

Opportunity: Using our growing diversity as our biggest strength

Written by Scott Gray, MUL President/CEO
Friday, 08 November 2013 10:53



Inside H. Jackson Brown's *Life's Little Instruction Book*, he says that "nothing is more expensive than a missed opportunity." These little words of wisdom can help us understand the compounding negative impact of poverty, discrimination, institutional bias, and lack of opportunity that exists among communities of color. We now understand that the "achievement gap," "wealth gap," "income gap," and "housing gap" may stem from a foundational "opportunity gap."

I was encouraged by several of our new leaders' platforms as they professed a recognition and interest in closing the stark opportunity gaps that exist in Minneapolis. As Minneapolis becomes more diverse it is more important than ever to narrow these gaps and make Minneapolis a great city for all. Taking on this challenge is sometimes a lonely road, but I say to our political leaders, it is not a road you have to travel alone.

Each year thousands of people enter the doors of the Minneapolis Urban League seeking assistance and opportunity. The disparities that we see on a daily basis at MUL are the result of opportunity gaps beyond education and extend to health, occupation, income, homeownership. The MUL's current strategic program platform "The Gateway to Opportunity" was created to address these very gaps. However, in order for us to be successful, we need alliances, we need supporters, and we need the government leaders onboard. The "time is now" to be courageous and to allow communities of color facing these challenges to build the capacity to provide and produce solutions. I am hopeful that MUL along with many other capable organizations can help our new leaders help the people.

The Minneapolis Urban League has been committed to removing barriers to opportunity for 87 years and we are continuing to create innovative strategies that address the current challenges for communities of color. Some of those innovative programs include the 13th Grade initiative; customized workforce development and Project Big Step. One of the benefits of our Gateway is that this year alone our workforce development programs will have helped to create 132 livable wage job opportunities for our community members. We know that the need is much greater and our elected leaders can help make a more significant impact.

My hope is that this new leadership class will successfully pursue their platforms of removing the opportunity gaps in this city. I welcome and challenge you to partner with organizations that offer innovative and proven strategies to complete this work. The MUL has a plan in place to accomplish these goals. We want to help make Minneapolis a vibrant community where our children are reaching their full potential and families benefit from good livable wage jobs.

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Leading with this platform can only enhance our city, as the nation will start to identify Minneapolis as a place where opportunities exist for all and opportunity has no boundaries.