

Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Historic I-70 Protest on July 27th at O' Fallon Park in St. Louis

July 27th marks the 25th anniversary of the historic I-70 protest in St. Louis, a pivotal moment in the fight for racial equity in the construction industry.

SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI, UNITED STATES, July 24, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today marks the

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The shutdown of Highway 70 made it possible for MOKAN to become a leader in the construction training and education of people of color, leading to a more diversified workforce in St. Louis, Missouri.”

Yaphett El-Amin

25th anniversary of the groundbreaking I-70 protest in St. Louis, a pivotal moment in the fight for racial equity in the construction industry. On this day in 1999, members of the African-American Business and Contractors Association (AABCA) halted traffic on Interstate 70 near the Gateway Arch during rush-hour, in a powerful demonstration against racial disparities in awarding construction contracts. This act of civil disobedience, organized by civil rights leader Eric Vickers, continues to resonate within the local and national construction sectors.

The 1999 protest, which echoed a similar demonstration a

decade earlier that led to 125 arrests, highlighted the systemic inequities faced by [minority contractors](#). Vickers emphasized that despite federal programs intended to support disadvantaged businesses, white women were disproportionately receiving these contracts, leaving African-American contractors at a disadvantage.

The 25th celebration will be held on July 27th, 12 pm - 3 pm in O'Fallon Park, 1955 Adelaide Ave, St. Louis, MO.

In the 25 years since the protest, the ripple effects have been profound. The demonstration spurred the creation of a construction training program that has since graduated over 1,000 individuals, equipping them with the skills needed to succeed in the industry. The inclusion of minority contractors has become standard practice not only in highway construction but also in major capital projects across St. Louis, including the St. Louis Art Museum, the University of Missouri-St. Louis, and BJC HealthCare.

The July 27th commemoration brings together a coalition of contractors, politicians, civil rights

champions, and community members who continue to advocate for equality in the construction industry. The event serves as a reminder of the progress made and the ongoing efforts required to ensure fair and equitable opportunities for all.

"The shutdown of Highway 70 on July 12, 1999, made it possible for MOKAN to become a leader in the construction training and education of people of color, leading to a more diversified local workforce in St. Louis, Missouri. I am proud to stand today continuing this mission as MOKAN's Executive Director," stated Yaphett El-Amin.

As we reflect on the past 25 years, we recognize the importance of continued vigilance and advocacy to address and overcome the systemic challenges that remain. The legacy of the I-70 protest lives on in the ongoing efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable construction industry.

About MOKAN

For more than 39 years MOKAN CCAC has been at the forefront of efforts to provide opportunities for MBE and WBE contractors on construction projects in the St. Louis metropolitan area. Since its incorporation in 1974, its mission was and remains today to serve as an advocate and facilitator for the inclusion of minority and women-owned businesses on construction projects. MOKAN also assists in strengthening the business development of contractors through the MOKAN institute.

MOKAN serves as a vital link between minority, female-owned, small contractors and the general construction population. There is also a strong commitment to promote and maintain a mutually beneficial and profitable relationship between contractors, developers and government.

MOKAN is focused on building partnerships that create win-win scenarios for everyone in the construction trades industry. While we are strong advocates for our members we also work diligently with majority contractors to develop strategies to increase minority participation for their firms and meet minority inclusion goals. We provide insight and guidance in developing minority business inclusion programs. We do all of this with one single focus: to expand opportunities for growth for minority and women-owned businesses in the construction trades.

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