

## 2010 Census: Coming to your 'hood?

Written by William Reed  
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There are many reasons to dislike the census but Black Americans need to know that many benefits can accrue for their participation in the 2010 Census.

In addition to a federal requirement, Census 2010 represents a significant economic stimulus for Black communities. Census 2010 is a federal program that's pumping billions into the national economy and creating more than a million jobs. The upcoming decennial population count is putting 1.4 million people to work. The Census Bureau is also funneling money into local communities by renting office space and furniture and by buying equipment and supplies. And it is spending \$212 million in advertising to urge people to return the census forms.

Census 2010 representatives contend that their communications campaign program to get people residing in the U.S. to fill out the form and send it back represents the nation's most comprehensive social marketing and communications campaign. Arnold Jackson, an Associate Director at the U.S. Census Bureau, served as the agency's chief operating officer during the build up for this decennial said his target was "to reach everyone". The Bureau had planned to spend \$85 million in ethnic advertising and establishing partnerships with community groups to reach Black households.

With millions of African Americans lacking employment and business opportunities the 2010 Census operation comes at an opportune time. Census Bureau processes toward assuring an accurate and complete count can pump \$5 billion into Black Communities through employment and grant monies. For an equitable amount of federal subsidiaries and local and state political representation, it's imperative that Blacks participate in the 2010 Census. But, fewer than 60 percent of African-Americans returned their 2000 Census questionnaire compared to 77.5 percent of Whites.

Blacks comprise 13.4 percent of the national population. The 40.9 million Blacks include a substantial portion of the hard-to-count populations. Black institutions and organizations should be an equitable part of the 2010 Census revenue stream, but are all too often are undervalued and marginalized. The process to get the word out about the 2010 Census is an example of such "marginalization". The Draftfcb Company holds the 2010 Census communications contract. But, the mainstream media giant has a meager record of participating in behavior-changing campaigns that reach historically hard-to-count populations. Draftfcb, and even Bureau African American managers, have a "mainstream media mindset" when it comes to outreach practices.

The Census Bureau is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce. Rick Wade, deputy chief of staff and senior advisor to the Commerce Secretary Gary Locke illustrated a "mainstream mindset" when he spoke to an assembly of Black publishers in Minneapolis in June. Though he spoke to the National Newspaper Publishers Association of monies going to their neighborhoods in census jobs, Wade was ridiculed by Black publishers who labeled the advertising plan for Black newspapers "insufficient". Wade had announced that of \$24 million for Black media advertising only \$1.6 million had been earmarked for Black newspaper advertising. Wade exemplifies contemporary African Americans holding management and supervisory positions this decennial. Most have departed hard-to-count neighborhoods and

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missed Jackson's message that "money be spent among Black and local community and faith-based organizations, media, businesses and schools to broaden a partnership base and encourage participation in the 2010 Census".

Unless Black-oriented media, businesses, agencies and community groups participate in monies for the count, the "undercount" will continue. Black-oriented publications are by nature located in the midst of hard-to-count populations and should be prime movers in convening local Count Committees, covering events of other Census partners in the neighborhoods and keeping 2010 Census messages before their audiences.

Census and Commerce Department executives cannot turn a blind eye to inequalities in the 2010 Census. It's time Census Bureau recalibrated to make its activities and outreach more profitable to Black American enclaves. The Bureau's advisory committees provide vital input on behalf of their communities. In regards to the public's interest and the reality of the current methods to reduce the undercount, the problems being experienced by Black Media is an issue for prompt review by the Census Advisory Committee on the African American Population.

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