

Get Connected And Make Black Count

Our worlds have been flipped upside down in a matter of weeks, forcing all of us to reevaluate how we manage our daily lives. Learning and work for many are now virtual, with schools scrambling for adequate digital devices. Our local small businesses are

family to help ensure a complete count for the 2020 Census.

The Greater Sacramento Urban League's mission for 52 years has been to help enhance education and develop jobs and management skills for residents. Yet, in my four years as the President of the Urban League, there are only a few moments I've witnessed as pivotal as now.

With social distancing orders in place, those committed to a complete 2020 Census count have had to reimagine outreach efforts to our state's most vulnerable communities. Events planned literally for months have turned into virtual webinars and online gatherings to spread the urgency of the need for a complete count. Unfortunately, we have been unable to consistently reach many vulnerable communities: those who don't have access to high-speed Internet at home.

The COVID-19 crisis has



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shone a bright light on a connectivity gap, which has taken some by surprise. A recent survey by the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) found that while 88 percent of the state's households have high-speed Internet access at home through either a computing device or a smartphone, 12 percent — or one in eight homes — still do not have access. This disparity holds true for already-vulnerable populations, including African Americans, dual-language

households, low-income families and those lacking educational opportunities.

For the first time, the 2020 Census will be available online and one way we can ensure an accurate and complete count is getting people connected to the Internet. Getting homes connected to the Internet isn't just a sensible solution for a complete count; it's a sensible solution for improving our community's access to the 21st-century digital economy.

At the Urban League, we understand what basic computer skills training can mean for parents and kids of low-income backgrounds experiencing distance learning. Our Digital Literacy MOS and Internet skills training program for youth and adults is now offered virtually. Participants complete 60 hours of online curriculum with a live in-person instructor interface to earn a certification of completion. Through training and service, we are preparing people for jobs

today and tomorrow.

Though the Sacramento region's Census response rate is climbing, at 65 percent as of the beginning of May, we cannot rest as the job is not yet done. If you have a family member, neighbor, or friend who is not online, there are resources that can help.

We are witnessing in real-time, how profoundly political representation and cooperation at the federal and state-level impacts our neighborhoods. Completing the 2020 Census count gives us the power to change the course of our future. Now is the time to get connected and get counted.

Resources: To learn about low-cost Internet options, visit www.GetConnectedGetCount.org or text "Get Counted" to 5623-726925.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Cassandra H. B. Jennings is President & CEO of the Greater Sacramento Urban League.

by CASSANDRA JENNINGS
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barely hanging on and our concern deepens for the physical and mental health of those most vulnerable, all occurring during a window-in-time that is so important to our collective future - the 2020 Census count.

The 2020 Census is a promise to the future that communities will collect their fair share of funding and representation in our democracy at the state and federal levels. Yet, COVID-19 threatens our community's deep commitment to fairness, justice and equity. Each of us has the power to count ourselves and

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