

Shoving Diversity in Your Face

✘ The National Basketball Association has just begun a new season, and according to league officials 75 percent of the 450 players on the 30 team rosters are black. That shouldn't surprise anyone who follows basketball. Black players have dominated the NBA for decades.

While living in New York during the 1970s, I attended some Knicks games, and for a time only one Knicks player was white – Phil Jackson, who would later become an extremely successful coach of the Chicago Bulls and Los Angeles Lakers.

Poor Phil was widely regarded as the worst player on the Knicks roster, and there was suspicion in the air that he was on the team only because the Knicks management feared they might not draw enough white fans if the roster were entirely black.

I think that reasoning was faulty. The Knicks were a good team that had no trouble at all drawing white fans. When the fans in the stands were jeering Jackson, most, if not all, of the jeers came from white mouths. The white fans would have happily accepted another black player in his place if the black had been better. They just wanted their team to win.

Blacks tend to be taller than whites, and they seem to be better coordinated, and anyway, as we learned from a popular movie some years ago, “white men can't jump.” So why shouldn't blacks dominate a sport in which height and coordination and the ability to slam-dunk are paramount?

Now, however, there are civil rights leaders in Minneapolis complaining that the local team, the Minnesota Timberwolves, isn't black enough. Of the 15 members of the team's roster this season, only five – just 33 percent – are black.

One civil rights leader speculated that the team is mostly white because the owners made a calculated decision to appeal to white fans. "Minnesota, after all, is a pretty white state," said a Twin Cities civil rights advocate named Ron Edwards.

Actually, there are 18 other states that have whiter populations than Minnesota, where at last count 5.1 percent of the population was black, compared with the national average of 13 percent.

David Kahn, the team's president for basketball operations, calls the insinuations "patently false." He points out that the Timberwolves had hoped to place two other black players, both free agents, on the roster this year, but the attempts were foiled.

One player got an equally good contract offer from another team he preferred, and the other settled for a less lucrative offer from a team that he felt had a better chance to win a championship.

Believe it or not, the difference between having five blacks and seven blacks on a 15-man team is huge, if you consider the laws of probability.

If the 450 NBA players – 75 percent of them black – who are playing this season were all placed in a lottery, and picked blindly and at random, rather than according to their abilities, the odds against one team picking five or fewer blacks would be about 370-to-1.

That would seem to be persuasive evidence that the Minnesota civil rights leaders are on to something.

However, given the same random lottery, the odds against one team picking seven or fewer blacks would be less than two to one, which means a team consisting of seven blacks and eight whites – which the Timberwolves say they wanted – would be a perfectly reasonable expectation in a league of 30 teams. There would be no reason to suspect sinister motives.

Whatever you may think of the concept of “diversity,” it seems to be favored by a great number of Americans. But when advocates of “diversity” get so carried away that they seem to be pushing for a “diversity” that seems more like a monopoly, then it is time for a reappraisal.

Brave, New World

✘ Jeb Bush, who seems destined to be the only member of his family never to serve as President of the United States, says that the Republican party can't survive if it continues to be perceived as a bunch of “old, white guys.”

He's been saying that for years, but I only just learned about it, because I fell asleep in 1956 and just woke up. I went to sleep as a young student, and now I am an old, white guy, a very well-rested one but somewhat confused.

When I came across Jeb's comment on this thing they call the Internet, I had to do a little research to figure out who he was. I learned that he used to be the governor of Florida, which struck me as impressive until I found out that Charlie Crist also held that position. Crist has been publicly accused of having homosexual affairs, but has steadfastly denied it.

I wondered how anyone even suspected of being a homosexual – what used to be called “queer” before my Van Winklean siesta – could win high public office. But I am told by everyone I meet that being a homosexual today puts you above criticism of any sort. Nobody calls them “queers” anymore, they are called “gays,” and it has become better in the public eye to be one than not. People who are not homosexuals commonly apologize for the fact, or so I gather.

Public contempt is now reserved for "straight, white guys." "Straight" means heterosexual, "white" used to connote social superiority but no longer, and "guys" means men.

Straight, white guys, especially those who are also old, seldom speak up in public anymore, because they know that nothing they say will be taken seriously, and in fact that their remarks usually will be greeted with angry sarcasm by people who aren't straight, white, guys or old.

When I was a student in New York City, I sometimes would be groped while walking along the sidewalk by strange men who would then dash away. These were the gays of that time, starving for sexual satisfaction, because they were a small minority. They got what they could, any way they could.

Once one of these gentlemen spotted me hailing a taxi late at night in lower Manhattan, came running over and jumped into the cab with me, and implored me to come home with him and "talk." The cab driver helped me wriggle out of that one, and I gave him a nice tip, perhaps as much as fifty cents, which was a modest fortune then.

Recently, before I was reprogrammed, I saw a man who was obviously gay and called him a "queer." A stranger rebuked me for being a "homophobe." I don't know the definition of that word, but from its roots it seems as though it would be someone who is afraid of himself. Does it show that much?

As for lesbians, I can understand their attraction to women, but don't you have to be pretty stupid to suppose that sex is better without a pecker in the room?

Being white, I used to consider myself lucky. But now I find that being white makes me guilty by association with every inhumane misdeed ever committed in the history of mankind. Most importantly, I share the blame for slavery, and for robbing the Indians of their land.

Let me make it clear that my forebears never owned slaves – although who knows what might have happened if they had come over before slavery was abolished. Also, none of them ever stole a single square foot of land from any redskin – pardon me, Native American.

I have bumped into a few Native Americans since waking up, being an enthusiastic patron of casinos, and have dared them to prove that I am responsible for taking any land from them. They just laugh at me, and pocket my bets.

By the way, I tried referring to them as Native Americans, and they laughed at that too, and insisted that they were Indians. And here I was trying my best to be what folks nowadays call politically correct.

When I went to sleep the Constitution of the United States was revered by every citizen of our nation, its contents were taught in countless courses at the high-school, college and graduate level, and it was universally regarded as the law of the land.

Now, I have learned, the Constitution is of no value whatsoever, because Thomas Jefferson owned slaves. Left-thinking people want to replace it at a new Constitutional Convention to be presided over by two politicians named Debbie Wasserman Schultz and Harry Reid, and the President of the United States routinely ignores it, or supersedes it with Executive Orders.

This President, by the way, is half-black, which used to be called mulatto, which I suppose is a sign of social progress. He is being opposed for re-election this year by an old, straight, white guy.

What a joke! The only candidate who could possibly beat him, given the attitude of today's electorate, would have to be young, gay, full-bloodedly black, and female, or perhaps trans-gender, like Christine Jorgensen.

Remember him, I mean her? And to think that people dared to laugh back then.