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Dec. 6, 97 - DPC Weekly Report

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

12-8-97

December 6, 1997

Copied  
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Kagan  
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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Bruce Reed  
Elena Kagan

SUBJECT: DPC Weekly Report

1. **Budget and State of the Union:** Over the next few days, we will send you memos on proposed initiatives to include in your FY 99 budget and State of the Union. These initiatives involve education, child care, health, crime, welfare, housing, and civil rights enforcement.

2. **Health -- Pediatric Labeling:** You recently asked about a *New York Times* story on the Administration's pediatric labeling regulations. The *Times* reiterated the pharmaceutical industry's claims that clinical trials required under the regulation will expose children to inappropriate and potentially harmful doses of medication. These claims, however, are spurious. The testing requirement generally ensures that doctors will not endanger children by giving them inappropriate doses of medication. When the application of this requirement poses unacceptable health risks to children, the FDA Commissioner has the authority to waive it. The American Association of Pediatrics and other consumer advocates immediately responded to the *Times* article by emphasizing the ethical propriety of, and the medical need for, this regulation. The industry's true complaint is not with the regulation's ethics, but with its cost. Even here, however, the industry has no legitimate grievance: the FDA reform bill you recently signed contains a provision to give a company that has tested a drug for use on children the exclusive right to market that drug for six months.

3. **Health -- Medicaid AIDS Demonstration:** About six months ago, the Vice President asked HHS to consider the feasibility of a demonstration program that would provide Medicaid coverage to relatively healthy HIV-infected people, so that they could get the benefits of early drug treatment. After much study, HHS concluded that a program of this kind would cost a significant amount of money (\$8 billion over five years), thus violating the Administration's rule of budget neutrality for Medicaid demonstrations. We now have asked HCFA to develop a legislative proposal for a capped Medicaid demonstration to provide HIV-infected individuals with early access to drugs. The Vice President's request created high expectations among AIDS advocates, and they are demanding that the Administration make room for this program (in addition to increasing support for other AIDS treatment and research activities) in the FY 99 budget. We will give you an options memo on this issue later this week.

4. **Race -- Race and Service Link:** We are attaching a column by Steve Waldman of *U.S. News* arguing that service activities by people of diverse backgrounds, such as AmeriCorps' CityYear program, does more to foster racial understanding than dialogue or more traditional efforts

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to promote racial harmony. In keeping with this article, Harris Wofford has urged the race initiative to focus on common action by Americans of different backgrounds. In a recent note to us, you indicated that you would like to engage in service activity on Martin Luther King Day, in recognition both of Dr. King and the effort to make the holiday "a day on, not a day off." We are currently considering whether you should go to a literacy project connected to D.C. Reads, where AmeriCorps members, local work-study students, and senior volunteers help teach children from kindergarten to the third grade how to read.

can be another  
Colin Powell too?

could be more  
clearer - SA  
Waldman's suggestions

# Sweating to the oldies

*Toiling together will do as much for race relations as talking together*

BY STEVEN WALDMAN

The topic was supposed to be race, but the conversation quickly turned to music. As alumni of the national service program, City Year, gathered at a conference in Boston, one panel of young people convened to discuss how their ethnic backgrounds had affected their experiences with the program.

More than one former team of workers described how, whenever they would arrive at a work site to do graffiti removal or housing renovation, conflict would arise over what music to play on the boom box. Black corps members (and some urban whites) would generally put on hip-hop or rap—music that some of the white suburbanites found annoying. When a white City Year participant would change it to heavy metal or grunge, the black corps members would be insulted. The daily decision of what music to play became a constant issue of “respect,” a proxy for whatever insecurities and anxieties each group had about working with the other.

One team of corps members hit upon a comical, yet poignant, compromise. Instead of listening to rap or grunge, they agreed to listen to oldies—a musical genre that no one there particularly liked but which no one felt threatened by. The key to the compromise, the alumni agreed, had been the mutual trust they’d gradually developed through working together toward common goals.

**Colorblind huddle.** Usually when critics recommend that racial dialogue be accompanied by action, they mean acts such as appointing more minorities to important positions or promoting affirmative action. But there is also a need for people of different races to work jointly toward goals that have nothing to do with race. The failure to recognize this reality is one reason President Clinton’s race initiative has been such a dud.

The same dynamic described by the City Year alumni is typical of team sports. Republican politician Jack Kemp, for example, has often talked about how his experience as a pro football quarterback made him more understanding of African-Americans. As John Mackey, a former football buddy of Kemp’s, explained, “The huddle is colorblind.” Whatever Kemp’s preconceived notions, he was far less concerned with the race of his offensive linemen than with their ability to keep him from get-

ting killed by an opposing linebacker. Similarly, although there’s no statistical proof, it sure seems that most interracial friendships in high schools are forged on sports teams.

The other widely cited example of black-white cooperation is the military—where, again, the goals toward which soldiers strive have nothing explicitly to do with racial harmony. Indeed, if the goal of the Army were race mixing instead of defending our shores, it might do neither job well.

By contrast, college students spend a great deal of time talking about racial issues—and yet it doesn’t seem to translate into better relations. A recent study by the Corporation for National Service on diversity in civilian service programs included this

telling passage: “A white female . . . commented that the college she had attended was very diverse but the students there ‘hung out in groups where everyone was the same.’ In contrast, at her AmeriCorps program, members truly served and socialized across racial, ethnic, and class lines.”

Why the contrast between college and national service? Primarily, it’s a question of individual goals versus group goals. While the college student’s grades reflect only on her, a service corps—like an army or a sports team—measures success collectively. (At the end of the day, are the graffiti gone, the hill taken, the other team defeated?) Few things force you to take an honest measure of people as much as having to rely on them to ac-

complish an objective. You don’t have the luxury of your prejudices. Young people in City Year didn’t learn that everyone worked hard or was pleasant company; they learned that there wasn’t a correlation between those qualities and race.

So how could Clinton improve his race initiative? Perhaps by no longer thinking of it as a race initiative. He should pick a goal largely unrelated to race and create opportunities for people of different backgrounds to work together toward that goal. The president could help organize a partnership between black churches and white churches to fight drug addiction, or between Hispanic high schools and non-Hispanic ones to renovate low-income housing. There would be a lot less time for talk and perhaps more time for progress. ■

*Steven Waldman is national editor of U.S. News. In 1996, he worked as an official at the Corporation for National Service.*



City Year corps members warm up before starting a project.

Racially loaded arguments about music sometimes erupted at the work site.