NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
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July 9, 2010

Mr. Tony Hayward
Group Chief Executive
British Petroleum
International Headquarters
1 St. James's Square
London, SW1Y 4PD
United Kingdom

Dear Mr. Hayward:

On behalf of the NAACP, our nation's oldest and largest grassroots-based civil and human rights organization with an active presence in over 1,200 membership units, particularly those in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas, representing thousands of persons who have been affected by this oil drilling disaster, I urgently request a meeting with you to ensure all communities, including communities of color along the Gulf Coast, are fully restored and receive needed support and assistance from BP.

For the past several weeks, NAACP national staff members have been on the ground in the affected states. Recently, I personally visited, and among other activities, participated in a fly-over to view the oil spill disaster and the impact on the shorelines of Mississippi and Louisiana. Moreover, I met with members of the African American, Vietnamese and Native American communities – including residents, business owners, elected officials, community based organizations, faith leaders, and others. I witnessed their anger, fear, hopelessness and frustration.

I emerged from that visit dismayed and outraged by what I heard and saw:

- A gentleman named Darien gave testimony at a community meeting with tears in his eyes as he clutched the lease he signed in December for the shop he is on the verge of losing, because he can't afford the tripled prices for crabs.
- Chief Dardar of the Houma Nation spoke of the defilement of the land which defines the culture of the Houma nation.

- Byron, an African American fisherman in Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana, showed one of my staff members his docked boats and described his loss of livelihood which supports his family.
- Organizations representing Vietnamese fishermen who have been fishing the waters off the coast of Mississippi describe language access issues and how these barriers have made Vietnamese families vulnerable to predatory scams and also impeded their access to the claims process.

Throughout my visit, the following key issues emerged:

- Workers of color tend to be assigned the most physically difficult, lowest paying jobs, with the most significant exposure to toxins, while white workers tend to be in supervisory, less strenuous positions.

- Contractors of color are not receiving equal consideration for opportunities to participate in mitigation efforts.

- Local residents who have lost their livelihoods due to the oil spill are not being hired on to work crews. Instead, contractors engaged by BP to staff clean-up crews are busing in workers from out of state.

- Workers and residents who live on the coast have reported irritated eyes, nausea, problems breathing, and headaches.

- Cleanup workers are not being provided with protective clothing and masks, resulting in hospitalizations.

- People who are compelled to apply for cleanup work in order to feed their families -- due to inadequacies of the claim process -- are forced to sign documents that prohibit discussion of working conditions and forfeit legal redress for lost livelihoods.

- Community leaders are being denied access to information on the oil spill, particularly with respect to projections and plans are for mitigation.

- Community organizations offering a range of support services to families suffering from this disaster are financially strapped -- impeding their ability fully to address the magnitude of the problem.

We understand and appreciate that BP has been engaged in numerous efforts to address the oil spill and its impact on communities – including the concerns shared with me. But we urge BP to take further steps, including the following actions:

1. Establish monitoring mechanisms and take remedial action to ensure that workers of color are not relegated to arduous tasks and low-paid positions.

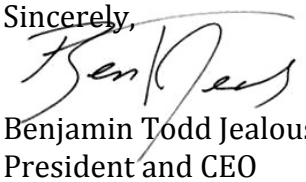
2. Guarantee that communities of color are awarded their fair share of mitigation contracts.

3. Provide financial support to community based organizations that are assisting distressed families.

I trust we will be able to meet in the very near future to discuss these and other recommendations, as well as to discuss how we can work together to make whole the families and communities that have been devastated by this tragedy.

I am looking forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



Benjamin Todd Jealous
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NAACP