

# WOMEN, ETHNIC GROUPS URGED TO FORM COALITIONS

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America won't offer equal opportunity until those who are traditionally underrepresented, like women and ethnic populations, form coalitions, according to a human resource expert.

"America's ideal of equal opportunity for all its citizens has not yet been realized. Many are still denied equal opportunity," said Bernadine Newsom Denning, president of a Detroit-based consulting firm that specializes in human resources, multicultural diversity and education leadership. "Women and persons of color have to understand power and know how to use it. If you don't use it, you will lose it. And those with power aren't about to give it up," she said.

Denning was the keynote speaker at LeaderLuncheon 2, a gathering of more than 700 people - mostly women - sponsored by the Salt Lake YWCA to honor women for their strength and contributions to the community. During the two-hour program Tuesday, outstanding achievement awards were presented to Ruth Draper, Emma Lou Thayne, Aden K. Ross, Betty Gaines-Jones, Irene Fisher and Dr. Kirtly Parker Jones.

Denning said people can only understand the present if they know the past. The 1960s and '70s were years of confrontational politics. In the 1980s, "we attempted cooperative politics. The '90s have to be coalition politics or none of us is going to survive."

When funds are tight, she said, the first cuts are made to human rights or civil rights programs. The labor force frequently exhibits "blatant racism and minorities and women have been targets," she said.

"People of conscience of all races" must work together, according to Denning, and not let those with political power force them to be divided and compete with each other.

Denning views society as being composed of three categories: the mainstream; "assimilated persons of color"; and an "excluded underclass" that includes the poor, the homeless, ethnics, the underemployed and the working poor. Women are a part of each of those three categories, she said, and must work together to create opportunity.

"Resistance to economic and social equality is fierce."

Change will occur, Denning said, when people move from problem-solving to system-changing mode and from serving individuals to allowing them to belong. "We need to move from liberalism to liberation. There's a big difference . . . From giving equal opportunity to creating a just society.