



# road:way

news about where we are and where we're going

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## Taking Diversity from Tolerance to Acceptance

Corporate America must take the initiative to achieve full equality for minorities, said Dr. Arthur Fletcher, speaking at SAFECO's Home Office on March 26 about his experiences and opinions regarding diversity and racial equality in America.

"Businesses must understand that in order to succeed, they have to take advantage of the many gifts and skills that people have to offer," Fletcher observed. "Once that happens, we will live in a society where the color of someone's skin is an afterthought, not a factor in hiring or promoting."

Fletcher, who is known as the "Father of Affirmative Action," has a long list of accomplishments which allow him to understand the "big picture" of diversity



Dr. Arthur Fletcher

in America today. He has advised four U.S. presidents (Nixon, Ford, Reagan and Bush); served as an infantryman in World War II; held the position of executive director of the United Negro College Fund; and was named a U.S. delegate to the United Nations.

"Many companies have taken on diversity as a policy, but not as a practice," he noted. "SAFECO is a leader because it has taken diversity a step further, from merely recognizing the need for it to putting plans into action to accomplish it, with both employees and the customers that it sells to."

It was SAFECO's dedication to equality that influenced his decision to fly from his home in Washington, D.C. to talk to employees about the importance of achieving equality for all people. "SAFECO has demonstrated its commitment to diversity and helping urban communities thrive," said Fletcher. "We can see that take shape through the Jackson Street Center in Seattle, where SAFECO has gone in and worked with community leaders to bring more financial opportunity to those who live in the area, many of whom are minorities."

Fletcher added that, like SAFECO, other companies need to take their

concern for diversity out of the boardroom and into the community.

"In part, minorities are responsible for their own futures by making sure that they obtain the higher education they

need to succeed in the business world. But we can't succeed without Corporate America. Companies need to bring their resources and expertise into the urban neighborhoods and help residents help themselves, turning

downtrodden areas into places where the people *and* the businesses thrive."

SAFECO, the premier company selling insurance and financial products through independent agents, was founded in 1923. Its operations include property and casualty insurance, life insurance, annuities, surety, business lending, asset management and financial services distribution operations. SAFECO employs more than 12,000 people nationwide and is represented by more than 8,000 independent agencies and brokerages across the country. SAFECO's web address is [www.safeco.com](http://www.safeco.com). •

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**— Dr. Arthur Fletcher**