

OPINION

Applaud McDonalds for Doing its Part

Addition of 50,000 hires means a stronger economy

BY MARC H. MORIAL



In March, the American economy added 216,000 jobs and the unemployment rate fell to 8.8 percent, the lowest in two years. That is the good news.

The bad news is that the nation has a mighty long way to go to recoup the 13 million jobs lost during the great recession. The real bad news is that with an unemployment rate of 15.5 percent for African Americans and 11.3 percent for Hispanics, communities of color seem to be fighting a losing battle to keep from being overwhelmed by the jobs crisis.

For more than two years, the National

Urban League has led the call for a national response to extremely high unemployment throughout urban America.

Our Jobs Rebuild America 12-point plan offers a blueprint for change. It calls for the restoration of the Summer Youth Jobs Program to provide summer jobs for millions of teens. We also propose greater public/private investments in job training for those most at-risk for joblessness and least equipped to navigate their way back to gainful employment. And while Washington thus far does not appear to be listening, we have sought and found allies elsewhere, including some in corporate America.

For example, we are pleased that last week, McDonald's Corporation, launched an unprecedented hiring campaign aimed at adding 50,000 new crew and management employees to its payrolls. The company plans to add 3-4 new workers to each of its 14,000 U.S. res-

taurants.

In addition to providing a pathway back to the dignity of work, many of these new "Mcjobs" come with training, flexible work schedules, competitive benefits, scholarship opportunities and growth potential. The company points out that more than 75 percent of its restaurant managers and many of its corporate staff and executive leadership, including current company president, Jan Fields, started behind the counter.

McDonald's projects that the addition of 50,000 new employees will boost the economies of states and local economies, which can likely expect an additional \$430 million spent on housing, almost \$186 million in taxes, and \$180.5 million in grocery purchases.

African American teens, 38.5 percent of whom are currently unemployed, may especially benefit from this hiring blitz.

The unemployment rate for black teens consistently hovers near 40 percent, the highest rate of any group in the country. In addition to putting thousands of black teens on successful career paths, each year McDonald's selects one high school student-employee from each state and the District of Columbia for \$2,500 scholarships, as well as three national "McScholar" winners who each receive \$5,000 scholarships.

The National Urban League will continue to push for federal action in response to the jobs crisis in urban America. In the meantime, we applaud McDonald's for doing its part with its "National Hiring Day."

More jobs mean a stronger economy and a better future for our children, our neighbors and our nation.

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.

Standing Up for Working Class Neighbors

Public sector jobs are core to a middle class society

BY M. LINDA JARAMILLO



As I boarded a plane today, I was confronted by what I call a first class attitude.

A passenger had put his/her fairly large bag in the overhead bin where it did not fit. It was simply too long, and it was left sticking out beyond possibility of the bin closing. I'm really not sure what he or she expected to happen. I can only assume that the passenger expected a flight attendant to make it fit; that the staff would fix it. Those of us who are privileged to travel by airplane have most likely had a similar experience.

Most airlines offer a first class experience. There is more space, customer service is ramped up, and they serve pretty good food. However, classism has a far broader reach than the airline

industry alone. There are so many other places where first class behavior and first class attitudes seem to be the norm in our country where we claim to be a working class society.

The most recent one is the offensive on our working class neighbors who are employed in the public sector.

I do not understand why those work for cities, counties, states, and school districts have become the target of our disdain. In states like Wisconsin and Ohio, our "public" officials have determined that unions and collective bargaining are the cause of the economic downturn so they must be done away with. Have we forgotten that the economic crash was the result of corrupt

business practices in the financial industry, not in the public service arena? Have we forgotten that in some states, the budget crisis is because they have continued to cut taxes thereby reducing revenues?

Unions are not perfect just as no other organization is perfect. However, unions are owned by their members; members who can exercise their voting rights to change what is not working. They were formed out of a need to improve working conditions.

We must not forget that most of us have benefitted by collective bargaining negotiations and now we benefit from the gifts of collective bargaining, such as paid vacations, sick leave, safety in the workplace, etc. It seems odd that our democratic system that treasures voting rights has somehow decided to negate the voting rights of people who have organized unions for a purpose.

We have watched the middle class disappear in nations

throughout the world. But we have failed to acknowledge that our country is headed in the same direction.

Data proves that the middle class is essential to any flourishing economic system. Public workers are at the core of a middle class society that cares for its working class. The Cleveland Plain Dealer recently published the results of a survey that indicates that 40 percent of those polled would be willing to have their taxes raised and only 20 percent advocate for public workers to lose their benefits.

Who are our elected officials listening to?

I hope you will join me by voicing your support of the bargaining rights of teachers, garbage and highway workers, police and fire fighters, office workers in schools, city halls and state office buildings, and so on.

Those who work in public sector jobs, members of working class America, deserve to be treated with first class respect.

M. Linda Jaramillo is the executive minister for Justice Ministries in the United Church of Christ.

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