

NAACP NEWS

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**DR. AND MRS. BENJAMIN HOOKS DONATE \$56,000 TO CREATE NAACP
NATIONAL LITERACY PROGRAM**

Donation to help organize reading programs in each of seven NAACP regions

Dr. Benjamin L. Hooks, Executive Director emeritus, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), announced during the NAACP 2006 Annual Meeting that he and his wife, Frances, will donate \$56,000 to create a NAACP National Literacy Program to encourage young children to read.

"I have always been concerned about children's ability to read," said Hooks. "No matter what other instructions a child receives, if he or she does not learn to read properly their ability to advance in this society will be sorely circumscribed."

Hooks, who led the NAACP from 1977 to 1992, said he hopes the new reading program will help close the education gap that currently exists between African American and white students. Hooks suggested that each year the NAACP should award a \$1,000 grant to a student who resides in each of the seven NAACP regions. Hooks said children might be encouraged to read a biography of a historical African American figure and then write an essay about the book.

Bruce S. Gordon, NAACP President & CEO, said, "Even as a former executive director and first lady of the NAACP, Dr. and Mrs. Hooks continue to demonstrate their commitment to the Association and their commitment to young people. This generous gift is just one of the many ways in which they demonstrate their support."

Dr. John Jackson, NAACP Chief Policy Officer, said: "When you look at national assessment scores, the average mean score for white kindergartners is 40, while the average mean score for black kindergartners is 34. When you consider that by 9th grade black students are, on average, more than two grade levels behind in reading, it clearly validates the need for this Association to continue its advocacy and programmatic focus on literacy."

Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. Its adult and youth members throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities, conducting voter mobilization and monitoring equal opportunity in the public and private sectors.

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