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Black self-employment agenda is long overdue

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Ask Norman Bond what is critical for developing the mindset of a successful entrepreneur in the black community and his answer is simple: An appreciation for the value of failure.

"The difference in our community when we fail is not enough of us will take another attempt," said Bond, national spokesman for Opportunities Industrialization Centers' new Entrepreneurial Mindset Initiative.

Last month OIC board members came to Canaan Baptist Church in New Castle to announce a \$100 million endowment campaign to develop a self-help approach to the depression-era problem of

joblessness in the black community.

National unemployment is 9.1 percent, but 16.2 percent of African-Americans are jobless. The National Urban League has taken on this issue with urgency. And members of the Congressional Black Caucus are touring the country sounding the alarm about high unemployment in urban communities.

But the Philadelphia-based OIC has more than 40 years of credibility in repurposing the unemployment discussion to viable solutions like the mindset initiative. Its national network of employment and jobs training programs in 22 states has helped over 2.5 million disadvantaged and under-skilled Americans find

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work.

OIC's founder, the late Rev. Leon Sullivan, was intentional about helping "the least of these" get qualified for work. So is Herman Taylor, OIC's current chairman. But Taylor is frank about 2011's employment realities and the best chances for survival.

"For too long, too many African Americans have been oriented to stand on the sidelines while other Americans grow wealthy. Too many black boys and girls grow up without considering the possibility of owning their own."

To change this mindset blacks have to transition from thinking like a workforce. To help make this transition OIC plans:

» **Tactical support.** Every Thursday at 9 p.m. a national conference call spotlights interviews with successful and budding entrepreneurs, sharing lessons learned from turning an idea into a profit-maker, as well as rebounding from business failures. (712) 432-0900, use the code: 306704#

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