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OPINION

Look at What We've Done with Apprenticeships

Bridging the gap for job readiness

BY ODIE DONALD II

Over the last decades, many American inner cities have seen an economic resurgence. Buoyed by millennials and people's desire to shorten their daily work commute, neighborhoods and communities that were all but pronounced dead two decades ago now find themselves flush with new businesses and residents.

This is no more evident than here in the District of Columbia, where the economic recovery of the city has been nothing short of breathtaking. However, as many have noted, this growth has not been equally beneficial to all residents.

While policymakers and advocates search for answers and solutions to this problem, there is one time-tested and



proven tool that should be a key part of any workforce development strategy -- apprenticeships.

Introduced in the 14th century, apprenticeships combine on-the-job training with classroom instruction, teaching workers the practical and theoretical aspects of highly-skilled occupations. Apprenticeship programs can be sponsored by employers, labor groups, or employer associations.

Traditional apprenticeship programs have been primarily relegated to labor fields, such as carpentry or pipefitting, but there are a growing number of companies offering them in high skill and high wage fields, such as IT and engineering.

While we understand that the wage and employment gaps cannot be completely closed until the educational and systematic inequalities in this country are addressed, strong apprenticeship programs can help bridge the gap between the shortcoming of our education system and job readiness for high

wage sectors.

Urban policymakers should make a strong investment in funding apprenticeship programs that help those from their most underserved communities enter into career fields with strong earnings and growth. By providing strong hands on training in high wage and high growth fields, such as tech or entrepreneurship, policymakers can help residents who may not have received adequate educational preparation build key job skills and find stable employment.

Furthermore, in a political environment where big initiatives can often be hard to implement, apprenticeship programs have long had bipartisan support. The U.S. Department of Labor reports that over 91 percent of all apprentices retain employment upon completion of their apprenticeship.

Here in the District of Columbia, we have committed to increasing the number of registered apprenticeships. In September, we awarded approximately \$400,000 in grants to local businesses

and community-based organizations that target the IT, construction and infrastructure industries.

Apprenticeship DC promotes both pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship work-based learning models. Over the next year, we will work with local business owners and community advocates to build upon this effort and target resources to maximize the number of apprenticeships available for our communities.

Through this initiative and the D.C. Infrastructure Academy, we hope to prove that we are committed to ensuring that all District residents are able to participate in the growing economy.

As officials and policymakers in other urban areas deal with their own economic gaps, I hope that they will take a look at what we have done here in the District with our apprenticeship programs and embrace this model as a strong workforce development tool.

Odie Donald II is director of the DC Department of Employment Services.

Hollywood Won't Destroy Sexism, But We Can

Oprah gives a voice to the voiceless

BY RAZAN AZZARKANI

This month's Golden Globes were the first awards ceremony held since #MeToo went viral. To commemorate it, celebrities brought social justice activists along as their plus-ones, and many more wore black to show support with the Time's Up movement, a new Hollywood initiative to purge the industry of predators.

While I'm sure they mean well, repairing the damage is going to take more than wearing black.

After all, Hollywood has collectively spent years perpetuating a rape culture, a sexist culture that did absolutely nothing for women of color, working women, women in the gay and trans communities, women of diverse religious backgrounds, and others. In fact, it often did the absolute opposite.

Elite men accused of abusing women have not only repeatedly gotten away with it — they've been praised for their work, given awards, and offered new jobs. Men such as Woody Allen, Casey Affleck, Johnny Depp, Bill Cosby, and Harvey Weinstein. Only recently have

some faced some sort of consequences.

But then there was Oprah.

Oprah Winfrey won this year's Cecil B. DeMille award for "outstanding contributions to the world of entertainment." The first black woman to get the prize, she accepted her award to a standing ovation — and gave a rousing speech that inspire

She talked about the women who aren't talked about: the domestic workers, the women working for minimum wage, women who have

who don't have the luxury of being the famous, rich, mostly white women with more power to speak.

No longer will women have to remain silent and endure because "this is what men do" or believe these are experiences that come with being a woman. No longer will women have to be shamed into silence because they aren't believed, because they're not rich enough, white enough, pretty enough, whatever enough to be believed.

The solution isn't, as some are al-

Ai-jen Poo, director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance.

Women like Anika Raihan and Leilani Ganser, young activists I've had the pleasure of working closely with. They were brave and courageous enough to publicly fight back against their abusers after receiving little to no help from their university campuses where the assaults took place. Despite stigma, backlash, and struggle, Raihan and Ganser continue to fight every day for justice, for themselves and for women everywhere.

The solution is to support organizations that give voice to women of color and other marginalized groups — organizations such as Know Your IX, National Domestic Workers Alliance, INCITE!, and Mending the Sacred Hope.

Even Hollywood's getting wise, the New York Times reports. Time's Up set aside a \$13 million legal fund "to help less privileged women — like janitors, nurses, and workers at farms, factories, restaurants, and hotels — protect themselves from sexual misconduct and the fallout from reporting it."

"Speaking your truth is the most powerful tool we all have," Oprah said. Until "nobody ever has to say 'me too' again." A new day is indeed on the horizon.

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no choice but to be silent about their abuse because they have a family to feed. "For too long, women have not been heard or believed if they dare speak the truth to the power of those men. But their time is up," she said.

Oprah gave a voice to the voiceless,

ready demanding, for Oprah to run for president. The solution is to listen to women everywhere, and empower female activists in their work.

Women like Tarana Burke, senior director of Girls for Gender Equity and founder of the #MeToo movement, and

