Comments by LaMont Eanes to the Black Affairs Advisory Council (BAAC) August 26th 2016

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- Good afternoon.
- I would like to begin by thanking McCarol Johnson, Ken Johnson, the Black Affairs Advisory Council, along with the Social Security National Diversity and Inclusion Staff for the privilege of speaking with you today….on a Friday….on the last day of the session at 2:00 pm in the afternoon. □
- The topic I will be speaking on today is Leveraging Diversity & Winning; Team building, leading people, leading change.
- In a few minutes, I am going to share with you a few of my personal management sayings or philosophies. But before I do that I have a few comments on the general topic of diversity.
- The definition of diversity taken today has evolved from what it was 50 years ago. The contemporary use of the term in many US colleges and universities today is:
  - "Understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences**. (Pause)** These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies".
- The premise I believe, is that the various unique qualities we each have; be they physically discernible, economic, geographic, genetic, spiritual, historical, experiential or psychological, causes us each to see and rationalize things a bit differently than the person sitting next to us, or for that matter differently than anyone else in the room or building. Each of us are indeed unique based upon our DNA and cumulative experiences.
- However, these unique characteristics in each of us are merely inputs to are current situation – those situations that we face each day . . . just inputs.
- I prefer to focus on outcomes. So… what is the output? The important question to consider is: **what will be the outcome of bringing together or developing different perspectives**?
- Here is my view: I believe that the effect of bringing together different people, with different perspectives and experiences is to **create an environment of diverse thought**. Personally, I have a very high regard for Diversity of thought!
- So for me having a team of people that have different skin tones, ethnicities, and gender is only an indication or milestone along the road to diversity of thought…it is not a guarantee or outcome.
- What I can see with my eyes, that is different among you, is not the outcome.

- Diversity of thought is manifest in what I hear from differing perspectives and voices and the better deision made as a result. Diversity of thought is ultimately, what I try to develop among team members.
- So as a leader, managing people, I try to and I recommend to you that you hire a team of individuals whose collective outcome will result in diverse ideas and approaches. But, that is only where the road to successful outcomes begins.
- As managers, we should encourage our team members to speak up, expressing their unique views and questioning the views of others. **(Pause)**
- Now…encouraging people to disagree with one another might sound a little risky. And… it miiiight not be the cultural norm where you work. Some might say it's too confrontational.
- And, to a degree it can be confrontational. However, if there are rules of engagement established, known, and modeled that encourage respectful disagreement, then the engagement should be manageable. The discourse can become (how do I say this??) a bit heated at times. However, as someone once counseled me: ***The thing about heat is that it purifies things***.
- I believe that building and leading successful teams requires that managers encourage team members to disagree – that is how we get to better outcomes.
- That brings me to the final discussion topic before I review with you a few of my personal management principles. That topic is leading successful change.
- I'll begin with a quote from one of my favorite management philosophers Niccoli Machiavelli. **(Slide 1)**
- "There is nothing more difficult to carryout, nor more dangerous to handle than to initiate a new order of things. For the reformer has enemies in all those who profit by the old order, and only lukewarm defenders in all those who might profit by the new order…"
- Folks….leading change isn't easy. It requires courage. It requires planning. It requires the leader to listen to those that will be affected; and to understand their needs and motives.
- But…..What is leadership anyway???…. Leading, does **not** equate to standing still, or staying where you already are. Leading involves getting to a **new** place.
- Think about it. Do we really need someone else to lead us to where we already are? Did the Hebrews need Moses to lead them to stay where they had already been for 40 years?
- A true leader will congratulate his/her team for what they accomplished today. And, quickly they will pivot to challenge their team to do even better tomorrow, changing for the better.