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Honig: Hold Obama Accountable on Minority Ownership

David Honig

Journal-isms asked **David Honig**, president and executive director of the Minority Media and Telecommunications Council, which works for minority ownership of media properties, for his reaction to [last week's report by the firm CB Insights that, among other findings, blacks were 11 percent of the population but 1 percent of the founders](#) of private, early-stage Internet companies that raised their first round of institutional venture capital funding in the first six months of 2010.

He wrote back:

"Anyone who reads the CB Insights report, and has a conscience, will be shocked.

"Only 1% of funded Internet start-ups are owned by African Americans? Is this 2010 or 1910?

"The CB Insights report — and [the San Jose Mercury News' February expose of African American and Latino exclusion from employment in high tech](#), are a chronicle of economic inefficiency on a massive scale. In the nation's fastest growing industry, representing a tenth of the economy, 30% of the nation's people are unable to fully express their inherent technical, creative, managerial and entrepreneurial talents. Why are we wasting all those brains, all that initiative, that insight, that vision?

"It's no wonder America lags so far behind most of the developed world in science, in math, in manufacturing, in economic growth, in broadband penetration and in broadband adoption.

"This industry had its birth after the 1964 Civil Rights Act, yet it is just as exclusionary as newspapers were in the 1930s, radio was in the 1940s, and television was in the 1950s. The malignancy and persistence of racial discrimination, as well as the fast-growing racial wealth gap which Pew now places at 14:1, are heralding our 25th consecutive generation of second-class citizenship.

"And so far no one's published a map giving directions to the Promised Land. The FCC has no plan to close the digital divide — NONE. Instead, the FCC is obsessively focused on an issue that's of secondary impact and importance — net neutrality. Much of net neutrality is worthy, but some of it is downright anti-minority and none of it is nearly as critical as reaching universal broadband adoption and closing the racial digital divide among consumers, high tech workers, entrepreneurs and owners. How un-engaged is the FCC? As MMTC recently documented, the FCC hasn't even brought an EEO case in

over a year — the first time that has happened since 1968, when there was no FCC EEO rule at all. We're still waiting on the FCC to designate a compliance officer to enforce its rule against racial discrimination in broadcast advertising — which it adopted unanimously in 2007 after 23 years of litigation. And the FCC is now over seven months late in issuing its congressionally mandated 2009 triennial report on what's being done to knock down the market entry barriers facing minorities and women.

"As has always been the case, this is a question of priorities. Let's not assume that just because this administration won the votes of most people of color, it will be any more assertive than any other administration in addressing, head on, The American Dilemma.

"Think of how strictly we would have held **President McCain** accountable. Unless we're hypocrites, we now have to hold **President Obama** just as accountable. Fortunately he understands this very well — after all, he was the first civil rights lawyer to be elected President since **John Quincy Adams**. And he empathizes with us. He can fix it! And he will fix it if, as **Franklin Roosevelt** told **A. Philip Randolph**, we 'make him do it.' "