

# Donna Brazile and Cornel West Headline the California Diversity and Leadership Conference



*Donna Brazile (left); Cornel West (right)*

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual California Diversity & Leadership Conference was held on Thursday and Friday, February 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012 on the campus of the University of California, Berkeley. Over 350 of California's business elite attended to learn Diversity Best Practices and strengthen their professional networks. The theme of this year's conference was "Deconstructing the California Glass Ceiling."

Over the course of the two-day conference, attendees had the choice of 17 panel sessions, of which they could choose six to participate. The panel discussions were designed to cultivate the skills necessary to further their careers, utilize any available resources to expand their networks and grow as leaders. The sessions each functioned as a stake supporting the conference's foundation.

The informative series of panel discussions included "Leadership: Thinking Strategically," "Diversity Best Practice" and "Politics, Education & Multiculturalism." About the "GLBT Roundtable," one attendee said, "I believe this is an eye-opening and informative panel that presents factual evidence and new perspectives in the light of the LGBT movement."

The conference opened with the California Most Powerful & Influential Women Recognition, with opening remarks by University of California, Berkeley

Chancellor Robert J. Birgeneau.

"The Council hoped to create an environment where business leaders could learn the necessary techniques to advance their careers using diversity and inclusion practices," said

Dennis Kennedy, Founder and CEO of the National Diversity Council.

Following the recognition were concurrent panel discussions, and the DiversityFIRST™ Awards Luncheon. The DiversityFIRST™ Award was given to local individuals, community groups, non-profit organizations and business establishments within the legal, academic, corporate and/or health communities that have demonstrated outstanding achievements and sustained commitment to the pursuit of cultural diversity and inclusion in the community and workplace.

After the awards ceremony, the first Keynote Speech was given by Veteran Democratic Political Strategist and the Founder of Brazile & Associates LLC, Donna Brazile. Brazile's speech centered on the importance and benefits of diversity in today's business world. Her insight

and experience perfectly accented the conference's themes.

The second day of the conference opened with the Multicultural Leadership Awards Breakfast. Winners of this prestigious award were individuals of color who have made a difference through their achievements and exemplify the ability to excel in their field, despite difficult odds. The awards breakfast was followed by two more panel discussions.

At the closing reception, renowned civil-rights activist, public speaker, and this year's second keynote speaker Dr. Cornel West addressed the assembly. His speech concentrating on the benefits of major corporations hiring and promoting diverse employees epitomized the spirit of the conference.

In 2008, the National Diversity Council created the California Diversity Council with a mission to help strengthen organizations with education, strategies and measurable best practices for leveraging Diversity in the workplace. The organization has a unique set of resources and tools to support consistency in analysis and performance tracking while showing value-added results with diversity measures and performance standards.



*College Student Attendees*