

Letters to the Editor: Vernon Jordan Known for Helping Others

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HEADLINE: Letters to the Editor: Vernon Jordan Known For Helping Others

BODY:

I write in response to the media impression of Vernon Jordan as a presidential yes man and coverup artist in the wake of the Monica Lewinsky controversy. My personal experience with Mr. Jordan strongly refutes such allegations. In the fall of 1993, as a first-year law student at Howard University and a Washington neophyte, I wrote a single letter to the powerful lawyer Vernon Jordan in a vain attempt to gain entry to the Washington legal establishment. At the time I knew no one in national politics or the capital city. In that letter I pointed out our unique and ironic shared educational background (unique because we both received our undergraduate degrees at DePauw University and our legal educations at Howard; ironic because Mr. Jordan, was a black man at a predominantly white school, DePauw, and conversely, I was a white man at a predominantly black school, Howard). I also discussed my ambitions and requested a meeting.

A week later I was shocked to receive a response from Mr. Jordan, inviting me to lunch near his Washington law offices. From that moment on Mr. Jordan became a mentor to me as a young law student, setting aside time to meet with me at least once a semester throughout law school, offering advice and counsel as I charted my career path. Additionally, Mr. Jordan introduced me to leaders of the legal profession in both the private sector (setting up an interview with the general counsel of Sara Lee, where Mr. Jordan sits on the board of directors) and the public sector (assisting me in landing an externship with the Justice Department). My experience at Justice convinced me to be a prosecutor and helped me secure a job as an assistant state's attorney for my home county of DuPage, in suburban Chicago (I am a native of Oak Brook, Ill.). The only conceivable motivation Mr. Jordan had to assist me -- a complete stranger and Washington outsider -- was his commitment to the adage "to whom much is given, much is required."

If Mr. Jordan noticed in Ms. Lewinsky some of the same ambition and drive he found in me, it would be consistent with his character to assist her in the ways that have been reported, ways that are very similar to the ways he assisted me. The assumption that Mr. Jordan was motivated to help Monica Lewinsky solely to protect his friend President Clinton is premature and flawed. Before rushing to judgment, consider my experience and Mr. Jordan's life and career -- he is worthy of a more substantial review.

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