

SPEAK NOW



Marriage Equality, you say?

Part I: Why the NAACP National Board of Directors voted to oppose codifying discrimination.

The NAACP's recent decision concerning marriage equality is defined by our mission and constitution, which states our objective is to ensure the "political, educational, social and economic equality" of **all people**. We support marriage equality because it is consistent with the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution.

This support does not mean the NAACP has adopted a position on same-sex marriage from a personal, moral, or religious perspective. We are not an organization that takes a position on an individual's sexual orientation.

We deeply respect our members' personal and moral beliefs and, as our resolution states, "we strongly affirm the religious freedoms of all people as protected by the First Amendment."



The NAACP has always advocated strongly on behalf of the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment, and this is an extension of that mission.

Indeed, the Mississippi State Conference of the NAACP honors and defends religious institutions from discrimination, just as we honor and defend individual rights.

For decades, this great nation was divided by miscegenation laws created specifically to pare us into easily controlled enclaves. Those in power knew full well that a poor white population separated from its poor black brethren would never have the strength to challenge a system designed to keep the majority impoverished.

Today, the battle to divide us continues—only now we are capable of recognizing it.

Segregation laws helped maintain a rift between the races, weakening their bond. Today, those looking to cut deeply into the clout of a struggling middle class now seek to emasculate African-American churches and divert them from their age-old battle for social equality and reform by hammering the divisive issues of morality such as abortion and, now, same sex marriage.

It is no coincidence that we are seeing multiple states dredge up marriage purity laws at a time when the middle class is becoming aware of growing economic inequities between the richest Americans and the rest of the nation. Likewise, it is no accident the gay marriage issue arises at a time when a host of southern states seek to create laws restricting voting.

Many of the same people who seek to remove citizens from voter rolls or impose strict new voting requirements also demand we ban the rights and privileges for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) citizens.

Simply put: those who seek to confine our rights would first divide our voice.

The Black Church is a force of strength and organization in our community, and we support the belief that the church must continue to take moral positions on issues of

faith. However, issues of faith are not the domain in which the NAACP operates. The NAACP serves to protect individuals and religions in the realm of government treatment under the United States Constitution.

For the NAACP, marriage equality is not a question of what is morally right or allowed by religion. It is a question of whether individuals are provided equal protection under the law.

While marriage is a religious practice, it is also a phenomenon instituted by the government, which allots governmental rights and privileges, such as Medicare, Social Security, disability and veteran's benefits for a spouse.

The NAACP board has heard the argument that marriage equality undermines the institution of marriage, but we also recognize that the highest rate for domestic violence, unwed parenthood and divorce sits well within the nation's Bible belt, where there is greatest resistance to marriage equality. Logic suggests that any genuine effort to defend marriage on a legal level must begin with an attack upon the institution of divorce, the

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scourge of domestic violence, and the crippling impact of unwed parenthood. However, we are not faced today with a flurry of laws seeking to restrict these events. The question is, why not?

We must conclude that the LGBT community is instead just one more social class targeted with discrimination. The recent call for war against marriage equality amounts to a war on yet another minority. It is a war that seeks to isolate us from one another, as it has attempted to isolate us from our Latino brethren and from economically underprivileged Caucasians. We have seen this tactic in the past, and we must not again fall victim to it. The LGBT are our sons, our daughters, our family members, our co-workers and our fellow church members.

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President's Post

Dear Friends of the Mississippi State Conference NAACP,

As we welcome the sunshine and heat of the summer season, I am excited to share with you the new Mississippi State Conference NAACP (MS-NAACP) newsletter, **SPEAK NOW**. We have endured a spirited legislative session, some challenging social justice issues, and a compelling voter registration push this year. Now, we are embarking on a new component, effectively conveying our news. **SPEAK NOW** is an essential tool in our communications box. Who better to tell our story than us?

As you read this publication, you will find new information that you may have not otherwise received from your main source of news. You may even get perturbed, upset, or uncomfortable...and that's okay because we want our stories to move you to action. **SPEAK NOW** tells you more than what's happening in MS-NAACP, it will show you what to look for in your community, inspire coverage, generate interest, and provide a full-bodied account of modern-day Mississippi injustices from a racial lens. This document will give you a counter-balance of issues and events that affect our people.

We will also launch an e-newsletter, new website, and updated alerts via Facebook and Twitter this season.

This could not be possible without you, our members and partners, who have provided us with tips, ideas, and suggestions. I challenge you to continue being proactive in your community and ensuring the equality of all persons.

If you are not a member, I encourage you to join the more than 11,000 Mississippians who believe in the mission and vision of the NAACP.

My last request is that you join us in our historic voter outreach effort, the *This Is My Vote!* civic participation program. New tactics to keep you from the ballot box are nothing but old ways to suppress voting numbers of people of color. Don't be fooled, and don't be discouraged. Every single vote counts. So, host a voter registration drive, do door-to-door canvassing, hold registration booths at church or where you work, make phone calls. If we can assist you in any efforts, please don't hesitate to contact our office.

I am ever so grateful to serve as your State President and I appreciate your support, prayers, and contributions.

Sincerely,



Derrick Johnson
State President

- Making Democracy Work in Mississippi -



SPEAK NOW is the external publication of the Mississippi State Conference NAACP. Content features news about MS-NAACP events, activities, and legal redress issues and topics. **SPEAK NOW** is published quarterly.

MS-NAACP is equally committed to ensuring the political, educational, social and economic quality of rights of all person and eliminating racial hatred and racial discrimination. MS-NAACP welcomes partners and is eager to hear from concerned citizens.

Ideas and suggestions may be submitted via email to zsummers@uniteonevoice.org or delivered to:



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NAACP Endorsement A Shake-up For Some

Part 2: Local Religious Leaders React to Marriage Equality Decision.

The Mississippi State Conference of the NAACP (MS-NAACP) committed itself to the National NAACP's resolution supporting marriage equality, but some local residents expect a cold reception from some community residents.

"We're going to be divided about it," said Rev. Charles Holbrook, pastor at Lynch Street CME Church, in Jackson. "There will be some acceptance, but plenty of disagreement, too. Society is more tolerant for things once considered taboo, but the black religious community does not think with one voice. I intend to open discussion on it at a Wednesday evening Bible study, to see how they feel on it."

The Mississippi branch supported the national NAACP's position that marriage equality opposition is the modern world's new version of the interracial marriage ban, a wedge issue promoted by those looking to divide the black community, and the middle class in general (see front page article for more on MS-NAACP's official statement).

MS-NAACP acknowledged that, while marriage is a religious practice, it is also a government phenomenon. The U.S. Government in particular allots a set of rights and privileges, such as Social Security, disability and veteran's benefits to a spouse. As the NAACP has historically fought for the government to treat citizens equally, naturally the NAACP would advocate for marriage equality as a right for every person.

The Black Church in Mississippi has diverse responses to the NAACP's decision, according to Reverend C.J. Rhodes, pastor of Mt. Helm Baptist Church in Jackson. "Though the Black Church here is by far socially conservative on the issue of homosexuality per se, it isn't monolithic about the [NAACP] Board's decision. Dialog will reveal how nuanced and complicated this conversation is in our communities."

"The separation of church and state argument works constitutionally, but it's the implementation that causes anxiety," Rhodes added. "Are churches, for instance, mandated to perform marriages for tax purposes in a

state that legalizes same-sex marriage, with them being a 501 (c)(3)?" he asked.

Rhodes offered that some churches do wonder if the NAACP would be willing to defend both churches and gays with equal enthusiasm if civil marriage laws evolve: "Some people making a distinction between the religious freedom argument and the

Constitutional argument are OK with this decision. But there will be people who want to make sure that if there are churches that—for any number of reasons--forbid s a m e - s e x marriage, that the NAACP will be just as vocal about protecting religious liberty for those churches if any laws change."

The generation gap will also likely be a problem, said Rhodes, with many older African-Americans viewing marriage equality as a treacherous shift in the social

fabric, as society's opinions evolve beyond them. Even today, he said, some African-Americans still frown upon interracial marriage, long legalized by the U.S. government in *Loving v. Virginia* in 1967. But views are changing among many younger black Christians, even in Mississippi, Rhodes said.

Gay and lesbian advocates champion the NAACP's decision, marking it as a long overdue step in the direction that society is already evolving, with marriage equality overwhelmingly approved by people under the age of 30. A recent Washington Post-ABC News poll found that 53-percent of Americans polled approve of gay marriage, with only 39-percent saying it should be illegal.

Some critics worry, however, that the National Board of Directors of the NAACP may have alienated a few of its members with the perceived haste with which it gave its endorsement.

"More than anything, you hear a lot of people say 'process matters.' You hear those who are very supportive of the NAACP and who hold strong views on same-sex marriage say the membership wasn't consulted prior to the vote," Rhodes said. "Even if the board supported it on constitutional grounds, some folks may not be able to say 'at least we had that dialogue,' and I don't know what the fallout will be because people feel slighted."

Nevertheless, Rhodes believes many black Christians understand that that civil rights are different from Christian rites, and he, like many others, appreciates the legal and constitutional distinction being endorsed by the NAACP. ■

2012 Legislative Session In Review

The new Republican-controlled Mississippi State Legislature embarked on an agenda crafted by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a corporate-backed ultraconservative trade association, and the TEA party, funded by billionaires David & Charles Koch.

The Majority in each chamber enabled swift passage of many measures, yet they were surprised when a number of their oppressive measures died due to progressives coming together to provide balance and push-back.

Defeated

Immigration Reform - Religious leaders, business leaders, and law enforcement officials marched on the Capitol en masse, opposing the copycat Alabama law, which has proven to have devastating financial consequences to our neighbor state in addition to its inhospitable impact on foreign business executives. Broad-based support for the Mississippi Immigrants Rights Alliance carried the day and defeated the anti-immigrant legislation.

Predatory Consumer Loan Hike - A plan to raise interest rates on consumer loans from 36% to 99% failed after a coalition of good citizens objected. The Mississippi Center for Justice, backed by the Mississippi Religious Leadership Conference, spearheaded this successful effort.

Harassment of Public Benefits Recipients - Several attempts were made to regulate persons who receive "public benefits," but they all failed. They included such things as checking for citizenship status, drug testing, and requiring



Mt. Helm Baptist Church Pastor Rev. C.J. Rhodes says homosexuality is viewed from a socially conservative perspective in Mississippi's black community.

photo courtesy of washingtonpost.com

20 hours of free labor of all recipients, including public retirees, nursing home residents, children, and seniors.

Personhood - The "Personhood" agenda was embedded in bills twice (in a clear attempt to thumb the nose of the voters who rebuffed the concept last November). Both bills died after much volatile debate, though a bill placing onerous burdens on Jackson Women's Health Organization (JWHO) did pass. This matter concluded with the political witch-hunt of Dr. Carl Reddix. Lt. Governor Tate Reeves blocked Haley Barbour-appointed Dr. Reddix's confirmation to the State Board of Health because he was the doctor with admitting privileges to JWHO. Reeves first claimed he wanted a "qualified appointment," however, when this story went national and Dr. Reddix's impeccable credentials were made public, Reeves admitted he blocked the nomination because of the JWHO affiliation.



Charter Schools - "Profitizing" public schools, as part of the for-profit charter school movement, failed after two committee vote attempts and numerous delays. The Republican leadership promises that it will return to this issue in 2013 after a public campaign.

Privatization of Child Support & Child Care Licensing - An attempt to privatize management of the child support system was slipped into a conference report that would extend the life of Department of Human Services, but the bill was returned to die in Conference. Another bill did extend the Department until 2015. A bill to remove childcare licensing authority from the Health Department to DHS was also killed in committee.

ALEC Bills that Survived

Sunshine Act - This bill limits the Attorney General's power to represent state agencies and to retain private law firms to assist his office with complicated legislation. Now, the Attorney General must seek permission from each of the nearly 200 state agencies (headed by political appointees) in order to proceed on their behalf.

Public Employees to Lose Jobs - A bill to remove state employees from the protections of the state employment system was passed, paving the way for many employees to be fired at-will.

Dismantling of Public Education Through Consolidation - three important bills provide for the consolidation of school districts without consideration of the local school

boards: (1) consolidates administrative operations of Drew, Sunflower, and Indianola school districts; (2) consolidates Bolivar County's six non-failing school districts to three; (3) authorizes "emergency" consolidation by the State Department of Education. The impact of these measures will likely include: increased costs due to restructuring, new transportation costs, and job losses due to district contraction.

Corporate Tax Reductions - The corporate inventory tax will be phased out completely by 2016, costing the state hundreds of millions of dollars. The public will have to pay for this un-funded tax break through increased state and local taxes.

Voter ID - Aside from its intended goal of reducing the electorate, this new un-funded mandate will cost to implement. More cronyism is anticipated as contracts to implement an ID system are farmed out to private entities. Implementation funding

was not provided to counties and municipalities, once again placing the financial burden on the public.

Child Protection Act - This Act makes virtually everyone who comes into contact with children responsible for reporting perceived abuse and/or neglect. It provides no "reasonable person standard" or any other guideline for determining a credible threat to the welfare of children, but it criminalizes the failure to do so. It is anticipated there will be an increase in false reports, court proceedings, more children placed in protective custody and foster care, or more parents retaining lawyers to defend themselves.

Redistricting - The new leadership's redistricting maps packed African-American districts and collapsed districts where African-Americans are significant communities of influence. The maps require U.S. Justice Department approval to ensure that the plans do not dilute minority voting strength.

Workers Rights and Protections Weakened - Rights under the Workers Compensation reform makes it more difficult for employees injured on the job to recover benefits. Among a host of draconian limitations, there is a new rule that, upon injury, workers are presumed to be under the

influence (this is a rebuttable presumption), workers must prove they were not under the influence. There is a prohibition against workers choosing their own physician for care, and a new short window for workers to bring a claim.

New Legislation

Education - Public funds will be given to pay private school tuition for children with learning disabilities. This could be the opening to a widespread voucher system where public dollars fund private schools.

Juvenile Prison Reform Fails - A bill to require licensing of juvenile detention facilities died in the House Corrections Committee. Instead, task force was created to find alternatives to juvenile detention before a child is taken into custody.

Domestic Violence - This new measure clarifies and revises Mississippi Code of 1972 regarding domestic abuse cases. Amendments include clarifying the relationships triggering domestic violence designation for simple and aggravated assault, what acts require personal appearances before a judge before bail is set, and requiring judges to check the attorney general's protective order registry before granting bail on certain charges, among others.

State Health Care Exchange - The framework for Mississippi's Health Care Exchange has begun and must be ready for operation by 2014. The exchange is part of the state law governing Mississippi's high risk pool, which helps people with pre-existing conditions get insurance. It is also key to subsidizing health insurance for some Mississippians with federal money. Thus far, there has been no role created for independent insurance agents to assist people in navigating the newly created exchange. ■



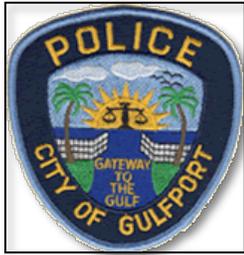
Mississippi State Capitol, courtesy of MS State Legislature website

Footage Captures Police Shooting Of Natchez Man

Robert Lee Buchanan had no idea his trip to Gulfport would cost him free use of his arm, more than \$500,000 in medical bills and dump him down the slurry-filled toilet of race-based Mississippi justice.

It was quite the shock to the 59-year-old war veteran, a beleaguered resident of Natchez who was already battling the gibbering demons bequeathed him by the violence of the Vietnam war.

“There’s no question about it. Mr. Buchanan is not a mentally healthy individual,” said Thomas Bellinder, who represents Buchanan in his civil action



against the Gulfport Police Department. “A conservator has been appointed for him by the Chancery Court. Mentally, he was already not in good shape—and then this happened.”

The accounts of what happened vary, depending upon whose lawyer you ask. In July 2007, Buchanan traveled to the Mississippi Gulf Coast to visit a veteran’s facility.

Buchanan, who is certainly one of Vietnam’s more mentally-besieged and financially bereft casualties, is also described by his attorneys as a loner accustomed to “urban camping” as an alternative to hotel stays. After his car had broken down, he’d planned to spend the night under the stars in Gulfport before getting it fixed in the morning, according to his lawyers.

Court files claim Gulfport Police officers Paul Podlin, Joseph Wuest and Ryan Stachura spotted Buchanan walking along Hwy 49 while “wildly” and “aggressively” swinging a baseball bat in the direction of passing vehicles. Officers described him as “trying to hit somebody, but there wasn’t anybody there.”

It’s anybody’s guess what Buchanan’s war-added mind thought it was swinging at as hundreds of glowing white headlights zoomed past, but his behavior caught the attention of the police officers, who had not been directed to the scene. Three officers, all out of uniform, interrupted their current duties of prisoner transport (there were two prisoners accompanying them) and pulled up in an unmarked police vehicle—a Chevy Tahoe with tinted windows—and intercepted Buchanan.

What happens next depends on whether you’re willing to believe the account of a police officer or the image of a camera. Podlin initially claimed Buchanan never dropped his bat, as ordered, and that this is the reason he and Officer Stachura blasted him with nearly 10,000 combined volts of police-issue Taser X26 pulse electricity.

The tasers weren’t the end of it, however. Footage taken at the scene reveals that Podlin and Wuest then fired their guns a total of five times. Medical reports cite entry wounds in the vet’s elbow, mid-section and pelvis. Podlin testified that he hammered Buchanan with bullets from a Glock 21.

The violence of such a scene is nothing new in the shadow of the recent Trayvon Martin death. But what shocks supporters is police officers’ attempt to tidy up an egregious assault with lies—and the willingness of Mississippi Courts to help with the cleaning.

“The part that really drives me crazy is that these policemen, at first, lied about where Buchanan had his bat at the time of the attack,” said Jackson attorney Dennis Sweet, who is working with Bellinder on Buchanan’s civil action case against the City of Gulfport. “They said he was holding it and that’s why they first fired upon him, but he wasn’t. The thing was on the ground where Buchanan had followed orders and dropped it.”

Caught on Tape

Nobody’s sure how police let slip a falsification so easily disputed by cameras. Perhaps tasers were new technology with the Gulfport police department in 2007. Maybe Podlin didn’t even know his weapon contained a video camera and microphone recording Buchanan dropping his stick seconds before the electric element plunged into his body. Or maybe Podline had heard that footage recorded by the camera generally held second-place in rank compared to officer testimony in court. There’s no clear reason why a cop would even temporarily try to argue with a clear, high-megapixel digital account of a police incident.

But there’s no denying Podlin let slip a whopper. In his original statements to Gulfport Municipal Court and to Harrison County Circuit Court, Podlin claimed he fired the taser when Buchanan refused to drop the bat after viewing the clip multiple times during a January 2012 deposition. Wallace grudgingly agreed that Podlin’s statement does not match the video. Gulfport Police Detective Craig Peterson also admitted under questioning that Wuest’s testimony contradicted film footage retrieved at the site.

“In the video, the bat is out of his hand,” Wallace professed sourly after a barrage of identical questions from plaintiff attorneys. “In the statement, it says that the individual refused to drop his bat.”

Your typical “CSI: Crime Scene Investigation” re-run would have you believe that such a serious deceit before a court would automatically derail the prosecution’s case entirely. That’s not the way it works in Mississippi. In the criminal case prosecutors lodged against Buchanan, a jury found Buchanan not guilty of three counts of aggravated assault on a police officer, but guilty on one count of misdemeanor simple assault after the July 2007 shooting, which was alleged to have occurred after the tasings.

The misdemeanor charge stuck because the prosecution managed to successfully sell the story of Buchanan reacting to multiple tasings by bolting toward the officers with bat in hand.

“After being tased, Buchanan picked up the bat, raised it above his head, and started to charge Officer Podlin,” stated Mississippi Court of Appeals Judge Tyree Irving in his dissenting opinion in the criminal case. “At that point, Officer Podlin fired two shots, striking Buchanan in the abdomen. When Officer Podlin fired his taser, Buchanan was approximately 15 to 21 feet away, and when Officer Podlin fired his handgun, Buchanan was approximately nine feet away.”

Sweet & Associates frame Buchanan’s behavior after the tasing as constitutionally protected self-defense, since Buchanan had done nothing to evoke a shock charge from a police taser in the first place. The Constitution, they say, grants U.S. citizens the right to defend themselves after an unprovoked attack by anybody, even police. It’s the same series of Constitutional protections that supposedly keep cops from storming your house, emptying your refrigerator of booze and potato chips, and then goose-stepping back to headquarters for the NFL after-party.

But the bat charge itself is unproven, in Sweet’s mind.

A Dodgy Defense

The prosecutors based none of their evidence upon forensic examinations, such as footprints or bullet trajectories. The prosecution built a portion of its account of Buchanan’s attack upon images of the man running, although neither of the two available cameras actually show Buchanan running toward the cameras. One camera took an immediate dive to the ground and offered a splendid but worthless worm’s-eye view of the grass after the officer supposedly dropped his spent taser and grabbed his gun.

The other camera shows a recently electrified Buchanan staggering clumsily off to the left of the camera, with no clear weapon in hand.

Bellinder claims the video is devoid of any evidence that Buchanan ever actually picked the bat back up. He states that will be a question for the jury, although the laws state it doesn't matter. "You have a constitutional right to defend yourself from an unlawful arrest, and at the moment when Buchanan was tased, he had broken no law," he said.

Oddly, the Court also based the accusation of Buchanan's hostile reaction upon the testimony of the officers involved, namely Officers Podlin and Wuest.

There is a possibility that cops who lied about a critical piece of information concerning the events leading up to the tasing could have disclosed the truth about the even more violent post-tasing half of the story. But Sweet sees little likelihood of that.

The Defendant police officers in Buchanan's ongoing civil suit against the City of Gulfport, however, claim Buchanan's unwillingness to work with police is without question.

"It is undisputed that Buchanan was uncooperative with the officers as he did not initially comply with police commands to drop the bat," the police officers' attorneys stated in a February 2012 motion against Buchanan's punitive damages claim. Incredibly, the defense also tries to downplay Buchanan's actual surrender of the bat as some kind of nefarious tactical action Buchanan used while "calculat(ing) his next aggressive move" toward the police officers. In addition, the defense claims Buchanan "then attempted to regain control of the bat," despite the absence of clear video evidence suggesting as much. Attorneys for the City of Gulfport and the Gulfport Police Department contend that Buchanan's hostile behavior is not in dispute because the criminal court already found Buchanan guilty of misdemeanor simple assault, and the Mississippi Court of Appeals upheld Buchanan's conviction last September.

One particularly horrified eyewitness, passing motorist Debra Cherota, watched the 2007 drama unfold while sitting at a red light. Cherota claimed during a January deposition that Buchanan held no bat during the time between the tasing and the gunfire: "(After the tasing) he just stood there, maybe put his hands up to his chest like he was going to pull (the taser darts) out. And then ... I heard pow, pow, pow, and the man fell. And I was just like, oh, my God. I could not believe what I had seen."

In Cherota's words, Buchanan never reached for the bat nor lunged at officers. Attorneys for the police, during that same deposition countered with a suggestion that Cherota "did not keep constant eye contact

on what was going on." After all, as a driver, she must have occasionally been scanning the red light in front of her, rather than the drama beside the road. (By her own account, this seems unlikely. She apparently lost complete interest in the red light, since a car horn behind her was what alerted her to it turning green.)

Not only did the court base the entirety of its misdemeanor Simple assault charge upon the testimony of two proven inconsistent witnesses, it apparently never opted to punish either of the two cops for perjury after their mischaracterization of Buchanan and his bat prior to the tasing. Sweet claims that it is an undisputed fact that Officer Wuest admitted under oath at deposition that he previously made different statements--also while under oath--and that his testimony in Harrison County Circuit Court was incorrect. Podlin's statements to the Mississippi Bureau of Investigations, likewise, are inconsistent with the taser videos, according to Wallace, who is by no means a Buchanan sympathizer.

Perjury Ignored

But rather than addressing the issue of perjury, the Court merely acknowledged--in the driest language possible--that Podlin recanted his story. That he grudgingly came clean only in the face of damning video evidence seemed a non-issue to the Court. That acknowledgement, rather than being a game-changer in the entire case, became a mere footnote at the bottom of the March 2010 Court of Appeals decision:

"In his original statement, Officer Podlin stated that Buchanan never dropped the bat before he tased him," Judge Donna Barnes stated in the footnote. "Upon watching a video of the incident, however, Officer Podlin saw that Buchanan actually did drop the bat before being tased; so Officer Podlin changed his opinion accordingly."

Mississippi College School of Law professor Matt Steffey said it is rarely easy for an attorney to prove perjury in a court of law, even in the presence of extreme inconsistency.

"For it to be perjury, the false statement has to be under oath, the false fact has to be material, and the perjurer has to have stated the materially false fact intentionally. If, for example, I'm a witness in a criminal case, and I lie about my age, that would not be subject to perjury because it doesn't have anything to do with the case at hand. Or if I'm asked who first pulled the gun, and I lie about who pulled the gun, it was material. If I lie about what the weather was like that day it probably wasn't. Perjury is unquestionably

difficult to prosecute because you have to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the guy was really lying, as opposed to just being mistaken, or a simple disagreement about facts.

And you've got to prove that the falsified fact was material, that it had the potential to impact the outcome of the case."

Inconsistent officer testimony was not enough to keep the Mississippi Court of Appeals from upholding Buchanan's misdemeanor simple assault conviction last September, but Sweet & Associates is still pushing the civil action against the Gulfport Police Department and the City of Gulfport for civil rights offenses. Trial is set for July 9, 2012. ■

Man With Child's Mind Strangled In For-Profit Prison

Madison resident Leslie Crosby said there was no reason for her brother to have died in prison.

"It didn't have to be like that," Crosby said. "They knew about his problem. They knew he wasn't healthy. He should never have been in prison. He should've never been there."

East Mississippi Correctional Facility officials charged inmate Thomas Hall for the Feb. 21 death of 35-year-old Vicksburg resident Stuart Brooks. The charges and the possibility of justice mean little to Crosby, who said a society more sensitive to the shortfalls of mental illness could have prevented the death of her little brother altogether.

Brooks' mental issues were obvious at an early age. His sister said he was diagnosed with attention deficit disorder as a child, and could not remain focused on his school work. His speech impediment was obvious thanks to his inability to correctly pronounce the letter "S," and his lack of grasp for complicated conversational tools such as parlay, sarcasm, understatement and the countless other little communication subtleties that comprise the miracle of human language. His handicap made him the butt of children's teasing. The resulting social isolation of being "the little broken boy" in school cost him even more valuable communication and socialization skills, setting him on the path to an adulthood marked by heartbreaking failures and misfires.

A Broken Mind

His sister said she dropped out of school in 11th grade to look after her little brother when the adult in their lives--their grandmother--fell victim to disability. It was



a rough life to share with a sibling whom she described as at least 10 mental years behind his actual age.

If his sister's description is accurate, Brooks' mind, at the age of 17, was less than 10 years old when he sexually battered his 9-year-old cousin in 1995.

Warren County Circuit Court Judge Frank Vollor sentenced Brooks to 30 years for sexual assault. Brooks' aunt, whose child suffered from the sexual advance, wrote that she hoped Brooks would get the mental care he needed in prison.

Critics line up to decry the state's prison system for its inadequate treatment programs for the mentally disabled. Psychological problems, they say, are for mental treatment facilities. Prison, they argue, is for criminals.

"People with an intellectual disability—we use to call it mental retardation—present a different set of challenges within the criminal justice system, and definitely they shouldn't be in the general (prison) population," said Ann McLane, executive director of Disability Rights Mississippi. "Lots of times they don't understand anything, and become targets for victimization in jail. The prison system is absolutely not developed enough to help this particular population, but there is no uniformity, there's no statewide standard, for dealing with these individuals because the community health system is not consistently strong statewide."

Prison often stands in for institutional health care in jail-friendly Mississippi, especially when there is no easily accessible alternative. Brooks never got a chance to sample the alternatives during his adult life, however. He served 15 years of his 30-year sentence, and had been living in a kind of halfway house in Vicksburg when officials scooped him up a second time, this time for violating the rules of his sentence.

Brooks, though 17 at the time of his sentence, was required by the court in 1995 to register as a sex offender. He failed to do that for more than a week after his release, according to his sister, and family friend Vickie Sims.

"He was staying at a shelter in Vicksburg, and told me that he had to go register, but he didn't know how to do that, or where to go," said Sims, who has more or less been helping look after Brooks and his sister since they were children. "He didn't know what to do, so I took him in to get registered."

"I did—did it, but—but what I'm saying,

there wasn't nothing but—when they—when they discharged me from the penitentiary in May, they—they said I had to register. They didn't tell me about it or nothing," Brooks said.

Chaney blinked at this for a moment before again turning to Winfield for a translation.

"What he's saying is when they released him, they told him he had to register, but they didn't tell him where, or how, and didn't explain it to him. And I don't think that he fully understood how to go about registering. ... but he did not register, though."

"Okay," Chaney said, turning to Brooks. "But you understand for the purpose of this hearing that you are, in fact, guilty; is that correct?"

"Yes, sir," Brooks said, and then brainlessly surrendered any further attempt at argument. So, on September 10, 2010,

the cogs in the machine of the Mississippi court system began to turn and soullessly ground out three years of new jail time, \$1,322 in fines and court costs, and three years of post-release supervision for Brooks.

He never made it to the post-supervision part. Halfway through his three-year sentence, he was strangled, an autopsy showed, at the Lost Gap facility.

Prison chaplain John Newbaker informed Sims, rather than Brooks' sister, of the death in February, likely because Sims' name was the only one with an adjoining contact number in prison records. Crosby said prison officials were uncharacteristically cold about the death, and stingy with the information. She said she originally believed the death to be a suicide. She said she learned it was a murder not through prison officials, but through the news.

"Getting any information out of them was difficult. They wouldn't tell me anything, or they would give me the run-around, even though I called and called. Why did reporters get to find out that he was murdered before his sister?" Crosby demanded. "For all I know it would still be considered a suicide if I hadn't bothered them and bothered them."

Officials at the prison did not immediately return calls for comment.

McLane said a reliable post-prison system for dealing with intellectually disabled ex-cons would have prevented Brooks' embarrassingly fast recidivism.

"There's not nearly the amount of communication and coordination between that service system and jails," McLane said. "If this man spent 15 years in the system, they knew he had these limitations. The parole should've been set up in a way that better worked for him."

Angry Child, Evil Place

Brooks was, by no means, a little angel during the first 15 years of his incarceration on the sexual assault charge. Hopelessly unable to express himself or his problems, Brooks could fly into a frustration-fueled rage. He was a child with a man's problems, living in the vicious hyper-male world of a prison—but limited to conveying his aggravation through childish tantrums. He would strike at prison employees and wipe the walls with his own excrement. As a child, his inability to communicate his problems could drive him to tears. His sister said she doubts adulthood rendered much of an improvement upon him. She said she sometimes envisioned her hopelessly broken brother as a grown man wailing like a child through the bars of his cell. Prison, claims his sister, was not the place for someone like him.

East Mississippi Correctional Facility, in particular, is a GEO Group-owned private prison: a designation that comes with its own group of critics who question why a for-profit motive should be tied to incarceration policies in the first place. The ubiquitous profit motive requires cutting costs to maintain revenue, which raises public safety concerns, according to national nonprofit Justice Policy Center's 2011 report "Gaming the System: How the Political Strategies of Private Prison Companies Promote Ineffective Incarceration Policies."

"While even public prisons have ... problems, evidence suggests that private prisons are worse. Incentives to keep costs low drive many of the problems that make private prisons more detrimental than public ones," claims the report, which then outlined a list of assaults, deaths and safety fears in private prisons across the country.

There is no way to know how a man-child such as Brooks fared in such a system. For this, Sims and Crosby ache for him. Crosby has approached Jackson attorney Isaac Byrd to represent the family regarding Brooks' death. Byrd did not immediately speak on the case. ■



Brooks as an adult ward at Mississippi Department of Corrections.



Officials charged inmate Thomas Hall with killing Brooks in February.

MBI Still Clings to Autopsy on Contentious Greenwood Death

photo courtesy of andjusticeforus.org



The gruesome photo of Frederick Carter's body still stirs fear of lynching, but MBI's refusal to surrender autopsy files only stokes more questions, say family members.

A 2010.

n attorney of Frederick Jermaine Carter says the family is demanding a conclusion for Carter, who local authorities say hanged himself from a tree in

"The Mississippi Bureau of Investigations won't say they don't have an open case, but they still won't call the case closed, so we cannot petition for our files associated with the case," said the family's attorney Valerie Hicks-Powe.

"We do not have a complete autopsy report with pictures or any investigative report that they've done. They've refused to talk with the mother to say what they gathered. They've only drawn a conclusion that it is suicide. They never cordoned off the scene to gather evidence or treat it as though it were a crime scene. This was a rush to judgment to call this a suicide, and then to fail to give the family what they need to make their own determination is unconscionable."

The NAACP and Hicks-Powe criticized Leflore County Sheriff Ricky Banks' hasty conclusion that Carter, who was 26 at the time of his death, hung himself from the tree in an act of suicide. The Sheriff's office reached their conclusion less than two days after workers discovered his suspended body hanging from a tree in a predominately white section of north Greenwood.

The State Medical Examiner's office performed an autopsy less than 48 hours

later, and Leflore County Coroner Debra Sanders also labeled Carter's death a suicide. State Medical Examiner Adel Shaker released a report on Carter's autopsy, but still has not released the autopsy itself to Carter's family. He did not release the autopsy report to the press until March 2011, and even in the report Shaker merely summarized that Carter's cause of death was due to the hanging. He did not include in his report an assessment on the hanging itself.

In fact, Shaker refused to render a conclusion on the manner of the death pending further "investigation."

One year later, that investigation appears to still be underway, and the family members are furious.

"They say they are looking into this. They don't say it's an official case or an open investigation, so what is 'we're looking into it' supposed to mean? One (MBI) agent said 'we're monitoring it.' What does that mean? It's been over a year. What are you monitoring? Who have you spoken to? What have you done on the case? Every case has a case file number, but there's no file number for us. I've received none of that," Hicks-Powe said.

photo courtesy of jessemuhammad.blogs.finalcall.com



Mississippi Attorney and talk show host Valerie Hicks-Powe is pressing state authorities to release the autopsy report to the family so they can hire an independent forensics expert for analysis.

The sight of the hanging body splashed across the Internet dredged up recent collective memories of frequent lynchings in the area around Greenwood, sparking suspicion in many circles. Greenwood, which sits in the Mississippi Delta, shares the same county as Money, Miss., where 14-year-old Emmett Till met his death in 1955 at the hands of a group of terrorists who murdered

him for allegedly whistling at a white woman.

photo courtesy of andjusticeforus.org



Two years later, Carter's relatives still ache for the boy they knew and loved.

Sheriff Banks, whose county already carries a violent history of mass murders throughout the Jim Crow years, told reporters last year

that his department discovered no evidence of foul play. Sheriff's deputies reported that they found a section of the rope used in the hanging in one of Carter's pockets, but Hicks-Powe said the presence of the extra rope only increased suspicion.

"It's a freezing cold evening, and you're hell-bent on taking your life, and you cut your rope to the precise length you need it to be to get the job done, but you don't want it to litter the scene, so you put the extra rope back in your pocket? Give me a break," Hicks-Powe said.

Banks' believes his account lends credence to the possibility of suicide. He told reporters in 2010 that only Carter's DNA was found on the rope and said deputies found no fingerprints other than Carter's around the scene of the hanging. He also claimed family members said Carter had previously attempted suicide.

But Hicks-Powe said the reliability of Banks' initial assessment concerning DNA and fingerprints was problematic considering authorities never roped off the area as a crime scene to prevent contamination. Hicks-Powe said she also hotly disputes Banks' claim of Carter's suicidal tendencies.

"There's no evidence that he had tried to commit suicide in the past. That's not a fact. That's an allegation that the Sheriff made up. He invented that," Hicks-Powe said. "They just did a piss-poor job of investigating this. I don't think they have any information to support the allegation of suicide, but they would prefer it being left at that. That's what I believe is going on."

Reasons for denying the family's demand for the whole report were not forthcoming recently when the NAACP made a round of calls to Banks' office and the MBI.

Banks said outright that the case is closed, as far as he is concerned, and that he would have closed it ages ago.

"The only way that it's going to be a continuing investigation is if new evidence comes up that indicates (a crime). I don't know of any," Banks said.

He added that the FBI had been assisting his office with this case, but that the federal agency had also slammed its doors on the investigation.

"They've informed me that they've closed their case, too," Banks said.

That leaves the Mississippi Bureau of Investigation, which wasn't surrendering any answers. Master Sergeant Johnny Poulous, director of MBI public affairs, did not return repeated calls from the NAACP—leaving a nice, smooth record of silence for both the NAACP and Carter's family. ■

Prosecutor Jokes About ‘Hanging’ Juvenile Defendant - Complaint Filed

Even in the year 2012, Mississippi stings at any reference to a hanging noose, especially from a public official.

Grenada Police Officer Stephen Chism said he was furious at a statement made by Grenada County Youth Court Prosecutor Jay Gore during an April 23 Youth Court morning hearing.

Officer Chism saw Youth Court Counselor Stephanie Holland hand Jay Gore a file concerning an African-American juvenile delinquent. Afterwards, he heard Jay Gore state, “can we just get a rope and hang him? If we can’t hang him nor shoot him, what else can we do with him?”

Mississippi is a state with a history drenched in racist bloodletting, where many first impressions contain images of violent lynchings and murderous, terrorist activity. Many of those lynchings are traditionally recognized, in both history books and Hollywood, as culminating in a noose and a broken neck. This is one of many reasons Chism said he took personal offense at the statement.

“Whether or not it was humor, that courtroom was not the place to say it,” said Chism, who was in the room at the time with others who also heard what they considered to be Gore’s snide declaration. “This was a court, and a court is no place for it.”

Chism described the youth Gore referred to as a “repeat offender” who has seen the court more than once.

The youth’s déjà-vu court behavior no doubt sparked the comment, but Grenada attorney and NAACP member Carlos Moore said the statement was out of line. Chism hired Moore to file an affidavit against Gore. Moore sent the complaint to the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of

“Can we just get a rope and hang him? If we can’t hang him nor shoot him, what else can we do with him?”

Investigation, among other agencies.

“Believing the affidavit to be true, we feel the prosecutor should resign or be removed from any elected or appointed public

office,” Moore told the NAACP. “He definitely no longer needs to be around children while harboring such vile thoughts.”

Gore, who owns Grenada law firm Gore, Kilpatrick, & Dambrino, PLLC, has been a county prosecuting attorney since 1980, and has served as attorney for the Grenada County Board of Supervisors and Grenada Lake Medical Center since 1993. Gore released a statement to the Grenada Star, complaining that Officer Chism “misinterpreted” what he said that Monday morning.

“I was advised on that a police officer was offended when he overheard and misinterpreted a portion of a private discussion I had earlier that morning, with another court official before opening court, concerning my frustration with the lack of alternatives available to help repeat offenders within the Youth Court system,” Gore states. “I promptly sought an audience with that officer and after discussing the matter with him, received his assurance that we were on good terms, shook hands with him and considered the matter closed as a resolved misunderstanding.”

The Magnolia Bar Association is up in arms over the exchange, regardless of how Gore characterized its aftermath. Magnolia Bar Association President Carshena Bailey said Gore should be removed from his Grenada County post if his statement really happened, as at least three witnesses maintain.

“A person in such a position should, at all times, maintain fairness, impartiality, integrity, honor and dignity,” Bailey said. ■



Lawyers.com

Three witnesses accuse Grenada Attorney Jay Gore for joking about hanging an under-age offender.

County Releases Twin Youth Following NAACP Investigation

Bailing out criminal suspects is never meant to feel like an inspiring, wholesome affair. More often, it’s a demeaning lesson in humility, one comes to terms with a friend, child, or relative whose criminal capacity was thought to be non-existent.

In this particular case, however, Leake County NAACP head Dan Battle-Griffin considered it a triumph.

On March 13, Battle-Griffin shelled out \$50 to bail out two youths housed in Leake County jail for alleged burglary. Three months ago bail was \$50,000 each, thanks to what Battle-Griffin considers to be a justice system’s unrepentant taste for vengeance.

“We think it was because we embarrassed the judge and the police department and they took retribution for the family, who called the NAACP and got lawyers to delay the eviction from their apartment,” Battle-Griffin said.

Carthage police arrested twin brothers Markeil and Marquize Greenwood, 18, for the alleged burglary of a Carthage home on November 22. Police arrested both brothers with 1.5 miles of the scene; however, neither of them had stolen items in his possession, nor did their fingerprints match those found at the home.

Instead, police arrested the two on the word of a third suspect in the burglary, who was captured with stolen items in his possession.

No trial has been held to determine their guilt or innocence. The two had no prior criminal records to justify such a high bail, which kept them in jail and out of school long enough to cost them their high school graduation this spring. But the brothers do have a kind of history with the court system. The NAACP first adopted a role in their lives when they and their mother faced eviction from their Carthage apartment complex, owned by Lincoln Estates, LLC.

Lincoln Estates sought to remove Erica Johnson and her two sons from the apartment complex late last year after by accusing the boys of being drug users. As the eviction matter went to Leake County Justice Court, Johnson was represented by NAACP-financed attorney Christopher Espy, and the Court never issued a ruling. Lincoln Estates, LLC acknowledged the lack of evidence and reached an agreement on the family’s continued stay at the complex. The Justice Court judge ordered the Mississippi Department of Human Services to conduct an investigation on the allegations. The Department, according to Espy, summarily dismissed and closed that investigation.

(continued on next page)

Espy was still filing motions in the civil case in November, the same month police arrested the twins. Justice Court Judge Ken Adcock, who Battle-Griffin said recused himself from Johnson's eviction case, was the judge who set the \$50,000 bail. Battle-Griffin said Johnson recused himself from the civil matter because of his connection to Lincoln Estates manager Carolyn Rawson and her husband, former Carthage Police Chief Tommy Rawson, who Adcock served under as a police officer.

"What startles me is the lack of movement on the case," said Battle-Griffin. "They were originally scheduled to go to a grand jury March 8. I called the district attorney in Philadelphia, and we discovered that they [District Attorney's Office] had no paperwork on them whatsoever. They were in jail for four months, and the DA knew nothing about them or their case. That Monday I got on the phone with ACLU and the Southern Poverty Law Center and asked them to get involved. Tuesday morning the bail dropped from \$50,000 to \$25."

Espy said their arrest has yet to even be brought before a grand jury, to his knowledge. ■

The Carthaginian



Carthage authorities handcuff Markeil Greenwood on November 22, 2011 in a trailer park on Dickens Street. He and his twin brother were among four suspects apprehended in connection with a burglary.

Voter Registration Push



The Mississippi State Conference NAACP (MS-NAACP) has launched a statewide initiative designed to register, educate, and turn out minority voters for the upcoming 2012 election. *This is My Vote!* campaign is targeting African-American, Latino, student, and elderly voters -- groups that may be affected by the state's Voter ID law. The goal is to register 25,000 Mississippians to vote by October 6, 2012. There

are more than 50,000 unregistered voters in Hinds County alone.

"The Mississippi NAACP has been working on this campaign since October," says Kamau Franklin, Civic Engagement Director for the MS-NAACP. "We have been setting-up registration booths at various public events, training volunteers, working with churches throughout the state to help attract new voters, and hosting meetings to educate voters."

"Every aspect of our lives is shaped by our participation at the ballot box," says MS-NAACP President Derrick Johnson. "That's why it is so important that we work hard to register more voters and educate them to ensure they have full access at the ballot box."

MS-NAACP is asking all places of worship to make *August 5, 2012 "Called to Serve, Called to Action Voter Registration Sunday"*. The religious community is our strongest, most important institution. Its participation is key in helping increase our community's civic participation. To find out how your church can get involved, call 601.353.8462. ■

WAYS TO REGISTER TO VOTE:

- CALL 1-866-MY-VOTE-1
- Log on to www.thisismyvote.org



GET A VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATION:

- at the Circuit Clerk's Office;
- at a Driver's License Facility;
- at an agency where you receive public assistance;
- at a State-funded office serving people with disabilities;
- at military recruitment centers;
- through a voter registration drive;
- emailing naacpms@bellsouth.net

(continued from page 1)

The NAACP has and must always speak out against attempts by the government to codify discrimination against any group, including efforts to restrict marriage equality at the state and federal level. We followed strong NAACP principles in our fight against laws restricting inter-racial marriage, and NAACP principles have proven sturdier than the notions of the vocally intolerant, leading the way to a new, more tolerant society. Our mothers and fathers can remember when it was considered culturally abhorrent for Blacks and Whites to marry, when such intermingling was considered atrocious and harmful to the whole of society in the eyes of the law. The NAACP and its members were among the few who heralded this social evolution. Then and now, we must not align ourselves with any effort to codify discrimination. ■

Community Rallies Behind Nissan Workers

MS-NAACP, UAW Assist Workers in their Attempt to Organize

Employees at the Nissan plant in Canton say they want to organize the non-union plant in an effort to gain job security and a voice.

The U.S. automotive industry is fresh off a give-and-take victory in Detroit between auto factories and employees, and the automobile industry is subsequently booming. It's a good time, say union-leaders like Mississippi Alliance of State Employees/CWA president Brenda Scott, to seek labor rights in Canton, Mississippi.

Industry forecaster Automotive Industry Solutions estimates auto sales in 2012 to be up 1.5 million from 2011, with an expected demand of 14.3 million vehicles this year. USA Today notes that automakers are pushing factories and workers to the max in trying to meet explosive new demand for vehicles, with some plants adding third work-shifts and others piling on expensive worker overtime and six-day weeks. Two companies, Chrysler Group and Ford Motor, are cutting into the annual two-week shutdown in July at numerous plants this summer in order to roll additional vehicles off the assembly line.

The boom in Detroit is a welcome change from the saggy bust that perforated the auto industry since 2008.

Nissan's \$1.4 billion plant in Canton began producing vehicles in May 2003, including the Nissan Altima, Quest, Armada, Titan, and Infiniti QX56. The plant has an annual production capacity of 400,000 vehicles. However, plant workers at the Canton plant make considerably less than their auto-building counterparts in Detroit.

UAW claims hourly wages at the Canton plant are about a \$1.70 less than the company's sister plant in Smyrna, Tennessee. Pay is not the main reason workers are asking the United Auto Workers union to step in and aid the organizational effort, however. Workers say they are seeking to organize for the sake of stability, benefits, and overall job security. Employees claim the plant's average pay no longer qualifies as \$23.22, because plant operators are relying more and more on temporary employees. Nissan is paying many of its "temp" workers \$12 to \$14 an hour.

Staunch union ally Rep. James Evans, D-Jackson, complained this year that the state was not getting adequate return on its investment in the Canton plant as long as Nissan continued to pay a minimum. Evans said the state committed about \$400 million in tax breaks, set-up costs, training and other incentives, with the expectation that the plant would pay, on average, \$23 an hour per job. Evans complained that "temp" workers making \$24,000 a year barely passed the federal poverty level for a family of four. That kind of pay, he said, leaves very little discretionary income to spend on the local economy, which ultimately provides little return on legislators' investment.

Union pay is higher than non-union pay on average, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which recorded a weekly median wages advantage of about \$100 for union workers. On average, weekly pay for union members was about \$938 in 2011, \$934 for those not in a union yet represented by unions, and \$798 for non-union workers.

The pay gap gets wider for minorities, with blacks earning, on average, \$595 in weekly pay if non-union, but \$771 if a union member. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, non-unionized Hispanic workers earned \$520 a week, but their pay increased to \$811 a week with union participation.

The lack of a union presence in the state of Mississippi is a nagging problem, according to workers' rights organizations, because the state has never been a friend of labor. For much of its history, the state of Mississippi didn't even pay its workers.

"Mississippi has always been a state where you should be considered lucky just to have a job, as if working poverty wages were some kind of blessing," said Scott. "State leaders have always hated labor organization because they hate anything that tries to cut into their unbalanced power. Think of it: this was a state where for years you worked for free as a slave. Having to pay people at all must feel terrible to the people in power."

The battle for worker rights tended to act hand-in-hand with the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi because both worker advocates and de-segregationists knew economic fairness was inextricably linked to social equality, and that the movement would be hobbled by poverty pay. For this reason, opponents of the Civil Rights Movement often referred to workers' rights organizers and civil rights organizers equally as communists, in an attempt to demonize both.

The brunt of the economic battle continues today, as a significant portion of black Mississippians stew in poverty. It is for this reason that the Canton Nissan plant's majority African-American workforce considers the local unionization effort an expansion of the Civil Rights Movement. Nissan workers have been reaching out to the community, including the NAACP, to seek support in their effort to organize the plant. They hope that plant owners will be willing to allow union activities, considering how well unions worked with Detroit automakers to hammer out an auto industry recovery for the Big Three.

At the height of the recession, the U.S. government stepped in and loaned money to Detroit automakers in hopes of pulling manufactures out of an economic hole. Mississippi Republican Senators Thad Cochran and Roger Wicker as well as Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell and Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney hotly opposed the \$82 billion rescue package for General Motors and Chrysler in 2008. A majority of Congress supported the deal, however, knowing unions were willing to make concessions to preserve the Michigan automotive industry.

Unions say they are willing to work with manufacturers to make sure the industry in the South also continues at a healthy pace, but union officials say they want to see these plants extend some of the same worker protections Detroit automakers offer.

Initially, the union opted for a non-confrontational approach to the Nissan plant in Canton, hoping that Japanese automakers would recognize the UAW's work with employers across the U.S., such as Mitsubishi, Ford, GM and Chrysler. However, Nissan officials are just as heatedly opposed to collective bargaining as they ever were, according to employees and union allies. ■

See the next edition for continued coverage on this issue.



"Think of it: this was a state where for years you worked for free as a slave. Having to pay people at all must feel terrible to the people in power."



2012 ACT-SO Competition



ACT-SO Committee and Forreest County NAACP Branch Member Karolyn Thompson proudly stands next to Hattiesburg High School Students (pictured left to right) Travanti Daughrity, Britnie Gray, Paris McClendon, Treya Brown, Tia Bullock, and Deondrey Russell, who placed in several categories during the competition.



Music vocalists Yasmin Glover and Hillary Watkins, who placed gold in contemporary and classical respectively, will travel to Houston, TX to compete at the National ACT-SO Competition during the NAACP National Convention.

2012 Mothers of the Year



Winners and finalists for the 2012 NAACP Mother of the Year (MOY) gather after the crowning. Pictured are (l-r) Annie Patton of Lauderdale County, Carrie McGee (standing in for Sheila Lofton, MOY-Large Branch) from Forreest County, Karen Harris from Newton County, Hattie Smith, MOY-Small Branch, Montgomery County, and Willie Mae Laird from Jefferson Davis County.



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