Ford pledges to be President of "Black, brown, red, white people."

THE UNTOLD SIDE OF PRESIDENT FORD

By Simeon Booker
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Will President Gerald R. Ford "go all the way" in emulating the Democratic President, Lyndon B. Johnson, in doing a political flip-flop from his role as a conservative, anti-civil rights lawmaker on Capitol Hill to an equal opportunity champion in the White House?

This is the question on the minds of many Blacks in the nation's capital as the 38th President assembles a new Administration, Vice President, Cabinet and White House staff to lift the nation from an economic and emotional depression.

At the moment, the prospects look good.

Already the President has come a long way. At his confirmation hearing as Vice President last January, Ford was opposed by such Black leaders as the NAACP's Roy Wilkins and Clarence Mitchell, the National Urban League's Vernon Jordan and Operation PUSH's Rev. Jesse L. Jackson. One opponent was quoted as saying, "You can put all the Black and brown folks Jerry Ford knows in the trunk of a Pinto and still have room for the GOP elephant."

President Ford takes exception to this remark. He told the recent National Urban League convention: "My civil rights record is anything but negative, and it is a long way from standing in the doorway of a schoolhouse in defiance of a federal court order in an attempt to deny Black children a quality education."

Men who could help President Ford get rid of the policy of "benign neglect" are (l-r) labor expert Fletcher, communicator Scott, who introduces Vernon Jordan to Ford, and Brooke, who greets Louis Stokes, a member of the Black Caucus.

"One of my first public appearances was before a group of 700 Black Republicans from throughout the country, who attended the Lincoln Day Dinner sponsored by the Capitol City Republican Club in the nation's capital," he continued. "I have also spoken before the National Assn. of Black Manufacturers, the Links Inc. and the National Council of Negro Women. Also I have toured the Opportunities Industrialization Centers in Philadelphia with the Rev. Leon Sullivan."

On the day that he was sworn in as President, Gerald Ford was scheduled to officiate at a groundbreaking ceremony at a new housing project in the Watts section of Los Angeles, scene of one of the nation's worst race riots in 1965. Few GOP politicians, and especially one a heartbeat—and a scandal—away from the Presidency, would accept such a difficult assignment.

Despite his hectic first day's schedule, the new President talked to the California audience by phone. If he had spoken in person, he would have said, "If America can build platforms on the ocean bottom, on the sea's surface and in the sky, and send men to the moon and bring them home safely, we can save our cities' houses, our elderly, our low-income groups and our poor."

This whirlwind effort to "touch base" with Black America apparently is beginning to pay off. Few Black leaders reacted negatively when Ford was announced as the nation's new President. The Congressional Black Caucus did not boycott his opening Capitol Hill speech.

But he also told the Urban League convention, "I thoroughly realized the impact of both the change and expectations on the part of minorities. Let me assure you that during my confirmation hearings, minorities put me on notice of their concerns."

One of the few Blacks to testify in Ford's behalf was former Asst. Secretary of Labor Arthur Fletcher, who told how the Michigan

Ford Meets With Blacks To Get Their Ideas And Views

congressman five years ago had "rescued" the Philadelphia Plan, which was designed to help Blacks enter the construction trade. The Senate had voted to deny funding to the Labor Dept. for carrying out the Philadelphia Plan.

Labor Secretary George Schultz and Fletcher briefed former President Richard Nixon and informed the Republican Party leadership at a White House conference of the necessity for such a plan. The Michigan congressman, according to Fletcher, went back to the House and mobilized Republican support on behalf of the plan. Ford's efforts resulted in the Senate changing its vote allowing the plan to remain in effect until the courts ruled that it was legal.

Said Fletcher, "If it had not been for Gerald Ford's clear thinking and commitment to equal opportunity for minorities and women, we might still be struggling to define what equal opportunity really means."

Since the overwhelming Black opposition at his Vice Presidential hearing, Ford has tried to bridge the gap. He told the Urban League, "My first White House luncheon was with top Black Presidential appointees. Immediately following that, I met with a group of national civil rights leaders, headed by Roy Wilkins, the dean of the civil rights movement."

In fact President Ford called Harlem's Rep. Charles B. Rangel (D., N.Y.), the Congressional Black Caucus chairman, to invite members of the Caucus not only to his speech, but to a later White House meeting. Rep. Rangel had voted against the confirmation of Ford as Vice President and so did other Caucus members, except Atlanta's Andrew Young. Other Blacks, including civil rights leaders and mayors, soon will get a hearing in the White House.

As Vice President, Ford receives award from National Council of Negro Women President Dorothy Height at dedication of the Mary McLeod Bethune statue in Washington. He greets Rep. Shirley Chisholm at the event.

The new President's "Open Door" policy has broadened the base of GOP Blacks. Rather than competing for "top jobs," White House Aide Stanley S. Scott Jr. and Fletcher jointly urged Blacks across the country to "urge the new President to name a Vice President to the aspirations of minorities."

New policy-making positions for Blacks are expected in the White House, and on the Vice President's staff, as well as major positions throughout the Administration, including possibly a Cabinet slot. President Ford reportedly is weighing the selection of a Black as Attorney General and is considering Republican Blacks of the stature of Philadelphia lawyer William Coleman and former New York judge Samuel Pierce, who served as general counsel of the Treasury Dept.

The Ford Administration also is considering putting key Blacks in the departments of Agriculture, Interior, Treasury, Commerce and State. The elevation of Black policymakers, however, will not be a chief thrust of the Administration. The economy, with unemployment and soaring food and meat prices, is one of its prime goals and any improvement in this area certainly will benefit millions of Black families. As one Black Republican commented: "Gerald Ford may not be LBJ, but he cer-

President Ford greets Parks, mayor of his Grand Rapids hometown.

Atlanta Mayor Jackson makes point to President Ford at recent confab.

As one Ford to another, Tuskegee Mayor Johnny Ford greets President at meeting of Black mayors.

Here Are Blacks Who Can Get President Ford To Listen

tainly won't be a Dick Nixon."

The following are Blacks to watch as President Ford begins to organize his new team: **Arthur Fletcher,** former assistant secretary of Labor, who began a friendship with the President five years ago during the Philadelphia Plan battle on Capitol Hill. Now a minority consultant for the Republican National Committee, Fletcher advises the President on speeches and important developments among Blacks.

Stanley S. Scott Jr., top minorities adviser in the White House under President Nixon. In recent months, Scott, a veteran journalist, has helped arrange early meetings of Blacks with Ford and also helped in Ford's speech preparation.

Massachusetts Sen. Edward W. Brooke, the only Black senator on Capitol Hill. Mentioned in the selection for Vice President, Sen. Brooke is a mainstay because of his astute evaluations of legislative programs geared towards minorities.

Michigan Mayors Edward Bivens Jr. of Inkster, **Robert B. Blackwell** of Highland Park and **Lyman S. Parks** of Grand Rapids (the hometown of the new President). This Michigan trio probably has known the President longer, and has a much more intimate contact with him, than any other minority source. They are also qualified to advise Ford on urban affairs in the same party.

Virgin Islands Gov. Melvin Evans, chairman of the Southern Governors Conference. Ford considers the first Black Republican governor in U. S. history a "success story" in politics.

Dr. Helen Edmonds, a dean of North Carolina State College in Durham, and a longtime Republican who recently hosted the new President at a D. C. convention of the Links Inc. The first Black woman to second the nomination of U. S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, she has been recognized by President Ford for her long, dedicated service.

Mrs. Elaine Jenkins, president of One America, a D. C. consulting firm and longtime Republican institution.

Dr. Henry Lucas of San Francisco, the only Black member of the Republican Executive Committee. His advice would center especially on patronage.

Norman Hodges, Republican candidate for Congress from Los Angeles, who President Ford recently described as "the first Black Republican who may sit in the House Republican Caucus in some 40 years." Ford says, "He'll be very influential and possibly the most influential freshman congressman to enter the House in years. The welcome mat will be out for him at the White House."

Atlanta Rep. Andrew Young, a Democrat and the only member of the Congressional Black Caucus to vote for the confirmation of Ford as Vice President.

Mayor Bradley (r) and Newark's Mayor Gibson (3rd, l) were among three Blacks who attended recent meeting of 15 U. S. mayors with the President.

Black Mayors Ask Ford To Handle Urgent Needs

Gary (Ind.) Mayor Richard Hatcher urged President Ford to create a Domestic Urban Advisory Council composed of non-Administration officials to reopen the closed channels of communication between American cities and American central government.

Addressing the new President, Mayor Hatcher stressed that the council could be composed of academic and municipal executives, civic activists and leaders of national urban organizations. He specifically mentioned M. Carl Holman, president of the National Urban Coalition, and Vernon Jordan, director of the National Urban League, along with leaders of other ethnic groupings.

The Gary mayor attended a White House conference with President Ford last week in company with 14 other U. S. mayors of major cities including Newark's Kenneth Gibson and Thomas Bradley of Los Angeles. Mayor Bradley, who sat next to President Ford, called for a federal public employment program with "the jobs going where the needs are."

The mayors attending the conference also asked the President to consider legislation relating to mass transit and the formation of a new cost of living council.

Mayor Hatcher also urged the President to "focus on the need and assistance in promoting equal opportunity for all Americans."

The first Black elected official to meet with President Ford was Virgin Islands Gov. Melvin Evans, who was a member of a governors delegation which met at the White House an hour before the mayors session. At both meetings, President Ford brought out that "his record as a Michigan congressman would not always be my guide to his policies as President."

Lone Black Congressman Gave Early Support To Ford

A quiet stillness swept the House of Representatives chamber the instant the Black man from Georgia rose from his seat.

The man was Andrew Young, the freshman congressman from Atlanta, and he was about to endorse the nomination of Gerald R. Ford as Vice President.

The time was wintry December when Black and liberal critics of Ford's ascendency were harsh, claiming Ford not to be the proper man of mind or morality for such a coveted role. But Young was to courageously disagree.

"Mr. Chairman, in voting for the confirmation of Gerald Ford as Vice President of the United States," Young began, "I am casting a vote of faith, and hope that he will be a uniting and stabilizing force in a nation beset by division and crisis."

Eloquently, Young spoke with compassion and Biblical belief in the good in every man like the Baptist minister he is.

"I look to our colleague, Gerald Ford, to rise to occasion of assuming this high office to grow to that position as many have in the past. Out of my Southern experience," said Young, "I have confidence that people can overcome past parochial views, and develop a broader perspective which takes into account the interest of all the people.

"Decent men placed in positions of trust will serve decently. I believe that Mr. Ford is a decent man.

"I am therefore willing to extend this opportunity to Mr. Ford to give him a mandate to unite an entire nation. I will be the first to criticize any unwarrant-

Rep. Young believes that Ford will serve the interests of all Americans.

ed actions and policies coming from him just as today I oppose in the strongest sense the philosophy reflected in his record of public office.

"Let us hope that Mr. Ford will respect and abide by his own mandate, which we as representatives of the people are giving him one fateful and possibly final act of trust."

With that, Young strode to his seat and waited to cast a vote of "yea" for Gerald Ford, the only Black member of Congress among 16 to do so.

—GRAYSON MITCHELL