

# THE CONTENDER

By Jackie  
Kelvington

**38.7 million:** number of African  
Americans in the U.S.

**1.2 million:** number of African-  
American-owned businesses  
in the U.S.

**\$89 billion:** revenues generated  
by African-American-  
owned businesses

**Two in five** of all  
African-American firms are  
owned by women

**Metro Orlando is the 28th largest**  
metro in the U.S. for total  
population (1.95 million)

**Metro Orlando is 22nd in the U.S.**  
for total African-American  
population (285,384)

**Metro Orlando has the 19th**  
largest percentage of African  
Americans for metros over  
1 million in population

**Metro Orlando has the third-**  
fastest-growing African-American  
population in the nation

METRO ORLANDO IS  
A TOP SPOT FOR  
BLACK ENTREPRE-  
NEURS.

»» You've heard the  
news. Demograph-  
ics are vastly shifting in  
the United States. That  
is certainly true here in  
the increasingly diverse  
region of Metro Orlando.  
It's expected that by  
2020, nearly half of the  
region's residents will be  
African American, His-  
panic and Asian. With  
these changes in our  
population come exciting  
new national business  
trends.

Today in the U.S. more African Americans own businesses than ever before. In fact, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, from 1997 to 2002 there was a 45 percent increase in the number of Black-owned businesses — a growth rate that surpasses that of all other minority-owned companies. Data also shows that African Americans are 50 percent more likely than Caucasians to start their own venture.

Surprised? Now consider this: Metro Orlando has become a leading contender for Black entrepreneurs, surpassing cities of similar size and even larger ones. With more than 11,000 Black-owned businesses currently operating here and a total African-American population of 285,000, the



**JOSHUA HIGH**  
Owner, Enterprise  
Technology Partners

region's number of Black-owned businesses is higher per capita than other major metros, including Chicago, Denver and Columbus.

Why? The very reasons that make Metro Orlando one of the nation's top-ranked business locations have attracted successful, minority-owned businesses: a growing and young workforce; strong, diversified and emerging industry sectors; a pro-business environment; a strategic geographic location; a diverse population; top-notch educational institutions; a solid infrastructure; and an outstanding quality of life.

Harold Mills adamantly agrees. He is the CEO of ZeroChaos, one of the top minority-owned contract labor sourcing and management companies in the United States. ZeroChaos has even been recognized as a leader in its market by *Inc.* magazine.

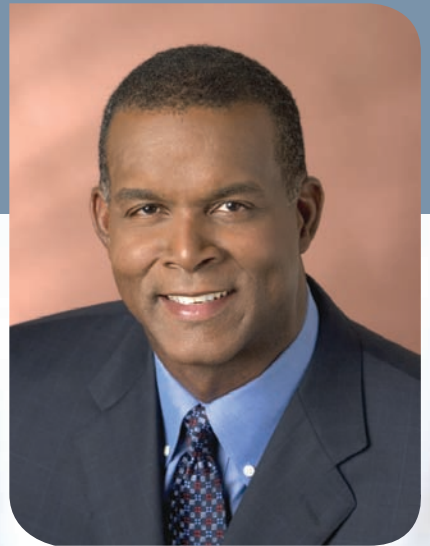
"We're in the people business, and Orlando has everything a business like ours could want, including a pro-business tax environment, a culturally diverse and technically savvy talent pool, a major airport with direct flights to cities around the world, and a thriving convention scene that brings in top executives from around the country," says Mills. "And there's the fact that, year after year, Florida leads the nation in annual job growth. I can't imagine a



**THOMAS S. KORNEGAY**  
Owner, TeKONTROL Inc.



**HAROLD MILLS**  
CEO, ZeroChaos



**CLARENCE OTIS**  
CEO, Darden Restaurants

better city for our headquarters."

Recent trends show that business service firms like Mills' are among the fastest-growing sectors of Black-owned businesses. He is in good company here in Orlando, where other industry leaders and nationally recognized minority entrepreneurs are shaping future economic growth.

CEO Robert Johnson is a good example. After selling Black Entertainment Television, he acquired Metro Bank in Orlando and renamed it Urban Trust. It is the first branch of a network that will serve African-American communities nationwide. Central Florida is home to one bank now, but eight more branches are planned to open this year.

Joshua High is another top African-American entrepreneur based in Orlando. High's management, IT and financial consulting firm — Enterprise Technology Partners — has become a resource for a growing number of federal, state and local government clients. His company is also one of the fastest-growing businesses in the Central Florida region.

TeKONTROL Inc., led by Thomas Kornegay, is based in downtown Orlando and provides logistics, information technology and administrative support, training, systems engineering, and facilities management to government and commercial clients.

In addition to these homegrown companies, several major Metro Orlando corporations are run by African-Americans and have renowned diversity programs in place. These include: Clarence Otis, CEO of Fortune 500 company Darden Restaurants; Joe Cleveland, CIO of Lockheed Martin's Orlando-based Enterprise Information Systems; Mark Russell, managing editor of the *Orlando Sentinel* daily newspaper; and numerous Walt Disney World executives, who include Jim

Business Center; Disney/SBA National Entrepreneur Center; African American Chamber of Commerce; the Black Business Investment Fund; and the National Association of Women Business Owners.

Orlando was recently ranked as the third fastest-growing metro area for African-American and Asian populations, and is third in the nation for African-American net migration, with more than 56 percent of that in-migration coming from the northeast. In

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Lewis, president of Disney Vacation Development, and Reggie Williams, vice president of Disney's Wide World of Sports, who was recently inducted into the Ivy League Hall of Fame.

There are also scores of organizations that support the growth of minority businesses in Orlando, including: the City of Orlando's Minority and Business Enterprise program; National Minority Supplier Diversity Council; University of Central Florida's Small

addition, Florida ranks fourth in terms of largest net in-migration of African-American college students.

This data further supports Orlando's recognition as being one of the best cities for African-American business owners. With an environment that welcomes and nurtures entrepreneurs, a diverse and thriving economy, and an unsurpassed quality of life, Orlando is a clear choice for anyone with a dream and the drive to pursue it. 