

March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom – A Reminder that Good Jobs, Change Lives.

It's been 61 years since Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his iconic "I Have a Dream" speech at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Two of the U.S. Department of Labor's leaders came together this year to commemorate the anniversary of the March and discuss key accomplishments in their respective offices. Alaysia Black Hackett is the Chief Diversity and Equity Officer for the Department of Labor, and Michele Hodge is the Acting Director of The Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP).

Alaysia Black Hackett: “History has proved Dr. King right. Decades of dismantling systemic inequality has created more opportunities for all Americans, and greater diversity has widespread benefits. We have yet to achieve King's dream of universal equity, but we have made progress. Michele, what progress have you seen at OFCCP?”

Michele Hodge: “After serving at OFCCP for nearly 40 years in every role from Compliance Investigator to the Acting Director of the agency, I have seen a tremendous amount of progress! The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom is credited with helping to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and Executive Order 11246 which led to the creation of OFCCP in 1965. Since then, we have been protecting workers and removing barriers to equal employment opportunities for marginalized and vulnerable communities. In the past three years alone, we have helped over 34,000 workers and job seekers recover more than \$36,000,000 in back wages and interest from federal contractors who failed to provide workplaces free from discrimination. Now that's real progress!”

Alaysia Black Hackett: “The Department of Labor is tapping into the talent and skills of workers who have been left out of good jobs for far too long. At a time when our economy is growing and as we break ground on new projects in every corner of our country, we cannot leave diverse talent untapped. What is OFCCP doing to advance the economic message of the March?”

Michele Hodge: “At OFCCP, we launched the [Mega Construction Project Program](#) in 2023 which fosters equal opportunity in the construction trades workforce of federal contractors and subcontractors on large federal construction projects. Projects eligible for designation as Megaprojects are valued at \$35 million or more in funding. Through the program, we're focusing resources on construction projects that have the greatest potential to make a positive economic difference in a community. OFCCP engagement provides immediate impact on contractor and subcontractor recruitment and hiring practices in the construction trades, helping build robust applicant pools that include talented workers from underrepresented backgrounds. We are bringing good jobs that change lives to communities that have been historically left out.”

Alaysia Black Hackett: “I am honored to reflect on the ongoing journey toward achieving Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of universal equity. Decades of dismantling systemic inequality

have yielded more opportunities for all workers in America, showcasing the immense benefits of greater diversity. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and Executive Order 11246—catalyzed by the historic March on Washington—laid the groundwork for leveraging the talents and skills of workers who have historically been excluded from good jobs.

Considering the historical significance of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, and the reality that our economy is expanding with new projects emerging nationwide, how is OFCCP ensuring that economic opportunities are accessible to all workers, especially those from marginalized communities, and what steps can individuals and organizations take to support this mission?"

Michele Hodge: As we continue to build out the economy from the middle out and the bottom up, OFCCP is committed to tackling employment policies and practices that create barriers to opportunity and perpetuate inequality. No one should be excluded from the full promise of economic opportunity and prosperity. In commemorating the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, OFCCP invites everyone to join us in achieving equal employment opportunity for all workers and job seekers by reviewing and utilizing OFCCP's updated [workers rights' resources](#).

Alaysia Black Hackett: " As we reflect on our discussion today, it is clear that significant strides have been made towards dismantling systemic inequality and fostering greater diversity in the workforce. Michele Hodge's insights into the transformative work of the OFCCP, particularly through initiatives like the Mega Construction Project Program, highlight the critical role of federal efforts in promoting equal employment opportunities. These programs are not just about creating jobs; they are about ensuring that every community, especially those historically marginalized, can share in the promise of economic prosperity.

Our commitment at the Department of Labor is to continue tapping into the diverse talents of all workers and breaking down the barriers that have excluded many from good jobs for far too long. As we commemorate the 61st anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, I urge each of you to join us in this vital mission.

Review and utilize the OFCCP's workers' rights resources, advocate for inclusive hiring practices, and support policies that promote equity and opportunity for all. Together, we can honor Dr. King's legacy and work towards a future where every American has access to the full promise of economic opportunity. Let's take action today to build a more equitable and inclusive workforce for tomorrow."