

COMMENTARY



The Publisher Speaks

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We hope it will be of some value to each of you.



Tony Brown's Comments

NAACP Unduly Criticized

Those of us who are outsiders to the facts of what is going on inside the NAACP should recognize our status and keep an open mind. Be assured that we can depend on the 64 members of the organization's board of directors to analyze the situation and make the right decisions.

People who give no support to the NAACP when it needs it are now more than eager to meddle and spread unfounded gossip. A promotional announcement on NBC's local television station in Washington, D.C., the Sunday after Margaret Bush Wilson (NAACP chairperson) suspended Benjamin Hooks (NAACP executive director), promised details at 11 p.m. of the rumor that the two had split over Rev. Jesse Jackson's presidential ambitions. The news, including an interview with Jackson, came and went with no clear explanation of the anticipated facts.

A Black columnist on a white paper in New York, calling Wilson "this woman" in a scathing personal attack, wants her to be fired because she (not Hooks) lacked good judgement. He first recognized that she had slipped from reality, he said, when she backed the NAACP legal suit against the white-controlled NAACP Legal Defense Fund to stop the fund from using the NAACP's initials.

Of course, the judge agreed with the NAACP's judgement and ordered the Legal Defense Fund to stop the use of the NAACP's initials. In fact, this decision to oppose the fund was enthusiastically shared by Hooks as well as Wilson. I suspect that the Black columnist-supporter of the Legal Defense Fund (he delivered a stinging indictment of the NAACP for opposing the fund) was simply using his personal animosities over that suit to get back at the NAACP — by assailing Wilson.

The body with the basic interests of the NAACP is its duly constituted board of directors, not media grabbers or silent missionaries of dissent who will use this unfortunate situation as an opportunity to divide and conquer.

Instead of wallowing in the constant reminders from the white media that the NAACP is suffering from a "demoralizing decline in its 400,000 membership" (Time magazine), and who called who what at the now celebrated meeting, all Blacks should be asking themselves, "What have I done recently to help this civil rights group survive and continue to work for my freedom?" Further, when can you remember the white media going out of its way to spread any good news about Black organizations?

Be careful that you do not join this hysteria by calling the incident a "Mutiny at the NAACP" (Newsweek). Hooks and Wilson are two very strong personalities — if they were not, they wouldn't be where they are — and equally dedicated in strength to the objectives of the NAACP and to the cause of Black freedom.

And you don't have to agree with every single ideological stance the NAACP takes to appreciate its value to the race. The NAACP's almost single-minded and blind pursuit of racial integration for its own sake, especially busing to sit next to whites, is not shared by me and many other African-Americans. But I am an ardent supporter of the NAACP because

I'm in agreement with the vast majority of its programs and an eager and appreciative student of the historic role that it has played in securing the present-day freedom of Black people and the opportunities that I personally enjoy.

In researching the role of America's only Black Air Force (World War II), I was reminded of the NAACP's guardianship. I started out to do the history of the Tuskegee Airmen and found that getting Blacks into pilot training and World War II as combat pilots was largely due to NAACP pressure and a lawsuit, i.e., the Yancy Williams case.

I started out to do the history of Blacks in films and in the monopolistic Hollywood industry, in particular. I found again that it was the NAACP, in 1915, that not only fought the racist movie epic "The Birth Of A Nation," city by city, but originated the idea of the Black community's movie response, "Birth Of A Race." Later, that idea grew into an industry of Black producers, theatre owners and talent.

And there is another missing chapter in NAACP/African-American history: The 6888th Central Postal WAC Battalion. This superb group of women was cited for doing a job that no one else had succeeded in doing. The 6888th also holds the dubious distinction of being the only all-female unit to serve overseas which did not receive a citation.

Novella Auls, one of the women in the unit, retired from the army after serving more than 20 years. She is writing a book on the contributions of Black service-women.

"In the beginning, when they first established the Women's Army Corps, they said that we would be authorized overseas duty also, but it would have to be at the discretion of the overseas commander, and at that time it was Gen. Eisenhower," recalls Auls. "He did not want Negro WACS in the theater. But the Negro press, the NAACP and several other civil rights groups finally forced the government to send us over and Gen. Eisenhower had to accept us."

And then there is another NAACP story: Medgar Evers, a native of Jackson, Miss., and the NAACP's first field director in Mississippi.

He was a lone voice crying in the wilderness. He conducted political education campaigns, organized desegregation petition drives, led sit-ins and spearheaded the first successful boycott of a Jim Crow department store in the South before the era of Martin Luther King. On June 12, 1963, some 20 years ago, Black civil rights activist Medgar Evers was killed by an assassin outside his home following a fiery civil rights speech in Jackson, Miss.

There is not enough space to remind us of all that the NAACP has done for us. But, keeping the importance of our largest civil rights organization in mind, we should wish both Hooks and Wilson success and happiness because, in that way, we wish ourselves the best.

And if you don't hold a NAACP \$10 membership, don't criticize either Hooks or Wilson or the NAACP until you join.

Tony Brown's Journal television series can be seen on public television Sunday,

New Beginnings

LEADERSHIP ANNOUNCED

The Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce announced today that four prominent area business and community leaders will spearhead their "New Beginnings" program. "New Beginnings," the \$1.6 million accelerated economic development program for Tacoma-Pierce County, will kick off on July 13 under the leadership of George H. Weyerhaeuser, President and CEO, Weyerhaeuser Company, and W.W. Philip, Chairman and President of Puget Sound National Bank, co-chairmen of the Development Council. Ned Shera, CLU and President, Schwarz, Shera & Associates, and Chuck Cereghino, Director of Community Affairs, Weyerhaeuser Company will co-chair the Development Fund Drive.

The drive to raise \$1.6 million, unveiled at the Chamber's 98th annual meeting in October, has already received some advance gifts toward the four year program of economic acceleration. Aimed at attracting new jobs and payrolls and broadening the area's tax base; improving local public schools to meet the needs of employers in high-tech and other industries; improving Tacoma and Pierce County's image internationally, nationally, regionally and at home; creating an accelerated convention and tourism development program, the project is the first of its kind for our area.

The fund drive will finance a community assessment and targeted industries analysis followed by national advertising; promotional materials and marketing aids; accelerated prospecting and direct contact with industrial prospects and corporate decision makers; a showcase program highlighting the assets of Tacoma and Pierce County to be shown throughout the nation; targeted sales trips and participation in trade shows; tours to our area by convention planners and travel agents; marketing aids; and public relations.

Business and community leaders as well as private citizens will be asked to support this expanded economic development program. Full details will be released at the Development Council Breakfast on July 13 at the Tacoma Dome.

"Our plan costs less, but its coverage has more holes than Swiss cheese."

"You should have called Pierce County Medical."

