

We have come a long way in Diversity Management. This is really a fancy name for Affirmative Action which was introduced by my mentor, Dr. Arthur A. Fletcher, under the Nixon Administration. Jim Crow (legislated discrimination) seems so long ago. Actually it has been only 2 generations since the very bad days. Let's take a look at this successful venture.

Jim Crow laws and practices were implemented soon after the end of the Civil War. Blacks were second class citizens and in many places so were Hispanics. Our Jim Crow system was so bad that when South Africa created their Apartheid system they used American Jim Crow as the model. Restaurants, hotels, jobs, parks, state fairs, movie theaters and many other public facilities were separated by Whites and Blacks. In the southern states, Wednesday was the designated "Colored Day". Blacks were forbidden to attend on the other six days. My father-in-law, Charles DeBow Jr., was one of the first four Tuskegee Airmen. He flew a P-38 dive bomber. He participated in North Africa, Italy, France and Germany flying an outrageous number of missions. When he returned back to Indianapolis wearing his captain bars and golden wings he was denied entry into the bus station and had to stand out in the rain as he waited for his parents to pick him up. Later, he would receive the same treatment trying to check into hotels.

America was ugly but things would soon change. Veterans were eligible for the GI Bill of Rights as World War II ended. All veterans, regardless of race, were entitled to college funding, a home mortgage and other benefits. My father-in-law went to Indiana University. They could not deny him entry but he could not stay in a campus dorm. He and other Black veterans stayed off campus in trailers.

Soon a rising class of Black college graduates and homeowners would evolve. This was the first step to economic empowerment for Blacks but still Jim Crow was formally in place. Then, one day in Montgomery, AL a lady by the name of Rosa Parks decided she wasn't going to take Jim Crow any longer. This defiance ignited mass strikes and demonstrations. A young preacher from Montgomery by the name of Martin Luther King decided it was time to change it forever.

This gave birth to the Civil Rights Movement. The movement was successful. It culminated into the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This brought Blacks and others into the Constitution of the United States in a real sense. Shortly thereafter the Voting Rights Act of

1965 was passed. This gave Blacks political clout and served notice on elected officials that things must change or their political careers will be shortened. These two laws would kill Jim Crow once and for all.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act was the beginning of enforcement. This dealt with hiring, training and promotion. No business could discriminate in these areas and the US Department of Labor would police this (through the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs). Black faces started to grow within work places at a rapid rate. The perfect model would come from the military. There are so many field grade officers of color working in the Pentagon that it is almost impossible to take a look down any hall and not see a Black officer. I owe my college education and professional career to the Civil Rights Movement and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

Title VI of the Civil Rights act states that if you are doing business with the federal government or benefiting from a federal program you cannot discriminate in your business practices. Entrepreneurship in the Black community is the fastest growing segment of American small business thanks to this law.

Title IX emulated Title VII from a female perspective and increased female participation immensely. The OFCCP monitors this also. It also created women college sports programs.

We have had 2 generations under these laws and it has been truly a success in a collective sense. It has become the envy of many nations. Thus, our major corporations that do business globally have brought the above practices to these nations and these nations have greeted them warmly. A Diversity Management Officer usually holds the rank of vice-president and reports directly to the President/CEO of the corporation. This officer is constantly looking for good minority and female talent and makes sure there is representation from top to bottom – including the Board of Directors.

Corporations such as Xerox, Johnson and Johnson and AT&T are fine examples of good diversity management. Perhaps the best is the French company Sodexo. There is a complete saturation of diversity amongst its 414,000 employees. Yes, we are off to a great start but remember it is still a “work in progress”.

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