

DIALOGUE ON DIVERSITY'S 2010 ENTREPRENEURSHIP/IT CONFERENCE

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Washington, DC - Dialogue on Diversity's 2010 Entrepreneurship/IT Conference, presented Friday, July 27th filled a conference hall to capacity at the U.S. Capitol Visitors Center on Capitol Hill. Women entrepreneurs were the subject of a series of rapid fire seminars through the day, covering the marketing, information, and financial management skills they need to hold their own in today's sharply competitive business milieu. Leading off a packed agenda was introductory speaker **Alex Rodriguez**, Chair of the Washington Metro Chapter of LULAC, who, in an emotional and evocative address, named the many marginalized classes of persons in American society, each of which must be an effectively protected class, whose persons and interests, the image of our American diversity, must have a claim on our attention and action.

"Dialogue on Diversity", noted its President, Ma. Cristina Caballero, "celebrates the achievements of young women entrepreneurs, in two enterprises rocketing ahead in prestige, quality, and revenues." Cristina Mossi, recently acquiring ownership of Devis, a software design firm that is now much in the ascendant under her driving leadership; and Evelyn Brooks, jewelry designer of rare talent, received the Young Entrepreneur Awards, while the Entrepreneurial Mentorship Award was conferred on the resourceful Charlie Partridge, a supplier diversity executive with Pepco Holdings, Inc., who has for long combined her purchasing functions with active mentoring of the small, often struggling, entrepreneurs she encounters. Recognition of the honorees was part of the midday session, in which Ms. Harriet Fulbright, head of the J. William and Harriet Fulbright Center and a much valued friend of Dialogue on Diversity, joined Ms. Caballero of the Dialogue, who presented the awards. Ms. Fulbright is a former Chair of the President's Committee on Arts and Humanities, and spouse of the late Senator J. William Fulbright.

Rep. Raul Grijalva, building on some of the themes expressed in the introductory overview, offered a persuasive vision of diversity in America society which conceives economic activity and our social classes and income levels as "part and parcel" of a dynamic that includes an ongoing stream of immigration as part of an integral structure, without which none of the other parts can be rightly accounted for and which is a necessary feature in the functioning of the national economy. Policy measures which view the inflows of migrants as accidental, extraneous interferences with a self satisfied native polity, both misread the logic of American society and view any provision touching migrants as a begrudged concession rather than as a recognition of the integral character of their presence on the national scene.

The many-talented Yvette Mouton, representing Conference sponsor AT&T, led off the marketing- supplier diversity session, once again this year a central Conference focus, dealing with the nuts and bolts of entry into the diverse supply chains of large private-sector and governmental purchasing entities. Also speaking were the magisterial Jonice Adams of the Washington area Minority Supplier Development Council, Mauricio Vera, Chair of the federal Inter-Agency OSDBU Council, Charlie Partridge of Pepco purchasing, Michael Veve, experienced Washington attorney, on the crucial step of Certification, and finally Susan Au Allen, head of the U.S. Pan-Asian American Chamber of Commerce, on international aspects of small enterprise marketing.

In examining still another facet of the near pervasive influence of modern IT and the Internet in the lives of citizens, and of businesses owners in particular, a privacy roundtable had opened the Conference, with Mamie Kresses of the FTC, and Debra Berlyn of Consumer Privacy Solutions, together with Andrew Bloom, whose encyclopedic grasp of the privacy issue completed the panel, all fixing their focus on the challenges and the obligations resting on owners of small business enterprises in the face of multifarious privacy threats.

The featured speaker for the Conference's midday session was C. Lincoln Hoewing Verizon's Vice President for Internet Technology and Policy, Mr. Hoewing outlined in a systematic but concise way the current information technology landscape, stressing that the internet is not, as sometime is asserted, a flagging, effete technology, a spent force in

economic society. It is in fact just beginning its transformative work: with the penetration of high speed internet -- and high speed means at this juncture unheard-of transmission velocity, information volume, and efficiency. The legion of uses of broadband not yet exploited are, among others: energy saving, with "smart grids" for electrical power distribution, health care technology, with the promise of a functioning facility for "telemedicine", and much more.

Information technology was again the theme of a later conversation between Cristina Mossi, one of the Awards honorees, and the remarkable Joycelyn Tate, Telecommunications Advisor to the Black Women's Roundtable, who laid out a broad view of the place of the new technologies in the small business setting. These technical possibilities are the "On Ramp" for women setting out in the entrepreneurial race; they are the equalizer speeding functions that can now be dealt with as easily and swiftly as they might be by larger firms.

In addition to Ana Harvey, the top SBA executive charged with designing services for women business owners, the very welcome S.B.A. representation on the conference agenda included Stuart Shalloway on HUBZones, Melissa Fischer on loan guaranties, and Andrea Giles on micro-finance. Alejandra Castillo, second in command at the Minority Business Development Agency, described the work of that agency, outlining the panoply of consulting and active referral services available to inquiring minority entrepreneurs. Joseph Donadoni of Citibank set forth in detail the protocol of considerations his bank reviews in extending credit, emphasizing that while sound economic basics must be in place, businesses are now obtaining loans from his and similar institutions. Kevin Kelly held forth on small and micro-enterprise and on the work of his Enterprise Development Group as mentors and lending intermediaries for many such entities, while Cindy Hounsell on lifetime financial planning -- an often sadly neglected art -- and Christina Diaz-Malone of Freddie Mac rounded out the panel.

Sponsors for the 2010 Conference were venerable members of Dialogue on Diversity's Corporate family, AT&T and Southwest Airlines.

About Dialogue on Diversity: Founded in 1991, Dialogue on Diversity is a international network of women entrepreneurs, actively promoting constructive dialogue among Latino and other ethnic and cultural communities, with especial emphasis on their economic viability through entrepreneurship. America's minority entrepreneurs are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. economy. They promise to be the backbone of American economic strength in the 21st Century. Dialogue on Diversity's annual Entrepreneurship programs both celebrate and advance that promise.

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