

February 5, 2010

By Post Staff

Census Counting On Clergy

The importance of responding to the 2010 United States Census was the main goal of a faith-based prayer breakfast sponsored last week by OCCUR.

Reverend Arnold Townsend of Rhema Word-Moriah Christian Fellowship church in San Francisco and Berkeley said that ministers are uniquely suited to do outreach for the upcoming census count because “Preachers take their own census every Sunday morning and they always know who’s there and who’s missing. We as a community can’t afford to be missing this year.”

“We need to understand the importance of the census” said David Glover, Executive Director of OCCUR. “There was a time when there was a deliberate effort not to count black people. This census is about empowering people and their communities’.

Glover told pastors that people being accurately counted in the census could add up to \$1,500 a person to cities.

He said past census numbers for the Black community have been undercounted “due to black mistrust of government and census takers along with unstable home lives and some failing to realize the importance of the census.”

Lia Bolden, a senior partner specialist with the US Census Bureau said, “In the nation, black males between the ages of 18 and 25 are the most undercounted group in the country.”

“The youth 18 and older, must be counted,” said Bishop J.E. Watkins of the Jack London Square Chapel of the Church of God in Christ, who has a ministry that targets black youth. The Reverend Arnold Townsend of the Rhema-Moriah used the example of New Orleans to illustrate the importance of the census, “New Orleans was in bad shape before Hurricane Katrina, and because they weren’t getting the federal resources they needed, due to the undercounting of blacks in that area.” He continued, “Hurricane Katrina was devastating to black people, because, as a result, blacks were scattered all over. This deprived the city of those resources that the city needed.” He also said it’s up to faith leaders to realize their importance as it relates to the census and the black community. Townsend stressed the importance of addressing faith leaders due to their extensive influence and leadership. OCCUR and the US Census will facilitate outreach events and host a help desk from March 19 thru April 19 at the Eastmont Computing Center at 6948 Foothill Blvd. in Oakland.