

# Technology and Continuing Civil Rights Movement

By Jazelle Hunt  
NNPA Washington  
Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – If Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. were alive and dreaming today, his ‘I Have a Dream’ speech might be broadened to include technology equality along with racial parity, according to some civil rights activists.

“Dr. King could not have predicted what was next. But we now see what was next and that is technology. Just as we had been left

out of the economic avenues in Dr. King’s day, we’ve been left out of the economic avenues today, except now that’s technology,” says Rev. Grainger Browning, pastor of Ebenezer AME Church in Fort Washington, Md.

“Just as we had been left out of the economic avenues in Dr. King’s day, we’ve been left out of the economic avenues today, except now that’s technology”

out of the economic avenues in Dr. King’s day, we’ve been left out of the economic avenues today, except now that’s technology,” says Rev. Grainger Browning, pastor of Ebenezer AME Church in Fort Washington, Md.

Last week, Browning spoke on a panel as part of a symposium titled, “The Future of Civil Rights: Moving Towards First Class Eco-

nomie, Political and Digital Citizenship.” The symposium was sponsored by the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, which has spent the past year urging Silicon Valley giants such as Microsoft, Apple, and Yahoo! to disclose workforce diversity data and make a commitment to increasing diversity at all levels. Among those corporations, Rainbow PUSH Coalition found that Black people accounted for 3 percent or less of their tech and non-tech workforces.

Technology is playing a central role in what may be a resurgence of the Civil Rights Movement in the protests over grand jury decisions not to indict White police officers in the death of unarmed African Americans in Ferguson, Mo. and Staten Island, N.Y.

pared to White Americans who account for 71 percent.

As advances in technology give rise to new fields and accelerate existing ones, the lack of representation within STEM professions is resulting in a shortage of qualified Americans to fill these new roles. People of color are already the majority among the youngest generation of Americans—and without adequate STEM education, the generation may not be prepared. This lack of training already disqualifies many Americans from one of the most entrepreneurial, lucrative, and fast-growing sectors.

“The challenge is that we are primarily consumers and not creators,” says Navarrow Wright, president and CEO of the Close the Divide Project, which seeks to increase STEM opportunity awareness among women and people of color. Wright also served as a panelist during the



Rev. Grainger Browning, Jr.

Rainbow PUSH symposium. “There’s no light bulb that this is a business opportunity. When you consume, you don’t recognize you have power.”

Additionally, business and society are now globalized thanks to the Internet, but people of color

are less likely than their White counterparts to have access to high-speed Internet in their homes. The Pew Research Center found that 64 percent of Black adults have broadband at home, compared to 74 percent of White adults. Further, Blacks and Latinos are more likely to access the Internet only through smartphones – 74 percent of Black people who own a smartphone use it as their primary access to the Internet as opposed to a computer or laptop at home. Poor Internet access can create a range of barriers, from difficulty with online forms and job applications, to lowered academic performance, to increased

costs for financial and administrative transactions via mail or in-person visits.

Paradoxically, the Internet has also given voice to the least heard members of society.

“It’s true that there is a digital divide. However...cell phone is our main access to the Internet,” says entrepreneur and scholar, Avis Jones-DeWeever, who also served as a panelist.

“We tend to be overrepresented on a lot of these [mobile] platforms, on Twitter especially, but others as well. I think it’s amplifying those activists who were already there, already in the trenches, already doing this work...but it’s also I think motivated others to become involved and become change agents themselves.”

Social media sites such as Twitter, Vine, and Facebook, have enabled marginalized groups to bypass gatekeepers and communicate, organize, and draw attention to their issues. For most of the demonstrations around the nation in response to police killings—the roadway shutdowns, die-ins, and marches—the word was spread via the Internet. Additionally, online petitions and fundraisers

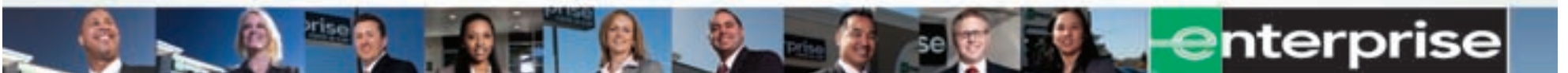
See **TECHNOLOGY**  
on page 18

## The Enterprise Way

# Staying true to the differences that make us unique.

Every one of us has something special to offer. With diverse backgrounds, every voice and every action brings an individual’s perspective to play. At Enterprise, we embrace this thinking by being an inclusive company. Everyone has the opportunity to make a contribution – and a world of difference.

Proud supporter of The Skanner Foundation.



We’ll pick you up.®

Please see subject to program and other restrictions.  
©2015 Enterprise Rent-A-Car. 02/15 1212.01