

2003 NAACP Convention
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To Board member Adora Obi Nweze, Vice Chair Roslyn Brock, other members of the Board of Directors, SCF Trustees, CEO Kweisi Mfume, NAACP staff, NAACP members, friends and guests – welcome to our 94th national convention.

Under President Nweze’s leadership, the Florida NAACP State Conference has risen to great heights. Building on an already solid foundation laid by Leon Russell, in the last two years they have chartered four prison chapters, filed lawsuits against vouchers and the state’s failed One Florida plan, an employment discrimination complaint against the corrections department, and against Florida’s disenfranchisement of black voters in 2000.

Last week, she opened the Florida NAACP’s first state office, in Orlando.

The Florida State Conference and all of you are part of the largest army of grassroots soldiers for civil rights in the country! And, in poll after poll, our constituents and the public say we are the most respected and most effective of all civil rights organizations.¹

Our membership is growing, our leadership is strong – and it’s a good thing, because we have much to do.

It is of course a pleasure to be in Florida – the state whose motto is, “It ain’t over until your brother counts the votes!”

You know last year we gathered in Texas. Now maybe because both Florida and Texas are hot, both are home to a particular species called the “bush”. These “bushes” are prickly and grow lopsided – they lean sharply to the right.

They are apparently an elusive, dwarf variety because we in the NAACP have not seen these “bushes” last year or this. But we intend to uproot the bigger “bush” in 2004. And what better place to start than right here in Florida!

The theme of this year’s convention is “Having Our Say.”

The abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison wrote:

“I do not wish to think, or speak, or write with moderation. ... I am in earnest. I will not equivocate. I will not excuse. I will not retreat a single inch. And I will be heard!”

We will have our say, and we will be heard!

We meet during a year studded with important anniversaries – celebrated events in the centuries-long struggle for human rights.

One hundred and forty years ago, President Abraham Lincoln announced the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing slaves in states in armed rebellion against the United States.

One hundred years ago, W. E. B. DuBois published The Souls of Black Folk, famously predicting that the problem of the 20th Century would be the problem of the color line.

Fifty-five years ago President Harry Truman desegregated the American military.

Forty years ago last month, NAACP field Secretary Medgar Evers was assassinated in Jackson, Mississippi.

And forty years ago next month, Martin Luther King, Jr., fresh from the battlefields of Birmingham, told the nation of his dream at the March on Washington.

And we meet in a place where NAACP history dates to 1915, when the first Florida branch was started in Key West. In 1916 W. E. B. DuBois came to Florida to energize our members, as we gather this week to be energized again.

In 1917, James Weldon Johnson, himself a native Floridian, organized Branches in Florida in his capacity as our first National Field Secretary.

By 1926, perhaps decimated by World War I, not a single dues-paying Florida Branch existed, but the NAACP stayed in the fight. It took Chambers v. Florida to the United States Supreme Court, saving an innocent black man from the electric chair. In 1940, NAACP attorneys filed suit to equalize teachers' salaries, the first such suit in the South.

When the Florida State Conference was formed in 1941, Harry T. Moore became its President and later its full-time Executive Secretary, along with officers E. D. Davis, W. J. H. Black, Frank Burts, Emma Pickett, Mamie Mike, and K. S. Johnson.

On Christmas night 1951, Harry T. Moore and his wife, Harriet, joined the ranks of civil rights martyrs when the KKK bombed their home, killing them both.

Moore's successor was Robert W. Saunders, Sr., who died this year. When Bob Saunders replaced Harry T. Moore, he stepped into big footprints, but he more than filled them. He was brave and daring and innovative and hard working – and we all miss him terribly.

After Brown v. Board, Thurgood Marshall targeted Florida, saying of the state:

“We found not one instance on the part of the political leadership ... to even consider the possibility of desegregating.”

The NAACP sued the school system here in Dade County.

Florida fought back. They formed an infamous body, known as the Johns Committee, to investigate the NAACP, and it “embarked on a witch-hunt that would last for years.”ⁱⁱ

But the NAACP helped to force desegregation in the public schools of 20 Florida counties and attacked segregation statewide – at service stations, cafeterias, in the Florida National Guard, and the University of Florida. The list goes on and on.

As Bob Saunders wrote of the NAACP’s role in Florida during the 1960s,

“We welcomed others to the fight. ... Still, we were here before the others came, and we were there after some of them left.”ⁱⁱⁱ

And we’re still here!

The Florida NAACP story is full of champions – Father Theodore Gibson, Reverends A. Leon Lowery and C. K. Steele, Rutledge Pearson, Charles Cherry, Flossie Currington, Ellen P. Greene – the list is long.

Today, Florida is the fourth largest state in the union, with a population becoming more diverse every day. Whites account for 65 percent, blacks 15, Asians 2, and Hispanics 17 percent.

We know that nationally, as in Florida, Hispanics are now the largest minority, and we are reminded of our need to make common cause with all who share our condition and concerns. Although

Latinos are less cohesive as a group than blacks – identifying themselves by place of origin rather than race and collectively lacking a shared history in the United States – blacks and Latinos, as well as other minorities, will move forward fastest if we move forward together.

We’ve said it again and again – in the NAACP, we believe colored people come in all colors. Anyone who shares our condition, values and concerns is more than welcome.

Although Florida boasts a diverse population and has witnessed a huge growth in its minority student population, its schools – in keeping with national trends - are becoming more segregated. We know that when properly enforced, Brown v. Board of Education does work – because we’ve seen it work, here in Florida and elsewhere throughout the South.

In 1980, the average black student in Florida, as a result of enforcement efforts under Brown, was attending a school that was half white. By 2000, however, that student’s school was only about one-third white.^{iv} We know that “[s]egregation by race is strongly associated with concentrated poverty and many forms of social inequality.”^v

We’ve tried segregation, and it doesn’t work.

Governor Jeb Bush’s notion of school reform is going to send black children to reform schools. His exit tests threaten to bar third-graders from advancing to fourth grade and high school seniors from graduation. Florida loses nearly half of its Black and Hispanic students before they graduate.^{vi}

Which brings us to Jeb Bush's One Florida Initiative – the first time any state's governor abolished affirmative action in higher education, government employment, and state contracting.

Maybe that's why he's not here – this time, the Supreme Court didn't bail him out.

The Bush brothers are big on preemption. First Governor Jeb Bush became the only governor to carry out a preemptive strike on affirmative action, and then President George Bush carried out a preemptive strike on Iraq, the only President in our nation's history to attack a country which did not threaten or attack us first. Both strikes were unnecessary and unwise.

The NAACP tried unsuccessfully to block the One Florida Initiative, which has turned out to be an abysmal failure. In higher education, race-conscious undergraduate admissions were replaced with the Talented 20 Program. “There is little evidence,” despite Governor Bush's premature pronouncements to the contrary, that the Talented 20 Program “has done anything to change the admissions prospects for Florida's public high school students.”^{vii}

Despite this, the President praised his little brother's Talented 20 Program, along with similar programs in Texas and California, as “race neutral alternatives” to affirmative action in the Michigan cases.^{viii} These percent plans, which guarantee admission to state universities for a fixed percentage of the state's top high school graduates, suffer from numerous deficiencies, not the least of which is that they depend for any success on continued racial segregation in high schools. In the process, they encourage students to remain in low-performing segregated schools and discourage

them “from taking challenging classes that might lower their grade point averages.”^{ix}

And percent plans do nothing to increase minority enrollments in private colleges or graduate and professional schools.

The Administration’s brief, of course, discussed none of these infirmities in urging the Supreme Court to consider such “race neutral” plans as a viable alternative to affirmative action.

You know the Bush Administration likes to use Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice as human shields against any criticism of its record on civil rights. After all, the President is proud of saying, his Administration is more diverse than any in history – except the one that preceded it.

But the day after the administration filed its brief in the Michigan cases, Ms. Rice issued a rare statement on a domestic issue, saying, “[I]t is appropriate to use race as one factor among others in achieving a diverse student body.”^x

And Ms. Rice has acknowledged that affirmative action was responsible for her employment at Stanford University.^{xi}

Secretary Powell, for his part, has long been an outspoken advocate for affirmative action, and specifically said he hoped Michigan would prevail in court.

Happily, Secretary Powell got his wish. The Supreme Court held, for the first time, held “that student body diversity is a compelling state interest that can justify the use of race in university admissions.”^{xii}

The Court struck down the points but upheld the principle. Since the opponents kept telling us that this was all about principle, I’d say we won!

The Supreme Court gave legal sanction to what we knew to be morally, socially, and educationally correct.

We urge all the states which have abandoned race-conscious affirmative action to come back into the Union. We're going to monitor their commitment to the Supreme Court's endorsement of race as a tool in achieving diversity.

Governor Bush, are you listening? We will be heard!

In dissent, Justice Clarence Thomas, affirmative action's poster child, opined that "every time the government . . . makes race relevant to the provision of burdens or benefits, it demeans us all."^{xiii}

If only he had said that to the first President Bush and, from the lofty perch of principle, declined his nomination to the Supreme Court.

Justice Thomas begins his dissent in the Michigan case by invoking Frederick Douglass for the proposition that black people do not need the government's "interference" and want to be "let alone."^{xiv}

Justice Thomas ought to recall that Frederick Douglass also said this:

"If the American people could build a schoolhouse in every valley; a church on every hilltop . . . and supply them with a teacher and preacher respectively and welcome the descendants of the former slaves to all the moral and intellectual benefits of the one and the other, without money and without price, such a sacrifice would not compensate their children for the terrible wrong done to their fathers and mothers, by their enslavement and enforced degradation."^{xv}

I believe Frederick Douglass would approve of the descendants of slaves taking their rightful place at the University of Michigan and elsewhere. Affirmative action represents racial redress and restitution.

But "winning" in the Michigan cases was considered "losing" when the Bakke case was decided 25 years ago. What really happened in the

Michigan cases is that we avoided disaster. We cannot truly celebrate until we achieve justice.

Our relief over the outcome of the Michigan cases is further tempered by the knowledge that the opponents of fairness are not going to accept defeat and disappear. The average KKK member may be stupid, but the well-financed forces of the radical right are not.^{xvi}

They say they believe in a color-blind America, where race doesn't count. Sadly, in America, equal opportunity is color-coded. What they really want is a color-free America, and they think they'll get there by not counting race.

Ward Connerly, the California Terminator, is back! This time he's sponsoring an information ban, which, like his Proposition 209 in 1996, will threaten the state's efforts to achieve justice and fairness. If it passes, it will hide racial differences in health care, education, and disease, making it harder to file discrimination complaints and to hold discriminatory organizations and institutions responsible for their deeds.

It will keep the state from collecting much-needed demographic information by race, but as long as race counts in America, we've got to count race.

If it passes, California will keep track of every kind of discrimination except discrimination by race and ethnicity. Studies on racial profiling, disparate medical treatment for people of color, black and white rates of incarceration, racial composition of juries, pass/fail rates for students of different races, loan approval rates for blacks – knowing all this and more will be forbidden.

The only color Connerly recognizes is the color of money. After years of loudly complaining about the so-called "civil rights industry", he's

created a lucrative multi-million dollar career fighting fairness. He says he's non-profit but not if you look at his paycheck.

He made four times the salary of the governor of California last year - \$700,000. In the four years ending in June 2002, he made \$2.1 million dollars.

Friends, we're in the wrong end of the civil rights business if we expect to get rich. Our payday comes in civil rights victories; his comes in civil rights defeats. We're doing good doing democracy's work; he's fighting democracy and doing quite well.

Now even though, or perhaps because, the United States Supreme Court has given approval to affirmative action at the University of Michigan, he intends to make Michigan his next target, along with several other states and cities.

In considering the University of Michigan cases, only Justice Ginsburg, joined by Justices Souter and Breyer, directly confronted the realities of our past and present, saying:

“[W]e are not far distant from an overtly discriminatory past, and the effects of centuries of law-sanctioned inequality remain painfully evident in our communities and schools.”

“In the wake ‘of a system of racial caste only recently ended,’ large disparities endure.”^{xvii}

Justice Ginsburg acknowledged what we know to be true:

“Unemployment, poverty, and access to health care vary disproportionately by race. Neighborhoods and schools remain racially divided. African-American and Hispanic children are all too often educated in poverty-stricken and under performing institutions. Adult African-Americans and Hispanics generally earn less than whites with equivalent levels of education. Equally credentialed job applicants receive different receptions

depending on their race. Irrational prejudice is still encountered in real estate markets and consumer transactions.”^{xviii}

She could have mentioned payday lending. Two years ago, our North Carolina State President and Board member Skip Alston rightly called it “exploitation, pure and simple. Tolerating this practice is unworthy of a society that claims to value its most vulnerable.”^{xix}

By convention resolutions in 2000 and last year and by a Board resolution this year, we’ve set binding policy on this issue for the NAACP from the smallest to largest Branches to the national staff. We despise this predatory practice that targets the poor, especially blacks. Charging annual interest rates of 390%, these companies prey on the weak, trapping them in unending cycles of debt. We won’t take their money, and we’ll do our best to stop them from taking money from others.

We will be heard!

Justice Ginsburg could have included the gross racial inequalities in our criminal justice system. As Richard Pryor said, “justice is just us!”

Although whites and blacks use illegal drugs at roughly the same rates, 55% of all those in jail or prison nationwide for drug violations are black and 30% are Latino.

An estimated 12 percent of black men between the ages of 20 and 34 are incarcerated, the highest rate ever measured.^{xx} Among white men in the same age group, the rate is 1.6 percent.

Racial disparities exist throughout the criminal justice system, including in the imposition of the death penalty.

Florida’s death row population trails only California and Texas. At least in Florida, the sun recently has shone on wrongful capital convictions.

The largest number of cases in which someone was exonerated after being condemned to death row have occurred here in the Sunshine State.

Racial disparities also exist throughout our economic system. In 2001, for example, a college-educated white man earned an average salary of \$65,000, while black and Hispanic men earned 30% less. The typical white family has a net worth more than eight times larger than that of its black counterpart.

Into this mass of economic inequality marches the President for the rich.

The civil rights community was absolutely right when we warned that great harm would come from the foolish, risky tax bill of 2001 that gave millions to the rich. It has become clear that our warnings were absolutely right.

It did not stimulate economic growth. It did not provide tax relief for most Americans. In fact, it succeeded only in fulfilling the worst predictions of those of us who opposed it – it squandered a once-in-a-lifetime budget surplus on an unwise tax cut that primarily benefited the wealthy, and it continues to threaten Medicare and Social Security Trust Funds.

To make up for just the initial tax cuts, we would have to cut spending by \$5 billion dollars five days a week for over a year. That was always the point – not just to further enrich the already wealthy, but also to starve and bleed the government, making it unable to meet human needs, signing a death warrant for social programs for decades and decades to come.

Now they have made matters even worse. Even as our troops were marching forward toward Baghdad, Congress was marching backward toward even greater deficits and even more tax cuts for the rich.

We learned when Ronald Reagan was President that trickle-down economics don't work. Tax cuts don't trickle down – instead they've helped create a downpour of debt and a flood of fiscal disaster for states from coast to coast. The result is swamped state budgets, closed schools and hospitals, and cuts in programs serving the poor.

The nation's governors warn that state deficits are the largest in more than 50 years. Some states are saving money by unscrewing every third light bulb, having teachers serve as janitors, releasing prisoners before their sentences expire, laying off teachers, cutting financial aid, closing schools.

And this in the richest country in the world!

The Administration also has declared its intention to farm out 850,000 federal jobs to private companies. And they've proposed new overtime rules that could cause 8 million workers, including some who earn as little as \$22,100 a year, to lose their right to overtime pay.

Their proposal is a job-killer, and an instruction manual to employers on how to lay off workers and force the ones they keep to work double hours for free.

The Administration is engaged in a relentless assault on the wage economy, part of its plan to favor the privileged over the people.

The President called his tax giveaway a "Jobs and Growth" plan. The only growth we've seen is in millionaires' bank accounts and the number of black people standing in unemployment lines.

Last month the unemployment rate rose to 6.4 percent, the highest in nine years. And "the number of employed blacks shrank while the number of employed whites grew."^{xxi}

The White House says its tax cut has yet to kick in, but the failing economy is already kicking us!

Unemployment for blacks in June was more than twice the rate for whites.

You cannot patch the leaky economy – or any other domestic problem – with duct tape and plastic sheets.

You don't show compassion by offering guests at the millionaires' banquet second helpings and an extra dessert.

We would do well to recall the wise counsel of President Franklin Roosevelt who said:

“The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”

We are meeting in “the poorest big city in the United States – poorer than Newark, poorer than Detroit, poorer than any city with a population of 250,000 or more.” Just a few minutes drive away from here is the gateway to Fisher Island, an exclusive enclave that, according to the 2000 census, is the wealthiest community in America.^{xxii}

While we add to the abundance of those in Fisher Island, and provide less than ever to the poor in Miami, our nation is regressing, not progressing.

We know there is an appalling double standard played out on Florida's shores between the treatment received by Haitian and Cuban immigrants – the Haitians are given the back of America's hand and the Cubans a hearty handshake and a loud “welcome aboard.”

One problem faced by hardworking immigrants is found in abundance here in Florida – the exploitation and near peonage of farm workers. Our units here in Florida have worked to improve their lives, and we support efforts nationwide to enable them to earn a decent wage under safe and secure conditions.

We've invited representatives of all the Caribbean nations to come to this convention to share their problems and the problems their nationals face in the United States.

We know America's policy makers often ignore this section of the globe, except as a pawn in the great power struggles of the past.

So too do America's policy makers often ignore Africa, choosing neglect over concern and engagement, so we applaud President Bush's trip there last week.

But while we are pleased that the President has discovered Africa, the continent needs more than an exotic photo-op presidential visit.

Solutions to Africa's problems must not be dependent on free market fundamentalism. The United States must adopt a multilateral approach to African problems generated by colonialism's legacy and decades of war, famine, and autocratic leadership. We must work for cancellation of Africa's unsustainable and largely illegitimate debt. We must fully fund the fight against Africa's AIDS pandemic, not just fret over it. Africa deserves her fair share of American attention, American trade, and American aid. Egypt and Israel alone receive as much US aid as do all the African nations south of the Sahara.^{xxiii}

Just as we have work to do abroad, we have work to do at home. This Administration has not been good for civil rights. It has not been good for civil liberties. It has not been good for democracy.

What better place than here and what better time than now to recall the travesty of the 2000 election.

You all know the story – Governor Bush's administration hired a firm to purge the voter rolls, and purge them they did, removing the qualified and

the ineligible with equal eagerness, 94,000 in all. This was truly a weapon of mass voting rights destruction.^{xxiv}

By the way, the man who ran that purge got a reward – today he is in the Voting Rights Section of the Department of Justice as Counsel to the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights.

Witnesses told the sorry story of voter suppression and nullification in Florida at our hearings after the election. They described police stops near polling places, demands for multiple forms of identification from people who had voted for decades, long-time voters' names missing from the rolls, a long and too-familiar litany of the sorts of activities practiced for years across the country to keep racial minorities from the polls.

With our coalition partners we filed and won a lawsuit, NAACP v. Smith, and received promises that what happened in 2000 will not happen again. But it has been happening for years, in Florida and elsewhere across the country.

The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court tried to keep Hispanics from voting in his native Arizona as a young lawyer; that experience must have served him well when Bush v. Gore came before him years later.

Despite all this, black Americans voted with the American majority on Election Day 2000. NAACP efforts then helped increase the African-American share of the total vote by 25 percent or more in four states. Two million more voters cast ballots in 2000 than did in 1996. Turnout in Texas increased 50 percent, in Florida by 60 percent, and in Missouri by a whopping 124 percent! More than a million African-Americans voted here in Florida, accounting for 15 percent of the total – a state record.

We did less well in 2002 – and you saw the result.

But what happened in the 2002 midterm elections also illustrated the politicization of patriotism and terrorism. In the Georgia Senate race, the Republicans used false patriotism to destroy a true patriot.

The incumbent, Max Cleland, is a Vietnam War veteran. He lost his right arm and both legs in battle. He also lost his Senate seat – when his opponent questioned his patriotism. Cleland had voted against the Homeland Security Act because it didn't provide protection for workers' rights.

His opponent ran an ad with pictures of Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, implying that the war veteran and triple amputee didn't love his country enough to help in the nation's fight against terrorists.

Republican Senator John McCain called the ad “worse than disgraceful, it's reprehensible.”^{xxv}

If Hispanics, blacks and whites turnout in 2004 in the same percentages as they did in 2000, the no-show National Guardsman in the White House and his draft avoiding Vice President will lose by three million votes.^{xxvi}

That's why voter registration and voter turnout must be a top priority for every Branch and every State Conference from now to election day. The countdown starts now. If a Branch isn't registering voters and isn't preparing now for a grassroots turnout program next year, it isn't doing its job.

Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “You are what you do!” What you do between now and election day next year will decide who you are – and will decide what kind of world we live in.

We've invited all of the Democratic candidates for President to a forum here. By their presence and their words, they will let you know that they are interested in your vote.

We invited the Republican candidate for President too, but he can't come. He couldn't come last year when we were in his home state – and so was he. He couldn't come to our Annual Convention in New Orleans two years ago either.

But he did come to our convention in Baltimore – when he was a candidate, and we hope he will honor the invitation we intend to issue next year.

We are and always have been nonpartisan. We've never endorsed a candidate for public office or a political party, and we never will.

But being nonpartisan doesn't mean being non-critical. And it doesn't even mean criticizing all parties equally. If the Democrats were doing anything, we'd criticize them too.

But one party controls the presidency, the Congress, and the Supreme Court – all three branches of the national government. And the press increasingly reflects and reinforces this one-party control.

One party repeatedly plays the race card, appealing to the dark underside of American culture, to that minority of Americans who reject democracy and equality.

In coded racial appeals, they embrace Confederate leaders as patriots and wallow in a victim mentality.

They preach racial neutrality and practice racial division. They celebrate Martin Luther King and misuse his message.

Their idea of reparations is to give war criminal Jefferson Davis a pardon.

Their idea of equal rights is the American flag and Confederate swastika flying side by side.

Speaking of the Confederate swastika, my former home state of Georgia rates last in the nation in SAT scores. Before they think about raising the Confederate flag again, they ought to raise their SAT scores!

We meet as our nation seems doomed to a punishing war of occupation in Iraq, war whose rationale has changed repeatedly – before it started and today. There was an ever shifting and constantly rotating reason for war – first regime change, then ties to terrorism, and then the invisible weapons of mass destruction.

Last fall the NAACP opposed unilateral war against Iraq, but we do not confuse opposition to the war with a lack of support for our fighting forces. We commend the bravery and sacrifice of our women and men in uniform, who represent all races and faiths.

More than most of American society, our military reflects the diversity of our nation. We mourn the lives lost, almost 20% of them black, almost twice the percentage of African-Americans in the population.

We have invited Specialist Shoshanna Johnson, the brave African-American woman taken prisoner during the war, to attend our Military Affairs Dinner Wednesday night.

But we'll continue to have our say.

At the NAACP, we long ago learned our lesson about not speaking out in times of war.

In the summer of 1918, on the eve of America's entry into World War I, one of our founders, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, urged blacks "to forget our special grievances and close ranks shoulder to shoulder with our fellow citizens and the allied nations that are fighting for democracy."

The criticism he faced then was immediate and loud. He quickly reversed his position and realized then – as we must realize now – that when

wars are fought to save democracy, the first casualty is usually democracy itself.

We ought to remember the words of Ohio Senator Robert Taft, who said two weeks after Pearl Harbor was attacked:

“I believe there can be no doubt that criticism in time of war is essential to the maintenance of any kind of democratic government.”

And the words of President Theodore Roosevelt, who said in 1918,

“To announce that there must be no criticism of the President, or to stand by the President, right or wrong, is not only unpatriotic and servile, but is morally treasonous to the American public.”

So we will continue to oppose any nominee to the federal courts who opposes us – such as William Pryor, whose nomination to this Circuit’s Court of Appeals is pending. Pryor, currently Alabama’s Attorney General, is a right wing extremist. He has consistently demonstrated hostility toward civil rights and voting rights. His nomination is an affront and his confirmation would be a disaster.

As war continues abroad, the attack on our liberties at home marches on.

We who know firsthand the evils of racial profiling must not tolerate its use against others in the name of national security. We also know firsthand the evils of law enforcement choosing their targets based on advocacy and association.

We have an attorney general who has abandoned the “attorney” part of his title. He has cast aside civilian courts in favor of military tribunals. He has “seized for himself the power to monitor confidential attorney-client

conversations without judicial oversight. The USA Patriot Act allows agents to seize business records, search a home or get information about a person's web surfing activity with minimal judicial review. It also allows the FBI to monitor telephone or email communications without demonstrating probable cause.^{xxvii}

We ought to remind John Ashcroft that the holiday we celebrate each July 4th commemorates revolutionaries who threw off the chains of privilege and arrogant power that were then – and remain today – the primary threats to freedom and human advancement.

If a dead man beat John Ashcroft in 2000, surely we can beat back his ideological assault on our Constitution.

Many of you remember when Senator Paul Wellstone addressed us at our convention in Minneapolis. Since last we met, we lost this powerful voice for the powerless. But he speaks to us still:

“I do not believe the future will belong to those who are content with the present. . . . The future will belong to those who have passion, and to those grassroots heroes who are willing to make the personal commitment to make our country better. The future will belong to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

The future belongs to us. We will be heard.

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(Julian Bond has been Chairman of the NAACP Board of Directors since February 1998. He is a Distinguished Professor in the School of Government at American University in Washington, DC, and a Professor of History at the University of Virginia.)

ⁱ In an April 1998 poll conducted by the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, 81% of blacks reported a favorable opinion of the NAACP. An October 1995 US News & World Report poll reported 90% of blacks

supported the NAACP. A 1993 leadership study by Brakeley, John Price Jones, Inc., showed 75% of blacks believed the NAACP the leader among groups with civil rights, social justice and race relations agendas. In this study, 75% of all respondents believed the NAACP adequately represented the black community. The NAACP is profoundly democratic. “Nationally, the NAACP (of all black civil rights/political organizations) is governed by its individually based membership.” In Class Notes by Adolph Reed, The Free Press, New York.

ⁱⁱ Saunders, Robert W., Sr., Bridging the Gap at 82, Univ. of Tampa Press (2000).

ⁱⁱⁱ Id. at 86.

^{iv} Patrice Marin & Edgar K. Lee, Appearance and Reality in the Sunshine State: The Talented 20 Program in Florida at 14, The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University (2003).

^v Id.

^{vi} Id. at 15.

^{vii} Id. at 21.

^{viii} Gratz v. Bollinger, 539 U.S. ___, ___, slip op. at 7n10 (June 23, 2003) Ginsburg, J., dissenting).

^{ix} Id.

^x “Bush Advisor Backs Use of Race in College Admissions”, The New York Times at A14 (January 18, 2003).

^{xi} “Dr. Rice said ‘I am myself a beneficiary of a Stanford initiative that took affirmative action seriously, that took a risk in taking a young PhD from the University of Denver’, referring to her arrival on the campus in 1981” in “Rice Considered a Centrist in Affirmative Action at Stanford”, Los Angeles Times (January 25, 2003).

^{xii} Grutter v. Bollinger, 539 U.S. ___, ___, slip op. at 13 (June 23, 2003).

^{xiii} Id., slip op. at 5 (Thomas, J., dissenting), (emphasis added).

^{xiv} Id. at 1.

^{xv} Frederick Douglass, “The Blessings of Liberty and Education: An Address Delivered in Manassas, Virginia” (September 3, 1894).

^{xvi} Paraphrased from “The Slow and Tortured Death of Affirmative Action,” The Black Commentator, July 3, 2003.

^{xvii} Gratz v. Bollinger, slip op. at 1-2 (Ginsburg, J., dissenting) (citation omitted).

^{xviii} Id. at 2-3 (footnotes omitted).

^{xix} “Let’s End Legal Loan Sharking”, by Skip Alston and Chuck Winfree, News Record, April 8, 2002.

^{xx} Fox Butterfield, “Prison Rates Among Blacks Reach a Peak, Report Finds,” The New York Times at A11 (April 7, 2003).

^{xxi} Daniel Altman, “U.S. Jobless Rate Increases to 6.4%, Highest in 9 Years,” The New York Times at A1 (July 4, 2003).

^{xxii} Bob Herbert, “Falling Into the Gap,” The New York Times.

^{xxiii} http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2004/summary_tables_table4.pdf USAID Country Allocation Summary, Actual Appropriation, 2002.

^{xxiv} King, Martin Luther III and Greg Palast, “Jim Crow Revived in Cyberspace”, The Baltimore Sun, (May 8, 2003)

^{xxv} Peter Carlson, “Political Veteran,” The Washington Post at C4 (July 3, 2003).

^{xxvi} Richard W. Stephenson, “Anger Raises Concern About Bush Run in ’04”, The New York Times at A30 (December 20, 2002).

^{xxvii} “Civil Liberties after 9/11,” Report by the ACLU at 21.