

Women, Blacks Urged to Step Up Social Activism and Service

Written by Jacqueline Frances Taylor
Wednesday, 21 March 2012 12:44



In celebration of Women’s History Month and the 185th Anniversary of the Black Press, leading pioneers in education, civil rights, politics, and media gathered at the National Press Club in Washington to honor the significant contributions Blacks have made and continue to make to society.

The forum entitled, “Stateswomen for Justice: From Whence We’ve Come, Where We Are, Where We Must Go from Here” addressed issues of leadership and the visionary solutions needed to propel African-Americans into the future.

Event organizer Hazel Trice Edney noted the importance of gaining strength from legacy of leaders who paved the way for African-Americans. Her hope was that the “spirit of courage” would be renewed and that the audience would continue the work of journalists such as Ida B. Wells and Frederick Douglass.

Moderated by Barbara Williams-Skinner, Founder, President/CEO of the Skinner Leadership Institute, the lively and interactive event focused on issues of equality in the areas of rights, justice and opportunities for African-Americans.

Dr. Julianne Malveaux, President of Bennett College for Women, emphasized that she is passionate about economic justice and noted the connection between economics and education and their ability to transform the lives of African-Americans.

Women, Blacks Urged to Step Up Social Activism and Service

Written by Jacqueline Frances Taylor
Wednesday, 21 March 2012 12:44

“African American women still earn 59 percent of what White men earn,” stated Malveaux. “Women still earn 77 percent of what men earn. We have lots of justice issues that we really have to deal with. We don’t get that passionate about economic justice issues and they really have tentacles.”

Barbara Arnwine, Executive Director for the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, focused on the importance of voting rights and the need to register one million new African-American voters in order to become a stronger voting bloc in the upcoming elections. She stated that the country is at a “critical juncture in this fight.”

“This is the fight of our lives folks,” Arnwine proclaimed. She distributed to the audience what was labeled as a “Map of Shame”, a color coded map showing voter suppression legislation by state. “And, this is the time in which we have to stand up. This is happening on our watch. This is our opportunity to make a difference....We need every one of you to be a voting rights champion.”

Rev. Dr. Barbara Reynolds, a syndicated columnist, was encouraged by the young people present at the event. She noted the importance of building bridges between the past and the current generation through mentoring.

With 20 students from the Maya Angelou Middle and High Schools in the audience, Rev. Dr. Reynolds recounted her work as a stateswoman for justice.

“I have been an activist, not just a journalist,” Reynolds stated. “I was the first woman who was arrested in Washington, D.C. picketing at the Sudan embassy. I was 17 chased by the Klan trying to get people registered to vote.”

Teen entrepreneur DeAnna Mayo, owner of My Sweet Tooth, LLC, was inspired by the event and plans to share what she learned on Facebook and Twitter. Her advice: “Never take anything for granted....We must take advantage of our opportunities and go out and reach everyone we can. That is the only way to make it and succeed.”

Women, Blacks Urged to Step Up Social Activism and Service

Written by Jacqueline Frances Taylor
Wednesday, 21 March 2012 12:44

Also present at the event were DeAnna's parents. Her mother and manager, TaKhia Mayo, homeschools her children and teaches about the importance of civic involvement. She said that she was pleased with the expression of unity showcased at the event.

Bruce Mayo was also eager to share what he learned with his friends and community. Mayo stated, "The voting message resonated with me today....This was powerful just to hear the women and how they presented themselves. To have my daughter and wife be a part of this was uplifting for me."

Melanie Campbell, president and CEO of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, focuses on increasing civic engagement and voter participation through mobilizing Blacks and underserved communities. She emphasized that everyone - including the church, sororities, and fraternities - can play a part in getting out the vote.

"We have to build cross-racial, cross-cultural, inter-generational coalitions to fight the issues around voter suppression," said Campbell. "It is the number one civil rights issue of our moment as we go into the next election cycle and not enough of our community knows about it."

There were a diversity of civil rights issues represented at the luncheon forum that drew more than 200 mostly women to the Club. This was the second annual Women's History Month/Black Press Anniversary forum organized by Trice Edney Communications and News Wire. Major sponsors of the event included AARP, Areva, and Wells Fargo.

"I am leaving with a renewed passion for the young people and everyone to vote," stated Rev. Laura Johnson, Founder and Program Manager of E.V.E. (End Violent Encounters) Ministry, an organization dedicated to ending domestic violence. "We need to get out into the communities."

Rev. Johnson continued: "It's given me a burning desire to get out there and really hit the pavement to get people to vote. That is going to be very important going forward." {comments on}