



**A Matter of Respect:
Urban Communities Need Good Jobs, Not a Public Relations Campaign**

A Statement to Wal-Mart CEO Lee Scott

Our urban communities are in state of crisis. Inequality is on the rise. The loss of good manufacturing jobs, stagnating wages, and decades of neglect have forced residents to struggle to provide for the most basic necessities, from food to housing to health care.

Wal-Mart has put itself forward as the answer to the challenges faced by inner city residents. High paid public relations consultants have ensured that Wal-Mart's initiatives — *Jobs and Opportunity Zones*, *Working Families for Wal-Mart* — hit the right rhetorical notes.

But these initiatives fail to address the underlying problem: Wal-Mart's business model is premised on poverty – the poverty of its employees and the poverty of its customers. Even as you have tried to burnish Wal-Mart's image, your company has fought attempts to ensure living wages for retail workers in Chicago and moved to cut the number of full time jobs at Wal-Mart across the board.

The message you have sent to us is clear: for our communities, any job is a good job. We reject the idea that minority communities should settle for low-paying jobs without a future.

Public relations campaigns and donations to charities of color cannot substitute for responsible employment practices or for respecting the aspirations of our communities, nor can they stand in for treating women and minority workers with dignity and respect. Your initiative to provide small sums of money to inner city chambers of commerce will do nothing to protect our small businesses and our neighborhoods from Wal-Mart's predatory practices.

A diverse group of urban leaders, we have come together -- clergy, teachers, environmentalists, community activists, elected leaders, and business owners--to ask you to embrace a vision for our urban communities rooted in the American ideal that hard work deserves to be rewarded.

We call on you to lead the way in eradicating poverty rather than perpetuating it. We ask:

- that Wal-Mart offer good jobs that provide quality health insurance and living wages, and that allow employees to work free from discrimination and intimidation. The nation's largest employer should not force its employees to rely on charity and government assistance.
- that Wal-Mart respect the proud democratic tradition of our country instead of trying to undermine the decisions of elected representatives with lawsuits, phony citizen initiatives, and slick public relations campaigns.

Wal-Mart officials say they want to be part of every community. We call on you to make sure that when Wal-Mart comes to town every part of our community—residents, businesses, and workers—is treated with the respect and dignity they deserve.