

Opportunity and Diversity One Industry at a Time

By Benjamin Todd Jealous
Special to the NNPA
from the *North Dallas Gazette*

There is a missing component to the national discussion concerning how to strengthen and rebuild the American economy. It is true that high unemployment, a weak national infrastructure, the need for stronger public education, the concentration of wealth and the deficit are all challenges to the nation’s economy but being left out of the discussion is the continued economic marginalization of racial and ethnic minorities.

The American economy has always been strongest when

As the country rapidly becomes majority-minority the nation’s economic well-being is increasingly tied to overcoming racial economic inequality

it’s kept the middle class within reach for most Americans. But with white households holding nearly 20 times the wealth of black or Latino households, and with rising disparities in unemployment, poverty, and income, the future of the middle class has never looked more uncertain. As the country rapidly becomes majority-minority the nation’s economic well-being is increasingly tied to overcoming racial economic inequality.

The economic challenges that people of color face is reflected in the recently released NAACP Opportunity and Diversity Report Card which analyzes the hotel and lodging industry. Mediocre grades among the five leading hotels we

examined—Hyatt, Starwood, Wyndham, Marriott and Hilton—reveal the widespread lack of investment in minority suppliers, the over representation of people of color in the lowest paying entry level positions, the under representation in the more highly paid career track positions and finally a lack of commitment to collecting basic diversity data that could be used to strengthen inclusion efforts.

Our report shows that black-owned businesses, which comprise 7 percent of all businesses in the U.S., make up only 0.9 percent of all vendors receipts—a troubling red flag that signals how far corporate America has to go in their supplier diversity outreach. And while people of color are 36 percent of the population, only 13 percent of the governing bodies in the hotel and lodging industry consists of people of color.

One of the most disconcerting findings of our report card is that all of the top 5 hotel and lodging corporations do not collect diversity data from their franchise properties. This means for four out of five of these leading corporations no data is collected for the majority of their individual hotels. This is unacceptable

The NAACP is calling for these corporations to collect the diversity data already mandated by the government through EEO1 reports. We are also asking for planners of major events to request EEO1 reports from any individual hotel they are considering for their event so they can make diversity and inclusion part of their assessment as to which hotel is worthy of their business. The National Coalition of Black Meeting Planners has already voiced support for this action and we will be working with our community and civil rights partners as well as local bureaus of tourism to make widespread the use of EEO1 data as an important and widely used factor for deter-

mining which hotels qualify to hold major events.

The EEO1 survey is a primary means that the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission uses to advance its mission derived from the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act focused on prohibiting racial discrimination in employment and almost 60 years later we still find great racial and ethnic disparities in business and its workforce. The Opportunity and Diversity Report Card and our call to action for greater use of EEO1 data should not be seen as just a “civil rights” matter but should be understood as a means of dealing with one of the greatest

True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.



threats facing the American economy over the next thirty years, racial economic inequality. We at the NAACP have always seen racial inequality as a grave threat to the country and in the next few decades if serious action isn’t taken to bridge this divide the entire nation will see the economic results of this inequality.



We stand together, richer for our differences.

We celebrate the wisdom of collaboration and the strength in diversity.

