



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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The Leader's Edge and Freeman Associates Help Bridge the Gap Between Executive Business Women Of Different Races

*Philadelphia, Pa.....*In what may have been the first event of its kind, Freeman Associates and *The Leader's Edge* brought together White and African-American executive women from corporations throughout the greater Philadelphia area to discuss their issues, similarities and differences, and suggest solutions for how they might bridge the gaps between them. The event took place at the Pyramid Club in Philadelphia on February 16 and included well over 100 women executives of both races.

“This was an exciting, dynamic undertaking,” said Molly D. Shepard, President and CEO of *The Leader's Edge*. “Most women never have the opportunity for open and honest discussion about race with women of another race. Today’s discussion represented new and uncharted territory for many.” Teresa Moore Griffin, President of Freeman Associates said, “Race relations among women business executives took a major step forward today. Understanding someone else’s point of view begins with dialogue. The process we started today is just the beginning.”

The event began with a presentation of “top line issues”, summarizing the results of interviews and focus groups undertaken by Freeman Associates and *The Leader's Edge* with African-American and White executive women.

- Some of the top line issues included:
 - There is a lack of understanding by each group about the issues of the other. For example, White women don't see that they are viewed by Black women as having advantages and opportunities that Black women don't have.
 - Black women encounter many of the same issues with White women as White women do with White men, such as exclusion from informal networks and information sources, and communication and self-promotion issues. Women of African descent, therefore, have two levels of hurdles to overcome.
 - Many White women appear to be unaware of the discreet issues of Black women and see differences as more a result of individual styles/personalities than of race. In some cases, this may be attributable to discomfort with the issue of race.
 - There are trust issues between Black women and White women which causes them to stay within their own groups and not to reach out to the other to create personal or informal relationships.
 - It appears that women of African descent are less comfortable, and frequently less equipped to deal with, the corporate culture than are White women. This may be due to their lack of opportunity for training and development, as well as cultural/background differences.

After being presented with the top line issues, the attendees were asked to air their views and a lively discussion ensued. One of the suggested solutions was the importance of acknowledging racial differences. While some White women may feel more comfortable sidestepping the issue of race, it is such an integral part of an African-American woman's reality and experience that it needs to be acknowledged. The women also mentioned the importance of participating in each other's informal networks, keeping an on-going dialogue open between each other and women of different races, and setting up mixed racial groups of women within their organizations to discuss the issues.

The Leader's Edge and Freeman Associates plan to examine the information obtained during this event and integrate it with the data acquired during the focus groups to develop future event plans. Both companies are partners in the new *Executive Program for Women of Color*, which is a powerful 9-month leadership development program specifically geared to women of African descent.

Freeman Associates, specializing in leadership development and executive coaching, is committed to supporting the growth and development of individuals, enabling increased effectiveness and greater satisfaction.

The Leader's Edge is an organization dedicated to the leadership development and advancement of high level executive women. *The Leader's Edge* offers comprehensive leadership coaching, assessment and training with the goal of developing outstanding women business leaders who contribute successfully in the corporate environment.

For more information call 610-660-6684 or visit the website at www.the-leaders-edge.com