

THE Skanner®

Challenging People to Shape
a Better Future Now

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Opinion

Is Age Discrimination Also a 'Me Too' in Oregon?

As a Black woman who is also over the age of 50, it breaks my heart when we receive calls from AARP members who cannot find jobs or even get an interview in a labor market that is screaming for qualified workers. People whose jobs have been downsized or who have had to leave the workforce to care for a loved one often find it difficult to re-enter the workforce. Many start tapping into their retirement savings or must take Social Security earlier thereby foregoing full benefits and losing needed retirement income.

These heart breaking stories are why AARP Oregon and other organizations sponsored a bill in the Oregon legislature to stop age discrimination in employment. Unfortunately, even with



Ruby Haughton-Pitts

AARP Oregon Director

wide-spread support our bill died without explanation. AARP designed this bill to safeguard you and your fam-

“According to the Oregon Bureau of Labor (BOLI) and Industry, one older worker in Oregon files a report of age discrimination in Oregon every day

ily against a form of discrimination that can touch all individuals as they age.

In a recent AARP Oregon survey of registered voters ages 40 and older, 62% of them indicate they have either seen or experienced age discrimination in the workplace. We think that's unacceptable. That's why the age discrimination legislation is so important.

According to the Oregon Bureau of Labor (BOLI) and Industry, one older worker

to our survey, only eight percent of workers file an age discrimination complaint with BOLI, their HR Dept. or the EEOC.

Age discrimination is not just perception. According to research by the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, job candidates between the ages of 29-and 31 received 35% more call backs than candidates ages 64 to 66 despite having similar qualifications and skills on more than 40,000 dummy applications.

It's time to fight back and say that in our state, we don't tolerate sexism, racism or ageism. All forms of discrimination must be rooted out of our society.

Thank you for standing up for the rights of older workers to be treated fairly. Together we will make a difference.

Student Loan Debt is a Crisis

There has been a lot of talk about whether or not there is a crisis on the border. I will leave that debate to the politicians. However, there is no debate about whether or not America has a crisis hitting all 50 states and over 40 million people. This crisis is impacting millions of students pursuing their dreams of earning a college degree. The crisis is impacting millions of young people coming out of college, wanting to be fiscally responsible and save, and buy their first home. What is the crisis? It is America's \$1.56 trillion student loan debt.

Today, student loan debt is the second greatest source of individual debt, only behind mortgages, according to the Federal Reserve. Something must be done about the ever-rising student debt, and the Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF) is taking the issue of financial literacy with HBCU students head-on. Exposing the nearly 300,000 students we represent to the host of scholarship offerings is one of our main strategies for decreasing student loan dependence. TMCF understands that student loans disproportionately impact minority students - with the greatest negative impact on African-American students. We have to put just as much early attention on student loan debt by providing student scholarships, grants and wraparound services, so HBCU students can persist in their studies without dropping out because of finances. The more scholarships we can award, the fewer loans students are forced to take, so they graduate without the strain of insurmountable student loan debt.



Dr. Harry L. Williams

Pres. & CEO, Thurgood Marshall College Fund

As the wealth gap continues to grow we know that by 2053, the net worth of African American families is projected to hit \$0, so there is a clear urgency to educate and support organizations that

“Finances should never be a barrier to graduation, nor should the financial impact of earning a college degree be a barrier for buying a home, saving money, starting a family, and having a good credit score

have direct connections to young African American students that will be entering the workforce. TMCF is committed to empowering students attending HBCUs on how to secure and keep a good paying job and build a career into the C-Suite, or become entrepreneurs, save money and build wealth for the future in the hopes of being great global leaders that give back to future generations.

Additionally, we are teaching HBCU students to be better college consumers, moving career-focused programming to Freshmen and Sophomores, so they can choose college course strategically, in order to graduate in four years, while entering the talent pipeline earlier.

More than 80% of all HBCU students attend TMCF member-schools and 97% of those

students rely on financial aid in their pursuit of a degree. Through our partnerships with many companies such as Wells Fargo, Boeing, Ally, and Apple we are providing scholarships, internships, corporate immersions, and innovation programs as well as good paying jobs.

For example, over the course of our partnership with Wells Fargo, they have provided more than \$7.2 million in support of TMCF student scholarships and financial literacy

paying jobs but we also have to work to ensure that those students are able to truly reap the financial benefits of their achievements without having to pay off years of student loan debt.

Yes, the student loan situation is a crisis that must be addressed early and often with students, parents, family members, and guidance counselors. We need to make this an issue on the campaign trail on both sides of the aisle in every election, not just the 2020 presidential one. Roll Call recently reported that there are 66 members of Congress who are currently paying off their own personal student loans or debts for dependents. “Collectively, the 44 Democrats and 24 Republicans have higher education liabilities of \$2.5 million, according to recent financial disclosures. The median student loan debt is \$15,000, while average debt is \$37,000.”

This is not a partisan issue and we will continue advocating for bipartisan solutions and effective student financial aid literacy opportunities especially for the Black college community because we know they work. The student loan debt crisis can be corrected if we all work together to make sure our future innovators, government and corporate leaders can lead without the crippling burden of student loans. The time is now.

Dr. Harry L. Williams is the president & CEO of Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF), the largest organization exclusively representing the Black College Community. Prior to joining TMCF, he spent eight years as president of Delaware State University. Follow him on Twitter at @DrHLWilliams.

Finances should never be a barrier to graduation, nor should the financial impact of earning a college degree be a barrier for buying a home, saving money, starting a family, and having a good credit score. TMCF prides itself on building pipelines into good