

The On-Going Case Of Vicki Bell



She was told the senior director of personnel could not call her but wanted her to return to the bank because she was a good employee. After a six week period, Mrs. Bell returned to the bank. The director of personnel stated that he wanted her to start in a different region which was synonymous. He praised her for being such a good employee and paid for the six weeks by treating it as a personal leave with all seniority and benefits reinstated while at the same time demoting her from a grade 14 to grade 12 and decreasing her salary by \$195 per month.

She was placed in a training program which, for the most part, mirrored her past experience. This training was stretched out exactly one year until her statute of limitation for the racist act as manager had expired. Mrs. Bell believes this was deliberate for the following reasons:

1) She was never given an objective review during her 8 months period as manager which she had requested on more than one occasion. To this day, even during the court proceedings, there was never any valid reason given that Mrs. Bell did anything to deserve a demotion.

2) There was never an investigation done on the racist acts until Mrs. Bell had filed formal charges.

3) Mrs. Bell was again demoted 2 more grades to a grade 10 from a 12 down to an assignment she had performed some 7 years prior. Along with this humiliation she was also closely supervised and extensive notes were taken on her without any just reason. Different standards were used in her evaluation than with her white peers.

4) When asked during discovery to provide names of any white employees that had been demoted from a 14 to a 10 they were unable to do so.

5) Mrs. Bell was not given an evaluation of performance rating for some 28 months. The normal time is twelve months. All of her prior evaluations had been above average.

6) Mrs. Bell was not given loan limits for quite some time even though she was very experienced. She was still expected to relieve other branch managers and train new lending officers even though she had been demoted so severely.

Continued Next Week

Continued from Last Week

Past Progress

The United States has made significant progress toward the goal of full participation for minority citizens. Yet, too often this fact goes unacknowledged. Advocates for disadvantaged groups, understandably eager to focus the attention of their fellow citizens on unfinished business, often ignore or minimize the very markers of improvement that might inspire new energy for their cause. Those who question the efficacy of government programs or court mandates also have been eager to cite examples of regression, and to render verdicts of failure.

This unwitting alliance has had at least one unhappy result: because so many successes have gone unnoticed and unremarked, a sense of weariness and discouragement has come to characterize the national debate over the pace and process of minority advancement.

Yet, the progress is there — on the record, revealed in census figures and the lives of real people. We must recognize and underscore that progress. It is impressive proof of what we can achieve together — and of what disadvantaged citizens can achieve for themselves. It is a tribute to the perseverance and frequent heroism of minority citizens in demanding their rights. And it is a tribute to the capacity of our democratic system to respond and change.

Consider these facts:

■ In the tumultuous 1960s, while the median income of white families rose by 34 percent after inflation, Black family incomes increased by 49 percent. The recession of the early 1970s slowed growth for all groups, but even in this period, Black median family income tracked closely with that of whites. Income for both groups rose by less than one percent between 1970 and 1975.¹⁸

■ Education programs like Head Start and Chapter 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act led to real progress for poor and minority students in educational achievement. For example, Chapter 1 students have gained seven to 12 months in reading, and 11 to 12 months in math for every year they have participated in the program, resulting in significant advancement for millions of young people.¹⁷

■ Between 1977 and 1987, average scores for Black students taking the SAT increased by 21 points on the verbal portion and 20 points in math. In contrast, scores for white students rose just one point on the verbal test and remained the same for math.¹⁸

■ High school graduation rates for most minority students have improved dramatically. In 1970, only 60 percent of Blacks between the ages of 18 and 24 had graduated from high school. By 1975, this figure had risen to 68 percent, and in 1985 it was 76 percent. For Hispanics, the high school graduation rate in 1975 was 56 percent; a decade later, the figure was 63 percent.¹⁹

■ College attendance and graduation by minority students increased significantly, due in large measure to the availability of federal aid. Between 1971 and 1981, total college minority enrollment jumped by 56 percent.²⁰ Enrollment growth in community colleges and adult education programs was especially heavy.

■ In the 15 years after Medicaid began, Black infant mortality dropped 49 percent, more than nine times the rate of improvement during the preceding 15 years.²¹

These gains did not erase earlier disparities. Most groups made progress in this period. With respect to high school graduation, for example, the rate for whites increased marginally between 1975 and 1985, from 83 percent to 84 percent.²² But the remaining gap should not keep us from acknowledging that the improved educational performance of Blacks and Hispanics represents a major social achievement.

Celebrating progress should not engender complacency. Nor

"One-Third Of A Nation"

do we want to paint a false picture. Successive waves of inflation and recession in the 1970s and early 1980s, accompanied by dramatic changes in our economic structure, eroded much of the improvement cited above, and the sustained growth of recent years has not made up the difference. Also, such averages must not obscure the fact that young people bear the greatest burden of deprivation. In 1985, 23 percent of all American preschool children were members of families with incomes below the poverty level. For Black children, the figure was almost 47 percent, for Hispanics almost 42 percent, and for whites, 18.7 percent.²³

Nonetheless, we believe it is useful — indeed essential — to underscore the advances made by minority groups in the past 25 years, and the conditions under which they were achieved. The formula for progress is no mystery. It consists of four elements:

■ Economic growth with low inflation;

■ A political consensus favoring minority advancement;

■ Adequately funded, well-administered programs at every level of government and in the private sector targeted at disadvantaged citizens; and

■ The determination of minority group members to help themselves.

The lesson that progress is possible, given the right economic conditions and a strong national commitment, is especially relevant now. In the last ten years, not only have we lost the momentum of earlier minority progress, we have suffered actual reversals in the drive to achieve full equality for minority citizens.

In higher education, for example, the picture of stalled progress is dramatically clear. **During the same period when the pool of minority high school graduates was becoming bigger and better than ever, minority college attendance rates initially fell, and have remained disproportionately low.**

These figures illustrate the dimensions of the problem:

■ Between 1970 and 1975, the percentage of Black high school graduates 24 years old or younger who were enrolled in or had completed one or more years of college rose from 39 percent to 48 percent; over the same period, the corresponding rate for whites remained steady at 53 percent. However, between 1975 and 1985, while the college participation rate for white youths climbed to 55 percent, the rate for blacks dropped to 44 percent.²⁴ Recently released figures indicate that in 1986, the rate for blacks rose to 47 percent — still slightly below 1975.²⁵

■ The rate of college attendance for Hispanic youths remained stagnant between 1975 and 1985. Available evidence indicates a slight decline, from 49 percent to 47 percent.²⁶

■ For American Indians, high school graduation and college attendance rates remain the lowest for any minority group. A report by the Cherokee Nation found that only 55 percent of American Indians graduate from high school, and of these only 17 percent go on to college.²⁷

These figures become even more disturbing when we look beyond college enrollment to college graduation. Minority students continue to complete their undergraduate degrees at rates far lower than their white counterparts. Also, a much smaller percentage go on to graduate and professional schools.

For example, although Blacks made up 10 percent of all college students in 1984-85, they received only 8 percent of the associates' degrees and 6 percent of the baccalaureate degrees conferred that year. Hispanics made up 5 percent of enrollees, but received only 3 percent of the baccalaureate degrees. Hispanics did better at the community college level, receiving Hispanics did better at the community college level, receiving 4.5 percent of the associates' degrees. By contrast, 80

percent of the undergraduate students in 1984-85 were white — but they received 85 percent of the degrees.²⁸

At the graduate level, the falloff for Blacks is dramatic. Between 1976 and 1985, the number of Blacks earning master's degrees declined by 32 percent. Although Hispanics and American Indians registered slight increases, their share of master's degrees remains disproportionately low — 2.4 percent and 0.4 percent.²⁹

In certain critical fields of study, the minority presence is nearly non-existent. For example, in computer science, only one Black received a doctorate out of 355 awarded in 1986. In mathematics, Blacks received only six of the 730 doctorates awarded in that year.³¹

Current statistics also indicated that fewer minority students are preparing for teaching careers. In the nation's historically Black colleges and universities, which traditionally have produced more than half the Black teachers, the percentage of first-year students intending to major in education dropped from 13.4 in 1977 to 8.7 in 1986.³² This suggests that in the future, not only minority students but all students will see fewer minority teachers over the course of their schooling. Such an outcome is a particular problem for minority students, for whom such teachers serve as important role models. But it also is a loss for majority students, who otherwise only rarely may be exposed directly to minority citizens in professional roles.

We stress these trends in higher education because of its special importance in the life of our country. For more than a generation, a college education has been a key part of the American Dream — and, for many individuals and families, a good measurement of progress toward its fulfillment. Statistics on incomes and living standards support the belief that college is the passport to greater opportunity and achievement.

Participation in higher education also is an important barometer of well-being for the nation as a whole. We rely on our colleges and universities to impart to young people — and increasingly to older students as well — the knowledge and skills that will prepare them for leadership in business, the professions, and government. A decline in educational attainment by any substantial population group is cause for deep concern — especially at a time when technological advances and global competition put a premium on trained in-

telligence, advanced skills, and a high degree of adaptability.

The aptitude for higher education and the ability to succeed in college and graduate school do not materialize suddenly at age 18; they are developed in childhood. Currently, we lose disproportionate numbers of minority students at each level of schooling, culminating in low participation rates in higher education. Only through intense, coordinated efforts at every state — beginning with adequate prenatal care, improved nutrition, and quality child care and extending through programs to increase minority retention and improve student performance at the elementary and secondary levels — can we hope to reverse these dismal trends. Too few children benefit from such efforts. Although preschool programs increase school success and reduce later expenditures for special and compensatory education, fewer than one in five eligible children is enrolled in Head Start. The Chapter 1 Compensatory Education program, which reduces the probability that a child will have a repeat a grade, now serves only half of those who need its services.

Beyond those for higher education, other statistics also suggest a reversal of progress toward full minority participation in American life — statistics that should be a cause for concern to all citizens, and a spur to national action.

Statistics tracking family incomes, for example, reveal a disturbing widening of the gap between living standards for minorities and whites:

■ After rising from 54 percent of the white median in the 1950s to 61.5 percent in 1975, black median family income fell to 57.5 percent of the white median in 1985.

■ In the same ten-year period, Hispanic families also fell back slightly. In 1975 their income was only 66.9 percent of the median for whites; in 1985, the figure was 65.2 percent.³³

■ Between 1973 and 1986, average real annual earnings for Black males ages 20 to 24 fell by 50 percent, from \$9,818 to \$5,299 in 1985 dollars.³⁴

With progress in key areas having come to a halt or even moving into reverse, the American people are at a critical point of decision: Will we rekindle our commitment to eliminating those disparities, a commitment that in the past often bore remarkable fruit? Or are we resigned to a long-term retreat, in which the gaps between minorities and the majority will widen and continuing inequality will be tolerated?

It's Father's Day



**I'm A DAD ...
And I'll Be MAD,
If You Don't Deliver
Jewelry So BAD ...
From National Gold & Silver!**

ONE FREE PAIR
STERLING EARRINGS
Per Person
With Coupon



620 S.W. Broadway
Portland, OR 97205
Phone
248-2156

Layaways Welcome

Skin Deep Beauty and Barber Supply

*Skin Deep Beauty and Barber Supplies •
We Sell To The Public • We Carry Most Of The Products
For Beauty Care And Pleasure • We Will Stock Your
Order To Your Satisfaction!*

— Remember, Beauty Is Only Skin Deep!!! —

1761 N.E. Dekum • Portland, Oregon 97211 • 283-5573
WHOLESALE AND RETAIL

WE WILL BEAT ANYBODY'S PRICE ON:

- ★ CEREALS
- ★ PET FOODS
- ★ SOAPS AND DETERGENTS
- ★ CAT LITTER
- ★ CHARCOAL BRIQUETS
- ★ SALSAS & BEANS
- ★ FROZEN & DELI
- ★ CANNED & PACKAGED FOODS
- ★ MUCH, MUCH MORE!



Don't pay supermarket prices! Shop here first! No membership costs! No coupons needed! Serving Portland for over 30 years!

The Bee Company, Inc.

FOOD STAMPS WELCOMED Mon-Sat 9:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. 800 N. Killingsworth FOOD STAMPS WELCOMED

283-3171