

Unemployment Among Black College Graduates

Contributed by The Hilltop Staff – Black College Wire
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“If opportunities are not offered to us, we must create our own.”

As graduation season rapidly approaches, black college graduates may face a greater burden in the job market than their white counterparts. Black college graduates are twice as likely to be unemployed as white college graduates.

The recession has only worsened this problem. Unemployment among blacks is disproportionately higher than the rest of the population.

Reasons for this trend include black students are not adequately prepared for the job market. They may have the degrees, but they lack the connections or professional skills to be successful in the workplace.

Students may have the knowledge, but not the resume; or the resume, but not the knowledge. Also, since many current black college graduates are first-generation college students, they may not have the same professional networks within their families that white college graduates may have.

Even when black people have significant professional and networking opportunities, race can still play a role in their employability. The New York Times cited a study that said Caucasian, Asian and Latino managers hired a greater number of white job applicants and fewer black job applicants than black managers did.

Other concerns and signs of more covert, and possibly even unconscious, racism included the tendency to hire candidates with less "ethnic-sounding" names or candidates to whom they felt they were a better fit for the "cultural environment" of the workplace.

The presidency of Barack Obama was also cited as a possible challenge to the employment of black college graduates. Since many people feel that President Obama's election demonstrated the limitless possibilities for black people, black job applicants are more likely to be seen as playing the victim if they express their feelings about racism or cultural bias in the job application process.

In some ways, Obama's election also diminished the severity of the need for programs and opportunities targeted toward cultural diversity in the workplace. Therefore, attempts to level the playing field of opportunity have decreased, leaving many black college graduates to continue to combat discrimination with, what is often viewed as, an old argument and with less ammunition.

Regardless of the reasons for the disparity in employment rates, black college graduates must navigate the job market the way it is now. Lack of opportunity can only be countered by continuing to be proactive.

Pro-activity does not just mean training harder or longer to improve or increase skills and marketability or working consistently to build connections.

If there are no opportunities available, black college graduates must create their own because entrepreneurship is the only definitive solution to the problem of employability. The difficulties associated with working for others decrease if we take steps to work for ourselves.

The Hilltop is the student newspaper at Howard University , which originally published this article.

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