

The Black AI Optimist Column: Trump's Genesis Mission and the Fight for AI Equity

by Kenley Joseph, MMTTC Policy Counsel

December 2025

On November 24, 2025, President Trump signed an executive order that could fundamentally reshape who participates in America's AI future. The “Genesis Mission” creates a massive federal AI platform combining 17 National Laboratories, supercomputers, and decades of scientific data—with aggressive timelines and minimal public input. For multicultural communities already fighting for a foothold in AI, this demands immediate action.

An Opportunity Within the Challenge

Black and minority scientists have been among America's best and brightest for generations—from Hidden Figures who powered the space program to today's leading researchers in AI and quantum computing. These brilliant minds working within our National Laboratories and partner institutions will be crucial to the Genesis Mission's success. Our challenge is ensuring they have seats at decision-making tables, not just at laboratory benches.

The federal infrastructure being built could accelerate breakthrough discoveries if it genuinely harnesses America's full talent pool. Public-private partnerships, properly structured, could expand opportunities rather than limit them. But without intentional inclusion from the start, even well-meaning initiatives risk perpetuating existing disparities.

Why This Matters for Multicultural Communities

The stakes extend beyond the Genesis Mission itself. A recent Brookings Metro analysis, “Mapping the AI Economy,” reveals that 67% of all AI-related job postings are concentrated in just 30 metropolitan areas – predominantly coastal tech hubs like San Francisco, Seattle, and Boston. Meanwhile, 84% of American businesses have yet to adopt AI technologies, with small firms lagging significantly behind large corporations. This geographic and economic concentration threatens to replicate – and potentially deepen – existing patterns of technological exclusion that have left multicultural communities on the sidelines of previous innovation waves.

The Genesis Mission represents a potential countervailing force. Unlike the consumer tech industry centered in Silicon Valley, the Genesis Mission draws heavily on Department of Energy National Laboratories – facilities like Oak Ridge in Tennessee, Sandia in New Mexico, and Idaho National Laboratory that are located in regions Brookings classifies as “Emerging Centers” and “Focused Movers” rather than coastal superstars. If intentionally designed, the Genesis Mission’s investment in these institutions could catalyze AI development in communities that have the foundational assets but lack the concentrated capital and talent pipelines of elite tech hubs.

The question for multicultural communities is whether this administration's AI initiative will distribute opportunity broadly or simply add another layer to existing concentrations of technological wealth and influence. Critical decisions about America's AI infrastructure are being made now – decisions that will shape the next several decades of technological development. Without requirements for diverse leadership and community benefit agreements, these systems could inadvertently perpetuate existing inequities despite the best efforts of minority scientists within the system.

As MMTC has emphasized throughout this series: we must be architects of the AI revolution, not just participants.

Immediate Action Required (Next 30 Days)

1. **Contact the Department of Energy directly:** Secretary Chris Wright and Under Secretary Darío Gil (Genesis Mission leader). Email: public.affairs@hq.doe.gov. Advocate for diverse leadership representation and transparency.
2. **Call your Congressional representatives:** Push for oversight ensuring minority scientists have leadership roles and multicultural communities benefit from discoveries.
3. **Connect with minority scientists in National Labs:** Build coalitions with those already inside the system who can champion inclusive practices.
4. **Engage Regional Assets:** The Brookings "Mapping the AI Economy" report emphasizes that regions outside traditional tech hubs can build AI capacity through strategic engagement with federal research institutions. Identify Department of Energy National Laboratories and federally funded research centers in or near your region. These institutions will be central to Genesis Mission implementation and offer entry points for workforce development partnerships, research collaborations, and supplier relationships. For communities near facilities like Oak Ridge (Tennessee), Sandia (New Mexico), Argonne (Illinois), or Lawrence Livermore (California), early engagement could position local institutions and businesses to benefit from expanded AI investment.
5. **Connect Educational Institutions:** Brookings researchers recommend democratizing AI education beyond elite universities. Advocate for the Genesis Mission's workforce development components to explicitly include HBCUs, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges, and community colleges—particularly those located near National Laboratories. Contact your institution's administration and encourage them to reach out to the Office of Science and Technology Policy and relevant agency contacts to express interest in AI curriculum development and research partnerships.

The Path Forward

The Genesis Mission invokes the Manhattan Project – a project where minority scientists made crucial contributions often without recognition. This time, we have the opportunity to ensure our communities aren't just included but are helping lead.

Our brilliant scientists and engineers within the National Laboratory system will be essential to Genesis Mission's success. Our role is to ensure they have the authority and resources to bring our communities along, turning this centralized initiative into a launching pad for distributed innovation that benefits all Americans.

The decisions made in the next 90 days will echo for decades. Strategic engagement and by leveraging the excellence already within our communities, we can help shape an AI future that truly represents America's diversity.

Stay engaged, stay informed, and act immediately. Together, we can ensure this mission includes all of America's genesis