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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 24, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR:

BOB ORBEN

FROM:

JIM CONNOR *JEC*

The attached was returned in the President's outbox with the request that it be sent to you for information.

The original is being forwarded to Robert Linder to arrange for an appropriate response to Secretary Coleman.

cc: Robert Linder - with original

Attachment:

Letter of 3/22/76 from
Secretary Coleman

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

3/23/76

MR PRESIDENT:

The attached is for your information.
It will be handled in a routine manner
unless you indicate otherwise.

Jim Connor

*Give to Bob Corbin for
info.*

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

March 22, 1976

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

Enclosed herewith is a short paper by Andy Brimmer, former member of the Federal Reserve Board, which I recommend you read. It has some striking figures in it, and, moreover, provides a basis for arguing that your Administration's policies to reduce unemployment and increase employment have seeds which should be embraced by Black Americans.

Respectfully,



William T. Coleman, Jr.

Enclosure

For Release on Delivery
Wednesday, January 28, 1976
10:30 A.M. (EST)

MOTIVATION, OPPORTUNITY, AND PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT

Lessons for the Black Community

Remarks By

Andrew F. Brimmer
Member of the Faculty

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Business Administration

At the Presentation of

The Second

BLACK ENTERPRISE

Annual Achievement Awards

New York, New York

January 28, 1976

MOTIVATION, OPPORTUNITY, AND PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT

Lessons for the Black Community

By

Andrew F. Brimmer*

I have been looking forward with a great deal of pleasure to the chance to participate in this celebration of personal achievement in the field of business. Black Enterprise established the Annual Achievement Awards in order "to bestow public recognition upon those outstanding black business personalities who have been exceptional achievers in America's economic arena."

We have come to praise the award recipients, and I certainly do not wish to detract from the honor that has been given them. Yet, we should also applaud Black Enterprise for its initiative in establishing these citations. We need many more such occasions because they enable us to pause and extend to those superior performers among us the congratulations they deserve for the efforts they have made. These occasions also permit us to demonstrate to young people--and especially to youth in the black community--that it is worthwhile to strive to improve themselves in order to take advantage of the many opportunities which have already opened up in the field of business--and which will multiply manifold in the future.

Significance of Personal Achievement

However, while I will return at a later point to suggest the lesson

* Dr. Brimmer is Thomas Henry Carroll Ford Foundation Visiting Professor in the Graduate School of Business Administration at Harvard University. From March, 1966, through August, 1974, he was a Member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. He is a Director and Economic Adviser of the Du Pont Company; a Director and Member of the Investment and Insurance Committees of the Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States, and a Trustee of Tuskegee Institute and the Ford Foundation. He is also a Member of the Board of Advisors of Black Enterprise.

which the black community should learn from these records of achievement that are before us today, we must not overlook the fact that we have come to celebrate the personal accomplishments of the five men and two women who have received the awards today. They are the ones who have moved from the background into the foreground, and they have done so by their own efforts. Undoubtedly, they can all point to the support of others and assistance extended by many persons along the way. Moreover, they have undoubtedly benefitted by access to opportunities which those who went before them helped to create. Yet, it is these seven individuals who made the personal strides which brought them to the achievements being celebrated today.

These men and women made their mark in highly competitive fields. They should be praised for their willingness to compete--rather than being content to drift along with the average pace of the crowd. I want to be quite explicit about this: in my judgement, there is still a great deal of ambivalence in the black community about the desirability of competition. In fact, in the country at large--but especially so among blacks--the notion of competition has a negative cast. For too many people--and again this is especially so among the younger members of the black community--the concept of competition engenders an image of rivalry and the unbridled trampling of weaker members by stronger, more able members of the community. Viewed in such a light, competition has been rejected (and rightly so) by a sizable fraction of the country's black population. In contrast, one encounters far more support--at least verbally--for cooperative efforts and joint undertakings which focus on community-wide objectives.

I want to advance an alternative view of competition. For me, competition has a much more wholesome overtone. It represents a conscious

striving to blend high motivation with persistent effort to achieve superior performance in the execution of whatever task one undertakes. I am not here focusing on the much more abstract notion of emulation or response to role models. Instead, I have in mind something much more concrete: I want young blacks to realize that a potentially rich field of opportunities is spread out before them. But to reap a bountiful harvest will require them to develop their skills and to compete vigorously for the rewards--including financial rewards--which can result from their efforts.

Importance of Participation in Business

We must also praise these award recipients for their willingness to compete for success in the private sector. Having made this statement, let me hasten to stress that I am by no means belittling the importance of public service. After all, I spent over 11 years myself as a public servant--including 8-1/2 years as a Member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. But we do not often realize that blacks--to a much greater extent than is true of whites--depend heavily on the public sector for jobs. We clearly need to reverse this situation.

For example, in 1974 (the last year for which we have complete data), there were 85.9 million jobs in the United States. Blacks held 8,112,000 of these jobs, representing 9.4 per cent of the total. About 4.4 million of the total number of jobs were in the field of public administration. Approximately 568,000 (12.9 per cent of the total) were held by blacks. Expressed another way, about one out of every 14 blacks holding a job in 1974 was employed in the public service. Among whites, only one in twenty was on the public payroll.

Moreover, the above figures do not include employment in education, hospitals, and other health services. In 1974, 6.9 million persons were

employed in the field of education, and 730,000 of these were black. So, blacks had just over 10 per cent of all the jobs in education. In the same year, 5.4 million persons were employed in health services--of which 211,000 (15 per cent of the total) were black. While many of these jobs in education and health services are actually in the private sector, a vast majority are in public institutions. Consequently, we can combine employment in public administration, education, and health services to get a rough indication of the extent to which blacks and whites are employed outside the private sector. In 1974, there were 16.7 million jobs in these three areas. Whites held 14.6 million of these jobs, and blacks held 2,109,000. Thus, blacks held 12.7 per cent of these public service jobs, compared with their occupancy of 9.4 per cent of the total jobs in the economy as a whole. But more importantly, over one-quarter (actually 26 per cent) of the total number of blacks with jobs were employed in public service positions. This was substantially larger than the one-fifth (19 per cent) of the total whites employed who were holding similar positions.

Given these figures, it is clear that blacks are proportionately over-represented on public payrolls and under-represented in the private sector. Of course, there is no mystery about the reasons for this situation. The existence of a segregated school system (especially in the southern states) for so many years presented a much greater relative range of opportunities for blacks in education. The public sector in general has traditionally been far more hospitable to blacks than was true of private employers. Moreover, the drive for equal opportunity in the last decade also brought new gains to blacks in public employment. This was especially true in the case of the Federal Government. As a consequence, in 1974, blacks held 390,000

of the 2.4 million jobs in the Federal Government. This represented 16 per cent of the total. Also in 1974, there were about 2 million persons employed in public administration in state and local governments. About 178,000 of these (9.1 per cent of the total) were black.

Within the private sector, the representation of blacks, particularly in industries and professions, varied immensely. For example, blacks held 9.4 per cent of the total jobs in the economy in 1974, but they held 10 per cent of those in manufacturing--including 13 per cent of all of the jobs in firms producing motor vehicles and equipment. Factory jobs represented 26 per cent of all black employment compared with 24 per cent of the total jobs held by whites. In contrast, the number of blacks employed in finance, insurance, and real estate represented only 6 per cent of the total employment in this segment of American industry. These jobs represented only 4 per cent of total black employment compared with 6 per cent of the total jobs held by whites.

Over the years, I have made a special effort to keep track of the progress blacks have been making in the field of business. The latest employment figures suggest that the shortfall is still considerable. For instance, in 1974, 8.9 million persons were holding jobs as managers and administrators in nonfarm positions. About 277,000 (3.4 per cent) of these were black. About 1.8 million of the total were self-employed persons. Of these 72,000 (only 0.4 per cent) were black. So, the vast majority of these managers and administrators were working for salaries. Of the 7.1 million in this category, 205,000 were black. Thus, blacks had 2.5 per cent of the total. Here, then, is an area where a great deal of effort needs to be made to accelerate the growth of opportunities for blacks and other members of minority groups.

Lessons for the Black Community

Let us put aside these figures on occupational trends and return to our main theme. Today's recipients of the Black Enterprise Achievement Awards are being honored for their personal accomplishments. Yet, they do represent excellent role models for black youth. The extent to which young people attach importance to their careers as symbols of achievement depends importantly on the interpretation which we ourselves place on their success. The message we ought to carry to young people is this: motivation is important, but it must be combined with a strong drive for self-improvement if the objectives we seek are to be achieved.

Unfortunately, I get the distinct impression that the motivation for self-improvement and the drive for superior achievement which characterized much of the black experience during most of the first hundred years following the end of slavery have weakened in recent years. I must confess that I cannot document this impression. Yet, fragmentary evidence suggests that there is something to it. For example, an editorial in the February, 1976, issue of Ebony entitled "A Challenge to Black Parents and Teachers"--which dealt with the pressing need to improve communication skills--said in part:

"At one time, blacks had a tradition of doing everything they could to learn to read and write. During the days of slavery, youngsters like Frederick Douglass learned to read and write though they knew they would be beaten if their masters knew about it. Young blacks and old flocked to Freedmen's Schools right after the Civil War, and, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries when whites gave blacks inferior schools and almost no supplies, children . . . read the Bible and whatever other books they could muster by the light of the fireplace in crude cabins at night. Education, obtained against great odds, gave black America a middle class, and education will help blacks move further toward their dream of full liberation."

I share fully the sentiments expressed by Ebony. Not only do we need motivation, we also need a clear and unsentimental commitment to hard work. Success requires us to strive for superior achievement. This means taxing ourselves to the limits of our capacity and to maintain the drive when it would be far more comfortable simply to relax and drift along with the crowd. This is the lesson we should learn--and try to pass on--from the records of achievement built by the 1976 recipients of the Black Enterprise Achievement Awards.