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Diversity Hiring Returns as Topic in '07 for Ad Industry

Rev. Jackson-Backed Group Keeps Pressure on Madison Avenue

By [Lisa Sanders](#)

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NEW YORK (AdAge.com) -- The advertising industry can add Democratic politicians and civil rights leaders, along with the



Photo: AP

Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY) was sharply critical of the advertising industry's lack of diversity in its C-level ranks.

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New York City Commission on Human Rights, to those scrutinizing its efforts to diversify its work force and use more minority-owned suppliers.

'Waiting for you'

"We're saying to the ad industry, we're waiting for you," said Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY), speaking at a breakfast today hosted by the Wall Street Project Economic Summit, a venture of the Rev. Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Push Coalition.

Mr. Schumer said leadership of the ad industry, which historically has been heavily concentrated in New York, contrasts sharply with other industries such as financial services and media and entertainment, where African Americans are visible in the top echelons. To bolster his argument, Mr. Schumer named three African-American chiefs: Merrill Lynch Chairman-CEO Stan O'Neal; American Express CEO Kenneth Chenault and Time Warner CEO Richard Parsons.

Future leaders

He said the ad industry can have positive impact in creating future generations of leaders. "Look around: if you see those in power look like you, that sallies forth a sense of possibility," he said.

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Mr. Schumer is a longtime ally of Mr. Jackson, who through his Wall Street Project has for a decade sought to broaden opportunities for black financial executives and firms. This year, Mr. Jackson is broadening his focus to include the advertising industry.

'Trade imbalance'

"We call upon them to end their long-standing, multibillion-dollar trade imbalance with minority vendors, consumers and employees," Mr. Jackson said. "The issue is not about talent. One cannot say we're not creative, or that we cannot draw. It has to do with how Americans see each other. It's about breaking down irrational barriers. When these barriers come down, everyone wins."

Mr. Jackson said his organization will host similar conferences in Atlanta, Chicago and Los Angeles.

Messrs. Schumer and Jackson's early-morning comments were followed by a panel at which participants from agencies, corporations and consultancies discussed how minority business owners and job seekers can forge successful relationships with advertising agencies.

'Talk about what works'

"The industry really wants to talk about what works," said Wally Snyder, CEO of the American Advertising Federation, who moderated the panel.

Agencies in New York are increasing their efforts at reaching out to minority suppliers and employees following the end of a nearly two-year investigation by the city's Commission on Human Rights into the recruitment, hiring and retention of minorities. In September, 16 agencies reached agreements with the commission, and they agreed to meet goals -- set by each individual agency -- in hiring and retention that will be reviewed annually by the commission for the next three years.

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