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## STAR TRIBUNE LETTER PUBLISHED JUNE 16, 2010:

### **Racial disparities**

*Star Tribune* stories highlight challenges

I want to thank *Star Tribune* reporter Molly Young for elevating the recent findings of the Economic Policy Institute's report "Uneven Pain" ("Twin Cities has widest jobless gap by race," June 10), as well as *Star Tribune* blogger Gary Cunningham for his post on the recent Minneapolis killing ("Murder on Lake Calhoun," June 10).

According to the institute's report, our region's racial disparities in unemployment are glaring and nation-leading. Other studies by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, the Itasca Project and the Brookings Institution have shown that racial disparities in our region are a threat to our long-term survival as a state and must not be a permanent feature of our public life.

Thankfully, proactive solutions that tackle the roots of disparities are moving. Cunningham pointed out 2010 legislative session victories with the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Through negotiation, MnDOT agreed to invest \$6 million in federal road construction to reduce disparities facing scores of women workers and workers of color.

In 2009 that same coalition worked with state lawmakers to commit \$2.5 million of our public investment to explicitly prepare thousands of women and people of color for energy and weatherization jobs. We profiled this legislation in the Organizing Apprenticeship Project's *4th Annual Minnesota Legislative Report Card on Racial Equity*, a multi-issue and multiracial assessment of state lawmakers' commitment to solutions that close racial disparities.

Achieving racial equity in Minnesota is possible when community leaders and decisionmakers work together and integrate equity as a core element of decisionmaking. It also prevents long-term harm to all Minnesotans.

Jermaine Toney

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### OAP Mission:

*To advance a community-based movement to achieve racial, cultural, social and economic justice across Minnesota*