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# OPINION

## High Tech Firms Must Embrace Diversity

### Numbers show striking lack of inclusion

BY MARC H. MORIAL

While the number of African American, Latino and women consumers of Internet and broadband products and services is rising, their numbers at the major high tech companies continue to lag way behind. After years of resisting disclosure, tech giants including Apple, Facebook, Yahoo and Google recently released their employment diversity numbers. As we've long suspected, they show a striking lack of inclusion.

According to published figures, at Google, 3 percent of its staff are Hispanic and 2 percent are black. Both Yahoo and Facebook reported that Hispanics and blacks make up 4 percent and 2 percent of their workplaces, respectively. When Apple makes an announcement, as in this month's introduction of the iPhone 6, it usually wants the world to stand up and take notice. This was



likely not the case with the release of its diversity numbers last month, which showed the company is 55 percent white, 15 percent Asian, 11 percent Hispanic and 7 percent black.

In his statement upon release of the report, Apple CEO Tim Cook candidly admitted, "I'm not satisfied with the numbers on this page." This acknowledgment is a first step, but the question for Cook and his Silicon Valley counterparts is - What are you going to do about it?

For years, Silicon Valley has used the specious claim of being a "meritocracy" to explain the lack of diversity in its ranks. It has never been true that African Americans, Latinos or women are somehow less able to excel at high tech jobs. It is true that communities of color and women continue to be underrepresented in the attainment of science and engineering degrees.

The National Urban League is working to increase those numbers with efforts like Project Ready STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) which is supporting 10 Project Ready STEM sites across the nation.

The sites are successfully operating

STEM programs for nearly 300 middle or high school students, with the goals of ensuring that urban students have the necessary supports and opportunities available to them to succeed in STEM-related class work and exposing students to STEM-related careers.

But as Freda Kapor Klein, co-chair of the Kapor Center for Social Impact explains, "The reality is that most of the barriers are structural... our sector is permeated by biases, both subtle and not so subtle."

Her co-chair and husband, Mitch Kapor, the designer of Lotus 1-2-3, adds, "Even as companies scramble to find workers in the most competitive hiring market in recent memory, most are continuing to bring aboard people who look like they do."

It is not enough to lament the numbers; high tech companies must be more intentional about increasing diversity. The industry would do well to follow the example of some of the large telecom companies, which have taken proactive measures in recent years to increase diversity within their organizations.

For example, AT&T's Workforce Inclusion website states, "We know that

diverse, talented and dedicated individuals are critical to our success, so we look for people from various backgrounds and give them opportunities to grow... we serve our customers better when we build diversity into all we do."

Verizon has also made great strides in both employee and supplier diversity. According to Verizon Chairman and CEO, Lowell McAdam "A diverse workplace is one of Verizon's biggest strengths as a global innovation leader. Our employees' unique backgrounds and perspectives are key to our success in delivering technology solutions that create value for our customers, shareholders and society."

High tech companies must not only make similar statements, they must make similar commitments. They can begin by developing comprehensive diversity plans to cover hiring, procurement, governance and philanthropy. As major consumers of technology, people of color and women should also have a fair share of the jobs and wealth that high tech generates.

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

## Our Current Approach to Marijuana has Failed

### Legalization measure energizes youth and minority voters

BY DOMINIC LÓPEZ

With each new generation, there is hope that a new approach can fix an out-of-date broken way of doing things. In the case of marijuana, students, young professionals and new home-



makers overwhelmingly support legalization. Let's put the drug dealers out of business, stop the unjust arrests, and raise some money for vital resources that serve all of us. This November, young Oregonians and communities of color need to stand up and be heard with our voices and our ballots by voting yes on Measure 91.

We cannot afford to have our history written for us. People of color, like me, are disproportionately targeted by failed laws that perpetuate a cycle of oppression, cloud our futures, and shame our present.

Black people in our state are more than twice as likely to be arrested for marijuana-related crimes as whites. In

some Oregon counties, the prosecution is more than three times the rate of white people. That's despite equal rates of marijuana use across racial demographics.

Every year we wait for the reform of marijuana laws means more lives are disrupted. A criminal citation for a mistake made when you're young follows you for a long time. It's easy for a landlord, bank or potential employer to find a marijuana offense on your record. We need to stop burdening people with this harsh punishment for a non-violent crime.

It's up to us to shine a light on marijuana prohibition and the harm it does. We need to make this a public conversation with our parents and our families.

Part of the money raised by Measure 91 is required to go to drug education programs to arm people with the knowledge they need. These programs barely exist now, and if they do they are terribly underfunded. We can change that by voting yes on Measure 91.

Colorado and Washington chose a new approach to marijuana first. We

look to their experiences for guidance. As a result, Oregon's initiative is the gold standard to regulate, legalize and tax marijuana. It would mean money guaranteed for K-12 education, including classrooms in Beaverton, the same ones where I was taught not long ago.

I am 23 years old. I know a lot of people think twenty-somethings like me are fickle voters. Not this time, my friends. This is our world too, and we can shape it. We have an opportunity this November to be on the right side of history.

Marijuana prohibition is an injustice. It's apparent when we count the thousands of arrests and citations each year, the wasted police resources, and the millions of dollars in potential revenue lost.

Measure 91 means marijuana safety through regulation, more money for our state, and an end to unjust incarceration. Get registered, and cast your ballot. Let our voice be heard. It is time for a new approach.

Dominic López is the metro regional organizer for Yes On 91.

## Letter to the Editor

### Exemplifies the Problem

I was disappointed to read The Portland Observer opinion piece "A Real Discussion about Domestic Violence" by Devin Robinson (Sept. 24 issue). He essentially advocated that it's okay for men to hit women if they don't know their place. I was further shocked to read that this man is a college professor. Honestly, the article made me wonder if he has ever physically assaulted a woman.

Yes, I understand it was an opinion piece, but I would like to think The Portland Observer would read submissions with a critical eye.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. I hope The Portland Observer will include articles written by black women/women of color who work with survivors or survivors themselves. The Healing Roots Center is great place to get information about the complexities of domestic violence in the black community.

I think pieces like Robinson exemplify the problem with domestic violence in the black community. How saddening.

Tonya Jones

Women of Color Zine Workshops