

Beyond the Rhetoric 864

By

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Affirmative Action Remains MIA in Trump Administration – Where is the Outcry?

There seems to be a very strange quiet regarding all organizations that claim to be defenders of Civil Rights and protectors of our hard-fought liberties won through the results of institutions that fought against segregation, lynchings and bloody demonstrations. Dr. Martin Luther King, Medgar Evers and others are “rolling in their graves” as the current White House has just disassembled the hard-fought victories of the 1990’s.

Reacting to the dismal state of our economy and the pandemic of the Coronavirus, the White House sponsored the infamous CARES Act. This new program relieves all federal agencies of any responsibilities regarding the Civil Rights Act or Affirmative Action. Basically, all departments can set aside any enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1965. Minorities such as Blacks, Hispanics, females and virtually all entities that are not white males can no longer feel protected.

Also, and worst, historical groups that are known as protectors of basic civil rights are not uttering a word. Where is the NAACP? Urban League? National Action Network etc. during this controversy? Potential contracts and financial agreements are being snatched away by the billions of dollars. “This is going to set back Black families by generations”, says Harry C. Alford, President and Co-Founder of the National Black Chamber of Commerce. “We are beginning the fight and it is rather lonely. The momentum must build as we go.”

Last week, the Chamber led a 2,000 participant “Call to Action”. “We are getting a constant flow of new members joining us in this fight”, Alford states. “We are in disbelief and we better snap out of it as soon as possible.”

As written, the Affirmative Action law is suspended for ninety days and authorizes ninety-day extinctions thereafter. This means the drought can last for years before being permanently cancelled.

We must begin to fight with all our hearts if we do not want this tragedy to turn into a most terrible nightmare for our children and thereafter.

Raise your hand if you have heard of Arthur Fletcher. He was known as the “father of Affirmative Action”.

According to the [Seattle Times](#), after Richard Nixon’s election, he appointed Fletcher Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment Standards. With responsibility for the wage and hour regulations for the nation’s workforce and supervision of the Office of Federal Contract Compliance, Fletcher now had the power to revoke federal contracts and keep contractors from bidding on future work.

On June 27, 1969, Fletcher implemented the nation's first federal affirmative-action program, which required federal contractors to meet specified goals in minority hiring for skilled jobs in the notoriously segregated construction industry.

But after two years, Fletcher's affirmative-action programs had earned him so much enmity among the leaders of the skilled construction unions that he was forced to resign.

President Nixon gave him a brief assignment on the United Nations delegation under Ambassador George H.W. Bush that created a lifelong friendship.

Arthur Fletcher, our mentor, travelled the world with us to Brazil, Cuba, and countries in Africa as we sought contracts for our members. He once told us the story of him being held against his will inside the Palmer House Hotel in downtown Chicago by construction union goons. He felt his life was in danger and frantically called the White House.

As the story goes, President Richard Nixon made an immediate direct phone call to Chicago Mayor Richard Daily and shouted: "If my man is harmed you are going to wake up to the marching of the 101st Airborne down Michigan Avenue." The bigots backed off.

Gone are those days of courageous leadership. We just wish they would return. Oh, how nice it would be for our nouveau leaders to stand up in a courageous manner such as Louis Sullivan, Art and of course Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

We have a lot to lose if we do not wake up and protect the things we have fought so dearly to win.

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