

THE NAACP IN COLLETON COUNTY

(by: Shiela Keaise)

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Evidence has been shown, how for many years Blacks were treated as slaves, toys and even playmates. After many years of having cruel treatment done to them, Blacks were finally granted the right to be counted as a citizen and then the right to vote. Even though they were considered as equal as the white man in the Constitution, Blacks were still treated with discrimination. To end discrimination against Blacks, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was founded. In 1909, 60 black and white citizens created the NAACP to secure better and equal living in the United States for black citizens. Even though other races and minorities have benefited, the NAACP was primarily created and is currently working for the advancement of Blacks or Colored People. Along with other counties in South Carolina, Colleton County has an active NAACP committee. The President is Mr. Thelmae Wiggins. By different controversial issues about discrimination that is continually existing against blacks, the NAACP shows up defending with the motive of equal rights for all.

During the desegregation period, on April 12, 1973, teachers, and students were probably just getting familiar with black and white students. However, black adult business-

men were still having a hard time finding jobs and positions that they qualified for better than whites. This is when the NAACP takes a stand and boycotts for jobs, if not, key positions that they qualified for. Along with boycotting, the NAACP chose to continue the selective buying until county or city officials took actions to eliminate discrimination with the unfair hiring among black residents.

The President, Raleigh Williams, at that time, was firm and to the point. He stated, "This and other things are long overdue. Until the council acts, we shall continue to react." Along with his ability to run a business and lead the NAACP, Williams took command and said, "Other actions would be taken in addition or in place of the boycott if the resolutions were not adopted." By going as far as to say, "We're not trying to hurt the merchants by boycotting, but they have the power to urge city council to act on our complaints," Williams shows that he was only for the good of equality shown to all.

On May 8, 1973, the NAACP had declared a moratorium on its boycott of white-owned firms pending the outcome of a planned meeting with city officials. The original meeting was cancelled because of a conflict of the NAACP's own meeting in Smoaks, so the NAACP officials had to decline. However, it was stated by the NAACP and city council that they would meet in the near future. Evidence was not shown where they ever met, not that one could find that is. However, the NAACP officials stated, if actions were not declared the

would have to travel that road again.

Another case^{is} where the NAACP's former President, Raleigh Williams stands up supporting the Constitution. The Constitution has and always ~~has~~ stated that all men are created equal, even if the Executive branch did not enforce it and/or the Judicial branch did not carry it out. In 1987, a group of people calling themselves the "Blue Dot" committee was encouraging selective buying among walterboro businesses to protect unfair hiring practices among black residents. Former Colleton County NAACP President Raleigh Williams, Chairman of Blue Dot, said the selective buying is not a boycott. The protest started after a white applicant was chosen to the director's position for the Department of Social Services. Williams said the NAACP is not included in the selective buying but is backing the effort.

The problem began when the Colleton County Department of Social Service named Richmond Drawdy as director of the county DSS department. The deciding vote was cast by board chairman Tom Murray who broke a 2 to 2 tie. The other candidates for the position was Norris Reardon. Blacks had begun picketing in front of Colleton Drug. The pickets were handing out leaflets urging shoppers not to shop at Colleton Drug. "He does not feel the needs for the blacks," the leaflet claims.

Williams said the group feels that anytime a good position comes open, the whites in the county always say that a white

person is more qualified, no matter how much education and job knowledge a black person may have. "Blacks are always the last to be hired, and the first to be fired." Williams yet said that the selective buying will continue until the conditions set forth in their complaints were met.

Even though the signs the blacks were carrying around Colleton Drug Store were to them the truth, the store's owner disagrees with them heavily. Murray, the store's owner, noted that the department's hiring practices could hardly be called discriminatory, because of 104 positions under the county DSS department, 59 are held by blacks. He will never know if Drawdy was more qualified than Reardon, because Reardon was not given the chance to prove himself, but it still shows up to be a factor in some way or another that sometimes, in Reardon's case, blacks are denied the position because of his race.

In 1987, the famous school referendum's proposals were rejected by Colleton voters, after an attempt by the Colleton County's NAACP to halt Tuesday's school referendum failed in the U.S. District Court the day before. The judge presiding was Judge Sol Blatt, Jr. Judge Blatt said at the hearing that the plaintiffs had to prove that they would be harmed more if the election was conducted than the defendants would be harmed if the election was postponed. Judge Blatt refused to postpone the election, stating he could not find any compelling reason to. The suit was initiated by NAACP members:

Glenn Pincaney, Norris Reardon, and W.P. Lloyd. They charged specifically that Colleton County Council had not followed proper procedure by not obtaining preclearance from the U.S. Justice Department prior to the referendum. Primarily, the NAACP efforts were directed at the single-member districting plan created by the Governor's Office at the request of the delegation. In this controversy the President, Thelmae Wiggins does not speak out, so there was no information that could be received about him.

Blacks are classified as doing the most crimes, being the most outcast, and being the poorest than other races, but yet they are the minorities. How can blacks be a minority and be majorities when it comes down to being the worst person and the worst criminals. There is evidence that whites are more in number as being poor than the "so called" minority race, the Black man.

Only a few things have changed since the 1965 Civil Rights Act, even with the NAACP trying to bring about equal rights to all. However, things are going to change. Soon there will be equality and justice will be served to those who try and stand against it. There will be equality and not any one race will dominate. Only those who are in the good for the country and the people. There will be no more giving credit where it is not due. With this effort, America can become a great nation. Along with the words of the slain, civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. when he said, "if we allow freedom to ring.....when we allow freedom to ring.....American will be a great nation."