April Is National History and Heritage Month!

We recognize the month of April as “Awareness and Heritage” month or “History and Heritage” month. Regardless of what the month is celebrating, let’s collectively make it a month of intentionality.

**History** – Let’s face it, the US has a very controversial yet rich history. The word *history* comes from the Greek word *historia* which means "to learn or know by inquiry." History is not static. It’s fluid. It changes and grows and becomes richer and more complex when any individual interacts with it. Knowledge of history is empowering. An event is but the furthest ripple of an ever-expanding wave that may have started eddying outward hundreds of years ago. One who "sees" history can harness the power of that wave's entire journey. So, why are we here and why is our Heritage so important?

**Heritage** – We know African Americans are largely the descendants of enslaved people who were brought from their African homelands by force to work in the New World. Their rights were severely limited, and they were long denied a rightful share in the economic, social, and political progress of the United States. Nevertheless, African Americans have made lasting contributions to American history and culture. Of an estimated 10 million Africans brought to the Americas by the trade of enslaved peoples, about 430,000 came to the territory of what is now the United States. The overwhelming majority were taken from the area of western Africa stretching from present-day Senegal to Angola, where political and social organization as well as art, music, and dance were highly advanced. On or near the African coast had emerged the major kingdoms of Oyo, Ashanti, Benin, Dahomey, and the Congo. In the Sudanese interior had arisen the empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai; the Hausa states; and the states of Kanem-Bornu. Such African cities as Djenné and Timbuktu, both now in Mali, were at one time major commercial and educational centers.

That being said, you should always know why you celebrate your History and Heritage! Knowledge is more than power, it’s your fundamental right.
National Board Member Opportunities

Are you passionate about driving change, fostering innovation, and shaping the future of human resources? We are growing and expanding our National Board of Directors and Young Professionals Board with the following opportunities available:

- National Board of Directors – Regional Vice Presidents, All 4 Regions
- Young Professionals Board of Directors – Associate VP of Corporate Event Management, Committee Seats

For more information, please contact us at info@naaahr.org, or lauren.ashley@naaahr.org / deidre.gwin@naaahr.org for YP.
EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR YOU

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Chief People & Culture Officer – Monterey Bay Aquarium – Monterey, CA
Senior Diversity Recruiting Manager – Perkins Cole – New York, NY
Vice President for HR – University of Louisville – Louisville, KY
Senior Diversity & Inclusion Manager – Perkins Cole – Seattle, WA
HR Director – Town of Morrisville, NC – Morrisville, NC

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WHAT THE HBCU IS GOING ON?

There are 107 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the US. Of those, three are currently being forced to close. Attacks on HBCUs include financial, political, and systemic challenges. Throughout history, HBCUs remain essential institutions in providing higher education opportunities for African American and many people of color.

HBCUs often struggled with financial issues due to a variety of factors, including historical disparities in funding compared to predominantly white institutions (PWIs), lower endowments, and limited access to resources. These financial challenges hinder the ability of HBCUs to maintain infrastructure, offer competitive salaries to faculty, provide scholarships to students, and invest in cutting-edge technology and facilities.

Additionally, changes in government priorities or regulations can disproportionately impact HBCUs, leading to decreased resources and increased administrative burdens. Systemic challenges such as racism, discrimination, and stereotypes can also undermine the mission and success of HBCUs. Negative perceptions of HBCUs and their students can perpetuate inequality and hinder opportunities for growth and advancement.

Despite these challenges, HBCUs have a long history of resilience and success in providing quality education and fostering leadership among African American communities. Efforts to support and strengthen HBCUs include increased funding, advocacy for equitable policies, and recognition of their unique contributions to higher education and society as a whole.
The Chairman’s Corner

ADDRESSING DISPARITIES FACE BY PEOPLE OF COLOR: Paths to Equity

In today’s society, people of color continue to encounter systemic disparities across various facets of life. From healthcare to education and economic opportunities, these disparities persist, casting shadows on the pursuit of equality and justice. To foster a more equitable future, it is imperative to confront these challenges head-on and explore viable solutions. Here, we delve into three prominent disparities faced by people of color and propose potential pathways for progress.

Healthcare Disparities: Access to quality healthcare remains a pressing issue for many communities of color. Structural barriers such as lack of insurance coverage, limited access to healthcare facilities in underserved areas, and implicit biases within the healthcare system contribute to disparities in health outcomes. People of color often face higher rates of chronic illnesses, maternal mortality, and lower life expectancy compared to their white counterparts.

To address these disparities, proactive measures are essential. Increasing funding for community health centers in underserved neighborhoods, expanding Medicaid eligibility, and implementing cultural competency training for healthcare providers can enhance access and quality of care. Moreover, promoting initiatives that prioritize preventive care, early intervention, and health education within marginalized communities can empower individuals to take control of their well-being and mitigate health disparities.

Educational Inequities: Educational disparities persist among students of color, manifesting in unequal access to resources, lower academic achievement, and disproportionate disciplinary actions. Factors such as socioeconomic status, inadequate school funding, and systemic biases contribute to these inequities, perpetuating cycles of educational disadvantage.

To address educational inequities, systemic reforms are imperative. Investing in high-quality early childhood education programs, implementing equitable school funding formulas, and diversifying the educator workforce can create a more inclusive learning environment. Additionally, adopting culturally responsive teaching practices and promoting inclusive curricula that reflect the diverse experiences of students can foster a sense of belonging and academic success among marginalized youth.

Economic Disparities: Persistent economic disparities hinder the financial stability and upward mobility of people of color. Structural barriers such as discriminatory hiring practices, wage gaps, and limited access to capital and entrepreneurial opportunities perpetuate economic inequality. Moreover, historical injustices such as redlining and systemic racism have entrenched wealth disparities between white communities and communities of color.

To address economic disparities, multifaceted approaches are necessary. Implementing policies that promote equitable hiring practices, pay transparency, and affirmative action can mitigate wage gaps and enhance economic opportunities for marginalized populations. Additionally, investing in affordable housing initiatives, small business development programs, and financial literacy education can empower communities of color to build wealth and economic resilience.

In conclusion, confronting disparities faced by people of color requires concerted efforts across multiple fronts. By addressing healthcare, educational, and economic inequities through policy reforms, community empowerment, and systemic change, we can move closer to achieving a more just and equitable society. It is incumbent upon all stakeholders to actively engage in dismantling systemic barriers and fostering inclusive environments where every individual has the opportunity to thrive, regardless of race or ethnicity.

Nathaniel Alston
Chairman of the Board
National Association of African Americans in Human Resources

Thank you