

The Empowering Role of the NAACP

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"Our objective was to launch a sustained consumer movement through education and facts. Our goal is to develop a disciplined consumer appetite that in turn will affect spending choices being made daily on every product and service we consume.

"That educative process continues as more and more consumers become aware of and take advantage of the report card. NAACP staff and other organization leaders address these issues at every opportunity and in every forum where economic empowerment is the topic of discussion.

"Consumer education and discipline translates into the ability to leverage economic empowerment and we intend to move forward steadfastly for however long it takes to affect real and dramatic change in the hiring, promotional and procurement practices in corporate America.

"But, we are not stopping with the hotel initiative. The larger business community must know that civil rights groups and other organizations are serious about achieving economic parity.

"Increasingly, civil rights leaders and others are talking off the same page

when it comes to this subject.

"The National Urban League's economic development strategy focuses on business ownership, particularly franchising, and the stability that concept creates in the communities where businesses operate.

"The Operation PUSH Wall Street project takes yet another approach—dialogue with stockholders and shareholders to affect change.

"The NAACP Economic Reciprocity Initiative seeks to marshal the forces of consumers in the quiet choices that are made everyday on where to spend talking the same talk.

"The NAACP and our coalition of partners announced last year that our strategy would be to proceed with industry-by-industry reviews, beginning with an assessment of our economic impact and comparing those results with the industry's reciprocal return, if any, on our investment dollars.

"Telecommunications is the sixth largest industry in the United States today and is rapidly growing. Economic development facts and opportunities are astounding.

"This industry represents \$150-300 trillion dollars and exceeded the gross

national product by 65 percent to 85 percent within the last two years as a trend.

"Telephones, wireless service, cable and the Internet posted \$800 billion in revenue last year and is expected to increase more dramatically in the next century as the full effect of deregulation kicks-in.

"Our compelling information also added our insight. The National Telephone communications and Information Administration, at the Department of Commerce, makes the point that more Americans build computers than cars, make more semiconductors than construction machinery, and work in data processing than petroleum refining.

"We are in the midst of an information economy and the future is upon us. Changes are rapidly taking place as technology is being used to grow our economy...to generate new products and services...to bring high-wage, high skilled jobs to our nation's workforce and to bring new resources to America's students.

"Where does this leave African-Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans and poor whites?

"We will be left behind.

"We will be under-served and unprepared unless we seize the opportunity, and extract real economic opportunities for the massive [amount] dollars we spend.

"The spending patterns in the black community alone are staggering and bear some careful attention.

"African Americans spend \$571 million on computers and related equipment. That number is expected to double this year.

"Black households are outspending white households by 2 1/2 times for on-line access.

"In the area of consumer electronics, we spent \$3.8 billion on goods and services.

"In media, African Americans spent \$3.4 billion - the overwhelming majority of those consumer dollars spent for media went to cable TV subscriptions.

"Black consumers outspent white consumers for cable service by five percent in 1996.

"Where telephone service is concerned, African Americans are reported to have spent \$10 billion.

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