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Ben Johnson African-American Report

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM

TO: Alexis Herman

FROM: Ben Johnson, Associate Director
Office of Public Liaison

DATE: March 31, 1994

RE: African American Report

The following report outlines the African American participation with OPL and the White house during the first quarter of 1994.

EVENTS

We participated in organizing three POTUS events this quarter. In January, we had the primary role of putting together the MLK event at Howard University and the White House reception for children of the civil rights movement. It should be noted that the President was a big hit with old guard civil rights organizers, because by honoring them, he demonstrated that he is very serious about diversity and equal justice under the law. In March, we were successful in coordinating the President's visit to the UNCF dinner and reception in New York city.

HEALTH CARE BRIEFINGS

We arranged health care briefings for several African American groups including doctors, directors of national associations, labor leaders, newspaper publishers, businesses associations, and nurses. Currently, we are in the planning stages of organizing a health care briefing for clergy from every major denomination in the African American community. This event is expected to culminate into a national day of prayer in support of universal health coverage. The primary goal for hosting this event is to generate an outpouring of African American religious support for the President's plan.

CRIME BRIEFINGS

We arranged for African American participation at each of the crime leadership day briefings. We invited police officials, religious leaders, and educators in from 26 different states.

SOUTH AFRICA BRIEFINGS

We coordinated a NSC briefing on South Africa for black college presidents, who asked to be briefed on events unfolding around the upcoming elections. We are currently working with the NSC to arrange a South African briefing for key African American leaders in early April. Additionally, We are fielding numerous calls from African Americans seeking information on various U.S. delegations to South Africa after the elections.

SENSITIVE NOMINATIONS

We were involved in extensive work on behalf of the two nominees for the position of Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. Needless to say, our involvement with John Payton was mostly damage control until he withdrew his name from consideration. With Deval Patrick, we employed a hands on approach to his nomination from the beginning. Shortly after the President announced his intention to nominate Patrick, we hosted a reception and introduced him to a broad coalition of civil rights leaders representing over 100 important organizations in the civil rights community. We then escorted Patrick to meetings with key members of the CBC and arranged a series of private meetings with leaders of traditional civil rights organizations. We later arranged for him to receive positive media coverage from key newspapers and magazines throughout the U.S. During this period, we were also actively engaged in building public support for Bill Gould, the nominee for NLRB Chairman. We hosted several meetings on his behalf and successfully generated public support for his nomination from several key African American organizations nationwide.

U.S. CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

We have had numerous phone conversations and meetings with members of the civil rights community regarding the problems associated with the Republican holdovers on the Civil Rights Commission. These and other discussions were centered around developing strategy aimed at Congressional reauthorization of the Commission to allow The President to appoint the Staff Director without having to get concurrence from a majority of the Commissioners. In addition, we have engaged in numerous discussions with key civil rights leaders regarding the suit brought against the Acting Staff Director by a Republican Commissioner. The fact that the case was recently decided in favor of the Republican, requires us to redouble our efforts in the congress around reauthorization.

PRESIDENTIAL DELEGATIONS

We arranged African American representation on various delegations to international events, such as the funeral of the late President of the Ivory Coast. We also assisted with delegate selection for South African and Mexican trade missions.

PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGES

We arranged for Presidential messages to be sent to various individuals, including messages to Ben Chavis around the recent loss of two family members. We also arranged for numerous messages to be sent to organizations hosting annual meetings and or anniversary celebrations. In addition, we arranged for presidential birthday messages to be sent to key constituents nationwide. We were also instrumental in getting a proclamation issued for Black History Month. We followed up on several requests to other White House offices and assisted in getting special messages to groups such as the Harlem Globetrotters etc.

DAMAGE CONTROL

During this quarter, we were engaged in damage control regarding our Haitian policy and redistricting. We have received numerous calls from individuals citing unfairness in our Haitian refugee policy. Many callers are expressing outrage over the perceived difference in treatment received upon arrival by refugees from Cuba and Haiti. Civil rights groups are complaining that the Haitians are being detained unfairly while Cubans are welcomed into the U.S. with open arms. In addition, we have been busy citing the President's strong support for voting rights and have sent his press statement on the subject to key constituents throughout the nation. Most civil rights groups however, are still requesting Justice Department intervention in each case.

SURROGATE SPEAKERS

During this quarter we have assisted several organizations in obtaining surrogate speakers for their conferences and annual meetings. At present we are assisting the NAACP in obtaining a speaker to address welfare reform at their national board meeting in May.

MINORITY BUSINESS OUTREACH

We are in the process of assembling information on minority business programs throughout government. We have held meetings with representatives from several federal agencies to determine if these programs are being effective in fulfilling their legislative mandates and policy requirements.

Name		
Wendy White	1/30/97	Counsel