BLACK HISTORY

Role of the Black press in politics

When David Dinkins won the New York City mayoral election in 1989 to become the city's first African - American mayor - elect, most people attributed the victory to Dinkins' moderate political stance and his ability to gain support from a significant number of White voters and almost all of the African - American voters.

These factors most certainly contributed to his victory, but a deeper look into the social fabric of New York might take observers to the city primary held earlier in the year.

It was then that Dinkins, behind large African - American support, upset incumbent Mayor Ed Koch for the Democratic nomination.

This, in a city dominated by

David Dinkins

Shirley Chisholm

Oscar DePriest

Democrats, set the tone for the election.

Some would say it was then, too, that the three - year campaign of the *Amsterdam News* came to fruition. It was that campaign, some remember, in which the 35,000 - circulation newspaper ran front page editorials every week calling for Koch's resignation.

Amsterdam News editor - in - chief Wilbert Tatum has *pointed out, too, that each editorial was different, but each outlined, in his opinion, explicit reasons why Koch should have been removed.*

And while Koch and his administrators dismissed the editorials as "not worthy of comment," many observers feel that the campaign eventually took its toll and contributed significantly to African - Americans and other rallying around Dinkins as a viable alternative to the incumbent.

In any event, the Amsterdam News campaign is reminiscent of other campaigns mounted by the African - American press. In most cases, however, theirs were campaigns in support of a candidate, rather than against a particular one. And the campaigns have been notable.

In almost every instance where an African - American has broken barriers to win a political office, the candidate has sought the support of two mainstay institutions in the African - American community, the church and the press.

And sometimes the campaign for the election of an African - American official has stretched across years — sometimes for nearly a generation.

In fact, the *Amsterdam News* is no stranger to political campaigns. It has supported other African - American candidates for decades.

It supported Brooklyn Democrat Shirley Chisholm when she became the first African - American woman elected to the U.S. Congress in 1968.

But as early as 1944, it also led the campaign in support of Adam Clayton Powell in his first run for Harlem's U.S. Congressional seat.

With the help of the African - American church and the *Amsterdam News*, Powell became one of the most powerful men in congress and certainly the most powerful and influential African - American politician of his time.

Throughout his storied career, Powell's daring exploits, conquests and scandals through 12 consecutive terms of office were chronicled in bold headlines, colorful copy and flashy photos across the pages of the *Amsterdam News*.

And when he died, it was the *Amsterdam News*, that provided full coverage of his funeral and recapitulated his fabled career.

In Chicago, another African - American newspaper, the *Chicago Defender*, can take some measure of credit for helping the bold labor leader Harold Washington come to power. But it, too, had previous experience with political campaigns.

As early as 1914, the *Defender* was active in support of Oscar DePriest in his successful primary - election for an alderman's seat in Chicago.

And when he proved victorious in 1915 over two White opponents, it was the *Defender* that chronicled the earth-shaking event of the election of the city's first African - American alderman.

Later, in 1928, when DePriest was elected to the U.S. Congress from Chicago's First District, it was the *Defender* again that led the campaign. It would laud him as his people's first elected U.S. Congressman since 1901.

In those days, DePriest in politics — just as Jack Johnson had been in boxing and Jesse Owens was in track and field — was a hero to African-Americans across the country.

Consequently, his exploits and successes were heralded not only in the *Defender*, but also in the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *Afro-American* as well.

Through these national giants, African - Americans everywhere knew about DePriest and his accomplishments.

The *Courier* would use DePriest as an example of what African - Americans could do as a unified group. "The ice is broken," the *Courier* announced after DePriest's election.

It would also chronicle his taking of oath, his seating, the casting of his first vote, his visit to President Hoover, ect.

When DePriest made his first speech in Congress, the *Courier* recorded it in its entirety.

DePriest was the shining example for African - Americans that anything was possible if they stuck together.

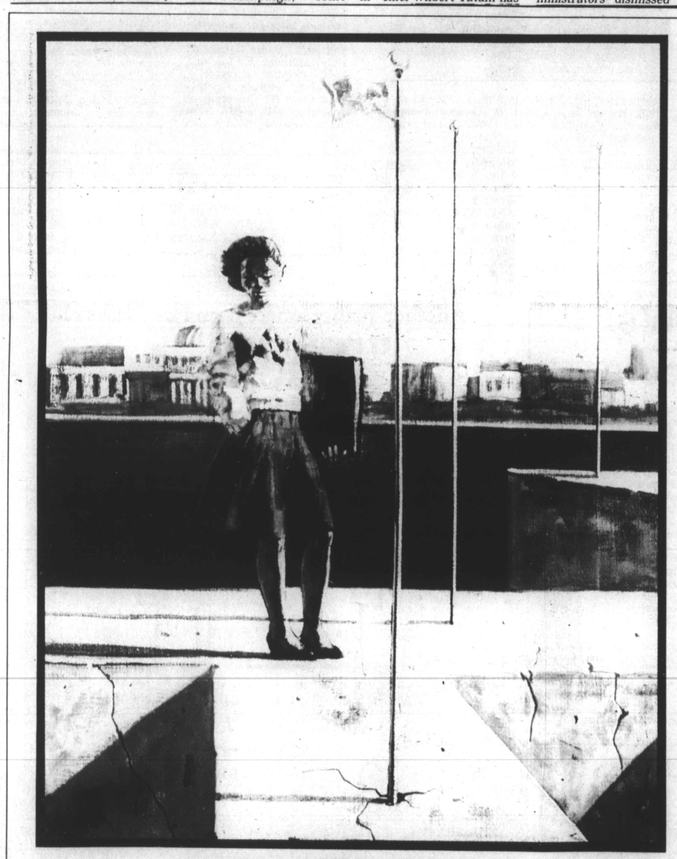
For the *Philadelphia Tribune*, its campaign for an African - American mayor bore fruit in 1983 with the election of W. Wilson Goode to his first term of office, but it began much earlier.

In the late 1960s when then - Police Chief Frank Rizzo had his eye on the mayor's office, the *Tribune* pushed for an African - American to run for office.

The *Tribune* encouraged state representative Hardy Williams to run for the office in 1971. And when he lost to Rizzo in the Democratic primary, *Tribune* reporters tried unsuccessfully to get Williams to run anyway as an independent write - in candidate.

Later, it supported attorney Charles Bowser in his unsuccessful bid for mayor on the independent Philadelphia Party ticket against Rizzo and a Republican.

Bowser was defeated by Rizzo, but secured more votes than the Republican candidate.



WHEN THE TRUE STORY OF BLACK HISTORY IS WRITTEN, WILL EVERY BLACK PERSON BE ABLE TO READ IT?

As it is today, one in five Americans is functionally illiterate. Shockingly, one in four African-Americans couldn't read and understand the story of their own ancestors' accomplishments. If we don't do something today, tomorrow will be worse.

During Black History Month, and through the year, Coors Brewing Company will bring you messages about literacy and how to find help for those who need it. Literacy is a lot like history. If you don't pass it on, it's lost.

Coors

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Fire Dept. discrimination

During the year of our Lord, 1953, the Mayor and City Council and The Urban League, AFRO-AMERICAN Newspaper brokered, 100 years of racial discrimination in the BCFD., by posting civil service examinations.

Approximately 900 applicants applied for these positions, and 18, more or less of those who passed the complete process were Black. They trained at the old fire school (36 engine), Edmondson Avenue, and Bentalou Street.

Those 18 "Afro Americans" or engine house reservist, were not allowed to use eating, bathrooms, and sleeping facilities that the Whites used, yet this planned segregation accommodations did not deter nor devastate those brave U.S. Armed Force Veterans.

They performed their duties under the most severe of scrutiny and nit picking and the most adverse conditions of the times; one year before Brown vs., The Kansas City Board of Education, and six years before Rosa Parks incident in Montgomery, Alabama.) Now some four decades later, those "Baltimore's Best" are a force of fine talented, model - citizens, professionals, business men.

They have paid their dues and returned to this society some "great minds" with solid tax base. "We are proud of what this city has accomplished."

BLACK HISTORY

Black History in the world of sports

By Sam Lacy
AFRO Sports Editor

A look at sports in the context of Black history bears out the truth of Black life in all areas.

The climb has been gradual and upward but the summit remains a long way off.

Contrary to general belief, the signing of Jackie Robinson by Brooklyn in 1946, was not the first incident of Black presence in what is known as organized baseball.

True, the complete (and final) desegregation of the game dates to Robinson's acquisition by Branch Rickey for the Dodgers.

But such names as George Stovey, Fleetwood Walker and his brother Welday, and Frank Grant infiltrated the old Eastern and International league rosters before the turn of the century.

It was, incidentally, a ploy by John McGraw, who later became one of baseball's immortals, that put an end to the early integration effort.

McGraw sought to pass off Grant as an Indian, but during a game in Chicago, a group of Black friends of the player took him off after the game to party. Thus McGraw's little deception was exposed.

Finally, after a continual crusade of racism, Fleetwood Walker stood alone. And at the end of the 1889 season, he retired.

Fifty-seven years later, Jackie Robinson and Branch Rickey set the stage for the great influx that since has produced a major league president, Bill White; six Black managers, Frank Robinson (3 times), Cito Gaston, Larry Doby and Maury Wills.

Also 24 Hall of Famers, 34 most valuable players, 39 batting champions, Cy Young pitchers, and countless coaches and minor league managers.

In the period between Fleet Walker's departure and Jackie Robinson's arrival, Black baseball thrived in the form of two leagues.

The Negro National League — comprised of teams in Baltimore, Washington, Philadelphia, Newark and New York — developed such topline players as Josh Gibson, Larry Doby, Monte Irvin, Martin Dihigo, et al.

And the Negro American League — with clubs in Chicago, Kansas City, Memphis, Birmingham and Cleveland on its roster — produced Jackie, Willie Mays, Ernie Banks, Hank Aaron and Satchel Paige.

Their proximity to major league locales, however, spelt doom as desegregation spread. Attendance figures declined drastically and Black team owners were forced to salvage what finances they could by selling contracts of their best players to big league buyers.

* * *

There is no argument that progress in basketball has been the most rapid for Blacks. And the reason is obvious.

The reservoir is full of Black talent.

While schools in, the Big Ten were recruiting Black players as early as the forties, it was not until Lew Alcindor (now Kareem Abdul-Jabbar) was lured to UCLA, that attention became focused on the major college arena.

Today, there are 13 Black coaches in major college basketball, and six Black head coaches in the National Basketball Association.

There also is one Black ownership in the NBA (at Denver).

Seven Blacks — among them Bill Russell, Al Attles and Elgin Baylor — held pro coaching jobs previously. Among the elite at the Hall of Fame are Bill Russell, "Bighouse" Gaines, John McLendo and Wes Unseld.

And at Cleveland, Wayne Embry is the general manager.

However, despite the fact that these larger schools produced the likes of Jabbar, Julius Erving, Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, etc., predominately Black institutions have held their own.

The Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA), organized in 1912 has operated with measurable success for 78 years without interruption.

In 1971, some member schools — Howard, Morgan, North Carolina A and T, Delaware State, South Carolina State and Maryland State (now Maryland, Eastern Shore) — defected to

(Continued on Page E12)

Opening Day 1939 at Bugle Field where Elite Giants owner Vernon Green hands the ball to Samuel Hughes. Mr. Green was VP of the club when this picture was taken, and later became owner of the Baltimore Elite Giants. (Photo from the archives of Jim Smith of Baltimore).

Jesse Owens

Jackie Robinson with Philip Liebmann

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The following departments are responsible for the completion of each product:

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- **Circulation:** Selling subscriptions and distributing the paper
- **Production:** Typsetting, past-up and printing
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- **Administration:** Human resources, office management and planning
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8:17 am.
The community hospital that just fixed Ed Fascio's hernia is prepping Sue Foster for laser surgery.

THE UNION MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

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