

ALEXIS M. HERMAN
NOMINEE FOR SECRETARY OF LABOR

A former director of the Women's Bureau in the Department of Labor, Alexis Herman will bring to the Department a life-time of dedication to and experience in training people for the workforce, a demonstrated capacity for leadership, a cooperative approach to solving problems and a vision rooted in a commitment to expanding opportunity for all Americans.

EXPERIENCE

Alexis Herman has a strong record of commitment to employment and training, to breaking down workforce barriers and to helping create productive working environments.

- ***Catholic Social Services, Job Training and Placement Coordinator*** -- After graduating from Xavier University, Herman joined Catholic Social Services in Mobile, Alabama, where she helped place children with adoptive or foster care families, worked with delinquent boys, and counseled families facing problems such as teen pregnancy. She also persuaded Catholic Social Services to support her effort to find jobs for young men facing dead-end futures in Mobile's Roger Williams housing project. Convinced that they could be productive if given the chance, she tutored them, met with potential employers, and ultimately, working in conjunction with the AFL-CIO, helped secure jobs and skilled apprenticeships for many at the Ingalls Shipyard in Pascagoula, Mississippi (1969-72).
- ***Director of the Black Women's Employment Program*** -- Herman ran this pilot program under the auspices of the prestigious Southern Regional Council in Atlanta. The program, designed to help African-American women break into white-collar jobs, was highly successful. Herman placed the first black women in white collar jobs at such leading corporations Coca Cola and Delta Airlines (1972-74).

Director of the Minority Women Employment Program -- In 1974, Herman's pilot program expanded, changed its name, and was taken on by a new sponsor, the New York-based Recruitment and Training Program. During the next three years, Herman extended her Atlanta model to nine other cities. In late 1976, RTP asked her to take charge of a 30-city program to place minority women in white collar *and* blue collar jobs (1974-77). The achievements of the Minority Women Employment Program are documented in the book "Stepping Up: Placing Minority Women in Managerial and Professional Job" (Glover, Greenfield, King and Norvel; Olympus Publishing, 1979).
- ***Director of the Women's Bureau, Department of Labor*** -- Herman devoted her energies to such issues as helping displaced homemakers get into the workforce, opening apprenticeship opportunities for women in skilled trades, providing job training opportunities for welfare recipients, and co-chairing a Presidential Task Force to promote business ownership by women (1977-1981).

- *Vice President of Green, Herman & Associates (1981-85); President of A.M. Herman & Associates (1985-93)* -- Herman provided a range of consulting services to business and local government on such issues as the hiring and training of minorities, the reduction of employee turnover, and the creation of productive workplace environments.
- *Deputy Chair and Chief of Staff of the Democratic National Committee (1989-92); Chief Executive Officer of the 1992 Democratic National Convention (1991-92).*
- *Assistant to the President and Director of the White House Office of Public Liaison* -- Herman headed the office known as the eyes and ears of the President, communicating to the President the concerns of constituencies from across America, communicating the President's message to those groups, and building grassroots support for the President's initiatives (1993-97).

LEADERSHIP

Alexis Herman has lived a life of taking on responsibility. At age 27 she was running a 10-city program to help minority women break into the workforce. At 29, she was the youngest person ever named to head the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor. Following that first government service, she went on to run her own business, manage the highly successful 1992 Democratic Convention, and run a key Department in the Clinton White House.

COOPERATIVE APPROACH

Alexis Herman is a coalition builder. Throughout her career, she has worked cooperatively with parties on all sides of problem to find good solutions. In her early years, she helped break down employment barriers for women and minorities by learning what kind of skills companies looked for in employees, training prospective workers, and persuading employers to hire people she had trained. Through her work at the Women's Bureau, in her consulting business and as the Director of Public Liaison at the White House, Ms. Herman has compiled a long record of working with organized labor, business, and individuals trying to break into the workforce.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Alexis Herman will bring to the Labor Department her life-long commitment to employment and training and expanding opportunity. Building on the record of outgoing Secretary Reich, she will dedicate special energy to (1) the challenge of moving people from welfare to work in the new era of time-limited welfare; (2) enhancing health and pension security for working people; (3) helping ensure a safe, equal-opportunity workplace; and (4) extending the life-long education and training opportunities our citizens will need to succeed in the 21st century.

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NOMINEE FOR SECRETARY OF LABOR

Biography

Alexis Herman was born in Mobile, Alabama in 1947. She was raised by a single mother who was self-educated, went back to school after Herman was born, and became a life-long school teacher. Her father ran his own insurance company and was one of the first African Americans elected in the South -- as Democratic Wardman in Mobile's 10th Ward -- since Reconstruction. Herman grew up in Mobile attending segregated Catholic schools, went away in 1965 to Edgewood College of the Sacred Heart in Madison, Wisconsin, where she was one of only three black students, and then returned home when her father had a stroke, finishing college at Xavier University in New Orleans. She graduated with a degree in Sociology in 1969.

After leaving Xavier, she returned to Mobile and began her career with Catholic Social Services, where she helped place children with adoptive or foster care families, worked with delinquent boys, and counseled families facing problems such as teen pregnancy. She also convinced Catholic Social Services to support her effort to help unemployed, unskilled young men in Mobile's Roger Williams Housing Project find work. She tutored and trained them and, working with the AFL-CIO, helped many secure jobs and skilled apprenticeships at the Ingalls Shipyard in nearby Pascagoula, Mississippi.

Her efforts there drew the attention of Ray Marshall, then an economics professor at the University of Texas, who was interested in seeing whether her success in placing African-American men in skilled blue-collar jobs could be extended to helping African-American women break into the white collar workforce. In 1972, supported by grants from the Labor Department and the Ford Foundation, Herman moved to Atlanta to run the Black Women's Employment Program under the auspices of the prestigious Southern Regional Council. She began her work by meeting with corporate executives to learn what it took to be a successful employee and then used that knowledge to identify, recruit and train talented young people. Her efforts led, among other things, to the hiring of the first African-American women in white collar jobs at such leading corporations as Coca-Cola and Delta Airlines.

In 1974, her pilot program expanded, changed its name to the Minority Women Employment Program, and was taken on by a new sponsor, the New York-based Recruitment and Training Program. Working with RTP, she extended her Atlanta model to 9 other cities. In late 1976, RTP asked her to take charge of a 30-city program to place minority women in white collar *and* blue collar jobs. The achievements of the Minority Women Employment Program are documented in the book "Stepping Up: Placing Minority Women in Managerial and Professional Job" (Glover, Greenfield, King and Norvel; Olympus Publishing, 1979).

In 1977, President Carter asked Ray Marshall to be his Secretary of Labor and Marshall tapped 29-year old Alexis Herman to be Director of the Women's Bureau -- the youngest Director ever. As Director, she devoted her energies to such issues as helping displaced homemakers get into the workforce, opening apprenticeship opportunities for women in skilled trades, providing job training opportunities for welfare recipients, and co-chairing a Presidential Task Force to promote business ownership by women.

In 1981, Herman started a consulting firm, Green, Herman & Associates, with Ernest Green, who had served as Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment and Training under President Carter. As Vice President of Green, Herman (1981-85), and later President of the successor firm, A.M. Herman & Associates (formed in 1985 when she bought out her partner), Herman provided a range of consulting services with an emphasis on issues related to the hiring and training of minorities, the recruitment of minority vendors, and the creation of productive workplace environments. For example, she advised the city of Atlanta on how to better coordinate their worker training efforts with their economic development planning so that workers would be trained for the jobs that new businesses would actually bring in. She advised companies on ways to reduce the turnover of minority employees who were having trouble adjusting to a corporate culture that had always been closed to them. And she advised major corporations on how to improve their relationships with minority communities.

In 1989, Ron Brown, newly elected Chair of the Democratic National Committee, asked Herman to do an assessment of the DNC's organization and then asked her to remain as Deputy Chair and Chief of Staff. She served in that capacity until 1991, when she became Chief Executive Officer of the 1992 Democratic Convention in New York.

When Bill Clinton was elected President, he appointed Herman Deputy Director of his transition and then asked her to head up the Office of Public Liaison, which communicates to the President the concerns of constituencies from across America, delivers the President's message to those groups, and builds grass roots support for the President's domestic and international priorities. As Director of the Public Liaison Office, Herman has been at the center of most of the pivotal initiatives of the President's first four years.

- Let me tell you about Alexis Herman. This is a special person who grew up poor in the segregated South and made something of herself through talent, energy and a commitment to an issue that is still at the top of our agenda today -- helping people to help themselves through employment and training.
- In her very first job at Catholic Charities 25 years ago, she worked with the AFL-CIO to place young African American men facing dead-end futures in skilled apprenticeships at a shipyard in Pascagoula, Mississippi -- where, incidentally, Sen. Lott's father was a pipefitter.

She went on from there to spend the next five years running a program in Atlanta devoted to helping minority women break into the white collar workplace. And she was so successful that she was able to expand into 10 cities across the country.

And then when she was only 29, President Carter asked her to become Director of the Women's Bureau in the Department of Labor, the youngest ever. And she continued her efforts to expand opportunity in the workplace, devoting her energies to issues like opening up apprenticeships for women in skilled trades, helping displaced homemakers get into the workforce, and providing job training for people on welfare.

Then started her own consulting business continuing to work on issues of hiring and training minorities. And for the past four years she has been an outstanding Director of the Office of Public Liaison at the White House.

- The other thing that is so special about Alexis and which I know was very important to the President in choosing her is that she is a true coalition builder. This is one of those rare people who is equally good with business and labor, rich and poor, black, white or brown. She has a gift for bringing people together in a cooperative spirit.



Stephen
Kiernan

Who can pass this test?

She was born in Mobile, Ala., in July of 1947.

Her first taste of politics came early, when her father sued the state's Democrats to win black voting rights in party elections. Later he became Alabama's first African American ward leader.

She attended a black Catholic high school, and was once suspended for asking officials why only white students were allowed to participate in the annual religious pageant.

Later, armed with a college degree, she returned to Mobile and joined successful efforts to desegregate the city's parochial schools. A social worker with Catholic Charities, she worked to increase job opportunities for shipyard workers. Next, in Atlanta, she ran a program that placed minority women in management jobs.

Then in New York City, she worked at a consulting firm that managed 30 programs to apprentice women in nontraditional jobs. Her success there caught the attention of Jimmy Carter's administration. In 1977 she was named head of the Women's Bureau at the Labor Department. The youngest person ever to hold that office, she was 30.

After the 1980 election, she opened her own consulting firm, helping businesses develop training programs. With clients like Burger King, Levi Strauss and Procter & Gamble, she was in high demand. On one project in Washington, D.C. — a mid-1980s \$200 million development known as Market Square — her pay for coordinating hiring of minority workers included a fractional ownership.

But politics was in her blood. She worked for the Democratic Party, managing Jesse Jackson's bids at the party conventions in 1984 and 1988, and joining the Democratic National Committee thereafter.

DNC head Ron Brown made her chief of staff for the 1992 convention. When Bill Clinton won, she co-directed his transition team.

Then Clinton named her head of the White House Office of Public Liaison. Her job was to build public support for Clinton policies, but she was also considered influential in delivering messages from the business community to the president.

Often her office brought executives in to meet Clinton. In May she received a list of bankers to invite for coffee with the president. The week-end before, she learned it was not a White House event but a campaign meeting, and a banking regulator would be there, so she did not attend.

Clinton won re-election; some of his staffers chose to return to private life. Labor Secretary Robert Reich was among them, and in December she was nominated for his post. The president's cabinet. The only African American woman in his cabinet.

It was a long, long way from 1947 Mobile. But then the other side of politics reared up. The ugly side.

Now she is under fire for her ownership in Market Square, because 12 years later her 1 percent is worth \$500,000. Critics ask, did she earn it? Now she is suspected of using White House resources for campaign purposes, as others on Clinton's team clearly have.

In neither case is she charged with doing anything illegal. Senate GOP leader Trent Lott met with her last week and said as much.

Yet her confirmation is stalled. The Senate Labor Committee will not even set a date for her hearing. After a life of accomplishment on behalf of women, minorities and workers, she is caught in the web of partisan spiders.

This is what Washington has become; this is partly where public disgust develops. Are we looking for saints or office holders? Is there anyone whose past can withstand meticulous, adversarial, public review?

Time to name names. Hers is Alexis Herman. And who is the chairman of the committee holding the reins to her future, while also stalling action on issues concerning the nation's businesses and labor interests?

Why, it's Vermont's junior senator, James Jeffords.

"Close to Home" is a weekly commentary on public affairs. To reach Stephen Kiernan, call 660-1861.

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HEADLINE: GOP living dangerously with attacks on Herman

BYLINE: By Carl Rowan

BODY:

Since the November elections, this question has been raised often and in many circles: "Why is the Republican Party losing women voters, and why can't it make any headway with blacks?"

The answer is obvious in the way the GOP seeks to exploit the mistakes and stupidities of Democratic fund-raisers. There are male villains of many stripes that the Republicans could humiliate in hearings, or push toward criminal prosecution, but they choose first to try to make a black woman the fall guy.

I refer to Alexis M. Herman, President Clinton's nominee to be secretary of labor, who has been director of the White House's Office of Public Liaison. Ignoring the fact that she is immensely popular among the hundreds of groups that have found her helpful during many years of public service, and the apparent fact that she is only marginally touched by the fund-raising scandals, Republican senators have decided to let Herman sweat in embarrassment while they hold up her confirmation hearings. The telephone calls that I'm getting suggest that the GOP will pay dearly for dumping on the 49-year-old Herman in their attempts to embarrass Clinton.

Republicans have said they want to know if Herman violated the Hatch Act -- a rule that limits political activities of some government employees -- when she advised Clinton on how to bolster support among black voters.

Republican senators know, though, that all senior White House employees, Democrat or Republican, work to get their president re-elected, and that the Hatch Act has never deterred any of them. Republican presidents have not had many blacks as top White House aides, but the few I've known worked aggressively to win black voters for their leader.

Furthermore, the Office of Public Liaison is inherently political, because it was created on the assumption that any president benefits when public groups and constituencies are informed and happy. Herman's success in the liaison job has left some Republicans eager to get her.

Senate Republicans made a knee-jerk judgment that Herman would be an easy target. She was until 1993 a chief of staff, vice chairman and deputy chairman of the Democratic National Committee. This DNC is accused of fund-raising abuses, including 103 coffees with the president for groups of potential donors.

While the White House claims that Herman was circumspect, and not involved in the coffees, it acknowledges that she unwittingly was party to the major error of inviting Comptroller of the Currency Eugene A. Ludwig to a White House coffee klatch for 17 major bankers for whom he is chief regulator.

The White House says that neither Herman nor the Public Liaison aide who invited Ludwig was aware that the DNC had set up the party, and that Herman stayed away once she became aware of the political implications. But no one told Ludwig.

Nevertheless, Herman is close enough to what Clinton concedes were "mistakes" for Republicans to see political advantage in letting her twist in the wind, wondering if she will be confirmed.

But the people calling me are threatening to make the GOP senators pay dearly if they deny Herman a Cabinet post on the basis of "nothing evidence."

Carl Rowan is a nationally syndicated columnist of the Chicago Sun-Times.

LANGUAGE: English

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Republicans' Tempest in A Coffeepot

In mid-December, when President Clinton tapped Alexis Herman as his choice to become the next U.S. secretary of labor, a roar of approval rose from many corners of the country. This eminently qualified woman was on tap to be the only woman of color in the president's Cabinet.

Despite that wellspring of support, Republican senators have delayed action on Herman's nomination for weeks while they investigated her part in a controversial political coffee klatch. The White House Office of Public Liaison, headed by Herman, invited a federal banking regulator to meet with Clinton and some powerful bankers. But the White House said that Herman's office was involved because of a miscommunication about the nature of the meeting and that Herman did not attend the klatch after she learned it was a political event. Documents turned over to the Senate several days ago confirm Herman's account, sources familiar with the documents said.

The slow pace at which her nomination has been considered is, therefore, suspicious. And the continual raising of additional issues is beginning to give weight to the idea that some Republicans would rather weaken Herman's nomination than give it the hearing it deserves.

So it was good last week to see a Republican senator and a Democratic senator, in an unusual display of bipartisan support, rise to say that the Senate has an obligation to respect Herman's qualifications to run this important agency and should move forward promptly on her nomination. Senators in both parties had been silent too long.

Although Sen. James M. Jeffords (R-Vt.), chairman of the Labor Committee, said this week he is still reviewing outstanding questions, Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) said Jeffords told him the prospects are there will be a hearing. Specter and Sen. Christopher J. Dodd (D-Conn.) still felt it important to go on record urging prompt hearings on Herman's nomination.

"She has a distinguished record," Specter said. "She may well be qualified or the contrary may be the case. But I think it is very important . . . that a person has his or her day

See GILLIAM, D5, Col. 3

GILLIAM, From D1

in court to have a determination made on the merits."

Added Dodd: "She is eminently qualified . . . to fulfill the position of secretary of labor. There have been issues raised, and the purpose for which we have hearings is to allow those issues to be aired and to give a person an opportunity to respond. In the absence of that hearing . . . the allegations remain.

"In many instances, there's never the kind of opportunity to respond with the same voice and the same positioning with which the allegations are made. It is absolutely essential in my view that she be given that opportunity. I am totally confident that she will respond to those issues when she is asked publicly."

It was revealed in late January that the Office of Public Liaison, which Herman has directed since 1993, was involved in inviting the federal bank regulator to the coffee, which was sponsored by the Democratic Party. The White House said Herman's office was involved in the improper gathering only because of a miscommunication about its nature. Although Herman did not attend, she did not inform Eugene Al Ludwig, comptroller of the currency, in order to withdraw his invitation.

Herman later reiterated to Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) that she did not invite Ludwig and did not arrange the meeting.

She explained the mistakes her office made in handling the incident.

Herman's situation is but one part of the larger issue of campaign fund-raising practices that ensnares both Democrats and Republicans. Clearly, campaign finance reform is high on the American people's agenda even if it doesn't seem to be very high on the priority list of congressional politicians.

But to ensnare Herman in this nasty morass of problematic fund-raising on the strength of a meeting she did not attend seems to be overkill. What should be the pinnacle of 49-year-old Herman's career seems to have become a political glass ceiling.

"The current contretemps over [the role of Alexis Herman] is a graphic and dramatic" example of why many bright young people do not want to enter public service, said Yvonne Scruggs, executive director of the Black Leadership Forum.

Herman is one of those bright young people who was willing to take the plunge into government 20 years ago. She was 29 when she became head of the Labor Department's Women's Bureau during the Carter administration, a job she performed so well that Labor insiders think she is one of the few people who could hit the ground running as secretary.

One of the most important pieces of pending business is the president's welfare-to-work program. To accomplish this is a huge undertaking that will require balancing delicate issues. The Department of Labor will play an important role in making sure the best possible conditions are created for success.

Some business group officials already have said that more government leadership is needed if companies are to sign on to the president's high-profile initiatives. Right now, the Labor Department is missing the voice and focus of a leader. While the attention of so many is on knocking people off the welfare rolls, somebody has to be focused on the endgame—making sure people can find jobs and training.

Alexis Herman's credentials are ideal to make sure the thinking inside and outside the administration takes into consideration the beneficiaries of all the Labor Department's services. It's time to set a definite and prompt date for her hearings. I'm already steeled for the usual circus that accompanies these hearings, but one hopes that despite self-serving queries and media-inspired speeches, there will be a focus on policy issues such as welfare-to-work and not only on coffee klatches.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Quit holding Herman hostage for Labor job

If Republicans know something, say so; otherwise, hold hearings to confirm her.

By DeWayne Wickham

Alexis Herman is in political limbo.

Nominated by President Clinton to be the next secretary of Labor, Herman's confirmation has been put on hold while Republican senators probe her connection to a questionable White House coffee klatch.

At issue here is what Herman — head of an office that had some involvement in setting up the meeting — knew, and when she knew it, about who was invited to attend this fund-raising event, which inappropriately brought together prominent bankers and the government's top banking regulator. The answer, contained in documents turned over to the Senate last week, is that she knew very little. Still, the Senate has her in a holding pattern.

Herman deserves better.

She deserves more than the muffled support she's gotten from Senate Democrats thus far. And she ought to be treated at least as well by Republicans — who control the confirmation process — as they treated Clarence Thomas when his nomination to the Supreme Court was under attack.

Thomas, who had virtually no judicial experience, was lionized by Senate Republicans for his up-from-bootstraps climb from Pin Point, Ga., to become a nominee to the nation's highest court. He did it by taking one government job after another. Thomas spent most of his adult life on the public payroll.

Herman's rise has been not nearly as self-centered. She grew up in Mobile, Ala., in a single-parent home. After graduating from college, Herman went to work for Catholic Social Services, helping to find adoptive parents or foster care for homeless children.



Nominee: President and Herman at Dec. 20 announcement.

She spent years running job-training programs for the poor and disadvantaged. A program she created in Atlanta to help semiskilled young women break into white-collar jobs was eventually expanded to 30 cities. Herman didn't just pull herself up by her bootstraps; she helped others escape poverty's tight grip as well.

That's the kind of story that ought to have Republican self-helpers championing at the bit to confirm Herman. Instead, they're raking her over the coals.

Little has been said about any of what she did before coming into government by the senators who are holding Herman's nomination hostage. Even less has been uttered by them about her impressive qualifications to head the Labor Department, where she served as director of the Women's Bureau during the Carter administration. Instead, they talk vaguely about wanting to get to the bottom of her involvement with a White House meeting she didn't attend and played little role in organizing.

That's got to make you wonder.

Of the seven people Clinton has nominated to fill Cabinet posts, Herman is the only one the Senate thus far has refused to consider. The Labor and Human Resources Committee that must vote on her nomination before it goes to the full Senate has yet to schedule Herman for an appearance. The question is, why?

"Her record deserves serious consideration," says Wade Henderson, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. "She has hands-on experience in putting people to work."

Among the mail piling up in the office of the committee's chairman, Vermont Sen. James Jeffords, is a letter from a 66-year-old woman with osteoporosis who says Herman's work with poor, jobless people turned her life around and restored her faith in God. When was the last time you heard that said about someone in government?

For a long time, the American public has been cynical about the shameless partisan wrangling that goes on in Washington. Recently, politicians in both parties have paid lip service to ending the backbiting that has given rise to the "gotcha" politics of the '90s — and in whose undertow Herman is now caught.

Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe there's much more to Herman's role in the offending coffee klatch than meets the eye. Maybe Jeffords knows something he isn't telling the rest of us. If so, he ought to speak up.

If not, he should give Alexis Herman the hearing she deserves and the full Senate a chance to vote on her nomination to become this nation's first black secretary of Labor.

USA TODAY

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1997

Labor nominee Herman, caught in Senate cross fire, deserves a hearing

I could not agree more with DeWayne Wickham's columns about secretary of Labor nominee Alexis Herman ("GOP tactic: 'Death by a thousand cuts,'" Tuesday; "Quit holding Herman hostage for Labor job," The Forum, Feb. 11).

Wickham hits the nail on the head in highlighting the bootstrap appeal of Herman's many accomplishments in bringing self-help solutions to the disadvantaged. It is all the more incomprehensible why Herman is not being given her date before the Senate confirmation committee.



By Gary Hershorn, Reuters
Herman: Nomination on hold.

A close examination of Herman's lifetime of work underscores that she is someone who can and has received broad bipartisan support. She already brings with her the diverse support of key leadership of organizations from the grass roots to the boardroom.

Herman has been caught in the cross fire, and the media have been all too quick to pronounce her nomination dead on arrival, compounding the unfairness to her.

I have known Herman for most of her adult life and can truly say she is a woman

of sterling character and exceptional ability. Whether in the public or private sector, her work is a unique record of achievement, exemplifying discipline, competency, creativity and dedication.

Let us urge the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee to move forward and give Herman the opportunity to be heard and answer any remaining questions.

I am convinced that the confirmation of Herman will light the way for many young women to seek a life of quality and integrity through public service.

Dorothy I. Height, president, CEO
National Council of Negro Women
Washington, D.C.

Voices: Should consumers have the option of disconnecting safety air bags?

USA TODAY
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1997

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 1997

Then Almost Brought Her Down

By MICHAEL WINES

WASHINGTON, March 11 — Nobody doesn't like Alexis Herman.

Ask childhood friends about President Clinton's choice to be the next Secretary of Labor, and they recall how the tough-minded black youngster from Mobile, Ala., faced down a Catholic prelate over racial discrimination. An admirer remembers when she lent her good dresses in the 1970's to black women interviewing for office jobs. Democrats marvel over her management of the party's 1992 convention, the one that helped pump up Bill Clinton's support in polls by 20 percentage points.

She has been known to give presents to co-workers after tough workweeks. One man says she briefly considered becoming a nun.

"People who like her really like her," says Lamond Godwin, who grew up across the street from Ms. Herman in the 1950's. "Most of the people she meets who become her friends remain her friends forever."

Which, lately, is her biggest problem.

The Senate Labor Committee investigated Ms. Herman for two and a half months before scheduling a hearing on her nomination for next Tuesday. The delay had less to do with her résumé, a Horatio Alger story of pluck and hard work, than with the friends — powerful, sometimes controversial Democrats — she made on the way up.

Ms. Herman's confirmation now seems likely, but questions about those relationships had threatened her nomination and angered her supporters.

"Alexis is not somebody who's along for the ride," said Ricki Seidman, a White House aide during Ms. Herman's recent tenure as the Presidential liaison to business and the public. "She's a highly principled person."

Few dispute that. But the story of Ms. Herman's rise to influence, so intertwined with powerful friends, suggests how delicate the balance between politics and principle can be.

The White House declined to make Ms. Herman, 49, available for an interview, citing her upcoming confirmation hearing. But associates describe a woman who learned early that skin color does not determine success.

Religion and Politics Side by Side

Ms. Herman grew up in Mobile when white resistance to integration was peaking and Southern blacks were awakening to their political power. Her mother was a reading teacher. Her father, a mortician, was one of the first blacks elected to Alabama's Democratic Party organization. Friends recall watching national political conventions in the Herman living room, her father providing commentary.

Religion most shaped Ms. Herman's youth. Her Catholic parents shunned segregated state education and enrolled her in parochial schools — still segregated, but employing white priests and nuns whose tutoring was colorblind.

"The nuns and the priests kept us from becoming racists," Mr. Godwin said. "The best people we knew were white — people we spent the whole day with, who were the best examples of moral behavior. We had the Klan bombing churches, but we had these people on our side. It made it easy to understand that the problem was not us; the problem was the Klan."

It also enabled Ms. Herman to challenge racism. She once sneaked away from classmates at a school event, the annual Christ the King parade, to demand that a church official explain why black students never performed the celebration's symbolic high-light, crowning the Virgin Mary.

Ms. Herman's father once took her high school class on an unusual field trip: to a meeting of the Alabama Citizens Council, the front for the Ku Klux Klan.

"They started throwing things at us," said Paulette Lewis, a classmate and still a close friend. "Popcorn boxes, cans, whatever. This is the kind of upbringing we had."

Forging Friendships With the Influential

Most Pure Heart of Mary High School, where Ms. Herman was a class officer, produced extraordinary alumni in Ms. Herman's era: a Marine general and ambassador; an adviser to President Ronald Reagan; doctors; investment bankers like Mr. Godwin, a managing director of Smith Barney Inc.

Ms. Herman graduated from a Catholic university — Xavier University of Louisiana, in New Orleans — and returned to Mobile. She joined Catholic Charities in nearby Pascagoula, Miss., lobbying the city shipyard to give apprenticeships to unskilled black laborers.

She was good at it, blessed with self-confidence and an ability to bridge gaps between blacks and whites. Mr. Godwin, then working on minority-employment programs for the Southern Regional Council, touted her to Ray Marshall, a member of the council's executive committee. Mr. Marshall brought her to Atlanta to work on a project to persuade corporations to hire college-educated black women for office jobs that had been filled exclusively by whites.

"I was amazed," Mr. Marshall said recently. "She did a better job than I would have."

Using a Federal grant, Mr. Marshall expanded Ms. Herman's project and merged it with a New York City nonprofit group, the Recruitment and Training Program. Working there was another Southerner, who had impressed Mr. Marshall on a project to integrate the construction industry. His name was Ernest G. Green.

Mr. Green was already well known. When Federal troops forcibly integrated schools in Little Rock, Ark., in 1957, Mr. Green was among the first black students escorted into Central High. His coolness had made him something of a civil rights icon. He and Ms. Herman became fast friends.

Mr. Marshall and Mr. Godwin, meanwhile, had moved on to run a task force on the rural South whose directors included Georgia's Governor, Jimmy Carter. "We were having dinner at the initial meeting of the task force," Mr. Godwin said, "and Governor Carter said he was thinking about running for President. This was 1974. At the time, we all thought it was far-fetched."

But President Carter chose Mr. Marshall as his Secretary of Labor. Mr. Marshall named Mr. Green an assistant secretary, Mr. Godwin his head of national employment programs and Ms. Herman director of the women's bureau.

According to Mr. Godwin, who sketched out Ms. Herman's life in politics, the three administered billions of dollars in grants much like those they had once received, and although Ms. Herman did not dispense money, she became a top adviser to Mr. Green and Mr. Marshall.

They also became political figures, if minor ones. Ms. Herman had worked on the Atlanta mayoral campaigns of Maynard H. Jackson and Andrew Young. She was also an early supporter of Marion S. Barry Jr., and got to know Ronald H. Brown, a National Urban League executive and Democratic Party figure.

At a 1980 testimonial dinner in Mobile, she met another rising political figure: the Rev. Jesse Jackson, then the head of Operation PUSH, the group that targeted companies with poor minority-employment practices.

After Mr. Carter lost the 1980 election, Mr. Green and Mr. Herman formed a firm that advised businesses on marketing and minority-hiring issues.

Within months, Republican critics accused Mr. Green of shoveling almost 300 Federal contracts and grants to cronies in the last months of Mr. Carter's term, including contracts to the Recruitment and Training Program and Operation PUSH. They also accused Green-Herman & Associates, the new consulting firm, of cashing in by obtaining subcontracts from some of those same cronies.

The Labor Department, the Senate and a United State Attorney's office all investigated. Though some Federal employees testified to irregularities, others called the complaints trumped up. No charges were filed. Mr. Godwin and Mr. Marshall, who now holds an endowed chair in economics and public affairs at the University of Texas, call the affair a political smear.

In fact, friends of Ms. Herman and Mr. Green now say, Green-Herman & Associates did benefit later from Mr. Jackson, who sometimes recommended their consulting firm to companies targeted by Operation PUSH. But that, they say, reflected not favor-trading but Mr. Jackson's growing friendship with the two and his confidence in their firm.

Building a Machine As Fortunes Rise

Ms. Herman's political and financial fortunes rose in tandem. In 1982, she supported Mr. Barry's re-election campaign for Mayor of Washington. In 1984, she worked for Mr. Jackson's Presidential campaign. About the same time, the developer of a Pennsylvania Avenue tract near the Capitol made Ms. Herman a partner, giving her 3.3 percent of an office-and-condominium complex for little or no money.

Then and now, such sweetheart deals are a common way of satisfying the affirmative-action demands of government boards that hand out lucrative contracts. Ms. Herman later sold part of her share and recently valued the remainder at \$500,000 to \$1 million.

Mr. Green sold his interest in the consulting firm to Ms. Herman in the mid-1980's and entered investment banking. In 1988, Ms. Herman joined Mr. Jackson's second Presidential campaign and found herself working with Mr. Brown, by now a prominent lawyer and lobbyist who was organizing Mr. Jackson's convention.

George Bush's triumph in 1988 left the Democratic alliance in tatters. Mr. Brown sought the chairmanship of the Democratic

National Committee, and won. Ms. Herman became his deputy and, in 1992, the organizer of the party's national convention.

Together, they built an impressive financial and political machine. Just as in Pascagoula and Atlanta, Ms. Herman's deftness at organizing blacks, whites, rich and poor around a common purpose stood out.

She and Mr. Brown also came under attack for what U.S. News and World Report called the lavish use of perks like limousines, private jets and a Central Park apartment rented during planning for the 1992 convention, which was held in New York City.

To some others' dismay, Ms. Herman continued to run her consulting firm while running Democratic politics. In one case, her firm was paid \$600,000 to advise the winning bidder for a \$750 million Federal office project near the White House, a plum fought over at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue. Critics later complained that she acted as a political fixer in the competition, an accusation the White House has denied.

When Mr. Clinton became President, Mr. Brown became Commerce Secretary. Ms. Herman went to the White House as head of the office of public liaison — in effect, the grass-roots organizer of support for Administration policies.

The job was ostensibly nonpolitical, but by its nature, it has almost inevitably taken on a political cast. This time, that was doubly true: the office helped draft Mr. Clinton's plans to win over ethnic groups in his 1996 campaign. Ms. Herman's deputy ran a group that targeted Asian-Americans. Another aide worked on wooing the Jewish vote.

Among other campaign duties, Ms. Herman supervised the strategy to win black voters. Her second in command was an old friend, Mr. Green, who by then was a friend of the President's, too — and one of the Democratic Party's biggest soft-money fund-raisers. He also promoted business deals, including ventures with another Arkansan and Presidential friend, Yah Ling (Charlie) Trie.

All those roles converged in the 1996 campaign. Mr. Green appeared at some of the now-infamous White House coffees with major party donors. In February 1996, he and Mr. Trie arranged for attendance at one coffee by one of their business prospects, Wan Jung, an executive in an arms-export business identified as a weapons smuggling front for the Chinese military.

Ms. Herman also attended some coffees; her office invited a Federal banking regulator to one such session, attended by big donors from the banking industry.

Ms. Herman has insisted that she played no part in that invitation, and that her work for Mr. Clinton's re-election was properly performed on personal time.

Senate investigators have since scrubbed that and the rest of Ms. Herman's past. After long thought, they seem agreed that nothing there bars her confirmation.

GOP tactic: 'Death by a thousand cuts'

Accusations about real estate project the latest cheap shot at Labor nominee Herman.

By DeWayne Wickham

Last week I challenged Senate Republicans to hold a hearing on the nomination of Alexis Herman to be secretary of Labor or come up with a plausible reason why they shouldn't.

The next day, Republican Sen. Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania took to the Senate floor to urge the Labor and Human Resources Committee to give Herman a hearing.

She's "entitled to be heard on the subject and to have a decision made one way or the other about whether she is qualified or disqualified," he said.

But instead of getting a hearing date, Herman got slammed.

On Saturday *The New York Times* ran a front-page story in which unnamed Republicans raised new questions about her fitness to head the Department of Labor. They questioned how Herman got a 3.3% interest in a Washington real estate project without putting up any money. They worried aloud that Herman may have traded on her access to high officials in the local or federal government to pay for her share of the deal.



By Paul T. Whyte, USA TODAY

"It is very important when someone is nominated for a position and there is public

I worry that there may be no end to the cheap shots Herman's critics will lob at her.

The deal Republicans are talking about was done during the mid-1980s. Back then Herman was a private citizen, and the GOP controlled both the White House and the federal corporation that oversaw the selection of the developer who made her a limited partner in his construction project.

If there was any illegal influence peddling done, it's unlikely that Herman, a life-long Democrat, did it. More likely, she was brought into the Market Square deal — as a limited partner — to help the builder meet his minority participation goal.

So what's going on here?

controversy and public comment that that individual have his or her day in court."

— Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa.

It's the political equivalent of "death by a thousand cuts." Herman is being sliced and diced by a Republican campaign of specious charges and nagging innuendoes.

Two weeks ago the issue was her role in a White House coffee klatch that inappropriately brought together prominent bankers and the top federal banking regulator. As it turns out, she

neither attended nor had a significant role in organizing that gathering.

So far, none of what her critics have thrown at her has stuck. But in today's political climate, that's not necessary. All that's required is for the attack to last long enough for people to begin to mumble "where there's smoke there's fire," and Herman can kiss her chances of joining Bill Clinton's Cabinet goodbye. Time is running out.

The conventional wisdom is that if a hearing date is not set soon, pressure will mount on Clinton to pull the plug on his nominee or for Herman to bow out.

Some say Herman's been targeted because she's one of the few remaining liberals in Clinton's inner circle.

Some claim she is being made to pay for her involvement in the successful effort to rally ethnic voters in support of the president's re-election campaign.

And others argue Herman suffers most from a lack of support from Sen. Edward Kennedy, the ranking Democrat on the Labor and Human Resources Committee, who is said to have favored someone else for the job.

For whatever reason, Vermont Sen. James Jeffords, the chairman of the committee, refuses to put Herman on his committee's docket. His failure to do so aids and abets the mean-spirited attacks her enemies are waging on Herman's integrity.

Jeffords has a reputation for fairness. But like Herman's good name, it is being sullied by the bad treatment she is getting.

Unlike Herman, he controls his fate in this matter. He alone can right the wrong that is being done. He can schedule a hearing on her nomination and allow the confirmation process to run its course.

Or, Jeffords can stonewall Alexis Herman long enough for her enemies' strategy to work.

USA TODAY
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1997

Herman shouldn't become another Guinier

No more Lani Guinier, please. Remember Lani Guinier, the University of Pennsylvania law professor and civil rights lawyer who was pilloried as the "quota queen"? She was unfairly denied an opportunity to become assistant attorney general for civil rights because her nomination for the post was withdrawn. She was never granted a hearing to defend her controversial writings.

Now there's Alexis Herman. Her nomination as secretary of labor seems "to be endangered by rumors, innuendoes and inaccuracies," according to Rep. Maxine Waters, California Democrat and chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Despite her career of helping to train and educate the working poor, particularly women, Miss Herman's confirmation hearings have been held up by those posing questions about campaign fund-raising practices at the White House, where she was recently director of the office of public liaison.

What do Alexis Herman and Lani Guinier have in common?

Besides being black, female professionals, neither was given



the chance to face accusers in public, despite outstanding qualifications.

Some detractors already are suggesting that Miss Herman's nomination be withdrawn based on sensational, though unsubstantiated, allegations. She is the only Cabinet nominee who has yet to be scheduled for a hearing.

What could be worse than being tried, dyed and fried in public without being given the opportunity to make your case?

"Is it fair that the professional career and stellar reputation of Alexis Herman is being buried in the ashes of deceptive and damaging delay, spins of repetitive misinformation and innuendo — all of which point to the possible abuse of the hearing process?" asked Dorothy Height, president of the Na-

tional Council of Negro Women, last week.

She spoke along with a number of women and women's groups that are coalescing around Miss Herman, vowing that they will not allow her to become another Lani Guinier.

From national organizations such as the American Association of University Women, Wider Opportunities for Women and the Feminist Majority, to local women such as Barbara Skinner and Juanita Britton, the womenfolk are lining up to support Miss Herman's nomination.

At a news conference last week on Capitol Hill, they demanded that Sen. James M. Jeffords, Vermont Republican, who heads the Committee on Labor and Human Resources, set a confirmation hearing date. They

also highlighted her expertise and experience, which more than qualify her for the labor post.

Ms. Britton, of BZB International in Southeast Washington, has been passing out fliers for the past month asking that "Sisters Unite to Get Alexis Herman a Date" by encouraging women to write, call and fax their representatives in Congress and Mr. Jeffords in Miss Herman's behalf.

"It will not be enough to express our support for designate Alexis Herman to each other. We must bond to present a united front, to take action, make history and a difference," she writes.

Yvonne Scruggs, executive director of the Black Leadership Forum, contends that the delay in Miss Herman's confirmation hearing is "inviting the stabbing of a thousand rumors." She says the labor secretary-designate has been subjected to "a confirmation strategy of repetitive, arbitrary and largely irrelevant questions to Miss Herman outside of the traditional and familiar context of a scheduled hearing."

Lani Guinier maintained until the bitter end that she would

have been confirmed had she been given the chance. Even Sen. Arlen Specter, Pennsylvania Republican, went on the Senate floor to say it was unfortunate that she was never heard, as he, too, questioned the fairness of not allowing nominees a fair hearing.

So what of Miss Herman?

Yesterday, she responded to the latest round of questions put to her by Mr. Jeffords, after which he said he would set a date in two weeks if he was satisfied with her answers.

Enough.

At the very least, Alexis Herman should have her day in court set now. Not because she is black and female and would represent in the Cabinet that portion of the nation's electorate that gave President Clinton 89 percent of their vote.

Alexis Herman should have her day in court because she's qualified to become the secretary of labor.

As for the rest, Miss Herman should be given the same opportunity as any other nominee to answer any and all allegations and charges in a fair and impartial confirmation hearing.

Then, let the chips fall where they may.

The Washington Times

TUESDAY, MARCH 4, 1997

2/24/97

WASHINGTON TODAY: Money and politics are common themes with Herman With BC-Bio Box-Herman

By DONALD M. ROTHBERG= Associated Press Writer=

WASHINGTON (AP) Rumpled, gruff, street-smart Paul Tully always opened the meetings with exaggerated politeness. "Madam, and how are you today?" Slender, cool Alexis Herman unfailingly responded in her soft Alabama drawl, "I'm just fine, Paul."

Then the battle began, Tully demanding more money for Democratic campaigns and Herman keeping a firm hand on the purse strings.

In that 1992 campaign year, Tully, then the Democratic Party's political director, smelled victory and was always looking for more money for this or that House or Senate campaign. As party executive director, Herman was the one who often had to say no.

Now, President Clinton is pressing a Republican-run Senate to say yes to Herman's nomination to be secretary of labor.

"She deserves a hearing and if she gets a hearing she's going to be confirmed," Clinton said last week. Sen. James Jeffords, R-Vt., chairman of the Senate Labor Committee, has said he will not schedule a hearing until he gets answers to questions about Herman's past activities.

As so often is the case with Herman, most of the questions involve money and politics, particularly her work for Democratic causes while on the White House staff.

Among the questions being asked: What role did she have in arranging the White House coffee klatch that gave political contributors from the banking industry a chance to chat with the president and the government's chief banking regulator?

White House officials say documents show that Herman did not attend the event and did not know that it was arranged by the Democratic National Committee and that Comptroller of the Currency Eugene Ludwig was on the guest list.

Yet Herman's strongest supporters describe her as highly organized, a master of detail.

"Alexis is a very strong manager," said Mark Steitz, who was communications director of the DNC when Herman was executive director and Tully was running the political division.

"The skill of knowing how to understand people, understand situations and manage them, those were the things that allowed her to be the tough cop to Ron Brown's always smiley, funny cop," said Steitz. Brown, who later became Clinton's commerce secretary, was party chairman and Herman's political patron.

When Clinton took office in 1993, Herman was named director of the White House Office of Public Liaison.

Clinton has described Herman as one of Brown's closest advisers. When the commerce secretary was killed in a plane crash in the Balkans last April, Herman played the lead role in making arrangements for his funeral.

Herman's White House job involves building coalitions around issues and working with constituency groups, especially when they are unhappy. Her ability to mingle and sooth ruffled feelings earned her the sobriquet "Queen of Schmooze."

"I feel like I've known Alexis forever," said Bill Lynch, who was a deputy mayor of New York during the administration of David Dinkins. Lynch worked with Herman and Brown when they joined the Jesse Jackson presidential campaign just before the 1988 Democratic National Convention.

"She has this kind of genteel facade," said Lynch. "But she's tough as nails inside and takes no prisoners."

The 49-year-old Herman was born into politics in Mobile, Ala. Her father sued the state Democratic Party to force it to give blacks the vote. He later became the first black ward leader in the state.

President Carter named her director of the Women's Bureau in the Labor

Department. When she left government service, Herman formed a company to help recruit black women for corporations.

The Rev. Calvin Harper worked with Herman in the mid 1980s when he was in charge of recruiting for the research and development division of Procter & Gamble Co.

Herman was hired to help employees ``develop the skills to help them function in the corporate environment.''

Harper cited the case of a black woman with a doctorate in biochemistry who was having difficulty fitting in at Procter & Gamble.

``A good scientist but having trouble working into the system,' ' he said. Herman pointed out the need to get the woman plugged into the informal company network that involved socializing over lunch or at the company fitness club.

``Alexis was able to make that kind of thing happen and this young lady now is probably at the associate director level,' ' said Harper.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Donald M. Rothberg has covered politics and national affairs in Washington for The Associated Press since 1966.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 30, 1997

The Honorable James M. Jeffords
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing in regard to the nomination of Alexis Herman to be Secretary of Labor, now pending before your Committee. During the past few days, there has been a good deal of inaccurate information in the press concerning Ms. Herman's alleged role in a series of coffees held in the White House in 1995 and 1996 for supporters of the President. The gist of the allegation is that she played a key role in setting up these coffees. (See, for example, Washington Times, 1-29-97 or BNA Daily Labor Report, 1-29-97.) That allegation is incorrect and I would like to set the record straight.

Let me first address the 102 coffees other than the May 13, 1996 coffee with bankers, and then turn to that particular coffee.

The 102 coffees. Neither Alexis Herman nor the Office of Public Liaison (OPL) arranged, organized or managed these coffees. Ms. Herman had a very limited involvement with these coffees. First, Ms. Herman personally attended about six of these 102 coffees. As a White House employee, her attendance was consistent with the Hatch Act. Second, on occasion, the Re-election Campaign sought suggestions from OPL staff for people who could be invited to the coffees designated as being for "Political and Community Leaders" (see list released by the White House January 24). The Re-elect made the final decision as to who would be invited. The coffees for Political and Community Leaders were not attended by finance officials of the Democratic National Committee and invitations were not extended on the basis of having supported the President or the DNC financially.

May 13, 1996 coffee. With respect to this coffee, OPL did have a lead role initially and did extend invitations. Because of a miscommunication within the White House, OPL staff and Ms. Herman believed that this was an official White House event, not a political event sponsored by the DNC. On the weekend before this Monday morning event, Ms. Herman, who was out of town, learned that DNC officials would be attending the coffee. At that point, she concluded that the White House Office of Political Affairs, rather than OPL, was the relevant White House liaison office and decided not to attend the event. She assumed that the Office of Political Affairs would address any issues associated with the event.

In short, the notion that Alexis Herman or OPL were involved in any significant way in White House coffees is untrue.

I hope this clarification has been helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd Stern", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Todd Stern

Assistant to the President and Staff Secretary

cc: The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy



AP photo
President Clinton embraces Labor Secretary-designate Alexis Herman in Washington Friday. Others from left are Transportation Secretary-designate Rodney Slater, Housing Secretary-designate Andrew Cuomo and Vice President Al Gore.

Alexis took call to duty

▶ When Ms. Herman heard it was the president, she answered the phone — and accepted Cabinet nomination

By JEFF HARDY
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Alexis Herman was in the shower when the telephone call came at 6 p.m. Thursday. When she heard that the president of the United States was on the line, she took the call.

As a result of that call, Ms. Herman's family won't be celebrating Christmas at home in Mobile this year. Instead, they'll be coming to Washington to join the new nominee for secretary of labor in "a big Christmas dinner."

President Clinton made official Friday afternoon what the Mobile Register had reported as a likelihood Nov. 24 and as a certainty Friday morning.

State Rep. Yvonne Kennedy, D-Mobile, announced in November that she had it on good authority that her old friend would get the labor post. After that, Ms. Herman's prospects seemed to blow hot and cold as the media spotlighted one candidate after the other as the front-runner. Ms. Herman was not the first choice of organized labor. Others questioned her qualifications.

But on Friday afternoon, the president made an honest woman out of Ms. Kennedy and a Cabinet nominee out of Ms. Herman.

The nominee took time out Friday to thank fellow Mobilians for their support leading up to her nomination.

Please see HERMAN on 10A ▶

She's fourth from Alabama

By JEFF HARDY
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — When Alexis Herman of Mobile becomes the new secretary of labor, she will be the fourth member of a presidential Cabinet to come from Alabama.

The first one fought in the Civil War. The second rewrote his job description to take himself out of the Cabinet. The third is a former University of Alabama president who was one of President Gerald Ford's youngest Cabinet appointees.

Hilary A. Herbert served eight terms in the House, some as chairman of the Committee on Naval Affairs, before President Grover Cleveland appointed him Secretary

Please see ALABAMA on 10A ▶

INSIDE

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- A look at the life of Mobile's Alexis Herman/10A
- Comments from area people on Ms. Herman's nomination/10A

Overnight low 58
Rain chance 0%

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Complete weather/12B

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DEC. 22

Herman bloomed in Mobile

By GENE OWENS

Political Editor

The ancient Chinese had a curse: "May you live in interesting times."

In ancient times, when the Canaanite prophet Balaam tried to pronounce a curse on the invading Israelites, it kept turning into a blessing.

Perhaps Balaam has been behind the scenes in the life of Alexis Herman. The "curse" of interesting times has become a blessing.

She was born in 1947, seven years before the Supreme Court threw out racial segregation in the public schools; eight years before Rosa Parks refused to move to the rear of a city bus in Montgomery; 16 years before George Wallace stood in the schoolhouse door; 18 years before the sheriff's posse and state troopers charged the unarmed marchers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge across the Alabama River in Selma.

Part of the blessing lay in the fact that she was born in Mobile, a relatively quiet eddy in the civil-rights maelstrom that was Alabama. Part of that peacefulness can be attributed to the white and black leadership of the day: Mayor Joe Langan, who sought to dampen the racial passions that so often led to tragedy in other parts of the South; John Leflore and Dr. Robert W. Gilliard, two respected black activists who worked with the white leadership to promote peaceful progress; and Alex Herman, her father, who became the first black to be elected to Mobile's city government.

With such men working on both sides of the color line, Ms. Herman was able to participate in a "sit-in" at a downtown Mobile cafe without triggering a race riot.

Southern charm

Part of the blessing lay in the fact that she absorbed the charm of her Southern surroundings and infused it with native intelligence and a vivacious personality.

"Bloom where you're planted," was the advice given her by her mother, Gloria.

Ms. Herman bloomed in Mobile. She became the Mobile Area Mardi Gras Association's queen in 1974, following in the footsteps of her father, who was NABAMA's king in 1910. But while she blossomed locally, she was preparing to spread her accomplishments far beyond South Alabama.

Her first political experience was distributing literature — at her father's behest — for Joe Langan. "I knew her then," said Langan. "Course, she was just a little young lady. Knew her father very well. He was very active in political life around Mobile. And her mother, course, I knew her."

Langan was on the Catholic Social Services Board, and Alexis was working with the organization at the time.

"Course, we never know how far people are going to go, but she certainly had a fine personality and was very intelligent," said Langan.

Ms. Herman graduated from Xavier University in New Orleans. She began her career in 1969 as a social worker for Catholic charities. She helped develop new skill-training opportunities at Ingalls Shipbuilding Inc. in Pascagoula for unemployed youth and unskilled workers.

Then she moved step by step toward national leadership: as director of the Black Women's Employment Program of the Southern Regional Council in Atlanta; as national director of the Minority Women

Employment Program, and as director of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor under Jimmy Carter.

In 1981, she established A.M. Herman & Associates, a consulting firm that helped develop programs to reduce employee turnover during mergers and acquisitions.

Then she became deputy chair and chief of staff to the Democratic National Committee, chief executive officer of the Democratic National Convention, deputy director of Bill Clinton's Presidential Transition Office and director of the White House Office of Public Liaison.

Ms. Herman has close friends in influential positions locally who give her part of the credit for her success.

For Frichard Mayor Jesse Norwood, her contributions have been solid and practical.

"She was instrumental in helping us with the Brownfield Grant through EPA," he said, "and was helpful for us in getting the early rounds of the COPS grant where we got the extra policemen through federal dollars. She facilitated a lot of other meetings that didn't lead us to direct funding."

Brownfield grants help cities to rehabilitate waste sites and turn them into industrial developments.

Personal touch

For others in Mobile, her contributions have been more personal.

"She's definitely one of my mentors," said Vivian Davis Figures, the Mobile councilwoman who is in a runoff for the state Senate seat left vacant by the death of her husband, Michael.

Mrs. Figures saw Ms. Herman's diplomatic skills at work when chaos was about to break out on the Democratic National Committee and "she just moved in and talked with this person and that person and by the time we got to the meeting, there was a unanimous vote."

Mrs. Figures doesn't think Labor has to worry much about any lack of forcefulness on Ms. Herman's part. "She's a very strong woman," she said, "and she has her resources in place. And she has the personality to go with it."

"I think her parents were very good role models for her," said state Rep. Yvonne Kennedy, president of Bishop State Community College, who grew up in the same community as Ms. Herman. "Her mother was a teacher and her daddy was a businessman and heavily involved in politics."

It was Ms. Kennedy who first announced Nov. 23 that Ms. Herman was in line for a Cabinet post. She told an awards ceremony at Bishop State that she had received the word from a reliable source.

After that, Ms. Herman's name surfaced, then disappeared, from speculative lists of candidates for secretary of Labor.

What was up?

Was the White House trying to throw the media off the scent or was the president really trying to make up his mind?

"I have no idea about that," said Mrs. Figures. "When I spent some time with her last week, she said everything was still pretty much up in the air. I don't think it was a done thing, if you will. The president really did take his time and weigh all the pros and cons with the other candidates, and I feel he did all that and he made a good decision."

"I think there was a lot taking place behind the



Alexis Herman applauds one of her fellow Cabinet nominees at Friday's news conference.

scenes," said Mobile Mayor Mike Dow, "and there was a lot of pressure on the president from several directions. He just voted his conscience."

But Norwood thinks Clinton was doing some "really savvy political maneuvering. My suspicions are that it was always a done deal. However, until you float the name and see the other contenders, you don't know what to contend with."

Don Langham, vice president of the United Paperworkers International Union in Mobile, said union opposition to Ms. Herman was not based on any hostility toward her. It was just that labor had other candidates it liked better.

His union supported Dr. John Calhoun Wells, director of the federal mediation conciliation service.

"I don't have any problem with her if that's the president's choice," he said. "She does have experience with the Department of Labor. I don't think she's been actively involved in labor-management relations on the level that Dr. Wells has."

Ms. Kennedy sees Ms. Herman's success as a healthy signal to the young people of Mobile.

"With the country being the way it is, the South gets a bad name and bad reputation," she said, "and many times our young people will get discouraged and think they're in the outer loop. A very positive message is that you can be whatever you want to be in life — you can get there from here."

Herman

Continued from 1A

The correspondence had been pouring in from home ever since Ms. Herman's name hit the headlines as a possible Cabinet member. It consisted of notes, cards and other expressions of love and prayer. She said they really made a difference for her during the selection process.

"Mobile has always been home to me," she said in a telephone interview. "It will always be home to me, and during this experience I have a special appreciation for when people say you can always go home, no matter what, and that thought gave me great comfort this week."

Ms. Herman says virtually everything is a blur up to the point at which the president called Thursday. When the phone first rang, she told her cousin she would have to return the call.

When told that the caller was the president of the United States, she came to the phone. She remembers exactly what she said to Clinton.

"I said, 'Mr. President, thank you for putting your trust and confidence in

me, and I'm honored by this assignment.'"

She said she harbored no ill will toward those who preferred other candidates. Rather than hold a grudge, she said, her time would be better spent working to get the trade unions to acknowledge the contributions she has made to American workers.

"I have spent most of my adult life working on practical real solutions to advance working Americans in this country," she said, "and I think I will bring that same sort of enthusiasm and energy and hands-on attention to the Labor Department."

If confirmed by the Senate after hearings before the Labor and Human Resources Committee, Ms. Herman, 40, will preside over a staff of 15,200 employees. Agencies under her will include the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Labor secretary, like other Cabinet members, makes \$148,000 a year.

Ms. Herman's nomination was the first announced at a presidential news conference Friday. She was given a very prominent position on the dais, behind Clinton and next to Vice President Al Gore. Clinton called her a leader in efforts to bring women and minorities

into the economic mainstream.

He said he has known Ms. Herman since she was director of the Women's Bureau at the Department of Labor in the 1970s, and the department is critical to the administration's push to expand job training and increase job security and safety.

"For the past four years, as director of the White House Office of Public Liaison, she has been my eyes and ears, working to connect the American people, business and labor, individuals and communities with their government," Clinton said.

Clinton went against the wishes of organized labor as he completed his Cabinet and economic team.

Earlier this week, U.S. Rep. Esteban Torres, D-Calif., and former U.S. Rep. Alan Wheat, D-Mo., were said to be in a dead heat with Ms. Herman. Organized labor endorsed former Sen. Harris Wofford, D-Pa., the director of Clinton's AmeriCorps who is a former labor secretary for the state of Pennsylvania.

Labor leaders who were asked during the selection process never said they had anything against Ms. Herman. They said they simply liked Wofford better.

In a statement released Friday by AFL-CIO head John J. Sweeney, there

was no hint of any animosity toward the nominee.

"Over the years, she has had an excellent relationship with me and other union leaders," he said. "In recent weeks, I have met and talked with her a number of times, and I know she is committed to putting together a strong team to fight for good jobs, justice and dignity for America's working families."

Sen. Jim Jeffords, R-Vt., the new Labor and Human Resources chairman, suggested no immediate impediments to her confirmation. Her predecessor, Robert Reich, got through the process with little controversy in just three days.

"She would bring much accomplishment to that position," Jeffords said. "I look forward to completing the nomination process in a fair and timely fashion."

For Ms. Herman, the nomination brings to a joyous close what in many ways was a trying and tragic year. Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, a close friend and former employer, was killed in a plane crash during a mission to Bosnia at the beginning of the year.

She said she spoke with Brown's wife, Alma, Friday morning. Mrs. Brown wished her well.

State Rep. Michael Box, D-Saraland, president of the National Conference of State Legislatures:

"The president couldn't have made a better choice. I think it brings credit to Mobile as a community. I'm particularly excited because of the fact that in my work with the National Conference of State Legislatures, we are always meeting with members of the administration and congressional leaders, and I see this as an increased opportunity, because of our common background, to improve the ties between state government and the administration."

Mobile City Councilwoman Vivian Davis Figures:

"President Clinton made an excellent choice in choosing Alexis. She's going to do an excellent job. She has always been a hard-working, dedicated, loyal Democrat, and she'll do a superb job in the Department of Labor. She's worked in that department before, so she has the experience. She has the charisma to get along with all types of people. She is a consensus-builder, a bridge-builder, and I think she will carry those attributes with her to that department and be an outstanding Cabinet member."

Mobile City Councilwoman Bess Rich:

"It's very exciting to have that connection for Mobile, and to have her there in that kind of capacity. She comes from a great background; she has been real involved in the Clinton White House. That appointment brings a lot of diversity to his Cabinet, which I know was very important to people."

Stewart Burkhalter, president of the Alabama AFL-CIO:

"From all the reports I've heard, the word is she'll do a good job."

Kimble Forrester, state coordinator of Alabama Arise, the anti-poverty coalition:

"I think it's really cool that an Alabama black woman's now in the Cabinet; other than that I don't have any background with her or anything."

Mobile lawyer Ronald Wilcox:

"I'm very excited that someone from this level, Mobile particularly, could rise to that particular level. It puts Mobile on the map. Any accolade given to her... Mobile will probably get a lot of popularity, a lot of publicity."

State Rep. Steve McMillan, R-Bay Minette:

"I don't know her, never have worked with her, but I've heard a lot of good things about her. That she's very bright and is very proud of her native home."

Sarah Teague, spokeswoman for the State Docks:

"It's always nice to have someone from your own neighborhood who gains that much prominence in the national spectrum, but it's also nice to have someone you can feel easy about tapping them on the shoulder and pointing out some problem that they may have authority over. The State Docks congratulates her, wishes her well, and is delighted that it's a Mobilian."

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1996

What they're saying about Alexis Herman

State Rep. Yvonne Kennedy, president of Bishop State Community College:

"It's a terrific Christmas gift to all Mobilians and Alabamians from the president of the United States."

Lt. Gov. Don Siegelman:

"Alexis Herman will be good for Alabama. Obviously the president thinks she'll be good in the position to which he appointed her. More important, to me it symbolizes that the president is not going to appoint necessarily those people whom interest groups want appointed to oversee their agencies. Ms. Herman offers a very balanced approach on the issue of labor. She certainly has an understanding of the importance of labor, and has been in the position of advising private industry, but at the same time is, as Yvonne Kennedy said, a compassionate and public-minded individual."

Mobile Mayor Mike Dowd:

"It's always nice to see a hometown person become successful. Knowing Alexis as a very intelligent and gracious person, I think she has all the sensitivity and intellect to do an excellent job. It's important for Mobile to have officials on the national level, and the more of that we have, the more we're able to get our fair share of resources and be able to communicate better. And we're doing pretty well these days."

Prichard Mayor Jesse Norwood:

"I'm so glad to read that. I don't know what to do. The president made a wise choice, and I am sure that Alexis will do the country and Mobile a great service in her tenure. We're all very proud of her. She's a coalition-builder and has been extremely instrumental in the White House in helping Prichard get the attention of departments that have an impact on our city."

State Rep. James Buskey:

"It's absolutely wonderful that the president made that selection. He made an excellent choice. All of us in Mobile and the state of Alabama should be extremely proud of that selection."

Commentary

Why So Few Choose to Be Among the Chosen

■ **Politics:** The distortion of Alexis Herman's record will further discourage our brightest from public service.

By YVONNE SCRUGGS

A few years ago, I co-taught the Capstone seminar for 22 second-year graduate students at the University of Pennsylvania's prestigious Fels Center of Government. Earning master's degrees in various aspects of government and public affairs at the end of that semester were 14 Phi Beta Kappas, several former Rhodes scholars, a passel of honors bachelors' degree holders and a majority who had rich backgrounds as aides to Congress or assistants to various mayors and governors.

During the final class meeting, we polled each student about his or her career plans after graduation. With one exception, all of these bright young people excitedly reported their success in finding coveted positions with private corporations and industries, not with governmental agencies or public organizations. Why? Because they feared the effects of press intrusion and unwarranted notoriety on their children and families and felt that given the conservatively capped government salaries and other restricted public employment amenities, the gains from public service simply were not worth the pain.

The years that I describe were 1986 through 1989. I wonder if these students feel vindicated today when they look at the cannibalization of public servants that soaks the front pages of national newspapers.

There are numerous recent cases of character assassination and reputation assault that would discourage any sane person from accepting high government appointment. Often, an entire family will be vilified by broad allegations of "appearances of impropriety" that, whether proved or not, remain indelibly inscribed in the media's memory, to be retrieved as fodder for any future publicity.

It should come as no surprise then that when it comes to service in a national public administration, few choose to be chosen. The current contretemps over the speculated role of Alexis Herman in the Democratic National Committee's fund-raising investigation is a graphic and dramatic case in point.

Herman's primary responsibility in the White House for the past four years has been to reach out to constituents, especially

traditionally excluded or under-represented classes, to make sure that they felt embraced. Since these groups include clergy, small business owners, labor groups, minorities and women who often also feel that their contributions do not count, Herman's office was responsible for correcting that impression. Herman's office existed to facilitate the inclusion of their opinions, encourage their influence and recognize their civic and entrepreneurial power.

Alexis Herman did her job well. This fact has been underreported and underestimated. Unfortunately, the decision to leak records of the many legitimate meetings that she arranged for diverse groups of Americans added to the problem and was unhelpful at best, cynical at least.

There is no doubt among women and minorities that minority women have the hardest time being accepted in positions of authority and in overcoming ingrained stereotypes and prejudices about race and gender. Sniping and sabotage motivated by these biases alone have torpedoed many women's and minorities' career advancements.

This reality is further complicated by the growing occupational hazards of high-level government service and compounded by ambiguous ideas of loyalty and the deadly "friendly fire" from within the administration's own ranks. The press then enters upon a feeding frenzy, resulting last week in many prominent photos of Herman in the news reports, the substance of which had very little to do with her, and virtually nothing that accurately explained her legitimate responsibilities in the White House job she held.

It should be anticipated that eventually the best qualified and experienced public service professionals will opt for some other line of work. Americans will then well-deserve the resultant gang of dispirited bureaucratic drones, who will probably provoke little scandal because they will do very little that makes much difference.

One hopes that this prospect will provide added support and encouragement to the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources to move forward with a speedy and positive confirmation of Herman for the Labor post. It also might challenge and invite smart graduate students and other young professionals to choose public service over a corporate career.

Yvonne Scruggs is executive director of the Black Leadership Forum Inc., a confederation of 21 of the largest and oldest national civil rights and service organizations.

Alexis M. Herman

Assisting the President in Building Public Support for His Agenda

Alexis M. Herman serves as Assistant to the President of the United States and Director of the White House Office of Public Liaison, the first African American to serve as an assistant to the President and the first to direct a major White House office. In directing the Office of Public Liaison, Herman is responsible for building public support for Presidential priorities. "In this position, I have the responsibility of educating the American public, receiving policy input on the President's agenda, and building public support for Presidential priorities," said Herman, a native of Mobile, Alabama. "On behalf of the President, my office relates to key organized sectors of American communities. Those sectors include basically everyone who is not an elected official. The business, educational, African American, Latino, and Asian communities, are all key stakeholders, and they all come through the Office of Public Liaison."

Herman brings to the office an extensive background in politics, administration, and entrepreneurship. Before her current appointment, she served as the Deputy Director of the Presidential Transition Office. In 1991, she was named Chief Executive Officer of the 1992 Democratic National Convention Committee where her responsibilities included overall strategic management and production of the convention. Before holding that position, former Democratic National Committee (DNC) Chair Ron Brown had appointed her Deputy Chair of the DNC where she also served as Chief of Staff.

Herman was the founder of a Washington-based marketing and management firm, A.M. Herman & Associates, and is still a recognized expert in field of multi-culturalism and diversity management as it relates to mergers and acquisitions. Her company, before its sale, specialized in targeted marketing strategies, organization analysis, and human resources management. Herman, who also owned and operated a manufacturing company in the transit industry for several

years, attributes her ability to run the office to her diverse business background.

"There are a lot of similarities in running your own business and in running this type of operation," noted Herman, who is a respected voice on workplace issues and has traveled extensively in the United States and abroad speaking on issues of productivity, innovation, and diversity. "You have to be clear about what your vision is, what you are trying to do. The President has always been very clear. What we are doing is putting people first through looking at how we can bring about real, meaningful changes in government."

"In this job, you always have to ask yourself 'how is that helping to create jobs? How is that helping in restoring confidence in the people,'" she continued. "You have to make sure you have a team in place, a team that is supportive and one that is diverse enough to carry the vision through."

One aspect of her job that is dissimilar to running your own business, notes Herman, is



Alexis Herman, Director, White House Office of Public Liaison

that she does not have total autonomy. "This President does not believe in a lot of hierarchical structures," she said. "He is very big on inclusion, on getting a variety of points of view, and making sure that has all of the information. That's what is called in business terms 'running a organization.'"

Herman also illustrates the importance of diversity and quality in the Clinton Administration, pointing to a record number of African-American cabinet members as well as sharp increases in the number of minorities in key positions throughout government. "African Americans were to Bill Clinton's political victory," Herman, who has the highest percentage of minorities on her staff than any other White House Office. "He recognizes the support he has received. But more than that, he said he wanted to make a difference, make history by including all aspects of American society. He has broken every record in that regard. Whether you're talking about the African American, Asian, Latino communities, the fact of the matter is that all racial groups are included."

"Bill Clinton will go down in history as the President that created a government of the people by the people," she continued.

"He is a man of vision, he sees diversity as a strength, he sees the government as inclusive rather than exclusive, and he is concerned with the common good."

Because the chief responsibility of Herman's office is to build support for Presidential priorities, she must constantly be aware of public perception. She notes that people often focus on the negative



Alexis Herman (right) with President William Clinton (left) and Vice President Al Gore (center, background)

"Bill Clinton will go down in history as the President that created a government of the people by the people."

Alexis Herman: A Brief Biography

In accepting her current position, Herman begins her second stint in government service. In 1977, she was named Director of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, a position she held until 1981. She advised both President Carter and the Labor Secretary, Ray Marshall, on economic and social concerns of women in the workplace and directed the department's program for small, developing, and disadvantaged businesses. She was also White House Representative to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, and a founding member of the National Consumer Cooperative bank. She later co-chaired the President's task force to establish a Women's Business Ownership Initiative for the federal government.

She is also the former chair of the National Commission on Working Women, and she was a member of the board of the Adams National Bank and the District of Columbia Economic Development Finance Corporation.

She has received several honorary doctorate degrees including Doctor of Laws from Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio, and Doctor of Humane Letters from Lesley College in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

A graduate of Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana, she currently lives in Washington, D.C. She has spent her life enhancing opportunities for working Americans, supporting entrepreneurship, and serving as an advocate for strong families and young people. In accepting these challenges, she credits her parents for giving her a strong foundation as well as others, such as Dorothy Height, who have served as strong role models.

aspects of government, rather than looking at the progress. "Due to the policies of this administration, such as lower interest rates and other incentives that allow businesses to begin to stimulate job creation again, the President has created more jobs in the private sector," said Herman. "These policies have resulted in more jobs developed in one year than were created in the previous administration. Unfortunately, what gets attention is when a company closes down."

While Herman believes public perception can change through repetition, she cautions that such change is often a slow and laborious process. "We cannot change the conditions of this country overnight," she said. "We didn't get here overnight, and we're not going to get to where we want to be overnight. We've made progress, and we have to be specific about what that progress looks like."

Such progress includes breaking the gridlock in the Congress, said Herman, noting that the President has had more legislative victories in Congress his first year since Dwight Eisenhower. She points to passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act, which allows parents to stay home and care for family members without the fear of losing their jobs; the Motor Voter Bill, a civil rights bill that expands political participation through voter registration; and the National Service Bill, which allows young people to attend college and pay back loans through community service.

She also points to other priorities that will be high on the President's agenda this year, such as health-care reform, crime and violence, and job creation—issues that concern all Americans, and which are prevalent in the African American community. "We must use many vehicles in getting the importance of these issues out to the community," said Herman. "This will include the use of a broad-base strategy, such as churches, black leadership, and any other audience that the African American community looks to."

"One thing my father always said is that no child ever becomes anything he or she cannot see," said Herman, whose father in 1940 was the first African American elected to a political office in Alabama since Reconstruction. "I'll always remember that. More importantly, I'll always be reminded of the responsibility we all have to raise the sights of our children, to help them dream dreams. That's what it is all about."

The Office of Public Liaison
The White House
Washington, DC 20500
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Corporate
Professional

Paul Newman

Working
Corporate America's

By Marlene L. John

Paul D. Newman works at "one of the best places for Blacks to work in corporate America," according to *Black Enterprise* magazine. The place is General Motors, where Newman is Executive Director of Urban Affairs with responsibility to provide advice and counsel to senior management regarding social and community concerns. Newman, who is out of GM headquarters in Detroit, said the company recently restructured the makeup of the headquarters staff into North American Operations. "What used to be principally corporate staff has now been reorganized and is part of North American Operations. Some departments, like Community and Urban Affairs, continue to serve the total corporation," he said.

GM earned its reputation as one of the "best places for Blacks to work in corporate America" because the giant corporation is committed to the well-being of its employees and to promoting quality of life in the communities where it is located. GM ranked near the top among corporations in terms of philanthropic contributions. The automaker seeks to leverage its contributions through active involvement in community partnerships to address critical educational, social and environmental needs. As part of that effort, GM encourages employees, retirees and their families to volunteer their time, effort and valuable technical and administrative skills in support of community service activities. So those activities include encouraging young people to stay in school and away from drugs, helping to rebuild communities devastated by disasters, and cleaning up the environment.

Newman agrees that GM is one of the best places for African Americans to work and says that it has gotten better over the years. Newman states that during his tenure, he has seen several improvements in GM's efforts to recruit minority employees. For example, GM recruits minority engineers through the Institution Program it designed. The best schools around the country are targeted and GM makes a concerted effort to recruit minorities.

"We go only after the top candidates and have been very successful in recruiting minority engineering graduates to work for GM. Our success rate is three times the national average. According to Newman, another area of significant improvement is in the management development and personal development opportunities the company provides Blacks and other minorities. "This gives the minority employee an opportunity to be exposed to various management techniques and to people working in different organizations, businesses, and industries." Newman also cited significant improvement by GM in getting more Blacks into higher levels of management.

Once employed, GM offers a series of developmental courses at all levels of employees to ensure that its work force stays competitive. "We have our own education and training activities, both internally and externally. There is a complete curriculum on

SISTERS

ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

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Giving it to ya' straight,
no chaser!

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Campbell's
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and Alexis
Herman:
Why these
women love
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Toni Braxton
fights vicious rumors



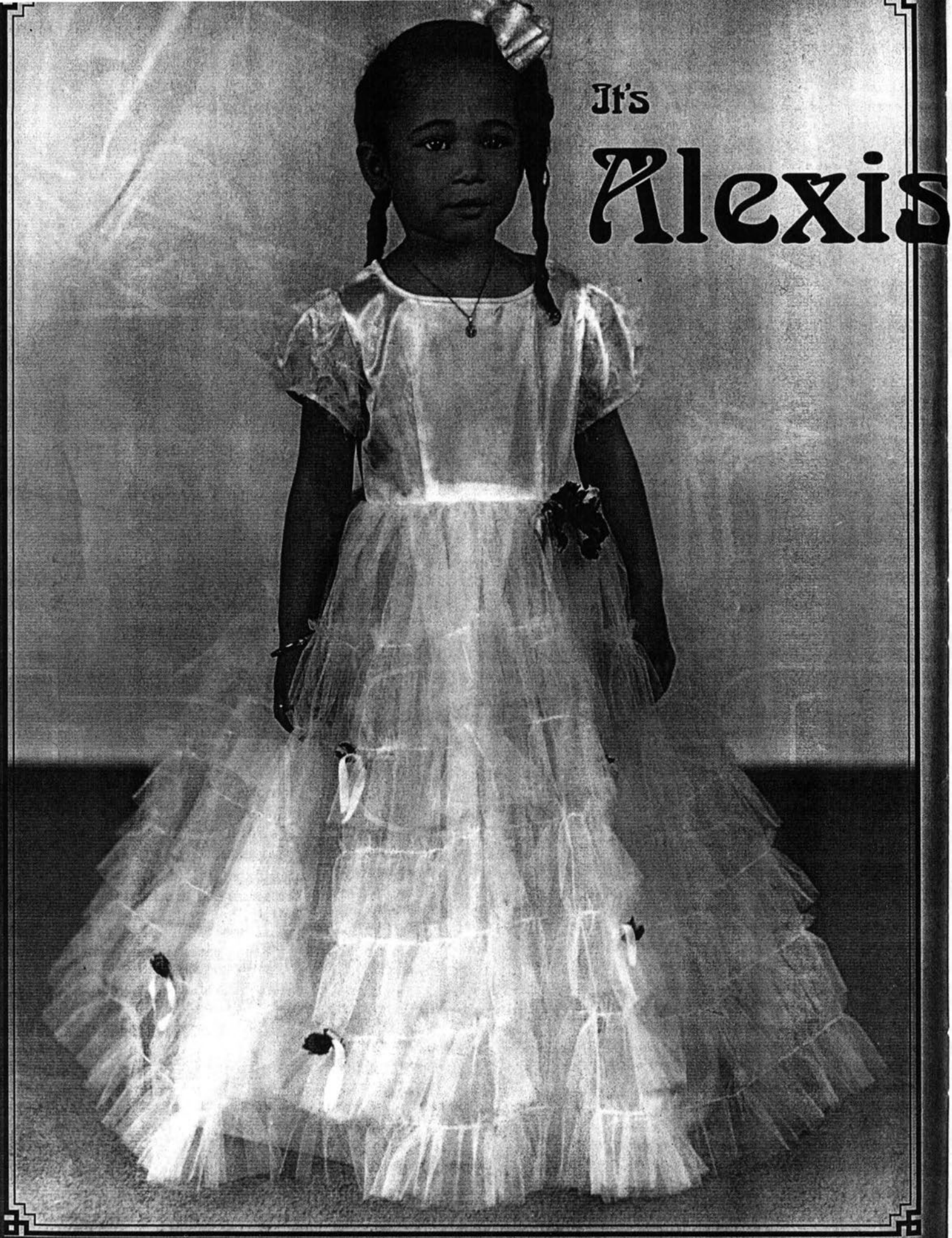
(l to r) Alexis, the President and Alma

\$ 2.99 USA 3.50 Canada



It's

Alexis



Herman, Assistant to the President and Director of the White House Office of Public Liaison

Boy, it was no joke tracking down Ms. Alexis Herman, who in reality is the "Miss Ann" of the White House. She's the darling.

But, I didn't know that until I saw how difficult it was to catch up with her. I didn't know that until I saw how well she handled all the arrangements for Ron Brown's funeral, including protocol for all the delegations (not just one person) foreign countries wanted to send to attend the funeral. I hadn't realized that if you're part of the general public, (IBM, *Sister 2 Sister*, NOW or Amtrak, etc.) you had to go through her office to get your concerns to the ears of "Big Boy Bill." I didn't know that she has constant access to him and is one of a very privileged few who must see to it that his agenda is carried out.

Well, on this day, Alexis had had dental surgery and she wasn't feeling well. But there was still plenty to do. The Democratic National Convention was the next week. Phones were ringing. Her condo was being renovated. She was due to speak on television. She had on no make up and her hair was let out like a lion's mane, which looked too sexy for her to be seen in public like that. She was swamped. But she told her office to have me come to her home to do the interview. She told me later that there was no way she wasn't going to get this interview done. She said she would order in some food. (I'm always hungry), but the Chinese place she called no longer delivered. So, she asked me if I would like some tea. I said, "Uh, yeah!" We guzzled that down, but after about an hour, girlfriend said, "Shoot I'm hungry." (You know I was!) So, we got up, got in the car, drove to a Chinese joint and had all-you-can-eat, buffet style all the while I kept scribbling and recording everything she had to say, which was plenty.

Hey, this is how you do it! Black women just know how to get things done! This is the real-deal gossip.

Jamie: What makes you like Bill Clinton? And how did you meet him?

Alexis: I like Bill Clinton for a lot of reasons. He is an

incredibly centered human being. He is very spiritual. He really has a core set of beliefs and values that I personally respect, that includes respect for diverse opinions and respect for women. His experience is grounded in growing up in the deep South. He understands what it meant to grow up in the segregated South. He understands Black people.

Jamie: Why does he understand Black people?

Alexis: I think he understands because of his own experience, growing up in Hope, Arkansas. He often tells stories of the customers who came to his grandfather's store that they operated. Many were African-Americans. And they didn't know the difference in color. They were friends who nurtured him as a little boy—that he spoke to, visited with, and played with. It was only when he went to segregated schools in his teen years that he began to understand the impact of segregation. It's not unlike most kids growing up in the South during the days of segregation. It was only after you became older that you picked up the patterns of your parents and of the larger society around you. But I also like him a lot because he's a real smart man. He's incredibly bright. You only have to say something once to Bill Clinton for him to get it.

Jamie: Were you involved with the decision to keep or not keep affirmative action? What kind of role did you play in that with Bill Clinton?

Alexis: I played a very significant role. The President and I spent a lot of time talking about the issues. Again, this was not a moment in time where you had to explain the impact of the benefits of affirmative action to the President. He understood that. He said in his own words, "How do we keep the principles but fix the practices?" He said affirmative action has been good for this country. So our efforts were centered around how do you create more opportunity and, at the same time, deal with some of the issues that were being raised? That's where the famous phrase, "Amend it, not end it," came from.

Jamie: Where'd that come from?

Alexis: Actually it came out of the President's mouth one

day when we were all talking. That's what you're really saying—fix the practices, keep the principles and amend it, don't end it. The Republicans, of course, were trying to end affirmative action. I remember that moment very well because you asked earlier how I met the President. I met the President back in 1978 when I was the Director of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, shortly after he had been elected governor of Arkansas. I met him in a very unusual situation and I've respected and admired him from that day to this. I had gone back to Little Rock for a tribute to Ernie Green [one of the "Little Rock Nine" students who first integrated the Little Rock, Arkansas schools]. Ernie was being honored by his community and Bill Clinton invited Ernie to the governor's mansion and hosted a reception for him and the Little Rock Nine. I thought to myself, Here's a newly elected, young, Southern governor. He didn't have to do that. He didn't have to pay tribute to this Black man in Little Rock. Not only did he host a wonderful reception, but late that evening, he invited us back to the mansion for coffee and conversation.

Jamie: Really?

Alexis: And it was the first time that I met Hillary. We sat there with the two of them until well after midnight. His love for Hillary was apparent. It was just a wonderful evening.

Jamie: Where did you grow up?

Alexis: I grew up in Alabama—in George Wallace country.

Jamie: What part of Alabama?

Alexis: Mobile.

Jamie: Politicians are a target for the media right now. So much so that people will think twice before going into politics because it's so mean spirited. So, how do you all handle attacks in the media? What do you say to each other?

Alexis: You know, it's interesting that you asked that because that's been one of the biggest growth areas for me, personally. Being part of the President's personal staff, I've come to appreciate even more the fact that real leaders model their own culture and environment that people respond to.

Jamie: Could you explain that?

Alexis: In the midst of the attacks and turmoil, I would become very upset because I didn't think he and the First Lady deserved that sort of treatment. But he has the ability to stay focused, to keep his eyes on the prize and not be distracted from what he wants to do. And the same is true of the First Lady. That's what I mean when I say, "Real leaders model their culture and their environment." They would say to us, "It's going to be all right. We were sent here to do a job and if we pay attention to this nonsense, we won't be able to do the job we were sent here to do and that's exactly what they want to happen. They don't want us to work on the issues that are good for the American people."

Jamie: Are you a God-fearing woman? Is that cool?

Alexis: I think it's cool. If you are not God-fearing in this day and age, I don't know how you keep your cool or keep your wits about you.

Jamie: What is your typical day like, Alexis? First, give me your full title.

Alexis: My title is Director of the White House Office of Public Liaison and Assistant to the President. The two titles actually mean two different jobs. To function as Assistant to the President is to function at the highest level in the White House. Leon Panetta is the Assistant to the President and the Chief of Staff. Tony Lake is the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. It is an official title that means that in addition to the line responsibility, which is the Director of Public Liaison, I function at the highest level of staff to the President in a general capacity.

Jamie: You have access to him all the time?

Alexis: All Assistants to the President have direct access to the President of the United States. That is what that title implies. Then you say, "What is your day-to-day job in the White House?" As the Director of Public Liaison, all of the organized sectors of the general public come through my office, the Office of Public Liaison.

Jamie: What do you mean by that?

Alexis: The Congress is easy to understand. It goes through the Assistant to the President for Congressional Affairs. The Cabinet is easy to understand. All the Cabinet goes through an Assistant for the Cabinet. Intergovernmental—that Assistant takes care of all elected officials who have governmental responsibilities: governors, mayors, state elected officials, county elected officials—they go through the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. If you are a member of the organized public, if you are the Chief Executive Officer of IBM, or Xerox or Coca Cola, you come through the Office of Public Liaison. If you are President of Harvard University or Spelman College, you come through my office. Any organized sector of the general public comes through my office to the President of the United States of America.

I basically do three things for the President. On any given day, I am the conduit to the President for individuals with concerns about policy development, legislative initiatives and concerns that they may have on what their government is doing. Whether it's to talk about that we need to pass a minimum wage bill or, when I'm talking to the medical community, what the real issues are in



Besides assisting the President and taking the concerns of the general public to him, Alexis Herman is a personal friend.

health care.

So, it's the office in which policy formulations go to our policy team in the White House. I would work close to the domestic policy staff formulating legislative agendas and strategies. I would work closely with the National Security Counsel Staff if there are issues that have to do with large domestic consequences, like Haiti—I was very involved with democratic restoration in Haiti because that affects large domestic audiences.

That's one level, the policy level. The second level is to build support for the President's priorities. If Bill Clinton says that he wants to get NAFTA passed or get the Crime Bill passed or make sure that we protect Medicaid or Medicare, education, and the environment—if those are his priorities and he wants people to know where he's coming from, then I have to work closely with those private sectors to make sure that I get them into the White House. I brief them, I talk to them, I educate them about the President's priorities. I strategize with them on how we can build support for his agenda.

And the third thing that I do is to conduct a lot of briefings and meetings on behalf of the President on what individuals and organizations care about and what they want to come in and talk about. It may not be about legislative proposals or even what the President's priorities are. It may be a completely different issue that you want the President to know about—that we haven't particularly thought about. So, I do a lot of that all day.

Jamie: That seems like a heavy, heavy volume of phone calls and letters and...

Alexis: ...meetings and briefings...

Jamie: So, what is the volume of letters that come into your office?

Alexis: Oh, I get thousands of letters. My personal phone log gets two hundred calls a day.

Jamie: How do you get back to them?

Alexis: I have to have a staff that does nothing but help me return phone calls.

Jamie: How big is your staff?

Alexis: I have a very small staff of 21 individuals, plus a lot of volunteers. My staff is half what Reagan's and Bush's were because of the cutbacks.

Jamie: Half of what Reagan's and Bush's staffs were?

Alexis: And it is also my responsibility if the President is going out to talk to organizations—whether it's the NAACP in North Carolina or the National Senior Citizens Counsel in Chicago—I also have to be the liaison with him on the road when he's going to speak to organizational leadership.

Jamie: That was a big coup for him to go and speak to the NAACP and for Dole not to show up. Just how did that come about?

Alexis: Well, the NAACP extended the invitation to the President. The way it works is that in any given month, various organizations would come to my office for recommendations to the President. So, I would recommend to him a series of speaking engagements for that month. Mind you that I am competing with other Assistants to the President for his time. There are media interviews, there are congressional meetings—all of the internal meetings. So, there is a scheduling team that comes together to try to take all of the priorities for the President and to try to put them into a coherent recommendation for him from the various offices.

Jamie: Are you a part of that team?

Alexis: I'm a part of that team.

Jamie: This is a very important role, Ms. Alexis. You know that, right?

Alexis: [Laughter].

Jamie: What kind of obstacles as a Black woman have you encountered through the ranks? What qualifies you? How do you know what to say, what to jump for, what the reaction is going to be? How do you know these things? Do you have a Ouija board?

Alexis: [Laughter] Well, I haven't thought about this in a long time like that. Part of what you have to do, especially when you work for a President like Bill Clinton, is to always stay focused on your priorities. What are his priorities? Because, obviously, in this kind of job they could change a hundred times in the course of a day if you allow that to happen.

So, it's very important to stay focused on your priorities. You can take just this week as an example. The day before yesterday, the President signed the Minimum Wage Bill, and yesterday he signed the Kennedy-Kassebaum Bill, which was the first step on health care reform. And we are preparing to meet for the convention. I've known for quite some time that these were the kinds of activities that we would be involved in during this period.

So, how do you make sure that you don't lose the focus on minimum wages; that everything is done to insure passage of that bill. The same thing is done for the Kennedy-Kassebaum Bill. How do you continue to stay connected to those issues that you have to introduce as priority. Make sure that your resources are allocated in a way that you do that work. You see?



It's not every day you get to meet the Pope.

So, the first thing you have to do is realize that you keep your priorities in focus. And if they shift, well, that's a part of the process. You have to have a plan and a system for doing that. And I think my management skills and training over the years have prepared me to think for the long term.

I do a lot of planning and a lot of organizing around end results. So, you have to have a very good staff. You have to invest in your staff and develop them. Make sure you create a very good team environment. And you have to have access to the top, which I have, in order to make sure you're doing the right thing. Sometimes you're busy working and you may not be working on the right thing. So, I think it's keeping all of that in focus that helps me be effective.

Now, you asked me how you know to make a judgment call. Where does the training come from? Well, I've had



training on a lot of different levels, I guess. I ran my own business for twelve years. This is my second term in government. I worked with the Jimmy Carter administration. It helps a lot to have been around this track once before, at least in terms of my government work. I have had tremendous role models and partners that I've worked with over the years whom I've been able to learn from—from Ron Brown to Dorothy Height to my own mom, who was a school teacher who had a passion and love for kids. She would tutor children after hours at home. So, I always watched her juggle ten balls at once.

Jamie: How many children did your mother have?

Alexis: I was raised as an only child, let's put it that way. I have a half-brother.

Jamie: So, you were raised by your mother.

Alexis: I was raised by my mother.

Jamie: Your father wasn't there?

Alexis: No.

Jamie: But, you seem to get along with men well. Why is

that? You are comfortable with them and you are not intimidated.

Alexis: Well, I was not raised in my father's home, but I knew my father. My parents were not married, but he still took responsibility for me and took an interest in me. I think that did make a difference. I also had strong male role models around me. That's why on the wall you see the two biggest men who had the most influence in my life. My Uncle Bubba, who is my mama's brother, and my father.

Jamie: He's the one with the cap and gown?

Alexis: My uncle is the one with the cap and gown. And they're both dead.

Jamie: They're both dead?

Alexis: Yes, my uncle died at age 55. My mom and dad are both dead. My mom died very suddenly in 1990. My dad died in 1975.

Jamie: What are their names?

Alexis: My father's name was Alex Herman. And my mother was Gloria.

Jamie: What was Uncle Bubba's name?

Alexis: Robert Broadus.

Jamie: Why was he so special?

Alexis: He used to sing to me when I was a little girl. He was always smiling. He had just a caring spirit, not just about the children in the family, but all the children in the neighborhood.

Jamie: Was he in politics?

Alexis: No, he was a self-made man. He was a smart man. He read a lot of books and challenged you mentally. When he came back after World War II, he went back and finished high school. Then he went to college. Both of my parents went back to school, too.

Jamie: What did mommy and daddy do?

Alexis: My mother taught school all her life. She had a passion for children and teaching. She was a reading specialist. My daddy was an interesting man. My daddy was the first African American who was elected in the deep South after the Reconstruction.

Jamie: You're kidding me?!

Alexis: In 1945. And at that time, believe it or not, the highest position that you could be elected to was a Democratic Wardsman. He was the first person to sue the Democratic Party because they wouldn't issue him an absentee ballot to vote. I grew up hearing this story.

Jamie: Yeah?!

Alexis: And he really believed in the political process as a way of making change happen. He played in an all-Negro baseball league. He ran a small insurance company. He was a business leader in his own right in Mobile. But, his first love was politics.

Jamie: Do you love politics?

Alexis: It's funny: Growing up, I never really used that expression, "Do you love politics?" Because, I didn't think of politics then as I do now from a professional stand-

point. I think what he loved and what I loved was understanding that it is through the political process that we can choose our leaders and shape our future. And that's what growing up in a democracy is all about. We have the privilege to do that. I learned that you should be involved in that process. It wasn't enough to complain and be on the outside talking about what should be going on. He was about making it happen.

Jamie: You mentioned the Kennedy-Kassebaum Bill. Just give me a sentence on what it does?

Alexis: It allows you to carry your insurance from job to job. So, you don't have to worry anymore about losing your health insurance when you change jobs. And you no longer have to worry about preexisting conditions. Those are two big wins—the first step in health care reform.

Jamie: Do the President and First Lady keep Chelsea from listening to hard rock and rap?

Alexis: I don't think it's so much having to keep Chelsea from listening to it as it is what you play in your home—the type of music you are raised around. Here, you have to remember that Chelsea is lucky to have a dad who is an absolute jewel. Chelsea's dad loves jazz. Chelsea plays piano music. She listens to rap. Clean rap doesn't try to dehumanize.

Jamie: How smart were you, Alexis?

Alexis: I did pretty good.

Jamie: Did you have a lot of boyfriends?

Alexis: I always had only one boyfriend. I had only one boyfriend all through high school. I had two boyfriends through college. I tend to be one of these...

Jamie: ...one of these "one woman, one man" women? You are in a position many Black women would never dream about. You look at how the young girls carry themselves. What would you say to them Alexis? I always tell them that you can't always get love by opening up your little legs.

Alexis: Girl, you are working my brain. I guess I would say a couple of things to young people. First of all, you have to know that you are beautiful and precious, and special. And you have to treat yourself that way in order for others to have that same respect for you. And you don't go along just to get along. You must have the courage to know you are right within your heart.

Jamie: Are you going to be the next person to head up the National Council of Negro Women? That has been a rumor for three years.

Alexis: I have always been a supporter of Dr. Height [who currently heads up the Council] and I've been a member of the National Council of Negro Women since I was thirteen years old.

Jamie: You are kidding me?!

Alexis: No. Since I was a teenager in Mobile, Alabama. So my affection for both the organization and Dr. Height is very real and very strong. I am committed to working with the Council. I have no plans to head up the National

Council of Negro Women because we have a president—Dr. Dorothy Height. And as long as she is there, that's our leadership.

Jamie: What do you think makes the President better than his competitor?

Alexis: I think the President is better than his competitor. And I think what makes him better is that Bill Clinton is someone who doesn't just talk the talk but walks the walk. He has a deep and rich experience rooted in the Black community. He understands when you talk about domestic violence. He knows what that means. He grew up in a home seeing his own mother battered. He grew up with a working woman. He respects independent women. Just from an experience point of view, he is one of the most well rounded and grounded Presidents we've ever had.

Jamie: Plus, he's cute. [Laughter] Tell me what it's like traveling on those planes like Ron Brown was on. Tell me about Air Force One. Now, I hear that you have your own compartments and your own chef?

Alexis: To be on Air Force One is like being in a flying hotel. Plus, there is a full medical facility. If ever the President had a medical emergency, there is one room that literally converts into an operating room. There is a kitchen. You can see movies.

Jamie: Can you order movies?

Alexis: You can order your own movies.

Jamie: Was that the kind of plane that Ron Brown was in on that trade mission?

Alexis: When we go on missions like that, the planes have compartments, food and beverage services, and they usually have a room that can convert to a sleeping area.

Jamie: What is something spectacular that has happened to you that we might never hear about or see?

Alexis: If you asked me for the three biggest emotional experiences for me since Bill Clinton was President they would be, when I traveled to South Africa for the Inauguration of Nelson Mandela with the First Lady and the Vice President. And of course Ron was a part of the delegation, along with so many distinguished African Americans. Then the Inauguration of President Aristide in Haiti was one where, unlike Nelson Mandela, the tide of public opinion of the President restoring democracy in Haiti was not a popular action except in the Black community. Seventy-five percent of the American community was against supporting Haiti. So, the second was to see that dove fly over and perch right in front of the President and Mr. Aristide as they stood at the podium about to address tens of thousands of Haitians. The third thing was watching him stand with the Constitution on one side and the Bill of Rights on the other side when he gave his speech on Affirmative Action. He stood in the National Archives. That was phenomenal.

Jamie: Are you ever afraid for the President?

Alexis: Obviously, there are certain moments when you're conscious of danger. Particularly with Bill Clinton who loves people so much and moves into crowds too quickly and so easily. You understand that that goes with being President. I pray a lot. I pray for his safety and I always pray when we land and take off. That's the first thing I do.

Jamie: Tell why you did so much for Ron Brown.

Alexis: I've been Ron and Alma's friend for over 20 years. And much of our early work together was really bonds of friendship where you support friends in whatever they do. When Ron Brown worked on Jesse Jackson's campaign, both Reverend Jackson and Ron asked me to come in and help pull the convention team

together in Atlanta. When Ron went to take on the Chairmanship of the Democratic Party he called me and told me that he wanted to run. I said to him, "You can't be serious."

Jamie: You said that to him?

Alexis: I said, "You are really going to do this?!" And he said, "I want you to help me." I said, "Ron, I've got a small struggling business."

Jamie: What kind of business did you run?

Alexis: I had two kinds of businesses. One was a management consulting firm that did a lot of work on mergers and acquisitions, helping to structure companies and to restructure them. Also, I ran a small manufacturing company that made and overhauled motors for subway cars.

Jamie: What?!

Alexis: I had just taken off four months to help him and Jesse in Atlanta. So, I said that I just took off four months from my business to do this. Now, you say you want to run for Chairman! [Laughter] I said, "I'll tell you what. I will help raise you some money. And if you win I'll do whatever you need me to do to help out. But, the best thing that I can do is to raise some money." So, that's what I did. I helped to raise his first 10,000 dollars.

Jamie: How'd you do that?

Alexis: Called up one of our supporters, a minority businesswoman, actually, who believed in Ron and believed

in his leadership. She said, "I don't know if I can really afford to give 10,000 dollars, but for Ron Brown to have a chance at this, I want to be there for him." So that's how I helped him out. And then he would call and ask me to make a few calls here and there with the campaign. And then he won. I'll never forget that day and that night. We

had this big celebration and he leaned over and said, "Now tomorrow I want you to come into my office and talk about how we put this team together for the DNC." I was going to take off three months to do some writing. That's what I always wanted to do. So, I said, "Okay. I'll take a month off from the time that I was going to take and I'll take March and help you."

I don't have to

tell you what it's like to run a small business and plan to take off that length of time. So, that's what I did, I took off and committed to him a month of my time to help him pull his team together. And he said, "I want you to do the same thing for me that you've been doing for these big corporations." He said to go in and do an assessment of the DNC and tell him how to restructure it and what we need to change in order to elect the President. He said that was his goal and that was what he planned to do. And I said, "If that's what you want, I'm going to treat you just like one of these big CEOs. Tell me your vision, tell me your mission. Tell me what you want to get done and then let me think about what kind of structure and what kind of team it takes to deliver that." He said, "I only have one goal." And I asked, "What is that?" and he said, "Electing the President in 1992." And I said, "Ron, that's too simple. You've got to tell me more than that. [Laughter] How do you plan to do this, Ron Brown?"

I can see it now: He looked off with that twinkle in his eye and he looked back at me and he said, "I want to run the DNC like a campaign. I want it to have the energy and excitement, starting now, that it's going to take to elect the President in 1992." He said that means that we've got to start to practice now what it means to start electing Democrats at every level. We've got to build the field organization. We've got to build the support it's going to



Alexis Herman, Evangeline Gouletas, Congressman Ron Dellums and former NY Mayor Dinkins.

take to support a national campaign. We start that the day we walk into the DNC.

Jamie: And is that what you did?

Alexis: That's what we did.

Jamie: You were in charge of what happened at Ron's funeral. Is that right?

Alexis: Yes.

Jamie: Now, the President told you, "Alexis, get over there right away." And you went and stayed with Ron's family. Now, tell me about that and when you first heard about it?

Alexis: When I first heard about it, the President called me down to his office and told me Ron's plane was missing. It was a very sad moment at the White House. He was teary eyed and we were all teary eyed. We didn't know what happened and we didn't want Alma to be alone. So he asked me to get over to the house right away. He said, "I need to be the one calling and telling her. But, I want to make sure there is someone there with her." So, I rushed out with Maggie Williams, Chief of Staff to the First Lady. We both rushed over to Alma's home. But, unfortunately, the news broke while we were in the car, so the President had already called Alma when we arrived.

Jamie: But, did he know that he was the first person to tell her?

Alexis: No. He actually was the first person, but we didn't know. Alma was not feeling well that

day, so she was asleep and hadn't heard the news.

Jamie: Was he shocked when he found out that he was the first one to tell her.

Alexis: I don't think he was shocked. He didn't want her to hear it second hand.

Jamie: So, you buried him with full military honors. I know that he was the first sitting Secretary to die in one hundred and fifty years...

Alexis: And he deserved to be buried with the full recognition that was befitting of the position and the contribution that he made.

Jamie: When things hit the President like Gennifer Flowers, [a woman who alleges she was once the President's mistress] do you call him? Do you comfort him? Do you believe what's said?

Alexis: Well, the way we deal with it is like water off a

duck's back.

Jamie: What?! You all don't even talk about it?

Alexis: It's like water off a duck's back. Because we all know that the only way they even think that they can compete on his level is to have these personal attacks. They can't talk about the substance of the issues because they don't have a record to talk about.

Jamie: Alexis, how has the power that you have affected you? Has it made you snooty? Do you ever think, "How did I get all this power?"

Alexis: Well, I don't think of it in terms of power. What I do think about is that I feel this sense of responsibility. I feel a sense of ability; I feel that we all have different roles, but the same goal, and that is the advancement of our people. I've been blessed to have been placed in a very unique position and I recognize that, as an African-American woman, I serve the President of the United States. And I don't take that responsibility lightly.

Jamie: Do you experience jealousy or do people say, "Well who does she think that she is?"

Alexis: I try hard to surround myself with people who are positive and supportive, who I share values with and who are interested in doing something with themselves and their lives—who care about this country, its children, and where it's going. I don't have time for negative thoughts and jealousy and pettiness.

Jamie: How has your career affected your private life? Do feel that your career is more important than get-

ting married? Will you say, "Well dag! I forgot to get married and I forgot to have kids."

Alexis: I've been accused of sacrificing too much of my personal life for my work and I recognize that. I'm at a point in my life where I'm really trying to balance my life and career out. Because at the end of the day it's important not to lose that sense of family and love and personal support that we all need. You have to create space in your life in order for that to happen.

Jamie: And you are doing that now?

Alexis: I'm doing that now. It took me awhile to learn it, but I'm doing it now. But, unfortunately, it took my mother's death to be my teacher on that.

Jamie: Do you love Hillary?

Alexis: I do.

Jamie: Why?



Alexis Herman's Grandma, Margaret Dozier, 91 years old. I got her sugar.

Alexis: She is a very sensitive, warm human being. She's a smart woman. I feel a closeness to her in terms of our life experiences. I think that she is so grounded, she cares about what she believes in, and in spite of all the attacks, she has not lost her sense of humor. She has not lost her fighting spirit. I just admire her courage. I probably love that about her the most.

Jamie: You said that you saw the love Bill Clinton had for Hillary. Does Hillary love him, too?

Alexis: Yes! They don't need words. You know some people need words. They don't need words to articulate it. You just have to be in their environment, their space, to feel it.

Jamie: Now tell me about that trade mission right after Ron died. I know you were overworked and you were still grieving. But Ron had planned a mission to Mexico that was to take place right after his untimely death. And you told me that they must go because Ron would want you to still go and do this.

Alexis: It was a great mission.

Jamie: Tell me who you took and what you did?

Alexis: I took about 18 businesswomen from all over the United States—from women who owned a construction company to women who owned computer and security companies, to one woman who was selling lights to put in cemetery plots. They call them "peace lights." It was a big success. More than half of the women on this trip either got contracts or are in the process of consummating deals, selling their products. And that's what these trade missions are all about, opening up these markets and helping these women create new opportunities, which creates jobs back home.

Jamie: What were you going to write your book about?

Alexis: At that time, I was going to write about an earlier career experience that I had been involved in. In the 70s, when I was in Atlanta, I ran a program training and placing African-American women in large corporations and in professional jobs. The first African-American woman at Delta Airlines was an accountant. The first professional African-American at Coca Cola was a chemist. The first woman in the southern region of the Southern Bell Company, General Motors—and I can go on. I began this work in 1972 and I wanted to go back in this fifteen year period and find out what it had been like for a Black woman to succeed in the corporate world. We talk so much about glass ceilings as it relates to White women. I always said that Black women had cement ceilings: they couldn't even see the next level because the path we had to travel was filled with so many obstacles. We didn't have role models. In the 60s and 70s, we weren't in positions in many of the companies to be promoted, to be trained because we weren't even there—not even as secretaries.

So, I had studied the patterns of how White women had moved and how Black women had moved. What you

found was that a number of White women were in clerical positions; they were there as office managers; they were there as assistants to managers. So, in the early 70s when the women's movement came, these jobs began to open up and the law said that you must hire more women and more minorities. There was a ready pool already there. But for Black women, there was no pool there. We had to create the pool. And I was a part of helping to create those early talent pools of Black women.

Jamie: That was when you were with the Women's Bureau?

Alexis: No, that was before. That is kind of how I got to the Women's Bureau, because of this kind of work I was doing.

Jamie: You did this on your own?

Alexis: I had a special research grant.

Jamie: What college did you go to?

Alexis: Xavier University.

Jamie: What they say about your boss is that Mr. Bill Clinton allows people to say terrible things about him—like in Whitewater investigation—that he put the folder away that had all of the information investigators thought they needed, then allowed it to build up and build up, then he says, "Oh here is the folder." Then there's nothing vital in it. Is that his strategy, to allow his attackers to create conflict, then he comes out smelling like a rose? Is he that shrewd?

Alexis: No, indeed. Nobody deliberately wants people to say negative and mean things about them. After all, Bill Clinton is human. It just so happens that when there is nothing there, there just is nothing there, and therefore he does come out smelling like a rose.

Jamie: They say he is wishy-washy. Do you see him as wishy-washy?

Alexis: I definitely don't see him as wishy-washy. Was it wishy-washy to stand up for Democracy in Haiti when 75 percent of the American people were against it? Was it wishy-washy to take on the National Rifle Association and the Gun Lobby for the first time in the history of this country and pass the Assault Weapons Ban and the Brady Bill and to get all these handguns off the street? Was it wishy-washy, my goodness, when he continued to press forward on health care, even though they talked about him and they talked about Hillary? It took us three and a half years to get that, yet he delivered. The first real reform of health care—he stood his ground. Was it wishy-washy to stand up for peace in the Middle East and bring together Yasir Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin for the first time in history? That took real courage. I don't see all of that as being a wishy-washy man.

Jamie: Thank you. I'm so sorry to take so much of your time, but you're so very important that my readers need to know you.

Alexis: Well, I'm glad we had a chance to talk. ■