

# NAACP HOUSTON BRANCH ALERT

Volume 7 Issue No 1 Houston's Premier Civil and Human Rights Organization

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2015

Dear Members and Friends,

It is not often an individual has an opportunity to live a dream and at the same time, be able to give service to society. Today, I am living one of my dreams. It is an honor that the Members of the Houston Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the oldest civil rights organization in the country, have collectively agreed to allow me, James Matthew Douglas, to provide leadership for the next two years. I would like to congratulate and thank those of you who have been elected to assist me in various leadership roles, the Officers and At-Large Members of the Executive Committee. I would also like to thank Mrs. Yolanda Smith, our Executive Director, those of you who are present members of the NAACP and those of you who will become members in the very near future, our volunteers, and community and business supporters for your commitment to this necessary and important undertaking.



*Dr. James M. Douglas, President  
NAACP Houston Branch*

As a member of the NAACP, people often ask me one of two questions. The first is whether the NAACP is necessary today; and the second is what the NAACP is doing. The answer to the first is a very strong YES. All one has to do is open his or her eyes and view the world. Conflicts between various races and cultures are present on every continent and conflict between races in America is at its highest since legal segregation. Blacks and Whites have not grown closer since 1975; but instead they have grown further apart. If the NAACP did not exist today, we would have to create it. As to what are we doing, just review the work performance of our various committees (Legal Redress, Education, Political Action, Economic Development, Veterans Affairs, Labor Advocacy, Environmental & Climate Justice, ACT-SO, Youth Works; just to name a few). And lastly, tune into our weekly radio show, NAACP TODAY with James Douglas on MJWJ Global Radio ([mjwtalkradio.com](http://mjwtalkradio.com)) to learn more of our advocacy efforts and to join us in the conversation on social justice reform. The NAACP is in fact doing a lot; however, we could do more with your involvement, so we ask you to please join in the work of our NAACP Houston Branch. I'm looking forward to working with you.

## NAACP Houston Branch Announces New Leadership Installation Ceremony Highlights



The NAACP Houston Branch swore in its new 2015-2016 Officers and Executive Committee on Sunday January 11, 2015 at the Wortham Center. The NAACP Houston Branch would like to thank Rev. Bill Lawson, Mayor Annise Parker, Council Member Dwight Boykins, Congresspersons Al Green and Sheila Jackson Lee, National Board Member Howard Jefferson, Carolyn Scantlebury, Reverend Reginald Lillie and Ms. Natalie Foreman for participating in the swearing-in ceremony of our new leadership and for making the event so special. Thank you to all of our members who attended in support of our new leadership.

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# 2014 Freedom Fund Awards Gala Highlights

## “Year of the Woman”

With over 1,000 persons in attendance, an amazing keynote speaker, an outstanding hosts of honorees and the presence of Grammy and Stellar Award Royalty, our recent Freedom Fund Awards Gala was definitely an event to remember for our Houston NAACP.

The fall gala was held on Thursday, October 30, 2014 at the Hilton Americas Hotel. Appropriately themed, "The Year of the Woman," the NAACP Houston Branch highlighted and paid tribute to an amazing group of women who have made it their life's mission to ensure social justice in our communities.

The evening opened with an inspiring prayer by Pastor Suzette Caldwell, Founder of The Prayer Institute-The Windsor Village United Methodist Church Family. Introduced by State Representative Senfronia Thompson, NAACP'ers were addressed by then Texas Senator and Gubernatorial Candidate, Wendy Davis who delivered a powerful speech highlighting the accomplishments and struggles of women in the civil rights movement and detailing the current forms of voter suppression, educational inequities and threats to women social causes.

In keeping with our theme of highlighting women of excellence. Mrs. Audrey Lawson was presented by Congressman Al Green, our branch's highest honor, the coveted Mickey Leland Humanitarian Award. Mrs. Lawson was joined by her husband, Rev. William "Bill" Lawson and her beautiful daughters, Roxanne, Cheryl and Melanie (who also served as the Mistress of Ceremony) to accept on her behalf and who gave the most heart-warming acceptance speech.

Former Branch President, Rev. Reginald Lillie presented our prestigious Presidential Awards to Mrs. Karen Jackson, President of Sisters Network, Inc. and Mrs. Sharon Michael Owens, Co-Owner LaMaison in Midtown.

No strangers to playing a huge role in improving the lives of countless women in our communities, the NAACP is grateful for the opportunity to have honored Karen Jackson, Sharon Owens and Mrs. Audrey Lawson.

A special treat of the gala was when the NAACP surprised two un-expecting women with recognition. Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee presented our branch's oldest member, Mrs. Emma G. Primas, at 109, with the NAACP Legacy Award. Mrs. Marian Tolan also received the NAACP Defender of Justice Award for her fearless fight for justice in the case involving the shooting of her unarmed son Bobby, Jr. at the hands of Bellaire Police Officer. (The case goes back to trial this fall; so stay tuned for continued information and opportunities to join in the Tolan advocacy).

As if the evening couldn't get any better, the night was topped off by the incomparable, Yolanda Adams. Accompanied by the fabulous Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church Choir, Ms. Adams presented a musical tribute to this year's honorees by performing “I Believe I can Fly”. Indeed, *The Year of the Women* gala was a fabulous event honoring Women of Excellence.

The Houston NAACP sincerely thanks Mr. George Foreman, Houston First, HEB, Capital One, Shell Corporation, Chevron USA, Brentwood Baptist Church, Centerpoint Energy, Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, CWA, Kroger, United Airlines and Fox 26 for the wonderful financial support of this year's gala. The gala would not have been a success without your generous contributions to support our branch's myriad of advocacy efforts.

If you missed the recent gala, we encourage you to visit our website for gala photos and videos at [www.naacphouston.org](http://www.naacphouston.org)



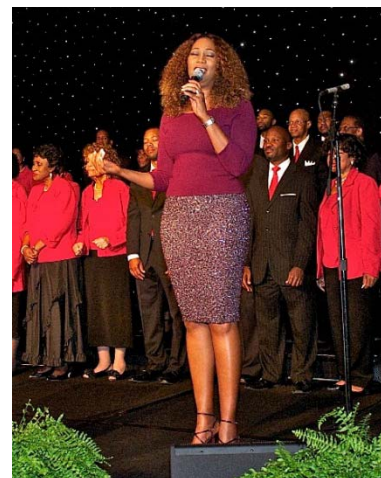
### Mrs. Audrey Hoffman Lawson

*Left to right:* Reverend Reginald Lillie, Branch President, Sheila Jackson Lee - U.S. Representative for Texas's 18th congressional district, Melanie Lawson (MC for the night), Congressman Al Green, Audrey Hoffman Lawson (Mickey Leland Award Recipient), Bill Lawson (Husband of Audrey), Roxanne Lawson, Cheryl Lawson



### Senator Wendy Davis & Honorees

*Left to Right:* Reverend Reginald Lillie (NAACP Houston Branch President), Texas State Senator Wendy Davis, Karen Jackson (Honoree), Sharon Owens (Honoree)



### Yolanda Adams

with Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church Choir



**THE NAACP HOUSTON BRANCH MOURNS  
THE LOSS OF ITS BELOVED ACT-SO  
CHAIR, MS. ANDREA ARCENEAX**



Affectionately known to many as Ms. ACT-SO, Andrea Daphine Arceneaux passed away on the morning of January 15, 2015 at the age of 58. A native of neighboring Port Arthur, Texas, Andrea was born on September 5, 1956 to Willie M. and Leroy Arceneaux. Andrea was a 1975 graduate of Lincoln High School and a 1979 graduate of Texas Woman's University, where she received a Bachelor of Science in nursing. She received a master's degree in Hospital Care Administration from Texas Woman's University and a Doctorate of Jurisprudence from South Texas College of Law.

In addition to serving the healthcare community in various executive and administrative capacities to include Chief Operating Officer, Administrative Director, and Director of nursing, Andrea was also a lawyer in private practice for 14 years and also served as Assistant County Attorney for Harris County. Andrea was a professional lecturer on healthcare related issues and spoke throughout the state and nation. She served on the Executive Committee of our local Houston NAACP and was Chair of the ACT-SO enrichment program for over twenty years. Andrea was so revered throughout our local and national NAACP, receiving THREE times the NAACP Houston Branch President's Award along with Houston's ALEX Award for Achievements in Legal Excellence. Under her leadership, the Houston Branch ACT-SO was awarded the "Most Outstanding ACT-SO Program in the nation" with receipt of the National 25th Anniversary Platinum Award; and in 2014, she was presented with the Inaugural National NAACP ACT-SO Advisory Council Award, for recognition as the nation's most exemplary chairperson. Additionally, the Shell Corporation, the longtime Title Sponsor of our Houston ACT-SO program, created a four year "Perseverance" scholarship in Andrea's honor.

Andrea's commitment and dedication to the NAACP and Houston ACT-SO is unparalleled, having influenced a generation of youth and touching the lives of countless volunteers, parents and supporters.

Andrea will forever remain in the heart of the NAACP Houston Branch Family.

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HOUSTON NAACP  
ACT-SO  
Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics

**2015 ACT-SO Competition**

ACT-SO is a major youth initiative of the NAACP, which provides a forum through which High School youth can demonstrate academic, artistic, scientific, culinary, business prowess and expertise.

*To be eligible, each contestant must ...*

- Be enrolled through grades 9-12
- Be a citizen or a legal resident of the United States
- Be an amateur (*having not received wages for professional services*) in any category of the ACT-SO Competition

**Location:** Hyatt Regency Downtown  
1200 Louisiana  
Houston, Texas 77002

**Date:** April 18, 2015  
**Time:** 9:00 AM

We are looking for qualified students in the following areas:

**HUMANITIES**  
Original Essay  
Playwriting  
Poetry-Written  
Poetry-Spoken  
Short Story  
Music Composition

**C-STEM**  
Biology/Microbiology  
Chemistry/Biochemistry  
Computer Science  
Earth and Space Sciences  
Engineering  
Mathematics  
Medicine and Health  
Physics

**BUSINESS**  
Entrepreneurship  
Culinary - April 25, 2015

**PERFORMING ARTS**  
Dance  
Dramatics  
Music Instrumental  
Classical & Contemporary  
Music Vocal  
Classical & Contemporary  
Oratory

**VISUALARTS**  
Architecture  
Drawing  
Filmmaking  
Painting  
Photography  
Sculpture

For more information  
**Contact: Sandra Roseborough**  
Competition Coordinator  
Cell: 832-423-4502  
sandra.rosebor@aoi.com

Visit the website for application, guidelines & rules.  
[www.actsohouston.org](http://www.actsohouston.org)  
[www.naacphouston.org](http://www.naacphouston.org)  
Twitter: [http://twitter.com/ACT\\_SOHouston](http://twitter.com/ACT_SOHouston)  
Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/ACT-SO-Houston>

Southwest Airlines is proud to be the Official Airline of the Houston NAACP ACT-SO Program.

The NAACP Houston Branch ACT-SO Enrichments Sessions are held on Friday nights at 7:00 p.m. at the NAACP Branch Office, 2002 Wheeler Avenue, Houston, TX 77004.

The remainder enrichments dates are:

- Friday, February 13, 2015
- Friday, February 27, 2015
- Friday, March 13, 2015
- Friday, March 27, 2015
- Friday, April 3, 2015
- Friday, April 10, 2015

The schedule for the Local and National competition are as follows:

- April 18, 2015 - Competition - Hyatt Regency Hotel Downtown - 9:00 a.m.
- April 25, 2015 - Culinary Competition - Hyatt Regency Hotel Downtown - 9:00 a.m.
- April - May 2015 - Awards Ceremony - Hyatt Regency Hotel Downtown TBA

National Competition is in Philadelphia, PA on July 9-10, 2015, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

National ACT-SO Awards Ceremony, July 12, 2015, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Avelina Holmes  
ACT-SO Chair

# ON THE LEGAL FRONT

by Taft Foley, Director of Legal Redress Chair

The United States of America is the greatest country on earth. However, it is not our military power or our wealth that defines our greatness. The concepts of Freedom, Justice and Democracy are what epitomizes this great nation and distinguishes us as the envy of the entire world. No organization has worked harder to make these concepts a reality than the NAACP.

The struggle to combat the vestiges of slavery and end segregation were fought by the NAACP. Our nation's road to freedom was paved by the blood, sweat and tears of NAACP members. Many in our organization marched, while others literally sacrificed their lives in the war against judicial inequality and voter suppression. No other organization has worked more diligently, has made more sacrifices, has lost more lives in the effort to make the notion, the concept, the dream of freedom, justice, and democracy a reality than your NAACP.

Segregation is an evil concept defeated by courageous Americans who sat at lunch counters, marched, withstood water cannons, and were bitten by the dogs of racism and discrimination. But despite the many victories throughout our history, our present condition remains fraught with challenges. Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown and Eric Garner epitomize our present day struggle to break the shackles of police brutality. Efforts like voter identification requirements attempt to shift the balance of true democracy in favor of oppression. Our present battles against anti-American racism and discrimination echo the resounding calls for justice shouted from every mountain top and heard in every valley from sea to shining sea.

For 106 years, the NAACP has been the voice that loudly sings the sweet songs of freedom, the anthem of justice and speaks truth to power, demanding that this great nation honor its promise of liberty and justice for all.



The NAACP Legal Redress Committee stands on the front line in our war to overcome disenfranchisement and oppression. In 2014 we took aim against prosecutorial misconduct and struck injustice at its core. The Texas Supreme Court unanimously ruled in favor of the NAACP-Houston in a battle for equality in our criminal justice system.

While we give thanks for our role in the advancement of justice, we acknowledge that the road to liberty is a long road, full of obstacles. We choose march this road in defiance of tyranny, shouting for freedom, demanding justice, and fighting for democracy each and every step of the way. The civil unrest behind the senseless killing of unarmed African-American citizens have stirred the consciousness of many frustrated citizens who have chosen to join the fight against racism. However, the NAACP Legal Redress Committee has remained diligent in the face of apathy. Rather than the sleeping giant, we are the giant who never sleeps. In the last year, our committee has assisted 192 individuals. We have been there for the mother who needs a will, for the father who has been brutalized by the police, for the sister fighting the system to keep her children and for the brother suffering the pains of workplace discrimination.

On January 31, 2015 the Legal Redress Clinic reinvested in the Houston community by offering free legal services to disenfranchised citizens. Over 20 attorneys and volunteers joined the effort to strengthen our community. Additionally, we registered citizens to vote and accepted several new memberships. Our promise to our community is that we will continue to be the voice of those whom tyranny seeks to silence. We will continue to extend a helping hand to lift our brothers and sisters from the crippling throngs of police brutality. We will remain diligent in our commitment to strengthening our community, our city and our great nation through unrelenting activism.

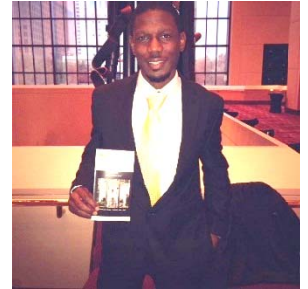
# MEMBERSHIP ON THE MOVE

by Carroll Robinson, Membership Chair

Without members the NAACP is only a name--a collection of memories of people who in the past were willing to come together, stand together, march together, protest together, litigate together, and sacrifice together to help make America better for all Americans.

This year it will be 106 years since the NAACP was founded and 97 years since the Houston Branch was founded. Unfortunately, the NAACP is still needed today to help fight discrimination and protect the civil rights of far too many Americans regardless of race or political party.

Since the founding of the NAACP and its Houston Branch, our nation and our home town has made progress but there is still work to be done on protecting the right to vote, ensuring minority and low income students receive a quality education, reforming and improving our criminal justice system, holding financial institutions accountable for fair and inclusive lending practices and including minority business owners in government contracting opportunities.



Akil Blake, New Member

To achieve these goals, Houstonians must come together once again as members of the NAACP to take collective action consistent with our common commitment to fairness, equality under the law and building a tolerant and inclusive community.

Membership is more than just numbers, its energy, intellectual talent and collective determination to make a difference.

As a member of the NAACP Houston Branch, you will be connected to more than just history; you will be a part of the present that is shaping the future of our city and region.

If you want to be part of an effort to build a new pathway from income to prosperity, to ensure economic opportunity, to protect civil rights and ensure social justice, then for \$30 dollars you can become a member of the NAACP and you can become one of the people working to make our community better now and for the future.

Membership is open to all who are committed to achieving a better, more inclusive and prosperous city and America, that includes the young people of community.

**Welcome to your NAACP Houston Branch. Join our conversation at:**

[www.facebook.com/naacphoustonbranch](http://www.facebook.com/naacphoustonbranch)/[www.twitter.com/naacphou](http://www.twitter.com/naacphou)

[www.instagram.com/naacp\\_houston](http://www.instagram.com/naacp_houston)/<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCP0LIXQdr-YvEg6qVw3iEA>

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## Health Happenings

by Carol Moore, Health Advocacy Chair

The Health Advocacy Program is in a race for Countdown to Health Coverage.

We have received a grant from National to assist in that effort. The greatest impact in a short window of time is with our religious affairs partners. The program is as follows; each church will receive a grant of \$500 to host an enrollment fair between 2/8/15 and 2/15/15. Each church will select the date that is a good fit for them. The NAACP members listed the following churches as enrollment sites: First Shiloh Baptist Church, Saint Paul Missionary Baptist Church, Higher Dimensions, Saint Andrews United Methodist Church, and Greenhouse International Church.



Those interested in this Outreach, please contact Carol Moore or Yolanda Smith at the Houston NAACP Branch Office at 713-526-3389. We need your help.



# EDUCATION IN ACTION

by Dr. Carolyn Evans-Shabazz, Education Chair

The Education Committee has kept a watchful eye on the Houston Independent School District. An alarming percentage of minority students are unable to read on grade level. School closures in minority schools is disproportionately high and finally the loss of quality programs and teachers tends to provide a poor delivery of educational services in the minority communities throughout the inner city.



*Reading Initiative Students at Cullen Middle School*

The committee has been engaged in collaboration with the Texas Civil Rights Project to address the disparity of opportunities given to affluent students and schools in the lower economic areas which are primarily minority. The Houston Branch has asked for a moratorium on school closures and has been involved in litigation regarding the closing of Jones High School. NAACP Houston Branch as is the Texas Civil Rights Project is committed to leveling the playing field for minority children.

The committee members have been involved in the “It Takes A Village” Reading Initiative at Cullen Middle School where we meet weekly to engage in reading support activities. We are actively seeking volunteers so that we can reach more students. To become involved, please register at [www.houstonisd.org](http://www.houstonisd.org) as a Volunteer in Public Schools (VIPS). Please contact our Education Committee to get more information on how you can join our Reading Initiative efforts.

The Education Committee meets on the first Thursday of each month except the month of July at the branch, 2002 Wheeler, at 5:30PM. We welcome all former educators and anyone interested in positively impacting the education of all children.

## Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Advocacy

by W. Clyde Lemon, Armed Services & Veterans Affairs Chair

The NAACP Houston branch’s Armed Services and Veteran’s Affairs committee was re-established in August 2014. Since its re-establishment, the current committee members include:

NAME	MILITARY STATUS
W. Clyde Lemon	Chairman of Houston Branch Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee Veteran U.S. Marine Corps
LaShondra Jones	Vice Chairman of Houston Branch Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee Veteran U.S. Marine Corps
Chassity Black	Veteran U.S. Navy
Sylvia McCarter	Selective Service Commission
Lee Perry	Veteran U.S. Air Force
Detra Sneed	Veteran U.S. Army
Brian Seymour	Veteran U.S. Marine Corps.
Ray Freddie	Veteran U.S. Navy



*Veterans Committee at Veterans Day Event*

To gain more insight into the needs of members of the armed services; their families; and veterans and their families the committee began a survey on Veterans Day. To ensure a valid survey the committee will be visiting housing and other facilities that serve veterans.

### Preliminary Survey Summary Results

On Tuesday, November 11, 2014, the members of the NAACP Veteran’s Committee disseminated surveys to local veterans during the City of Houston Annual Veteran’s Day Celebration / Job Fair. Of the 50 surveys that were given out to local veterans, 46 filled out the forms, 3 were not returned to booth, and one survey was filled out by veteran’s relative concerning the Denver VA Hospital which is not applicable. The overall concerns were regarding the services at the local Michael E. DeBakey Veterans Medical Center with few other general concerns as well. These issues will be reviewed by the Houston Branch Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs committee members on how we can best address these issues thereby serving this committee with the aforementioned issues and concerns of Houston’s veteran population.

# Environmental and Climate Justice - A Civil Rights Issue

by Jacqueline Smith, PhD Chair



The NAACP has determined that Environmental and Climate Justice (ECJ) advocacy is a civil rights issue and is developing a comprehensive and holistic agenda to reduce pollution, advance energy efficiency, promote clean energy, and build disaster resilient infrastructures. The Houston Branch began having an active role in ECJ advocacy with the creation of an ECJ Committee in 2013.

The Houston Branch ECJ Committee is committed to empowering individuals with knowledge, promoting dialogue on ECJ issues, and exploring the linkages between environmental quality and social justice. The committee opposes policies that result in damage to the environment, that increase inequity, and disproportionately impact communities of color.

Upcoming activities of the ECJ Committee include a review of the Toxics Release Inventory data for facilities in Houston, promotion of a climate sustainability plan that has equity based indicators, support for net metering regulations, and the continued monitoring of proposed changes to the solid waste management and recycling practices of the City of Houston.

# TEXAS NAACP NEWS



The NAACP National Headquarters, NAACP Texas State Conference and NAACP Houston Branch recently held a joint press conference to discuss the release of our new Environmental Justice Report, **“Just Energy Policies: Reducing Pollution and Creating Jobs – Texas Report”**. The report assesses energy policy in the State of Texas from a civil rights lens.



NAACP Texas State Conference Lobby Day will be held Monday, March 2, 2015 in Austin, TX. Please join us as we walk the halls of our Texas Capitol to discuss and advocate for important legislative changes with our local state elected officials.

# NATIONAL NEWS



NAACP National Announces  
New Leadership  
Cornell Williams Brooks  
President and CEO

NAACP Houston Alert



Houston Branch wins 2nd Place in  
National Membership Competition during  
2014 National Convention in Las Vegas.

2015 National Convention will be held  
July 11-15th in Philadelphia, PA -



2014 Image Awards will be live in Los Angeles on Friday Feb 6, 2015. NAACP Houston Branch is hosting a LIVE viewing party for those who cannot attend the live show!

# Mark Your Calendars

<u>EVENT</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>DATE</u>
NAACP Image Awards Viewing Party	Bayway Lincoln	February 6, 2015
NAACP's 106 <sup>th</sup> Birthday	Founder's Day	February 12, 2015
NAACP General Membership Meeting	Palm Center - 2nd Floor Judge Burney's Courtroom (5300 Griggs @ MLK)	February 19, 2015
NAACP Lobby Day	Austin, Texas	March 2, 2015
NAACP General Membership Meeting	Palm Center - 2nd Floor	March 19, 2015
NAACP General Membership Meeting	Palm Center - 2nd Floor	April 16, 2015
"NAACP Today" Radio Show	mjwjtalkradio.com 1-800-970-8716	Every Tuesday 9-11am

Monthly Standing Committee Meeting Date/Time Varies. Please [www.naacphouston.org](http://www.naacphouston.org) for meeting dates/times

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[www.instagram.com/naacp\\_houston/](http://www.instagram.com/naacp_houston/) <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCP0LIXQdr-YvEg6qVw3iEA>

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