

NAACP SPEECH

Marshall University September 22, 2007

Master of Ceremonies, President Rev. Paul Willis, officers of the Huntington Branch of the NAACP, members and friends.

You have honored me by allowing me to return home once again and be your speaker. I came to this wonderful city 47 years ago as a young inexperienced minister to pastor the First Baptist Church.

History is replete with wonderful life-sustaining memories of the 20 years afforded me and my wife Lillie and daughters Jacquelyn, Debbie Selena and Stephanie.

My bonds of friendship with many of you still shall forever abide in my bosom as an eternal light of love. Needless to say how proud I am to have one of my two sons in the ministry as pastor of the First Baptist Church. Pastor Paul Willis received his call to ministry under my ministry and matriculated at Virginia Union University for his theological training where I received my training. Incidentally, my other son in ministry, Dr. John Kinney is currently the renowned Dean of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Graduate School of religion.

I am proud to be back on the campus of Marshall University. In May 2003, I was conferred an honorary degree Doctorate in Humane Letters. I cherish that honor because it becomes a

metaphor for all the fine students of Marshall I ministered to for their college years, including the 13 African American college students that died in the tragic plane crash.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the name of my fellow civil rights colleague Attorney Herbert Henderson whose legal skills paved the way for privileges each of us enjoy today including opportunities take for granted here at Marshall University. History should record three names that led the fight for freedom and justice in Huntington during the 60s and 70s when African American women couldn't try on dresses at the major department stores, when the local Chamber of Commerce's marketing brochures boasted of its abundance of blacks to work as maids and servants in the home; when the School Board, after desegregation and the closure of Douglass High School, assigned all of its former teachers to positions unrelated to their training with disparity in pay, when Marshall College did not have one African American faculty member, when Blacks could not sit down and at any downtown restaurant down town; it was leaders like Herbert Henderson who did all of his legal work free, Andre McDade (former president) who paid court fees out of his pocket, Oressa Brown and Marion Gray who were fearless in their demands to City Council and Policy Boards. Upon those shoulders of these civil rights pioneers, we keep alive the vigil for freedom and justice.

Let's go back before the 60s and snap a picture of the NAACP'S Mission , Struggles and Achievements for fear that there may be those in this generation is unaware of NAACP's rich past and progress over the years.

In 1909, a call for issued on February 12, 1909, the 100th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth. The Call asked the nation then as we ask it today:

"How far has it gone in assuring to each and every citizen, irrespective of color, the equality of opportunity and equality before the law, which underlie our American institutions and are guaranteed by the Constitution?"

It called upon "all [the] believers in democracy" to gather for a national conference which eventually resulted in the NAACP.

The original incorporation papers of the NAACP listed as its goals:

"To promote equality of rights and eradicate caste or racial prejudice among the citizens of the United States; to advance the interest of colored citizens; to secure for them impartial suffrage; and to increase their opportunities for securing justice in the courts, education for their children, and complete equality

before the law."

This remains our mission today.

RECAPPING HISTORY

In 1909 Black and white leaders organized to combined efforts to deal with racial realities of the time

- I. First Phase focus -89 years primary order of business was preventing organized violence against African Americans and obtaining the passage of enforcement of anti-lynching laws.
- II. Second Phase focus - Seeking equal rights in the military and fair job opportunities for civilians.
- III. Third Phase by the 50's the NAACP was plowing judicial ground, including the landmark Supreme Court decisions of Brown vs Board of Education Topeka, Kansas which held public school segregation unconstitutional. Later NAACP members were instrumental in obtaining legislation mandating equal Voting Rights.
- IV. Fourth Phase - forcing implementation of laws. Overt racism dug in and was substituted with institutional - non-traceable racism. You get inside the door but the steps are too steep to climb.

What Phase are we in today?

It is often rumored that Civil Rights Struggle is over and race is no longer a factor its' economic and class.

The Civil Rights Movement may be over. Movements by

their own nature have a short shelf lives.

I will ask you to decide whether the fight for civil rights is over and worth you time, effort, money and quality of life.

Allow current reports of civil right situations provide a basis for your answered.

- The Sulphur Springs, Texas NAACP asked for an investigation of a beating of a black man.
- The North Carolina State NAACP presented the state legislature with a 14-point list of policy recommendations, including quality education for every child, a livable wage for all workers, universal healthcare, and readdressing past acts of racism to prevent current discrimination.
- The President of the North Carolina NAACP State
- Conference cited cross burnings, work place racial disputes and an incident in Oxford, N. C, in which a black couple were chased at gunpoint and subjected to racial slurs by a man with a Ku Klux Klan emblem on his truck as evidence of a rise in hate crimes in the state.
- The NAACP in Slater City, Missouri, charged that a recent report demonstrated African-Americans were 250 percent more likely to be searched than whites pulled over by police.
- Our Branch in Yonkers, New York, reported they receive 24 calls each month about police misconduct.

- The Mississippi State NAACP Conference joined with Democratic officials and the state's Republican Party to object to a photo identification requirement for primary elections.
- The Pittsburgh NAACP complained about race-based income disparities in the city.
- Last month our Washington Bureau Director, Hilary Shelton, testified against the death penalty before the United States Senate, charging capital punishment is racially biased. Our civic engagement staff is working to roll-out a nationwide voter registration campaign.

The nuances of our NAACP's WORK may shift, but the core issues remain unchanged:

- Poverty,
- A biased criminal justice system,
- Denial of voting rights,
- Unequal education,
- Disparities in earning power and job opportunities, lack of health care.

YOU MUST AGREE

(98) Ninety-eight years after it began, the NAACP is still fighting to eliminate the racism and prejudice that feed these inequalities and social ills. As long as these issues exist, the NAACP will be needed as an aggressive force seeking to eradicate them

IN ADDITION - LET'S REVIEW THE STATE OF BLACK AMERICA

I. Criminal Justice System

The disproportionate representation of black Americans in the U.S. criminal justice system is well documented.

II. Incarceration and Race - Juvenile Incarceration

III. The Face of Poverty

There is no better way to examine the state of race in Bush's America than to examine Katrina and the lessons it has to teach us.

IV. The Re-Segregation in Education

The American Bar Association

Resegregation in Public Education

But there is no way in this issue to capture the enormity of the challenge facing many urban school systems, where re-segregation has robbed public schools of the diversity that is so valuable to education. In a recent report, "Looking to the Future: Voluntary K-12 Integration," Harvard University's Civil Rights Project and other groups referred to re-segregation's "staggering impact, particularly on urban school systems and the students who attend them." Add to the re-segregation the problem of inadequate and still dwindling financial resources in many cities, and you have

little hope of any significant progress.

V. Dismantling of Affirmative Action

The elimination of affirmative action leads to Resegregation. After the Hopwood decision overturned affirmative action at the University of Texas (UT), the number of black students at the UT Law School dropped from 65 in 1996 to 11 in 1997. Only 4 black students enrolled—in a first-year class of more than 400. At the University of Texas Law School, Latino/a student enrollment has been cut in half since affirmative action programs were outlawed in 1995.

When the ban on affirmative action was implemented at the University of California (UC)—Berkeley law school, the number of black students admitted dropped from 75 in 1996 to 14 (out of 792 applicants) in 1997; none enrolled. In its first year without affirmative action, the UC—San Diego School of Medicine did not admit a single black applicant, of the 196 who applied.

UC—Berkeley admitted 61% fewer minorities in 1998—the year the state first implemented its ban on affirmative action at the undergraduate level. 800 black and other minority students with grade point averages of 4.0 and SAT scores of at least 1200 were denied admission to the 1998 freshman class. <http://www.bamn.com>