



Blacks on Boards

Once again, we quote Frederick Douglass: **“Power concedes nothing without a demand.”**

Being on the Board of Directors in the executive suite, in a supervisor’s office, at the cash register and on the sales floor or assembly line are all important.

But it is critical that every board have representation from the black community—corporations, hospitals, universities, colleges, commissions, foundations, newspapers, television and radio stations. Every organization, business and government body or institution that serves the black community or receives one cent from an African American should have black representation in its governing body and senior staff, as well as direct deliverers of services. While it is important to have board representation, it is also critical that board representation not be of the same few black people over and over again. There should be new faces, more faces, in all of these places. The same people should not sit on multiple boards.

African Americans should ask every time they spend a penny or receive a service, if such representation exists. If the answer is “yes”, then we should check and make sure it’s there. If the answer is “no”, we should begin the movement to change the policy or actions that have prevented such from being true.

The time has come for full inclusion, sensitivity and full understanding of all Americans. Our presence makes a difference. Our voice must be heard, our viewpoints, preferences and priorities understood. Our full inclusion and respect are essential.

And importantly, Blacks on boards should be held accountable by the black community for assuring appropriate changes in policies and behavior impacting the community. We must hear their voices and feel the results of their actions as people sensitive to the black community’s experience of bad or discriminatory policies of the companies on whose boards they now sit.

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