

Thursday, October 1, 2009



Dear Members, Corporate Partners, and Allies:

On behalf of myself and the board of directors, welcome to National Black Deaf Advocates, Inc.!

The first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is rapidly drawing to a close. This is an opportune time for NBDA and its 33 chapters to review, recommit, and redesign our advocacy efforts in support of our organizational mission statement. This calls for ethical strategic leadership, in addition to organizational management that is positive, productive, and professional. I will be working with our executive officers – in collaboration with the board of directors – to implement the following objectives over the next two years:

- Work with inactive Chapters toward becoming active again, provide support to Chapters who are struggling to remain active, and make special efforts to recruit new Chapters;
- Empower Chapters to promote leadership development for Black Deaf youth and college students;
- Aid chapters in obtaining sponsors and seeking grants to support current programs as well as develop new ones;
- Increase public awareness of BDA/NBDA;
- Create partnerships with other organizations to enhance educational and economic opportunities for members;
- Keep the lines of communication open between NBDA members and the Board of Directors;
- Develop coalitions of the willing to advocate social equality for NBDA members

Black deaf and hard of hearing people, along with other cultural and linguistic minority groups, are the beneficiaries of the gains achieved during the Civil Rights Movement and from legislative victories such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and other social policies that impact our daily access to educational, social, and political inclusion in American society. Despite these gains, we continue to experience gross deficits in access to education, economic parity, and social justice; second-class citizenship in terms of employment opportunities, fair housing, and sustainable relationships with banking institutions; and pervasive threats to our right to define ourselves – by ourselves and for ourselves – in a way that is empowering and culturally affirmative. National Black Deaf Advocates, Inc. continues to be a needed and cherished resource to assist our members, corporate partners, and allies with advocating with and on behalf of Black deaf and hard of hearing people.

If you are aware of an advocacy issue that is in need of support from your national officers and board of directors, please send an e-mail to our secretary, Sharon White: [secretary@nbda.org](mailto:secretary@nbda.org). She will follow up within 48 hours by directing your concerns to the appropriate person. The charge to advocate with and on behalf of Black deaf and hard of hearing people is not solely for NBDA's officers and board of directors. The responsibility belongs to everyone: Youth Empowerment Summit participants; Collegiate Black Deaf Student Leadership Institute alumni;

past and present Miss Black Deaf America Queens; our beloved Senior Citizens; interpreters and transliterators of color; and NBDA partners and allies.

Please join me in this good work. Together, we can ensure that NBDA achieves its mandate to “promote the leadership development, economic and educational opportunities, social equality, and to safeguard the general health and welfare of Black deaf and hard of hearing people.

I look forward to the beginning of a positive, productive, and professional working relationship with you and will depend on your support to serve this organization to the best of my abilities!

Sincerely,

Ernest E. Garrett III  
President, National Black Deaf Advocates, Inc.