



NAACP New York State Conference
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

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October 27, 2015

Gary LaBarbera
President, Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York
71 West 23rd Street, Suite 501-03
New York, NY 10010

Dear Mr. LaBarbera,

I am writing to request that you immediately release all data on the number of minority workers currently employed in each of the union building trades.

Over the last several weeks, you have undertaken a series of public efforts aimed at demonstrating that the New York City Building Trades Council has successfully increased minority participation in its various member unions.

In a full-page newspaper ad, you stated that the New York City Building Trades Council is “leading the way in expanding diversity.” In an op-ed, you wrote that the building trades have developed a “solution” to the problem of your longstanding lack of minority inclusion.

According to your ad, the building trades’ Edward J. Malloy Initiative has, over the course its entire history, placed around 850 African-Americans and around 590 Hispanics into union apprenticeship programs. You also cited a program for women that has placed around 660 African-Americans and 230 Hispanics into the construction unions over the past ten years.

Those figures pale in comparison to the approximately 100,000 workers represented by the New York City Building Trades Council. In addition, it is impossible to know how many of those African-American and Hispanic apprentices have been able to advance into full-time employment.

I was especially surprised that you chose to make those claims just months after the Sheet Metal Workers Local Union #28 — one of your members — was forced to pay more than \$12 million to settle a race bias lawsuit filed by African-American and Hispanic workers and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

If the building trades are really “leading the way in expanding diversity,” you should provide the actual data to prove it.

I urge you to immediately release comprehensive data showing the exact number of African-American and Hispanic members currently employed in each building trade. I also urge you to immediately release data showing how many African-American and Hispanic apprentices advanced into full-time employment. That is the only way to show whether or not union construction has truly become a field in which minority workers have equal opportunities to succeed.

The NAACP has historically supported unions across all industries, and we know they can have a positive impact on the workforce.

But you should not mislead New Yorkers by claiming that union construction is more racially integrated than it actually is. Such claims do a great disservice to real civil rights efforts across our city and state.

I look forward to your immediate response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hazel Dukes", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Hazel Dukes
President, NAACP New York State Conference