ourselves fighting them.

In what has been the greatest triumph for the adversarial construction unions in the

1990s was the changing of 49 CFR Part 23 to 49 CFR Part 26 by U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater under the authority of President Bill Clinton.

It reduced the power of Affirmative Action by the USDOT to the pleasure of the union lobby. There at the announcement and press conference was the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, standing next to Secretary Slater, applauding the debacle.

Subsequent to that, Secretary Slater cancelled Executive Order 11246 which sets the standards for employment counting and tracking of the racial make up of a workforce.

On the Cancellation Order was a reference made to the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. It was like — "Hey, it's alright with them so all of y'all be cool."

The problem is that "them" included our nemesis the construction unions who had them in their pocket. This was a very sad moment and turn of events. When the Bush Administration came in they exclaimed, "Hey, don't blame us. Your people did it to you."

We have yet to hear a voice of outrage or complaint about this from any civil rights organization yet. We will fight this and win in the end. Too bad the victory will come void of the civil rights community.

Harry Alford is Co-founder, President and CEO of the National Black Chamber of Commerce.

# Imus flap highlights need for media diversity

By Marc H. Morial  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Back in April, the controversy over racially and sexually insensitive remarks made by radio shock jock Don Imus toward Rutgers University's women's basketball squad made all too clear the lack of sensitivity accorded people of color over the nation's airwaves and the lack of diversity among the broadcast media's ranks.

In a nation where 33 percent of the population is of color, and has seen the Civil Rights Movement open doors for minorities in corporate America, government and the halls of academia, the picture reflected on the public airwaves is far from realistic.

"Cable news remains an overwhelmingly White and male preserve. The Don Imus controversy put a momentary dent in this pattern as a result of the increase in appearances by African-Americans over that week — but only a dent, and not a particularly large one

at that, concludes a report by the Washington, D.C.-based media watchdog group Media Matters.

"When an issue involving gender and race/ethnicity dominates the news, the cable networks do bring on a more diverse lineup of guests than they ordinarily do. The question, then, is why their guest lists are so overwhelmingly White and male the rest of the time."

The group, which monitored cable news network shows in April, found that even during the week of the Imus controversy, Whites — especially men — tended to dominate. They accounted for from 54 percent (CNN) to 72 percent (FOX News Channel) of guests booked. That's down from the week before, when Whites accounted for 71 percent (CNN) to 93 percent (MSNBC).



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After the Imus incident, White representation, which fell during the controversy, made a comeback of sorts to a range of 74 percent (CNN) to 82 percent (MSNBC). What is telling is that minority representation on MSNBC, which simulcast Imus, skyrocketed more than seven times to 30 percent of guest appearances during the week of the controversy, compared to the week before. After Imus, the percentage settled down to 14 percent.

It's not any better on the Sunday morning talk shows either, as Media Matters found in its "If It's Sunday, It's Still Conservative" report.

The study follows up on research conducted by the National Urban League in our 2005 Sunday Morning Apartheid report,

which found that only 8 percent of guests were Black over an 18-month period in 2004 and 2005.

The Media Matters report, which covered guest appearances in 2005 and 2006, found that Whites tended to outnumber minorities by 7 to 1, and that two out of every three guests were White men. At NBC's "Meet the Press," White men accounted for more than three quarters of guests followed by CBS News' "Face the Nation" with 72 percent. FOX News Sunday had the "best" track record with 62 percent.

The picture at America's daily newspapers is a little bit brighter in terms of newsroom employment of minorities but less than stellar. Nearly 7,800 minority journalists — or 13.62 percent of all full-time journalists — worked in the nation's newsrooms in 2006, down slightly from 13.87 percent in 2005, according to the American Society of Newspaper Editor's annual newsroom census.

It is only the second decline to have been observed since 1978, when the organization, which helps newsrooms increase their diversity to better reflect the communities they serve, began conducting the survey. Then, minority journalists made up nearly 4 percent of the total newsroom workforce.

"Diversity isn't just about numbers, it's about making our news reports better," said ASNE President Dave Zeeck in a press release accompanying the survey. "Diverse staffs lead to better journalism."

The number of newspapers with no minorities on their full-time staff grew by 15 — from 377 to 392. But a majority of them had small (10,000 or less) circulations. Of newspapers with more than 500,000 circulation, 17 percent of full-time journalists are minorities. The percentage rises to 22 percent for dailies under 500,000 but over (See Morial, Page 16)

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nese people decry China Towns? When have you heard Hispanics say, "Down with La Raza, we are one America"?

Trying to run away from who we are is embarrassing, unconscionable and cowardly. It also speaks volumes about our self-hate.

Newsflash!

You cannot run away from being Black!

You can't get promoted from being Black; you can't move away from being Black; and you can't get enough money to change your Blackness (Sorry, Michael).

Wherever you go, there your Blackness will be also. Whatever you do, your Blackness will do it with you. So, you may as well settle in and get down to business for your people, just as others are doing in this coun-

try; just as we used to do in this country, prior to "integration."

America comprises a tapestry of nations; it's not just one nation as the politicians would have you believe. That's utopian rhetoric, Pablum for Black people, because we are the only ones who buy the hype. White folks are circling their wagons right now at the specter of being outnumbered by so-called "minorities."

Hispanics are carving out their piece of the economic pie by unapologetically working in support of one another. So-called American Indians, after having raked in billions from their hotels, casinos and golf courses, are now branching out to other business ventures, off the reservation.

Koreans, Vietnamese and Chinese are

making moves to control more industries in America. Pakistanis and Indians are buying all the businesses they can find.

What are Black people doing, collectively, to improve and solidify our position in this nation of nations? We are trying to run away from our Blackness, which, if we succeed, will only cause us to disappear.

Why is nationalistic action bad only when it is promoted by Black people? The groups I mentioned, as well as Jewish people here and abroad, are all nationalistic; Joel Kotkin calls them "Tribes."

So what's it going to be, Black America? Nationalism or nihilism?

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