

National Black Church Initiative

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NBCI Calls Slavery Remark Wrong *Walmart an Economic Jewel to the Black Community*

Washington DC - The National Black Church Initiative, a coalition of 34,000 churches, deems the remark made by Delmarie Cobb in the Chicago Tribune comparing employment at Walmart to slavery insensitive, wrong, and nonsensical. Invoking the memory of slavery cheapens the violent, racist history that African Americans continue to struggle against in the United States. During this economic crisis, of which African Americans are hardest hit, nobody can turn down jobs or opportunities for economic revival and growth – we must do what it takes to survive.

Here are the alarming statistics, provided by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, which highlight the overpowering, undeniable, and urgent need for jobs.

- Unemployment rates in Chicago are **11.4%**, higher than the national average, which is **10.2%**.
- Unemployment rates for African Americans are **14.8%** nearly double that of whites at **8.4%**.
- Unemployment rates for African Americans are worsening at a faster rate than their white counterparts; unemployment rates have risen **4.7%** in only one year for African Americans, whereas for whites they have risen only **3.3%**.

- African American men have the highest unemployment rate among American adults – an astounding **17.4%**.
- African American teens ages 16-19 are currently unemployed at a rate of **39.5%** - nearly double their white counterparts who are unemployed at a rate of **20.1%**.

These figures substantiate the need for decisive action to stem the cycle of joblessness, foreclosures, and despair. Rev. Anthony Evans, President of NBCI says, “Walmart has proven to be a good corporate citizen and an asset and friend to the African American community. Their record concerning community involvement has grown stronger every year. Like any corporation, they have made mistakes, but they have corrected those mistakes and have begun to demonstrate how to build solid community attributes. We need Walmart and Walmart needs us. This is why NBCI is working to build a substantive relationship with Walmart on food security, employment opportunities, good corporate governance, and community development. We look forward to working with all community organizations in Chicago and across the country to discuss how we can work together to build a more official relationship between Walmart, NBCI, and host communities.”

The National Black Church Initiative is not suggesting that these hard times call for taking *any* job - NBCI does however advocate taking substantive steps toward employment, saving, and responsible money management – which cannot happen if there are no job opportunities in the marketplace. Bills cannot be paid, mortgages cannot be maintained, children cannot be fed, and families cannot endure without a job to facilitate these financial needs. Walmart is providing these jobs, **1.4 million** in the United States alone. African Americans would gladly take these jobs to support their families.

Cobb’s assertion that “slavery was a job” is ludicrous. By its very definition, slavery was (and is) involuntary subjugation without compensation. Walmart employs voluntary, compensated adults and their employment strategy is to promote from within allowing for upward mobility – thankfully a direct opposite of the horrors of slavery. Slinging the word slavery in the context of potential economic growth is obscene. Cobb instead should be grateful that in this historically desperate economic climate that any company, Walmart in particular, is capable of expansion at all.

Walmart is an asset to the communities it serves, not only as a provider of jobs but through its philanthropy which funds community projects and sustains local economies. In Fiscal Year 2010 the Walmart Foundation gave **467 million** dollars in the United States. They are an equal opportunity employer whose jobs are necessary to the US economy. It is an outrage that Walmart is being attacked given the positive contribution it makes to local communities and urban areas.

The National Black Church Initiative is sending this message to its 34,000 member churches nationwide - *we can ill afford to turn down jobs*. This recession has set blacks back 20 years –

decreasing property values, the loss of savings, pensions, retirements, and 401 K plans, and asset devaluing. This is a 200 billion dollar loss and the Church will not stand idly by.

About NBCI

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) is a coalition of 34,000 African American and Latino churches working to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare, technology, education, housing, and the environment. NBCI's mission is to provide critical wellness information to all of its members, congregants, churches and the public. The National Black Church Initiative's methodology is utilizing faith and sound health science. The National Black Church Initiative's purpose is to partner with major organizations and officials whose main mission is to reduce racial disparities in the variety of areas cited above. NBCI offers faith-based, out-of-the-box and cutting edge solutions to stubborn economic and social issues. NBCI's programs are governed by credible statistical analysis, science based strategies and techniques, and methods that work.