



## **The Empowerment Experiment**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of The Empowerment Experiment Foundation (EEF) is the dedicated study and facilitation of economic development in underserved minority communities via self-help economics/conscious consumerism, financial literacy, targeted entrepreneurship and business diversity and inclusion.

The current economic crisis has impacted the lives of many Americans; however, the Black community suffers at heightened and disproportionate levels. EEF aims to assist under-served Black families, businesses and communities by helping and inspiring them to 1) develop and practice basic and necessary business and financial skills, and 2) learn and access the financial tools, products and economic strategies to advance themselves both economically and socially.

The under-discussed and under-studied issue of economic and retail leakage in the Black community fosters a racially divided economy where Black consumers are unable to economically sustain their struggling neighborhoods with their close to one trillion dollars in buying power, and Black businesses are not able to attract and sustain consumer demand or corporate and government contracts. In addition, the racial wealth gap widens due to the lack of financial security, solidarity, acumen, and awareness of and access to the financial empowerment tools, strategies and products. These avoidable and solvable economic and financial disparities and circumstances result in disproportionate and worsening poverty, unemployment, under-funded school systems, depleted tax-bases, crime, racial strife, and a lack of communal pride and local role models for at-risk youth. These issues and problems hurt the American economy and damage race relations.

We believe the most viable way to drive this progression toward a more racially inclusive economy and empower the Black community is to teach financial literacy; study, promote and facilitate self-help economics; and drive more strategic minority entrepreneurship and supplier diversity.

## **BACKGROUND**

EEF is the offspring of the highly publicized, historic social initiative, The Empowerment Experiment (EE). During calendar year 2009, the Anderson family made a personal pledge to find and support Black businesses. It was called The Empowerment Experiment. For an entire year, they lived off Black businesses and professionals, and bought only Black-made products. The Andersons took this stand publicly in love and support of their community. EE dominated headlines, generating more national media coverage of business and economic disparities and the social crises that result in the black community, than any other figure, program or movement in history. The Anderson family's journey also resulted in a landmark Kellogg study and Maggie Anderson's critically acclaimed book, "Our Black Year". *Publisher's Weekly* said of her call to action to support black-owned businesses and black professionals... "A dynamite subject!" And *Library Journal* proclaimed, EE, the Kellogg study and Maggie's book "exposed the disproportionate difficulty that the African American community faces in successfully starting, growing, and maintaining viable businesses and inspired a new national dialogue about economic empowerment in the Black community." The experiment and resultant book generates phenomenal media coverage, touches millions, and injects the issue and impact of economic and retail leakage and the racial wealth gap into the national dialogue. Since the historic experiment, Maggie Anderson, a sought after speaker, uses this platform to not only share the disparities plaguing Black businesses and neighborhoods, but to teach possibilities and inspire solutions. Due to EE, and the movement Maggie Anderson inspires, EEF is now poised to make tangible impacts on underserved minority communities, while improving the national economy and race relations in general.

## **RESEARCH**

In partnership with Northwestern University's Kellogg Graduate School of Management's Levy Entrepreneurship Center, EEF conducted a scientific research study based on the Anderson's yearlong experiment. The study sought to prove that supporting Black businesses does in fact lead to improved quality of life in underserved Black communities -- while measuring the economic impact of self-help economics/conscious consumerism. Northwestern's Research Department performed research, statistical modeling, and regression analyses to predict the economic impact of self-help economics on an exponentially larger scale. There are millions of Black middle class families -- less directly impacted by the health, crime, education and economic crises that plague many economically deprived minority communities -- who have the ability and desire to do more to support the economic growth in the Black community. The Kellogg study proved that if they were to incrementally increase their spending with Black businesses and professionals (as well as the mainstream entities that partner with them) by merely 7%, close to one million American jobs could be created. The findings of this study have been disseminated nationally via a series of forums facilitated by the highly successful and publicized EEF speaking and book tours ("Our Black Year", which chronicles the Anderson's yearlong journey was co-authored by Pulitzer Prize winning research journalist, Ted Gregory, of the *Chicago Tribune*). Consumers and corporations alike are asking for a forum and program to drive, document, study and track that incremental spend Kellogg proved is needed to create the million jobs. Now, EEF wants to create the research, programming, curricula and events that could lead to those needed jobs.

## **UPCOMING PROJECTS**

- **Next Phase of Data Collection and Research** - EEF will continue to conduct research on the potency of self-help economics in struggling urban communities and evaluate associated corporate sponsorship, partnering, diversity programming, as well as public policies, programs and projects. On an ongoing basis, EEF will arrive at and support creative, viable, intellectually sound, politically and commercially relevant solutions and insights that can be immediately activated by minority businesses, professionals, and the people, groups and businesses who want to support them.

Research data will be gathered during the book/speaking tours and by information deposited into our website database (see “The Empowerment Tour and Campaign” description below). The aforesaid research will be primary and revolutionary in nature. Therefore, it must be gathered directly from consumers, business owners and corporations. We aim to demonstrate the value and power of conscious consumerism and self-help economics and financial literacy on countering social crises, closing the racial wealth gap, and creating a more inclusive economy and job growth. We want to further the statistical modeling that Kellogg started with the Anderson case study, on a broader scale and across several markets, and with real-life data.

Via the tours, we will conduct surveys to gather research from consumers, corporations and business owners about conscious consumerism, supplier diversity, financial literacy and minority entrepreneurship. These events will require organization, promotion and marketing, and other expenses related to putting events on (e.g., renting space, food and beverages costs, and paying for the event speakers). Furthermore, EEF require funding to maintain administrative and research staff, finance office supplies and support the maintenance of computers and other technology.

- **The Empowerment Tour and Campaign** - In 2015, EEF will coordinate and facilitate the highly anticipated “Closing the Racial Wealth Gap” Empowerment Tour (“Empowerment Tour”) in twenty (20) cities across America. The Empowerment Tour and the Town Halls are an expansion and evolution of Maggie Anderson’s lecture circuit and book tour that has touched served more than 50,000+ minority consumers since the release of her book in 2012. The mission of the Empowerment Tour and Campaign is to change the economic consciousness of minority consumers and businesses, and put in place actionable behaviors and strategies to create, sustain and grow wealth, businesses and legacies. The tour has three stated goals: 1) creating the largest contemporary accumulation of home-grown African American wealth; 2) driving unrivaled minority business growth and supplier diversity; and 3) creating jobs and role models in our underserved neighborhoods with quality minority-owned businesses and the mainstream partners that enable them. EEF is behind this because when minority communities and businesses are stronger, America is stronger.

The Empowerment Tour launches from historic Birmingham, Alabama on February 16, 2015.

- **The Empowerment Planning Guide/ Financial Literacy Curricula** - The Empowerment Tour will provide needed financial information to underserved African-American communities that have been disproportionately impacted by a lack of exposure to the financial, investment, and estate planning strategies that lead to community empowerment in all ethnic groups. Tour attendees receive an “Empowerment Planning Guide”. It is a what-to-do, how-to, and where-to-go, which includes a list of professionals, organizations, businesses, as well as local members of our empowerment team they can engage. It also includes financial literacy basics, strategies, products and contact info for local financial professionals who can help them employ them. Leveraging Maggie’s platform, and her vast and influential network local, regional, and national community, professional, civic, faith, media, university/academic and corporate partners, the Empowerment Tour’s outreach programs are also designed to further develop, implement, disseminate a comprehensive financial literacy curriculum, along with other local, national, and Internet- and mobile-based economic empowerment resources...as we will use data and funding collected via the tour to augment the research, curricula, and resources.
- **Maggie’s List** – Maggie Anderson, EEF’s Founder, has an inimitable story and is most equipped and proficient at delivering inspiration and intelligence that raise consciousness and motivate action. But those she inspires need a reliable and innovative resource to help them do it after I am gone. There are directories, but they are NOT 1) representative of the diversity of minority-owned businesses; 2) marketed properly or well-known; 3) able to connect consumers to minority professionals, agents, franchisees associated with mainstream brands, or vendors with products on the shelves of mass retailers; 4) focused on showcasing top quality businesses; or 5) corporate friendly. Maggie's List addresses the needs of conscious consumers, committed corporate partners, and the unsung quality business owners and professionals. And it will be a powerful tool in growing this movement. Maggie's List will be highly marketed and promoted, and will track and showcase the incremental spend empowering the community and identify where the spend is going. It will be promoted and grown via The Empowerment Tour. Maggie's List will take money to develop, maintain and market. EEF owns the [www.MaggiesList.com](http://www.MaggiesList.com) domain and is raising money for Maggie’s List.
- **EEF Website Renovations/ Technology** - In order to accommodate increasing participation in The Empowerment Tour and the heightened demand for Maggie’s List, our events, research, Empowerment Planning Guide, we need to purchase technology and enhance our now antiquated website. With adequate capital we intend to develop an interactive database and user-interface for registrants (our data points) to manage their empowerment accounts (pledges and progress). We want to track and showcase progress toward our business and job growth goals.
- **Public Policy Initiatives** - Building on the results and notoriety of EE, we are developing a national agenda to economically empower the Black community and close the racial wealth gap. The agenda, driven by EEF’s ongoing programming, partnering and research, will be shaped in collaboration with legislators, business leaders, professional and civic groups that have been at the forefront of introducing

entrepreneurship and economic development legislation and advocacy programs. Most of Maggie Anderson's empowerment research and ideas are outlined in her essay for the 2014 *State of Black America* published by the National Urban League. The acclaimed essay outlines research, policies and partnerships that could hasten and improve EEF's economic empowerment mission and projects. EEF seeks support and input from brands and corporations with commitments to financial and economic empowerment, and business diversity and inclusion.

For more information about The Empowerment Experiment Foundation, please submit the Contact Form below or write to us at:

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