



Tony Cárdenas
Congress of the United States
29th District, California

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Dear Colleague:

Our nation is currently experiencing one of the most important social justice awakenings since the Civil Rights movement that culminated in the 1960s. As Americans continue to educate themselves about systemic injustice and how our nation has failed whole populations of its citizens, it is time the United States Congress and the Democratic Party take an honest look at our own shortcomings. While it is true that we have the most diverse Congress in American history, when it comes to diversity in our staff recruitment, hiring, and retention practices in our offices, leadership teams, and committee staff, we are failing.

In the wake of George Floyd's murder, America is finally facing a racial reckoning. Americans have come to realize that some lives are treated as though they have no value. Racism is a disease that plagues every corner of our nation with some forms being more subtle than others. America has never truly rectified its original sins of slavery and genocide and their remnants are very much alive. We see it in health disparities, the racial wealth gap, denied financial opportunities, and in our hiring practices. The shocking underrepresentation and staggering lack of opportunities for people of color in the workplace are alarming – in corporate America, the non-profit sector, and government. It is time for us to step up and lead by example.

Latinos make up 17% of the population and Black people make up 13%, yet, in almost every industry, people of color are woefully underrepresented. According to the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Black and Latino professionals in 2018 held just 3% and 2%, respectively, of all executive or senior leadership roles, which are defined as within two reporting levels of the CEO. This lack of representation and inclusivity is not unique to corporate America. Unfortunately, the House of Representatives is nearly as bad.

The Joint Center of Political and Economic Studies found that more than eight out of 10 chiefs of staff, legislative directors, and communications directors in the 115th Congress were white. In 2018, 84% of chiefs, 88% of legislative directors, and 87% of communications directors were white. Of the 1,110 senior staff positions, only 152 were people of color. The data is clear: people of color are not being promoted or hired for senior staff positions. This is not for a lack of diverse candidates who are dedicated and qualified. How can we expect to address issues of racial discrimination when the vast majority of our staff working on these issues cannot speak directly to the experiences of racial injustice?

As we work to dismantle systemic racism throughout the United States, it is time for us to be bold, break our habits, and correct our flaws as a legislative body and a caucus. We must face our glaring failure as a Congress. Building a truly diverse House of Representatives is our responsibility, and, as leaders, we must do it now.

That is why I am proposing the formation of a Members task force with one sole mission: ensuring more equitable hiring practices and staff diversity. This task force will identify best practices in all aspects of staff recruitment, hiring, retention and promotions. Every Member will be provided with every opportunity to build diversity in every team in the House. Diversity is our strength.

And, if we are to be the party that truly believes diversity is our strength, then we must all unite behind this mission. This will make each and every one of us a better legislator and create a Congress that is truly of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Sincerely,



Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress