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OPINION

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GUEST COLUMN - THE NIKE CONTROVERSY CONTINUES

## Nike is Pushing Progress for Minorities

BY PHILIP KNIGHT  
GUEST COLUMNIST

BEAVERTON, OR.-The company that became Nike started 25 years ago as a partnership between my track coach and myself. We each put in \$500 in capital, and my mother's laundry room was our first warehouse.

*Philip Knight is chairman/president of Nike Inc.*

In 25 years we have made a ton of mistakes, but overall, we are enormously proud of what has been accomplished. This includes the area of minority relations.

Each year for the past four years, every manager at Nike has received a letter from me outlining our affirmative action programs and our corporate commitment to cultural diversity. In 1987-88, we made slow but steady progress. Slow, because we were laying off

employees, not hiring. Steady, because our employees share the goal of sustaining Nike's open, untraditional environment.

In the past two years, our business has grown substantially and so has our minority recruiting and hiring. Since January of this year, Nike has hired more than 1,039 new employees, 21% of them minorities. In total, our domestic workforce is 14.4% minority. In Portland, where most of our employees live, we have a 7% available minority workforce and we employ 10% minority.

The two highest-paid people at Nike are not its white chairman and president, but black endorsees named Michael and Bo. They earned that ranking.

Three-quarters of our \$10 million philanthropic donations go to minority organizations.

What are we going to do next? Last week we announced:

•Within one year, we will have a minority member on the board of directors.

•Within 24 months, we will have a minority vice president.

•We will have a 10% increase in minority department heads.

•We will hold at least the 21% minority level in the next 1,000 employees we hire.

•Our progress will be monitored by an independent board of three minorities to be named before the middle of September and to report to us on a six-month basis.

We have not announced any goals for black-owned banks, law firms or insurance firms. All are welcome if they earn the business.

Every 1% of market share in this industry is worth \$50 million in revenue. Balancing an aggressive affirmative action program with the daily competitive needs of an industry that changes with enormous speed is a real challenge. It is, however, what I am paid to do.

I believe we have made real progress in the past few years, but we can do better. And we will.

BY ULLYSSES TUCKER, JR.

"Intimate relationships offer a promise of healing, for they have potential to free up the flow of unconditional love to those parts of us that are wounded, cut off, or deprived of caring..."

John Welwood, "Challenge of the Heart"

Deep down inside of everyone, there is a very strong need to be loved by someone without conditions or emotional restriction despite our fears. There is no greater feeling in the world than moving beyond personal judgements and opening ones heart to another human being. Unconditional love has the power to knock down the strongest walls and greatest barriers. There are places inside the heart that love can melt like a glacier on a warm spring day if people allowed themselves to feel. Can you recall the feeling you had when someone in our family gave birth and you saw the child for the first time? That's unconditional love. You, more than likely, melted when you saw the child and you felt warm all over. Yet in relationships, people have a tendency to emotionally withdraw or restricted the flow of these feelings or positive vibrations they might receive from another person. People start to question their feelings, re-live past pains, hurt, and unpleasant memories from old relationships. Will he or she hurt me? Is he or she for real? Can I trust him or her? Will we fulfill each others needs or meet each others expectations? There are all types of little questions that pop into the human mind when they progress to the edge of intimacy or loving without conditions. The "tug of war" between loving someone or accepting someone without conditions causes great tension in the interaction process. One side wants to

love and the other side is afraid.

Whether people accept it or not, the heart functions unconditionally when it comes to love. The heart can reach out, touch, understand, share, and let others get close. The heart can also be moved by individual acts of kindness and the heart knows the type of human being that makes it feel good. Despite our desire to maintain a safe distance or play it cool, the heart has a way of exposing a person's coolness or desire to not get overly involved. It is my belief that once you allow a person to crack the barriers or walls around your heart, you will be forever affected by that individual even if the relationship is no more. Love has reasons we have yet to discover as lovers, psychologist, or scholars. It (love) is beyond logic and reason. It simply is. I'm

**There are hundreds of elements that can prevent someone from loving unconditionally and each individual needs to check his or her reasons for holding back this love. If a person never progresses beyond loving someone without conditions, then they will never know the full extent to which someone can love them, support their goals and aspirations, or grow together.**

most confident that each of us can name a few "unconditional loves" that got away and still affect our lives in a positive way. I can.

Now, why is it that human beings have conditions or restrictions as to how much they can love somebody? Conditions evolve because of values, morals, lifestyles, attitudes, needs, sexual orientation, emotional/psychological needs, fears, beliefs, and dislikes. There are hundreds of elements that can prevent someone from loving unconditionally and each individual needs to check his or her reasons for holding back this love. If a person never progresses beyond loving someone without conditions, then they will never know the full extent to which someone can love them, support their goals and aspirations, or grow together. On the other hand, people shouldn't give unconditional love when nothing is there in return. For example, let's say that you're in a relationship that needs to be terminated simply because it is not productive. The heart may want to keep

loving the person must the same, but the reality is that the situation is dead-end. People damage themselves emotionally by cutting off this love, rather abruptly in some cases, when it is the very thing that brings them great joy. People only create greater pain for themselves when they shut down their feelings and this alone can make a person cold, aloof, and cut them off from future opportunities. Do not make the mistake of building a wall around your heart. Remember the relationship for what was.

It is important to note that before a human being can give unconditional love, they must love and care for themselves unconditionally. Loving ones self can only enhance another persons love for you. In many cases, human beings are products of the mixed-up conditions that their parents placed on love. Be it conscious or not, most parents place conditions on love and this ultimately affect peoples attitude toward love in the future. Parents should not use love as a technique to control a child's behavior because they internalize it. For example, I love you when you're good and not when you're bad. In my opinion, this teaches children, who then become adults, to love themselves conditionally. People must realize that they do not have to live up to a certain standard to be considered good because it is human nature. We all have good hearts, but the emotional scars and past baggage get in the way.

Unconditional love is naturally available to everyone, especially during the early periods of a relationship. If people can cope with the everyday drama associated with life like family, work responsibilities, racism, and still communicate enough to meet each others needs--then I say that there is a great chance for unconditional love. Outside factors have a negative way of eroding the communications process. It is tough to do during pain, doubt, and dark moments, but people need to stay focused. Remember, unconditional love is the passionate and abiding desire on the part of two people to produce together harmony in which each can be, spontaneously express his/her real self; to produce together an intellectual soil and an emotional climate in which each can flourish, far superior to what could be achieved alone...

## NIKE's Minority Hiring Practices To Be Debated Next Sunday

On August eleventh, Operation PUSH ambushed NIKE with a barrage of charges: not hiring enough blacks; too few blacks in management and board positions; too much overseas production; not contracting with enough black businesses. NIKE reacted by challenging PUSH's motives, citing \$6000 in advertising purchased by NIKE competitor REEBOK in PUSH's magazine. NIKE also defended its minority hiring practices and civic involvement--and promised to do more--but refused to release actual employment data.

The debate raises larger issues that affect all businesses: What responsibility do companies have to hire minorities? Do they have a GREATER duty if more of their customers are minorities? Are there different standards for companies based in areas with small minority populations? Are people who buy a company's products "investors", as PUSH labels NIKE buyers, or merely "customers"? Do companies owe more to the community or their bottom line?

White males hold 95% of the top management jobs in the U.S., and the percent of minorities in those jobs has changed little in the last decade. Why are so few minorities in upper management positions at major companies? How do NIKE's hiring practices compare with other local companies? Is a boycott an appropriate solution to the problem of minority hiring and advancement? What do YOU think? Join host Jack Faust, PUSH director Tyrone Crider and other guests for this timely debate on Sunday, September sixteenth from 6-7 p.m.

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## Observer Seeks New Writer

The HERS side of the His/Hers Opinion Page has been temporarily suspended while the Observer seeks a new writer

The *Portland Observer* is seeking a female to write the HERS viewpoint in the popular column "HIS/HERS Opinion" published weekly in this paper. Individuals should be creative, intelligent, committed, black, and an excellent writer. This person should also be able to meet publication deadlines. Please drop off samples at 4747 N.E. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. No telephone calls, please. A freelance fee will be discussed should you be the one selected.



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