

CHESTER N.A.A.C.P. NEWS

Newsletter of the Chester Branch of NAACP

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Winter 2008

Getting to know you

Education and Service: Lifelong Pursuits for Ella

[Editor's note: This is one of a series of profiles on people who make the Chester Branch of NAACP a vital force in the Chester community and beyond.]



Ella Mae Gaines McFarland

Ella McFarland figures she will never stop teaching - or learning. She retired from a 27-year career as an elementary school teacher in the Chester-Upland District in 2001. Since then she has continued to teach as an adult educator, which she does to this day. For several years she was Adult Education Coordinator for Delaware County Community College.

Nor did she ever stop being a student. After earning a Master of Education degree at Widener University, she went on to doctoral studies at Penn State University, completing all but the dissertation. There have also been many workshops to hone her teaching skills. Beyond the formal schooling, her natural curiosity about the world around her makes her a lifetime learner.

The love of education was instilled in Ella early in life. "I was raised to believe that education is a powerful thing. It's not easy, but it is the road to freedom," she says.

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**SAVE THE DATE:
CHESTER BRANCH OF N.A.A.C.P.
ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER
FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 2008**

Catch Our New Website at www.chesternaacp.org!

The Chester Branch has stepped into the 21st Century with a brand new computer website. The handsome site, replete with a photo of President Darrell V. Jones with Governor Ed Rendell and State Representative Thaddeus Kirkland, was unveiled this month.

Start by opening the website. On the left you will see the names of a number of web pages you can go to. You can open "About" and find historical information on the Chester, Pennsylvania, and national NAACP organizations, as well as a schedule of meetings.

"Membership" tells you why it is important to become a member. You can download a membership form under the next link, "Membership Form."

"Contact us" tells easy ways to contact the Chester Branch or other related organizations.

Our Branch Backs Dissident Slate for National Board

A slate of seven candidates for the National Board of NAACP is calling for major reforms in the 99-year-old organization. The sponsoring group, the Coalition for NAACP Leadership of Conscience, wants to see more of our dues money go to local branches and less to the national organization. And they want NAACP to be a more dynamic organization.

The Chester Branch voted on December 21 to support the seven dissidents. The vote was unanimous.

Myrlie Evers-Williams, widow of civil rights martyr Medgar Evers, is the best-known of the seven candidates. Coalition members include J. Whyatt Mondersire of Philadelphia, the incoming President of the Pennsylvania State Conference of NAACP Branches.

Right now the National gets 60 percent of the membership dues coming into local branches, while the locals keep 40 percent. The dissidents would like to reverse those numbers so locals would get to keep 60 percent.

The Chester Branch in 2008: Visions for the New Year

Education, jobs, crime, and government are the issues that should be priorities for the Chester Branch of NAACP in 2008, according to **President Darrell V. Jones**. He believes the Branch's mission is to "raise the hopes and conditions of the people."

Darrell would love to see the Branch grow to 2,000 to 3,000 members, which would make it the largest in Pennsylvania.

Committees should get more people involved to lighten the work load, he says.

Branch **Secretary Karen Jones** hopes the Branch will continue to be a resource for those who need assistance in education, health, housing, discrimination and those seeking employment. She says NAACP "should work on providing our youth with the skills to become productive citizens in our community and the workplace by continuing to address the educational system and the lack of recreational activities...."

Karen sees the Chester Branch's Youth Council as playing a vital role in this regard. She wants the Board to "work on partnering with other organizations who share our vision for the betterment of the Chester community, as well as reaching out to those who we feel have not shown an interest in the community.... Our Board should become more involved in attending meetings throughout the City of Chester and surrounding area and continue to publicly speak out when injustices are brought to our attention."

For **Ella McFarland**, education, crime in the area (as it affects children and the school district), and housing should be the priority issues for the Branch in 2008. She wants us to keep abreast of housing patterns and reconfiguration of business.

She believes the Branch's new website will help to put us on the map in 2008. Ella wants us to be more visible during the primary and general elections. And, as chair of the Membership Committee, she not only wants to recruit more members but make sure they understand what it means to be part of NAACP.

Jones and McNear Honored

Chester NAACP President Darrell V. Jones and Executive Committee member Charles S. McNear received well-deserved honors recently.

Darrell Jones was one of several Chester community leaders saluted by St. Daniel's United Methodist Church in October. He also was an honoree at the Islamic Center of Chester in November.

Deacon **Charles McNear** was honored by the Deacons' Association of Chester and Vicinity for service to the Association, the Church, and the community.

Our congratulations to both.

Officers and Committee Chairs Chester Branch, NAACP

President: Darrell V. Jones
1st Vice President: Charlie L. Warren II
2nd Vice President: Ella McFarland
3rd Vice President: Donna V. Mims
Secretary: Karen D. Jones
Treasurer: Charlotte Beverly

Committees:

Armed Forces: Bruce Neal
Economic Development: Charlie L. Warren
Education: Ella McFarland
Finance: Charlotte Beverly
Health: Karen Jones
Housing: Ella McFarland
Labor & Industry: Charles McNear
Legal Redress: Tonya Warren
Membership: Ella McFarland
Office: Karen Jones
Political Action: Will Richan
Press & Publicity: Karen Jones
Religious Affairs: Donna Mims

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News From The NAACP**Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin to Be Honored at 39th Annual NAACP Image Awards**

At this year's nationally televised NAACP Image Awards ceremony, Stevie Wonder, who overcame blindness to become a top rock star, will be inducted into the NAACP Image Awards Hall of Fame. The multi-talented Wonder has won 25 Grammy Awards, a record for a solo artist.

Aretha Franklin, known throughout the music world as "the Queen of Soul," will receive the Vanguard Award. She has 18 Grammy Awards to her credit.

The ceremony will be telecast by Fox TV February 14.

The NAACP Image Awards were established in 1967, at the height of the civil rights struggle. This is the premier event to honor outstanding black actors, actresses, writers, producers and directors.

The NAACP had long been involved in the continuing struggle for greater participation by African Americans in the entertainment industry. This effort began in 1915 when the organization launched a nationwide protest against the showing of the movie "Birth of a Nation" by D. W. Griffith. The film set in the period immediately after the Civil War, depicted black people as savages and the reconstruction era as a period of corruption.

Although society has changed greatly since that time—as a record number of African Americans are winning numerous coveted, mainstream awards—the lack of racial diversity in the entertainment industry still exists. There is a need for more minority talent in front of and behind the scenes.

Presented annually, the NAACP Image Awards are an exciting, star-studded salute to the best in entertainment. Honorees, presenters and performers have included many of the major celebrities in America as well as international political figures and dignitaries. There are 36 competitive categories in the fields of motion picture, television, music and literature.

Target Co. Is the Target

Since 1996, the NAACP Economic Reciprocity Initiative (ERI) has been used as a guide for consumers to determine the economic reciprocity that exists between America's leading corporations and the African American community.

Each year the NAACP sends out a questionnaire to companies. One company that has not responded in the last three years is the Target Corporation, which operates over 2,000 stores, including many in Delaware County.

The ERI currently includes 51 companies in five key industries: Financial Services, Lodging, Telecommunications, General Merchandising and Automotive. Each company is evaluated in five areas: employment, community reinvestment, marketing, supplier diversity and philanthropy.

The NAACP has written to Target CEO Robert Ulrich expressing concern about the company's failure to respond and reminding him that "Black buying power is over \$700 billion a year and growing—a substantial amount of our hard earned dollars are spent in general merchandising with corporations such as Target. In this economic climate, we believe you need and want African American consumers."

A Call for Mortgage Reform, Foreclosure Relief for Millions

Predatory, discriminatory practices by the lending industry have resulted in a record number of home foreclosures—up 94 percent in the last year alone—and late mortgage payment levels that now stand at a 20-year high.

The NAACP and other civil rights organizations are demanding that the mortgage industry and policy makers end such practices. There should be an immediate moratorium on foreclosures, they say.

A Congressional estimate puts 2 million American homeowners with sub-prime mortgages at direct risk of losing their homes if nothing is done to remedy the situation immediately.

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(News From The NAACP, from Page 3)**'State of Emergency'**

The NAACP has declared a 'State of Emergency' in response to the recent surge in assaults against young African Americans as demonstrated by boot camp beating death of Martin Lee Anderson, noose hangings in Jena, Louisiana and other communities, and the assault by police on Shelwanda Riley. The rising level of violence against African Americans symbolized by these cases, as well as countless other dehumanizing attacks, requires immediate action by local and state authorities as well as the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Congress.

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"I am not a sit down person," says Ella. That rates as one of the understatements of the year. She still commutes to Delaware daily to direct a GED program there.

A Published Author

Ella has two books to her credit. The first, *Climb Till Your Dream Comes True*, lays out guidelines for young women to make it out of welfare and into careers. The second, *Suspenders.com*, is a novel about a troubled family and the young heroine's search for happiness.

Both books draw on Ella's own experiences and those of the people she has known and worked with. For example, she was involved in running Project Pride, a program to help women prepare for careers. It included job coaching, job fairs, and health education.

Ella was born in rural Virginia. When she was in the second grade, the family moved to Paoli, later to Bryn Mawr. In the process she made an

important discovery: that she was ahead of most of the other children in her class. She knew from first-hand experience that being Black and being from the South did not mean you were less than other people.

Southern 'Hospitality'

But Ella also remembers how things suddenly changed when her family crossed the Mason-Dixon Line into Virginia, on their way to family gatherings there. She knew the sting of humiliation when grown family members and friends were treated like second-class citizens without being able to do anything about it.

Yet these experiences have not left Ella McFarland an embittered person. Instead, she focuses her attention on helping young Black people prepare themselves to succeed in a world that isn't always fair.

The lessons have rubbed off on her own eight children. One of her offspring is with the U.S. Treasury Department. Another is in the State Budget Office in Harrisburg. Others include teachers in public schools and Head Start; director of a women's shelter in Philadelphia; correctional work; and trades.

Ella herself has won many awards. She served as a member of the Delaware County Women's Commission.

Church has always been an important support to Ella. She has been a member of Bethany Baptist Church for the last 35 years. Another important part of her life has been the National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa, Inc., where she has been a member for 21 years.

Devotion to NAACP

From early on, Ella was involved with NAACP. It began as a teenager in Bryn Mawr. Not surprisingly, the focus was on education then, as it is today. She currently chairs the Education, Membership, and Housing Committees of the Chester Branch.