



The NAACP at 100

Past Achievement and Inspirational Leadership Ensure a Dynamic Future



The installation of Benjamin Todd Jealous by Chairman Julian Bond at the NAACP National Office

Corporate America and the NAACP partner to prepare the 21st-century workforce *By Judith L. Turnock*

Halfway through its centennial celebration year, the NAACP is boldly positioned to address the American challenge of the 21st century: continuing as the economic engine of a world with new competition and changing demographics.

Partnering with corporate America on these goals has been and will be a critical factor in NAACP success. The NAACP's dynamic new President and CEO, Benjamin Todd Jealous, declares: "Since our first decade when Walter Sachs served as our treasurer, Corporate America has always been the NAACP's valued partner. This year our corporate campaign is headed by AT&T CEO Randall Stephenson, and under his skilled and focused leadership we expect great success."

The NAACP legacy is making the American dream a reality for all, and in its first century that meant a long struggle for de jure civil rights. Going forward, that legacy will expand into the struggle for human rights, focusing on disparities in income, health care and education.

The NAACP has identified these three organizational advocacy priorities because they build upon the historic mission, experience and expertise, and they directly address both the short- and long-term challenges the U.S. faces in preparing the 21st-century workforce.

Universal Health Care

Rising health care costs threaten our collective quality of life, the economic stability of individual families, corporate profits and the U.S. budget. Interim reforms

and voluntary efforts have failed to contain costs or improve coverage and overall health outcomes. Most health policy experts agree that a refocus on prevention over treatment and elimination of ineffective and unnecessary treatments would save trillions of dollars and actually improve outcomes.

American corporations have a vested interest in such health care reform, since they bankroll most private health care coverage. Relentless cost increases have a direct impact on their bottom lines and competitiveness. For example, U.S. auto companies must cope with much higher health care costs than their Canadian counterparts, and that drags down their profitability. The NAACP is ready to partner in the mutually beneficial struggle for permanent, effective solutions.



President and CEO Benjamin T. Jealous at a 2008 NAACP GOTV Rally, encouraging young people to participate in the political process

Employment Opportunities

Corporate America has made great strides in providing employment opportunities for all Americans, but more work remains. Unemployment is consistently higher among nonwhites even during economic booms, and during more trying times it is they who suffer first and longest. The most recent figures are dramatic.

Over the last four-plus decades, many doors have opened, and a cadre of non-white business leaders has achieved success. More have transitioned from corporate America to entrepreneurship, often remaining partners with their previous employers. Partnership with the NAACP has improved retention, eased transitions and, through its Annual Economic Reciprocity Report, lauded corporate best practices on diversity. That partnership is gaining momentum.



NAACP Youth "Get Out The Vote" Rally

A Living Wage

As Henry Ford realized a century ago, employees needed a living wage to purchase his cars. Today consumers drive our entire economy. With so many Americans losing their disposable income, the economy suffers, which is why providing a living wage is an essential long-term business strategy.

Those without living wages will never reach their maximum potential as workers or citizens, and we need everyone participating. The gap between the highest and lowest income brackets continues to widen, frustrating the hopes of too many. Even though we are the wealthiest economy in the world, we cannot expect to thrive with a permanent underclass, especially one where many have to hold two and three jobs just to remain afloat. The NAACP will remain a leader in advocating for a rising tide that lifts all boats.

Quality Education

From its inception, the NAACP has recognized educational opportunity as the foundation for dignity, respect and achievement in America. The legal civil rights battle may have been won, yet deep problems remain. The NAACP's broadened focus addresses the education challenges of the new century. "The ability to attend any public school is a civil right, but the ability for every child to receive a quality education is an unfulfilled human right," explains Jealous. Throughout its national network of local chapters and field offices, the NAACP works to secure access to quality education for all.

Corporate America has long partnered with the NAACP in its educational programs aimed at youth and young adults. Only through quality education can the next generation be prepared to become productive members of the workforce. Further,

the ability to rely on a well-trained, increasingly diverse American workforce means a competitive advantage globally. The NAACP will continue to lead this struggle.

Looking Ahead

Visionary corporate leaders stand with the NAACP because they know that NAACP priorities are also business imperatives, necessary to secure America's economic future and continued global leadership. Comprehensive health care reform will



NAACP Youth & College Division summer interns, sponsored by AT&T, join R&B artists "Day 26" during 2008 Annual Convention

bring immediate corporate bottom-line results through desperately needed cost control. A fair shake in employment opportunities and a living wage for everyone employed will lessen income disparity. And finally, quality education for all will close achievement gaps, both perceived and real.

Together, these priorities ensure maximum workforce preparedness and productivity, economic stability in our communities and a nation of consumers to drive our economy in the future.

The NAACP can boast remarkable accomplishments in its first century. The real legacy, however, is in the hearts and minds of all those who united to awaken the consciousness of a people and a nation. New generations of black, white, yellow, red and brown Americans will stay united into the second century, until the promise of America is made real for all. ■

AT&T: Strength and growth through diversity

For more than a century, the men and women of AT&T have strung the line, run the cables and built the towers that connect people with one another and with their world. What was born in a small room in Boston in 1876 today spans the globe — linking people across the world in ways that dissolve borders and invite exchange. A true appreciation of this extraordinary 133-year journey begins with acceptance of a simple proposition: We do not value diversity and inclusion because we are AT&T; we are AT&T because we value diversity and inclusion. Celebrating, embracing and rewarding our differences and the unique attributes each of us brings to this company every day is just what we do. It's embedded deeply in our DNA.

No matter how one defines diversity — by gender or race, culture or background — AT&T is a model of what a genuinely diverse group of people can do to change their world.

We've known for decades that a diverse employee body is a strategic asset that adds to our bottom line. We've understood all along that by leveraging each individual's unique insights, talents and gifts, we can outpace our competitors. That is truer today than it has ever been.



AT&T's North Texas Vice President and General Manager Adam Vital and Marketing Manager Sean Estell cook hot dogs for employees at a United Way kickoff.

AT&T's commitment to diversity and inclusion plays out every day in countless ways: our employee body, our unmatched leadership in supplier diversity, our commitment to the communities where we live and work, and our multicultural outreach. Our Chairman's leadership at the NAACP is but the latest example.

Congratulations to the NAACP on 100 years of success.

