



Opinion

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ABC agrees to increase minorities on network

New York - NAACP President and CEO, Kweisi Mfume and Patricia Fili-Kruschell, president, ABC Television Network, announced this week an agreement to adopt a series of initiatives to increase opportunities for people of color in all network operations. Under the agreement, ABC will create grants to discover and support new writing and directing talent and take other steps to expand the pool of candidates for network on air positions, program production, casting, promotion, professional services and procurement.

Mfume said, "The NAACP has worked extremely hard with our coalition partners over the last several months to create opportunities for qualified men and women of color. Their ability now to significantly impact executive, production and talent ranks of network television is greatly enhanced. This agreement is another step in creating greater opportunity in network television. Patricia Fili-Kruschell and the people of ABC are to be commended for their effort to have their network reflect the diversity of America and to increase opportunities for all." Within the next six months, ABC will make grants to minority individuals to discover and support new writing and directing talent. The network will also establish grants to people of color in universities and acting schools to increase the pool of actors available for all ABC programs.

ABC said it would expand the purchase of commercial time for programming in minority media and relationships with minority owned media placement companies. The ABC Entertainment Division will require casting executives to meet, audition and consider more diverse actors for all programs.

Re-awakening King legacy

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

January is the time of year that I focus not only on the Martin Luther King, Jr. That we so conveniently remember when we recite the lovely "I Have a Dream" Speech, but the Martin Luther King who fearlessly challenged the systems of injustice which have made millions of people poor, which have marginalized people of color and which were responsible for an unjust war in Vietnam. I remember the Martin Luther King, Jr. who afflicted the comfortable and comforted the afflicted.

But perhaps the best thing that we can all do to celebrate the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. is not just to go to the prayer breakfasts and religious services which remember this great man, but to get involved ourselves in the multitude of issues of injustice around us. One such issue is environmental justice or environmental racism, which is the dumping of toxic wastes in communities of color across this nation, and indeed, around the world.

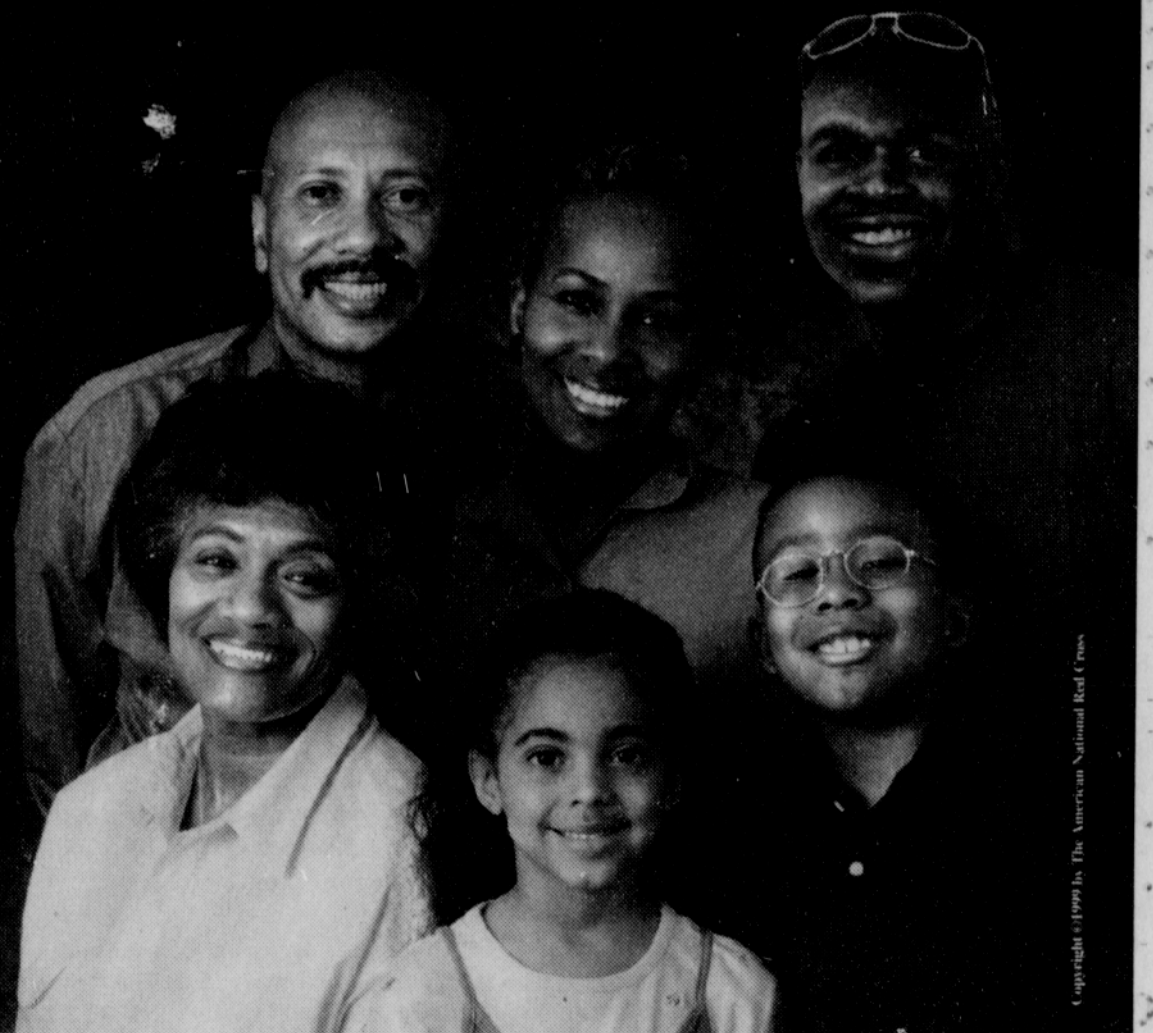
For more than 15 years the Commission for Racial Justice has been working on environmental justice and that continues to be important work for us. For this MLK day a group of African American leaders from around the country are focusing our attention on.

These African American leaders are also examining the health impacts of environmental racism for our communities, which face a myriad of health crises. Our children, for instance, suffer from abnormally high rates of asthma and lead poisoning and we also see higher incidences of cancer, birth defects and immune system diseases such as lupus in African American adults, which are sometimes related to toxic wastes in our environment.

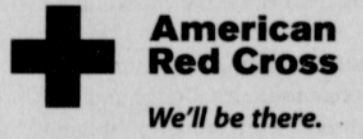
But environmental justice has other significant impacts on our communities as well, particularly economic impact. For instance, there are transportation concerns which relate as more and more jobs move to the suburbs which means people need cars since public transit is seldom a possibility. In some cases, businesses have chosen to move out of the cities because of contaminated sites left behind by now-closed companies which means fewer jobs near our communities.

All of this means that African Americans and others are facing a national state of emergency because of environmental racism and we hear little about this from our presidential candidates as we talk about our nation's agenda for the new century.

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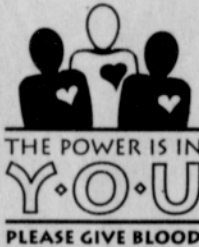


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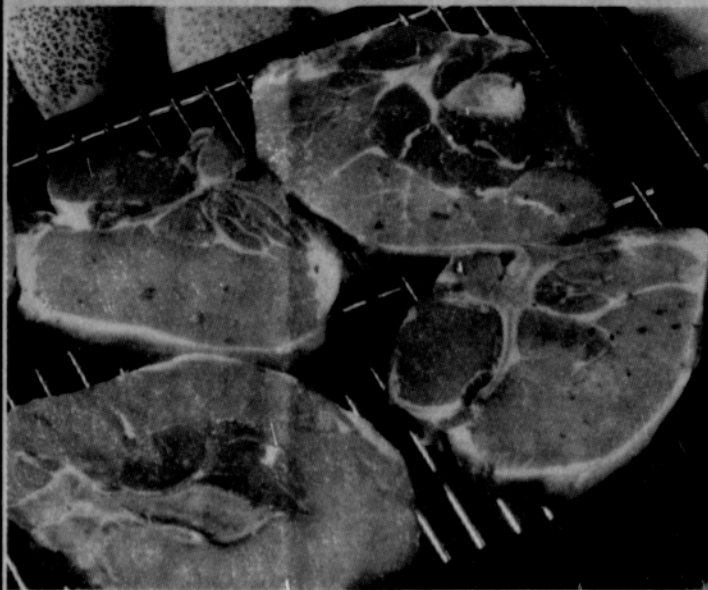
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