



OPINION

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The Portland Observer

The Portland Observer

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WHAT?

REACH stands for **Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health.**

It is a **community action plan** to decrease Cardiovascular disease (CVD) in the Oregon African American community.

WHY?

In Oregon **an African American is twice as likely to die** from a stroke and one and one-half times as likely to die from a heart attack.

African Americans have a **higher incidence of premature death**, diabetes, stroke, heart attack and high blood pressure.

STAY TUNED...

For more information programs such as **HOLLA** (youth peer education) and **Lookin' Tight Livin' Right** (beauty and barber shop based education) to **decrease the disparity** of preventable chronic diseases.

Progress on Minority Business is Our Goal

Hoffman Construction Co. would like to thank Faye Burch-Wilson for her "guest view" in the July 17 Portland Observer. Taking Hoffman and our public owners to task for our record on minority contracting really surprised us. We thought the progress we were making in diversifying our jobsites had earned us more goodwill.

For example, at the Oregon Convention Center expansion, we were given a goal of 10 percent minority, woman-owned, emerging small business enterprises. So far, we have achieved 19.8 percent. That's not entirely African Americans (that number is about 16 percent), but it does represent significant ethnic and gender diversity.

On one of our private projects, the Brewery Blocks on Burnside, we have achieved an 18.6 percent diversity factor. For Tri-Met at Washington Park Station, we achieved a 19 percent diversity factor. The list goes on, sometimes as high as 20 percent, almost always higher than the "good faith" goals set by the public owner.

Still, if the column represents a perception within some segments of the Portland community; if that is true, Ms. Burch-Wilson has provided a service to Hoffman, minority contractors and local public owners.

Many of her comments really resonate with us. She asked us to create more opportunities for minority subcontractors; she asked for greater accountability; she asked for a more focused effort to inject public construction dollars into the communities where the facilities are being constructed. We hear this.

In the wake of recent Supreme Court rulings, most of our government clients face even more challenges increasing diversity on their projects. There are no quotas, no set asides, no preferences. These

days, public owners set "good faith" goals, but then are often required by law to take the low bidder.

That hasn't stopped local government owners, or Hoffman, from reaching out to minority firms.

We may have a long way to go, but no large Northwest contractor has been trying harder to increase diversity on public construction projects.

On all of our public projects, we advertise in the Portland Observer and other community newspapers.

No large Northwest contractor has been trying harder to increase diversity on public construction projects.

—Hoffman Construction Co.

We belong to the Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs and we encourage the OAME membership to submit bids. We belong to the Port of Portland's Mentorship Program, where we volunteer our time to mentor minority firms about the business side of subcontracting.

Hard work without excellent results is not good enough. In the last 6 months, we raised the bar on ourselves.

Early in 2002, we hired two consultants who specialize in minority outreach. One is a member of the African Leadership Council. Both are people of color. They have done extensive research within the minority contracting community. They have identified major problem areas and are helping Hoffman develop so-

lutions that will lead to measurable improvements.

We opened lines of communication. Construction is a people business and many small, minority contractors have never been to visit us. What we heard is, our size and location makes us appear inaccessible. So, we began holding breakfast meetings in northeast Portland. We invited minority subcontractors to tell us what we could do better.

Some of the ideas that we have already started to put in place include the development of a more flexible payment system in order to ease some of the cash flow challenges that plague small businesses.

We work with M/W/ESB firms and their agents to better enable them to meet the insurance and bonding requirements, actively encourage our large subcontractors to use M/W/ESB firms as second tier subs.

We hold specific M/W/ESB pre-bid conferences to help educate minority firms on bid requirements and break up bid packages into "economic feasible units" that allow more M/W/ESB participation.

This is only the beginning. We are eager to continue meeting with leaders within the African American contracting community to jointly solve the challenges of public contracting.

In essence, Ms. Burch-Wilson challenged us to be an "industry leader" in the realm of minority outreach. We hope to earn her praise when we meet this challenge. It will take teamwork, cooperation, collaboration and two-way trust.

With the continued help of local public owners, community leaders, OAME and other organizations that represent minority businesses, you will see more women and people of color on Hoffman jobs.

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