

SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF LAW SCHOOLS WORKSHOP ON RACE, DIVERSITY & THE LAW: THE NAACP AT 100 YEARS

Good afternoon.

I'm Faith Rivers James. I am an Associate Professor at Elon Law School in Greensboro, North Carolina.

I'm pleased to moderate this panel on an important milestone— the NAACP at 100 years. The NAACP has had a significant impact on our nation's social, economic, and legal history. Indeed, history and law books are full of the NAACP's corporate accomplishments.

And our own homes are full of epic stories of the NAACP's work over the past one hundred years. In my home, for example, the organization's imprimatur is reflected in the life history of my grand-Aunt, Florence Brown. At 92, she has lived most of the NAACP's tenure. When she was growing up in Charleston, South Carolina, blacks were not allowed to teach in the public schools. In 1919, the NAACP successfully negotiated with the Charleston School Board to hire black teachers for black schools.

Upon graduation from high school and Avery Normal Institute, she accepted an offer to teach at the local elementary school. It was a one room school house with a pot-belly stove. She taught 50 kids ranging from first through fifth grade; all for a whopping \$45 a month. Turns out, that was much less than her white colleagues were making.

It was the NAACP's work on teacher pay equalization that forced the Charleston School Board to toss out its blatant race-based salary scales in the 1940's. The NAACP went on to successfully challenge segregation in Charleston County schools, and achieved a mandate for integration of the public and parochial schools.

Mid-century, Aunt Florence could not vote in the state's "white primaries." But thanks to the NAACP's work to eliminate these threats to the franchise, the right to vote became real. In this state where white primaries used to exclude her, in 2008, Aunt Florence was able to vote for Barack Obama in that "game-changing" South Carolina Democratic Primary, and then saw that candidate become President of the United States.

Now, at the seasoned age of 92, Aunt Florence will tell you that without the NAACP, teaching may not have been an option for her; she may have been limited to a broken down one room school house where she labored for half the pay for the same work; and her votes may never

have been cast or counted. But the NAACP's legal victories – combined with her hard work – made it all possible.

Just like Aunt Florence, the work of the NAACP has affected most of us in some aspect of our daily lives: the right to choose to attend an integrated university; the ability to live in whatever neighborhood our money can buy; the opportunity to fly, train and stay here together as colleagues.

Yet, in the words of Professor Derrick Bell, “we are not saved.” And that is our agenda today. Not only to hail the victories of the past 100 years, but also to examine the course laid before this important American institution for the next 100 years.

At the NAACP's Centennial celebration, President Obama implored the nation to continue the battle against prejudice and discrimination, and invited the NAACP to carry on the struggle against “the structural inequalities that our nation's legacy of discrimination has left behind.”

Today, we have a panel of accomplished public servants and scholars who will examine a panoply of these issues, including education, critical race theory, economic policy, and criminal justice.

We are pleased to have Ben Jealous, the President & CEO of the NAACP. President Jealous is a graduate of Columbia University. A Rhodes Scholar, Jealous earned a master's degree from Oxford University. He brings to the NAACP a background in community organizing (which began with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund) as well as experience in philanthropic executive leadership. I will ask President Jealous to set the course for us by discussing the NAACP's priorities, and then to bring a few closing remarks at the conclusion of the panel.

And now, to Ben's better half, Lia Epperson Jealous. Professor Epperson teaches in the areas of constitutional law, civil rights and education. A magna cum laude graduate of Harvard University and graduate of Stanford Law School, Professor Epperson Jealous clerked for the Honorable Timothy K. Lewis on the Third Circuit Court of Appeals.

Professor Epperson Jealous is a member of the faculty at Santa Clara Law School, and is currently a visiting assistant professor at the University of Maryland Law School. Prior to her teaching career, Professor Epperson Jealous directed the Education Law & Policy group of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. Her “education equity” scholarship focuses on the battle to both desegregate and equalize education in our nations' public school.

Dr. Gregory Scott Parks is the editor of several books about black fraternities & sororities, as well as a new book entitled “Critical Race Realism: Intersections of Psychology, Race and Law.” Dr. Parks is an honors graduate of Howard University and City University of New York. He earned his PH.D. in clinical psychology from the University of Kentucky, and is a recent

graduate of Cornell Law School – all with highest honors. He is just completing his clerkship with the DC Court of Appeals, and will clerk with the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals next year.

In his presentation, Dr. Parks will connect the NAACP's past history to its future. Harkening back to the NAACP's roots in sociological research and legal realism, Dr. Parks will consider the question of how the NAACP's strategy may evolve in what some consider to be a "post-racial" era.

Now, from the courthouse – to the White House. Derek Douglas serves as Special Assistant to the President for Urban Affairs. There, he is constructing and implementing President Obama's policy for economic development in our urban cities. Prior to the White House, Mr. Douglas served as Washington Counsel and Director of the DC Office for New York Governor David Paterson, and then as Associate Director of Economic Policy at the Center for American Progress.

Mr. Douglas graduated from the University of Michigan with Highest Honors and hails from Yale Law School. Mr. Douglas will talk with us about the Obama Administration's new urban policy vision and agenda in the context of the NAACP's mission.

Kami Chavis Simmons will take us to the criminal justice system. Professor Simmons practiced white collar criminal defense, and later became an Assistant US Attorney for the District of Columbia. Since 2006, she has been on the faculty at Wake Forest Law School in Winston-Salem. Professor Simmons is a graduate of Harvard Law School. Today, Professor Simmons will address prescriptive strategies for the NAACP to deter police brutality and increase police accountability.