

Yolanda Jones: Setting the Standard for AA Business from The Community

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (9/22)- On August 23, NBA Legend Lebron James commended Yolanda Jones for her hard work and dedication on his [Instagram](#) page, which has 23 million followers. Jones won the social media endorsement through James' recent contest, the #PitchLeBronContest, in which small-business owners submitted 23-second videos making their case for why they deserve a social media shout out. The contest was a promotional lead up to the debut of the new CNBC prime-time show "Cleveland Hustles," which is executive produced by James and premieres on Wednesday. The eight-episode series will feature local Ohio entrepreneurs who compete to win the support of a team of investors as they open up a storefront in an underserved neighborhood in Cleveland. When asked how did you react when you learned that Lebron James had endorsed YCAT, Inc.? Yolanda Jones said, "I was totally shocked. Breathless!!"

Yolanda Jones is the owner of Yolanda's Construction Administration & Traffic Control (YCAT-C), which provides flagging and signage services to large construction projects.

According to her website, "Yolanda's Construction Administration & Traffic Control (YCAT) is an African-American woman-owned business that offers a range of administrative and traffic control services to support public and private sector clients on engineering-construction projects-CAT staff represents extensive experience with the transportation industry, including rail transit and highway/roadway projects, as well as other heavy civil projects. We are experienced in working with construction teams onsite, and interfacing with diverse communities to support high-profile infrastructure projects in the Bay Area. We are familiar with local agencies and the local contracting and consultant community

When asked about the effects of LaBron's endorsement, Jones stated she received more calls and is excited about the new business opportunities. Job development is key and now we may be able to save one life if not two because of his endorsement. It is a start.

New Development Projects have drastically changed the nature of the neighborhoods in The Bayview. Jones understand and sees it firsthand that especially within the African -American community. African Americans are being priced out of the city, and the population of African Americans will decrease even more...." Forbes magazine noted that from 1970 to 2010, the African-American population of San Francisco decreased 50%, down to less than 49,000. The dwindling of the African-American population has happened for a variety of reasons: the increasing cost of living, the destruction of primarily-African American areas for urban renewal projects, redlining, and unusually high crime rates in the city's African-American neighborhoods.

When Jones was asked, with the future infrastructure and public transportation projects connecting the Bayview-Hunters' Point to the rest of the city and the Bay Area, what changes do you see for the neighborhood in the near future? Jones noted, "The African American community will continue to drop drastically..." Forbes magazine came to a similar conclusion stating, the decline of the African-American population continues today. The data shows that the African-American population declined by over 2,000 people each year, a loss of about 5% of the African-American population each year. Furthermore, The rate of decline in the 2010s is even more striking when we look only at people between the ages of 22 to 49, the period in life when adults are most likely to move for reasons other than schooling. For this particular age group, the African-American population showed an annual decrease of about 10%. With skyrocketing rents and a lack of thriving African-American neighborhoods, San Francisco is no longer attracting African-Americans to the city. If current trends continue, a place that was once a center of African-American life will see that population vanish.

We asked Mrs. Jones, what would you tell local residents about your work and that of YCAT?

Yolanda Jones stated, "I am only one business and lifelong resident fighting to hire within the

community. If you know of construction projects coming to SF or Bayview think of my firm make an introduction. Let's try to employ our community so we can stay in Bayview and not be priced out...."

As one of the few African-American female owned construction firms, do you feel that there was a higher level of expectations placed on the results that your firm delivered for the city? Jones stated wholeheartedly, "Yes it is. the construction field is a male dominated field number one and being African American woman from Bayview Hunter's point makes it even harder. You have to gain their trust that you will perform, pay your vendors and unions and employees these plights effect all small construction companies but African American companies are not trusted because of past performers in the industry so they clump you in the same bag with all other African American construction companies...."

When asked about what would she hoped is the legacy that is left behind by your work and that of YCAT? Jones noted proudly, "That the unions will be filled with people from Bayview and they will earn a decent living and be able to remain in Bayview generation after generation...."

Jones gave life advice saying, "Life is a hustle. You have got to get up every day and hustle your business. You have to go to sleep and dream about getting up in the morning and hustling your business. If you don't hustle, you won't get nothing."

- Jose Ricardo G. Bondoc