

Mid-career Re-Invention Is Possible in Pittsburgh



A Model for Creating an Even Better Pittsburgh Region for All

by PHIL CYNAR on JANUARY 13, 2012 · [LEAVE A COMMENT](#) · in ALLEGHENY CONFERENCE, DIVERSITY, GREATER PITTSBURGH CHAMBER, QUALITY OF LIFE

On Monday, the United States will honor the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with a federal holiday, as it officially has done - across all 50 states - each January since 2000. But here in the Pittsburgh region, the [African American Chamber of Commerce of Western Pennsylvania](#) celebrates Dr. King's vision, conviction and legacy related to non-racial discrimination every day.

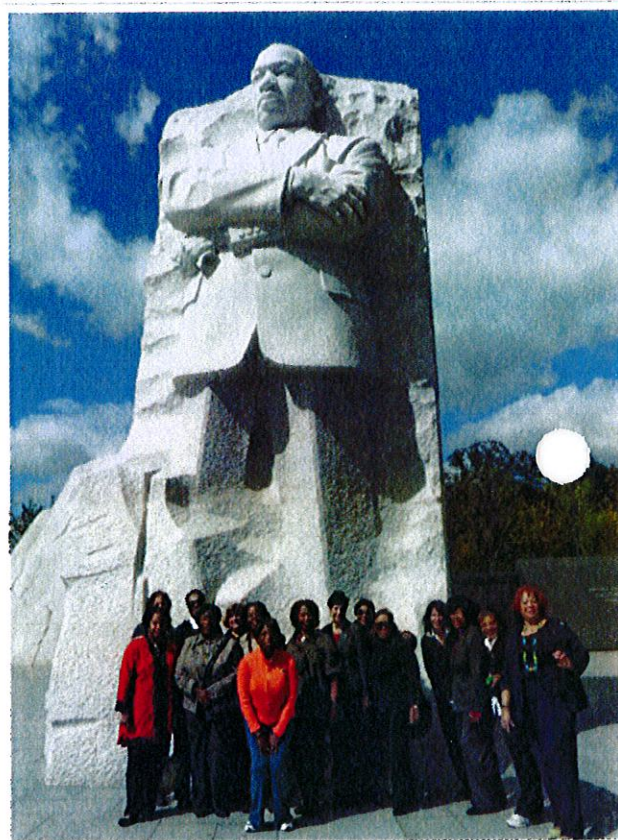
"It is wonderful that we have an official day set aside on which the nation honors Dr. King, but we should all strive to make living up to his ideals a part of our daily practice. Dr. King is an exceptional model," said African American Chamber President and CEO Doris Carson Williams. The second-largest minority chamber in the country, the African American Chamber of Commerce of Western Pennsylvania - through the joint efforts of its leadership and members - is doing just that: leading by example and communicating the value of developing strong relationships within the region's business and professional community.

"Our work to achieve parity in business opportunities for African American business owners and professionals is underpinned by a simple notion: treat each other with dignity and respect. Although simple, this is a cornerstone to increasing diversity in our Pittsburgh region and the pathway to strengthening and growing all of the places that are home to Pittsburghers and western Pennsylvanians.

"There have been significant improvements in the region, but we would applaud moving from good to great," she said. To achieve this, the region must be a place where African Americans have full participation in the public and private sectors and where young African American professionals and other skilled minority talent have real opportunities. "

Strides have been made toward expanding opportunities for the African American business and professional community. Carson Williams pointed to the Chamber's work to establish a [Business Institute](#) in 2004 with the assistance of Carnegie Mellon University President Dr. Jared Cohon. Since that time, this Institute has given more than 3,500 small business owners and professionals the opportunity to participate in an annual program designed to strengthen business acumen in the areas of marketing and communications, legal, finance and accounting, and social media/information technology.

"In 2012 I hope all of the region's business and community leaders will join me in looking to ourselves and our organizations to identify steps we can each take to raise the bar for everyone in the Pittsburgh region," said Carson Williams.



Doris Carson Williams (in orange sweater) and a group of African American Chamber of Commerce of Western Pennsylvania members visited the White House and the Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial in fall 2011 (Photo courtesy AACCWP.)