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Mayor's big plan to tackle Black and Latino disparities just a Band-Aid

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By ALEXANDER W. SAINGCHIN, ESQ. Policy and Research Coordinator at the Urban Justice Center – Human Rights Project. | 0 comments

Mayor Michael Bloomberg's three-year, \$130 million plan to address employment disparities among young Black and Latino males, though laudable, is only a first step in what the city needs to do to eliminate the discrimination that affects working families throughout New York City. This short-term, one-shot deal is not enough.

To begin with, the mayor's plan sets up its intended beneficiaries for failure. The nation is facing a shortage of an estimated 27 million jobs, and New York is no exception to this trend. Job training will prove insufficient if there are no jobs for the workers who need them. Moreover, the mayor's plan does nothing to address the discrimination confronting these men as they seek work.

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Indeed, a study conducted by the New York City Human Rights Commission found that Blacks and Latinos are less likely to be considered by employers compared to equally qualified white applicants. The mayor's plan does not acknowledge this reality and fails to consider the countless number of others struggling against discrimination.

Disparities hinder the advancement of New Yorkers of all hues- Black, Latino, Asian, female, immigrant, LGBT-and of all ages. For example, although people of color make up almost 60 percent of New York City's workforce, they only account for 19 percent of senior and executive staff of city agencies. Women continue to earn less than their male counterparts in the workforce. Likewise, many immigrants are relegated to working in the shadows, where pay is meager and exploitation rampant. These communities have endured decades of discrimination. A six-month investigation resulting in a short-term plan is insufficient to erase a legacy of injustice.

A real jobs creation program is needed in New York, and historical discrimination must be confronted by historic measures.

How can the city do this? One step in the right direction would be to enact the Human Rights GOAL (HR GOAL) bill into law. HR GOAL would require every city agency to collect data and conduct an internal analysis of how it might be underserving marginalized New Yorkers. With community input, each agency would then be required to create an action plan to eliminate this discrimination.

The city's approach to jobs, policing, housing and education, to name a few examples, would all come under scrutiny. This is similar to what the mayor performed for his plan. The key difference with HR GOAL: New Yorkers of all walks of life are included, valuable community voices are heard and the city makes a long-term, ongoing commitment to conquering discrimination in the greatest city in the world.

HR GOAL is modeled after a similar law in San Francisco that has garnered numerous accolades for its role in overcoming gender and racial disparities. If San Francisco can do it, New York City certainly can.

The mayor's plan is a step in the right direction, but he and City Council Speaker Christine Quinn should cement their commitment to ending discrimination in the long-term and make HR GOAL law.

Alexander W. Saingchin is policy and research coordinator at the Urban Justice Center's Human Rights Project.

Black New Yorker

Stormin' Norman: Serving up the sound of a sermon



Some might call him "The Preacher," but world-renowned turntablist Norman McHugh prefers to go by his stage name: DJ Stormin' Norman.

McHugh is best known for showing off his mixing skills in Harlem, where he resides, and has been seen on Sunday afternoons in Morningside Park at "Sundae Sermon." The outdoor event, which occurs every two Sundays from June to September, has turned into a must-be-there social gathering while also serving as a musical oasis feeding the many beat-savvy souls who attend.

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