

San Antonio Pipe Supply

by

Sam Aurelius Milam III
c/o 4984 Peach Mountain Drive
Gainesville, Georgia 30507

I heard this told as a true story. I don't know if it's a true story or not.

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This happened late one morning during the late 1960's, at a small manufacturing company on the south side of San Antonio, Texas. Buddy, the owner, was sitting at his desk doing some paperwork. The front door opened. Buddy looked up from his work. He saw, coming through the door, a skinny, girlish looking man... [*People had conservative attitudes back then, in southeast Texas.*] ...wearing a fancy three-piece suit, carrying an expensive-looking briefcase, and sporting a long ponytail with a [*Gasp!*] colorful elastic hair tie. The man sashayed prissily across the office and planted his briefcase in the center of Buddy's desk, just like he owned the place.

"I'm from the EEOC," announced the man, in a strong Boston accent. He paused, as if waiting for a chorus of angels. "That stands for Equal Employment Opportunity Commission." [*You could hear the capital letters.*] "From Washington." he added. "D.C." he added.

With unfeigned skepticism, Buddy asked, "What can ah do fer ya?"

With an appearance of delighted anticipation, the EEOC man flipped open his briefcase and withdrew a piece of paper.

"According to Our Information..." [*You could still hear the capitals.*] "...about the number of employees that you have working for you, We have determined that you're required to have six Negroes..." [*Remember, it was the late 1960's.*] "... in your workforce."

"Six?" asked Buddy in feigned perplexity.

"Six," replied the EEOC man, "and I'm here to Enforce Compliance." [*Yeah, capitals.*]

Buddy heaved himself up out of his chair and, wheezing loudly, shambled across to the yard door, at the back of the office. He yelled, "Hey Jack, git yer stinkin' ass in here!"

He shambled back to his desk and lowered himself back into the comfort of his chair.

A few moments later, a man wearing greasy coveralls entered through the yard door.

"Yeah?"

"This is Jack, my foreman." said Buddy to the EEOC man. "Jack, git out there and fire one of them damn niggers!" [*I apologize. I'm only reporting what actually happened, as I originally heard the story, and using authentic terminology of the time and place. Remember, it was the late 1960's, in southeast Texas.*] "This here, uh, man [*with a slight sneer*] says we only gotta have six of 'em!"

Jack was gone for a minute or so and returned, escorting a black man who was also wearing greasy coveralls.

Buddy pointed to the front door and yelled. "Git yer ass outa here, Amos! I'll send ya a check when ah damn well git around to it!"

The black man silently left.

The EEOC man looked confused, nonplussed, perplexed, bewildered, puzzled, flummoxed. He retrieved his briefcase and left.

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After the EEOC man was gone, Jack looked at Buddy and asked, "Want me ta go an' git him back?"

"Naw," replied Buddy. "Git back ta work. I'll do it."

Buddy heaved himself out of his chair, shambled out the front door, down the block, around the corner, and into Betty's cafe. Amos was sitting at the counter. Buddy took the seat beside him.

"Howdy, Amos, thought you'd be here."

Amos replied, "Is he gone?"

"Yup."

"Well," asked Amos, "back ta work, ah guess?"

"Ahh, not yet. It's almost lunch. Let's eat."

So, Buddy and Amos sat, ate lunch, an' talked about work, fishin', women [*when Betty wasn't nearby*], their families, and how the gov'ment was making a mess of things.

After they'd finished, Buddy went back to his desk.

Amos went back to the yard.

The EEOC man never visited San Antonio Pipe Supply again