NAACP Pennsylvania STATE CONFERENCE

2020

PRESIDENT'S REPORT May 2020



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Vision Made Plain: Advocacy During the COVID-19 Pandemic

With the attack of the COVID-19 pandemic having erupted and created havoc over all that we are accustomed, there is a new norm to behold in the wake of advocacy that must be even more poignant than ever before. The good news about the status of the Pennsylvania State Conference is the train is on the track, moving slowly but moving forward. Having embraced the theme, *Vision Made Plain: Advocacy During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, my thought was to convey information which would be both encouraging and firm at the same time. Inundated with the disturbing news of deaths and increased numbers of African-Americans infected by the disease, the agenda of the Second Quarterly Meeting held on Saturday, April 18, 2020, was to reflect once again where we have been, where we are, and what it will take for us to reach where we need to be.

In a quote that I recently read by Arthur Ashe, he stated, "Start where you are, use what you have, do what you can." Where are we? We find ourselves unprepared and unexpectedly in the midst of a COVID pandemic. Although, COVID-19 has altered how we advocate, it is clear that we must continue to advocate promoting the six game changers that National still considers at the core of representing disparities for African-Americans.

Even during this current health crisis, my vision is that the local branches continue to address those issues that directly impact their communities. Who do we have? We have you, the units and leadership. Through the units must come both monthly executive committee and general membership meetings to continue the work which connects us to our local communities.

Yes, we are in the midst of a pandemic unlike anything that our generations have ever witnessed. However, my vision for the Pennsylvania State Conference remains aligned with the vision of the National Office. Just as our essential health care workers persist daily in doing all they can with the limited protective personal equipment, some sacrificing being home with their families, or self-quarantining even when they are home, they do so because they believe in the greater good of humanity and saving lives. We too are the frontline soldiers of civil rights and must stay the course. We do this by doing all that is necessary to stay compliant with National so that as local units, you are positioned and empowered to do the work. Then you stay connected to as many people as you can through phone calls, conference calls, virtual on-line sessions, the media, churches, notifications through schools to students and parents, and whatever it takes to get the word out that you as a local branch are still advocating on their behalf and helping to meet needs.

My desire is that we are all fully engaged and aligned with the Constitution, Bylaws, policies, and practices of the NAACP. We accomplish those goals by remembering that our fight is not with each other but assisting in lifting each other up, by stimulating branches to do more, and reviving dormant units to join in on the action. There is one vision, one mission, and one agenda that is set forth by National with the expectation that the units within the various areas will persevere through this COVID-19 pandemic. If we stand firm and together, use this opportunity to bring even more attention to the disparities that have existed for years, there could actually be a positive outcome in all the negativity that we have had to endure for years.

I look forward to everyone making a genuine effort to undergird the NAACP and its work with your expertise, resources, tenacity, and as trained frontline soldiers prepared to fight the good fight of civil rights.

A more excellent way,

Kenneth L. Huston President

ADVOCACY THAT COUNTS!



A SEAT AT THE TABLE Public Health — April 2020

As president, one of my responsibilities is to partner with as many as possible, particularly on the state level, so that the State Conference can have greater access to resources in doing the work we are charged with completing. Therefore, accepting an invitation from Governor Tom Wolf to join the subcommittee on policy as part of the new Health Disparity Taskforce recently established by Governor Wolf to be chaired by Lieutenant Governor John Fetterman is huge. In Governor Wolf's announcement of the new Task Force, he stated, "The Lieutenant Governor will chair a new Health Disparity Task Force that will work to identify short—and long—term consequences of the COVID—19 pandemic in our vulnerable communities."

"As this subcommittee on policy is established, the expectation is that the committee will be tasked with convening to discuss/present policy recommendations to the Taskforce that will address areas or issues that exacerbate healthcare outcomes for Black and Brown Pennsylvanians (e.g. criminal convictions, lack of a driver's license, lack of access to capital, etc.)."

In serving in this capacity, the opportunity is one that will allow the local units to also provide input and together address disparities that have been plaguing systemic structures of inequality for generations.

ADDRESSING ISSUES OF CONCERN Criminal Justice — February/March 2020

On the web page of the Montgomery County of Pennsylvania Public Defender, you will find the following words in describing the climate of their office, "Client-centered advocacy, Community outreach, and Holistic Results. Clearly the Commissioners have a different interpretation of what those words mean since on February 26, 2020, they terminated the positions of Chief Public Defender Dean Beer, and Deputy Public Defender Keisha Hudson Brooks. Both Chief Defender Dean Beer and Deputy Defender Keisha Hudson Brooks exemplified what it means to advocate for clients, reach out to the community and produce results that impact individuals and families. The community at large is thankful for their work in valuing indigent persons who deserve the same effective representation as someone who can afford to pay for a private attorney.

The Pennsylvania State Conference President fully supports the action of the presidents of the six Montgomery County Branches (Ambler Branch, Cheltenham Branch, Main Line Branch, Norristown Branch, Pottstown Branch, and Willow Grove Branch, in their efforts to bring some understanding as to why these terminations took place. The travesty of this action is going to have a negative rippling impact on not just Montgomery County, but the entire Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Criminal Justice reform in many areas is needed and in Montgomery County, at least two individuals saw it as there mission to advocate for the kind of reform that if adopted would improve the lives of those who are unfortunately most victimized by the system. This fight is not over. The demand for answers is not over. local branches will continue to advocate for criminal justice reform as well as support the programs initiated by Chief Defender Dean Beer.

Criminal Justice - February 2020

Behavior that constitutes blatant implicit and explicit biases can never be tolerated by a judge. Pennsylvania State Conference strongly calls for the Judicial Conduct Board of Pennsylvania to thoroughly examine the allegations of the egregious conduct of Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas Judge Mark Tranquilli not only in the most recent case he presided over, but also other cases whereby this judge may have exhibited the same racist behavior. NAACP Pennsylvania State Conference will follow the progression of the investigation and hope that the Judicial Conduct Board will in fact find Judge Tranquilli guilty of the allegations charged within the complaint filed against him.

UPDATES

VICE PRESIDENTS

First Vice President, Blanding Watson, has been charged with overseeing the western branches in Pennsylvania in addition to the central branches. First Vice President Watson will present a report on the status of the western branches by next quarter. Second Vice President, Diana Robertson, is in charge of overseeing the eastern region of the State. As of right now, Second Vice President Robertson has a good grasp of the status of each of the twenty branches and is in regular contact with all of them. At least ninety percent of those branches are compliant. Third Vice President, Phyllis Waller, resigned from her position.

SECRETARY

The secretary is presently ill and has taken a leave of absence. The assistant secretary has taken over her responsibilities as Acting Secretary.

TREASURER

The assistant treasurer who assumed the position of treasurer after the resignation of the elected treasurer has now had an opportunity to review all of the documents that he received from the former administration.

He has submitted financial statements and is now in a position to prepare a proposed budget. The account is in the black with an accounting for the operational account, Economic Development account as well as the funds being held for the Youth and College Division. Outstanding vouchers have been reconciled based on supportive documentation provided, and whether or not voted upon by the previous administration. The annual financial report was submitted to National; however, there is a question in regard to the amount of assessment still owed. Action has been taken to resolve the issue with Nazar Scott by next quarter.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

There have been a few Executive Committee meetings for the purpose of presenting all important matters for decisions by committee members. Some of the committee chairs are more productive than others. It is my goal to again meet with all of the committee chairs to ensure that they are completing their tasks in accordance with the National Bylaws and have a clear understanding as to the expectations relative to the State Conference.

YOUTH AND COLLEGE DIVISION

The goal for the next quarter is to really work with the Youth and College Division. There is still a lot of work to do with them to get them where they need to be. Time will be spent in an effort to get them active during this next quarter.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

February 27, 2020 – Prison-Based Gerrymandering

NAACP Association filed a complaint on Challenging Pennsylvania's Prison-Based Gerrymandering. With the NAACP Pennsylvania State Conference as one of the plaintiffs, the complaint alleges that prison gerrymandering violates Article I, Section 5 of the Pennsylvania Constitution — the Free and Equal Election Clause and the Pennsylvania Constitution's equal population requirement for state legislative districts, Article II, Section 16.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Communications Committee has been diligent in providing all of the information that comes from the National Office, all of the Weekly Updates, and other information as requested by the President. Additionally, information has been regularly placed on the website for all to partake as well as sent to media outlets.

UNITS

I am pleased to report that units have begun to send in their quarterly report of activities. The focus during the second quarter has been compliance with National. Therefore, I have been following through with the areas of units membership, filing annual financial reports, submitting national assessments, submitting the tax exempt form, and secretaries taking the membership portal training. During the next quarter, the focus will also include fulfilling state conference requirements.

Ambler Branch: We welcome the new president, Shaykh Muhammad, who is working diligently through the transition of filling vacancies, and compliancy requirements as well as being an active participant in addressing the issues within his community. He began on February 13, 2020.

Lycoming Tri-County Branch: I congratulate this branch for working to become active once again.

Second Quarterly Meeting — April 18, 2020

Although originally planned to take place in the eastern region of Pennsylvania, in the midst of the pandemic, it was decided that the quarterly meeting would still be held but virtually. I am happy to report that the entire second quarterly meeting was held as a virtual zoom meeting. Considering this was the first State Conference Zoom session, everything went very well. The sessions were divided into the same three categories that had been established by our first quarterly meeting in January 2020. We began with a press conference held at 9:00 in the morning. This press conference produced a candid discussion with Brandon Flood, Secretary, Pennsylvania Board of Pardons; Steve McFarland, Pardons and Commutations Liaison, Office of Lieutenant Governor John Fetterman; Julie Strickland-Gilliard, Regional Director of Western Pennsylvania, Office of Lieutenant Governor John Fetterman; and Kenneth L. Huston, President, NAACP Pennsylvania State Conference. Tené Croom, Press and Public Relations Coordinator for the NAACP Pennsylvania State Conference moderated and Diana Robertson, Communications Chair introduced the participants. All agreed that the Health Disparity Task Force established by Governor Tom Wolf and to be chaired by Lieutenant Governor John Fetterman "could be a viable vehicle to not only address health disparities impacting the minority community, but would seek to identify a resolve to greatly diminish health disparities, particularly as it relates to the African American community."

The next session was the general meeting for the unit presidents and general members which began at 10:30 a.m. Since the agenda for this meeting was previously set to not only include updated information for the general membership but to also discuss various aspects of the criminal justice system, a decision was made to present an abbreviated format to accommodate speakers, Keir Bradford-Grey, Chief Public Defender of Philadelphia as well as Executive Director, Jennifer Clarke of the Public Interest Law Center.

Attorney Jennifer Clarke spoke on how and what the NAACP could focus on for immediate issues. She provided information on the (1) Fair Employment Project (2) Knowing Your Rights as a Job Applicant With a Criminal Record in Pennsylvania; (3) Philadelphia Federal Detention Center Detainees File a Class Action Suit Demanding Protection from Covid-19. The three named petitioners, all of whom have serious health conditions, describe a crowded facility where social distancing, basic health precautions, and regular disinfection are impossible; and (4) Gun Violence, the need for gun owners to report lost or stolen guns within twenty-four hours.

Keir Bradford-Grey spoke regarding the need for state funding for Public Defenders and with the unionization of defenders, they will have even less funding to handle defendants. Additionally, she spoke to the situation that occurred in Montgomery County with the firing of two top defenders and suggested that since the County Commissioners were speaking to the issue of becoming more independent that we needed to follow up on that to make that happen.

The third session of the day concluded with the meeting of the Executive Committee.

CONCLUSION

Many have been participants of the virtual series presented by National. Many have been encouraged and have in fact participated in the sessions that were provided as part of the CRATI series. We have done all that we can to continue to provide resources and to empower the units to still continue to do advocacy work even during this pandemic by continuing within their units to have monthly executive and general membership meetings.

The pandemic has certainly changed the way of life for most and the experience has been new in learning how to navigate different forms of communications through virtual sessions, social media, and other means of communication of choice. The National Office has made every effort to continue to provide training so that units, leaders, and committee chairs will be able to adequately promote advocacy. Voting and Civic Engagement remains high on the list and something that we must continue to educate individuals as to continuing to exercise their right.

We continue to persevere. We continue to train. We continue to advocate, knowing that "when we fight, we win." I thank those of you who have decided to be part of the solution instead of part of the problem.

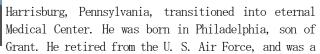
Thank you for stepping up to do things in a more excellent way!

IN MEMORY

JOHN ROOSEVELT GRANT, JR.

February 8, 1932 - March 1, 2020

John Roosevelt Grant, Jr., 88, of Schoolhouse Lane, life on Sunday, March 1, 2020, at M. S. Hershey the late John Roosevelt Grant, Sr. and Pauline Bell



member of the First Baptist Church of Steelton, where he served on the choir, a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. Kappa Omega Chapter, an endowment member of the NAACP and in his leisure, he loved to fish and travel. He also loved opera and classical music. John leaves to celebrate his life, his wife, Jessica D. Butler-Grant; his sons, Richard E. Grant, Sr. (Darlene) of Sicklerville, NJ and John R. Grant III of Upper Marlboro, MD; his sisters, Judith E. Grant, Eva P. Grant and Paulette A. O'Neill, all of Philadelphia; his seven grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren, and a host of other relatives and friends. Winfield Funeral Home, Steelton, Pennsylvania.

As a former executive committee member of the NAACP Pennsylvania State Conference, a Resolution was prepared, delivered, and read during the funeral services on behalf of President Kenneth L. Huston and Executive Committee.

Second Quarterly Meeting — April 18, 2020 PRESS CONFERENCE

Click below to Listen.



President Kenneth L. Huston's Television Interviews

NAACP, other organizations rallying to support African Americans struggling from COVID-19

Video 04/20/20 -- 11:36 PM

President Huston responds to racial profiling incidents on the rise in Pennsylvania during the COVID-19 pandemic. Particularly Black males wearing masks are targeted.

May 8, 2020 | NAACP: Racial Profiling Incidents on the rise in PA during COVID-19 Pandemic

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