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## **Building trades faulted on minorities**

### **Reports finds relatively few among workers, apprentices**

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Women and minorities in the Milwaukee metro area are largely being left out of apprenticeship programs in the building and construction trades, according to an NAACP-commissioned study released Thursday.

*Advertisement* Despite long-standing efforts to increase the numbers substantially, a study by the Employment and Training Institute at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People finds that many of the programs established to recruit minority construction workers have had disappointing results, and that the number of minority apprentices is alarmingly small.

The report says employers have a dismal track record in their attempts to hire minorities, even with the current construction boom in downtown Milwaukee.

The results show that even with programs such as Big Step and the City of Milwaukee's preference ordinance for hiring minority workers, area employers are sticking to old methods in hiring workers and apprentices for their projects. And many of them, according to the study, are ignoring minorities.

In short, the findings show that many private contractors in the area "have not stepped up to the plate" to become apprenticeship trainers.

"In just a few days, we will celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday," said Jerry Ann Hamilton, president of the Milwaukee branch of the NAACP. "Dr. King had a dream of a day when race would not matter.

"But the task force results indicate we've got much work to do if we are to realize King's dream."

According to 2005 data gathered from records at the state Department of Workforce Development and the Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards, only 475 companies employed construction trade apprentices in the metro area during the fall.

Of that group, 404 companies had no African-American apprentices; 411 had no Hispanic apprentices, and American Indians, Asians and women were barely represented, the study shows.

Lois M. Quinn of the institute, who led the study with Ruth Zubrensky of the NAACP, said an analysis of the data reveals that 475 contractors are preparing 11 white apprentices for every one African-American, and that the rate is 14 whites for every Hispanic entering the skilled trades.

In 2005, the study finds, there were only 118 African-American apprentices out of 1,515, or 7.8%. Only 89, or 5.9%, of the apprentices were Hispanics.

The bureau and other public and private institutions have failed to get satisfactory results from joint apprenticeship training programs and have failed to dent the need for jobs for central city residents, the study says.

Looking at the last six years of apprenticeship hiring and retention, the report finds little progress.

It says that unless all parties make a concerted effort to improve the record, "we may never witness equal access to construction training/jobs for minorities and women."

State Sen. Lena Taylor (D-Milwaukee) said, "These numbers show that you have to just be willing to let people in the door." Taylor attended a news briefing about the report at NAACP headquarters, 2745 N. King Drive.

Nacarci Feaster, secretary/treasurer of Laborers International Union Local 113 and a board member of Big Step, which trains minority workers for the trades, said one way to increase the number of minority apprentices would be to sidestep the unions and confront employers and owners directly on the issue.

Most of the minority participation, he said, is in the basement trades, such as ironworkers, carpenters and brick masons, but the mechanical trades, from electrical workers, boilermakers, plumbers and steamfitters, has virtually no minority participation.

The report makes 11 recommendations, among them asking the bureau to be more responsive to minorities and increasing state monitoring of construction sites.

According to the report, the Southeast Wisconsin Area Carpentry Joint Apprentice Committee sponsors the largest number of African-American apprentices; Associated Builders and Contractors of Wisconsin-Waukesha sponsors the largest number of Hispanic apprentices.

*The full list of recommendations and the report are at [www.uwm.edu/Dept/ETI/](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/ETI/)*

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