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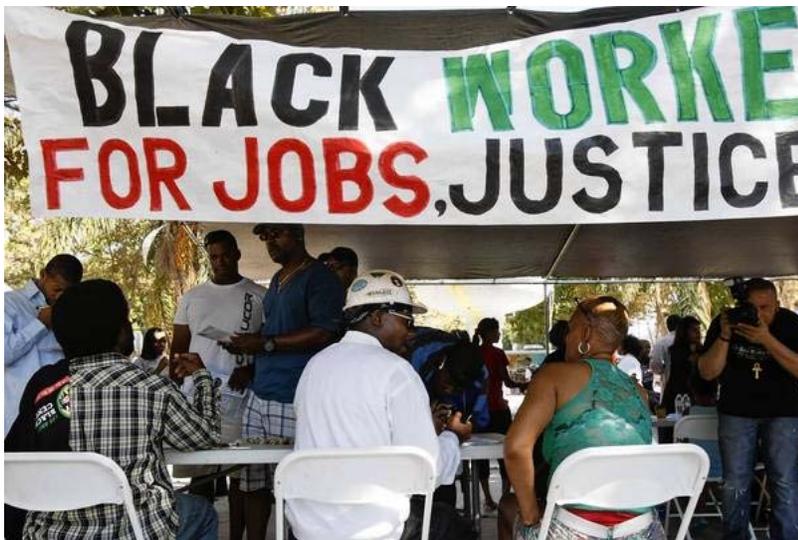
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Workers hoping to build Crenshaw Line rally in Leimert Park

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas tells the Ready to Work Rally that Metro must hire from the depressed area along the line. For Andre Hollins, who is black, finding work has been difficult.

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The Ready to Work Rally on Saturday in Leimert Park highlighted the need for jobs for minority workers. Many are applying for work building the 8.5-mile Crenshaw rail line. (Gary Friedman, Los Angeles Times / September 7, 2013)

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Employers have negative view of Gen Y workers, study finds

By Kurt Streeter
September 7, 2013 | 8:08 p.m.

For Andre Hollins, finding good work, the kind of job that can support his young family, is a tenuous proposition. "It's like digging yourself out of a grave," says the 29-year-old African American, who hopes to make a career in construction. "It just feels like people who do the hiring look at me and where I've been in life and there's a lot for me to overcome."

Which is why Hollins found himself on Saturday at a rally for would-be construction workers in Leimert Park. Dubbed the Ready to Work Rally, the event focused on new jobs expected to come with construction of the \$2-billion rail line along economically troubled Crenshaw Boulevard, expected to break ground next year. A particular emphasis was employment for black workers, long underrepresented in the building trades and unions.

At the event, L.A. County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas reminded a crowd of about 300 that the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and its contractors have agreed on hiring mandates meant to bring well-paying work to neighborhoods like the predominantly black and Latino ones straddling what will eventually be an 8.5-mile line connecting the Expo Line and the Green Line near LAX.

Under the agreement, 40% of work hours on the railway must be performed by employees from economically depressed areas. There are also special provisions for trainees and so-called "disadvantaged" workers — a group that includes veterans, the homeless and applicants with criminal records.

"This is economic justice in real time," said Ridley-Thomas, who serves on Metro's board and was one of the most forceful proponents of the agreement. He promised to closely monitor hiring and received a round of applause after announcing that if mandates weren't met he would look to

"penalize" contractors or "declare them in breach of contract."

Hollins listened to the supervisor while standing in a crowd of mostly black men looking for work in a community where the unemployment rate is roughly twice the national average.



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A father of twin 3-year-old boys, Hollins admitted to having struggled in the past, spending several months behind bars for robbery when he was a teen. Still, it's not uncommon for contractors to have criminal records, he's quick to note, and he's been on a straight path for years — holding a warehouse job, learning construction skills, even volunteering at UCLA's Los Angeles Black Worker Center, which sponsored the rally.

Hollins has been steadily showing up at construction sites for the last three years, only to be consistently turned away until two weeks ago, when he was hired for a temporary position that pays about \$12 an hour. Now he hopes to help build the Crenshaw line — potentially five years of employment at a union wage.

"My story is like a lot of the people out here today," he said, echoing a sentiment widely held at the rally: Racial bias adds an extra burden to the already difficult task of finding a job. "I show up and even though I'm trained, a lot of the time it feels like they are looking for ways not to hire me.... I'll do anything for a job to provide for my family, and that's the point of today. We're here to show the people doing the hiring that we're out here, ready to go to work."

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Lorenzo Mutia at 7:34 AM September 09, 2013

You can tell that the commenters who make the assumption that these workers are less than skilled or are "worried" about the quality of the work are just plain racist or just want to get everyone else angry. You cannot take those people seriously, humans can be bad but most of the time, we're actually kind and caring of one another when the stuff gets down.

Amendment I at 6:50 AM September 09, 2013

What are your skills? None, I don't need no stinkin' skills.
The work hours are from 9-5. What, you want me to come in at 9 and work to 5!
You'll be paid 15 dollars per hour to start. I want 45 dollars per hour.
But you have no skills. You're racist.
Reverend Sharpton to the rescue.

Clarabella at 9:00 PM September 08, 2013

The same people on this post who are making snide and ugly remarks about the blacks or Latinos who are hoping for one of these construction jobs? They are the same miserable people who go on and on and on about minorities not wanting to work; about minorities who want "something for nothing". And here they are, ready and eager to work, and all you petty, pathetic people can do is mock them. Why don't you just admit that you just hate them and would prefer that all these construction jobs go to your white brethren?

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