

NAACP
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in Wake County, Charlotte/Mecklenburg, Halifax, Greenville and even Forsyth County are of grave concern to the NAACP, Barber said. He cited these and other events as counteracting the progress that was made during the Civil Rights Era.

"We are at an intersection of history and the question is are we going to keep pressing forward - even if it's gradually - or take some significant steps backwards?" he intoned. "We have to challenge those whose policies are rooted in the politics of yesterday rather than the politics of tomorrow."

With the General Assembly under Republican control for the first time in decades, protecting the strides made by a more progressive state legislature is even more important, Barber said. The landmark Racial Justice Act—which allows death row inmates who can prove that racial bias was a significant factor in the prosecution of their cases to have their sentences amended to life in prison without parole—is one of many initiatives that could lose their



Rev. Barber is surrounded by local supporters as he speaks.

footing in the state if those who believe in them don't speak out, Barber said.

Educational equality is among the chief priorities of the People's Agenda. Though, like many states, North Carolina is flagging under the weight of a growing deficit, Barber warned that hasty solutions could lead to more problems. Budget cuts that target education and other service areas pose a threat to the future economy, he said.

"If you undercut education, you're undercutting that which fuels the economy," the president declared.

"You're actually working backwards when you undercut central services."

Economic justice is also a key component of the Agenda. Barber said lawmakers must be cautious not to balance the budget "on the backs of the poor."

"You can't cut your way out of a \$3.7 billion budget. You've got to create some 21st Century solutions," he remarked. "...That's why on the 12th, we're going to present some alternative budgeting ideas."

County Commissioner Walter Marshall reminded those present that participa-

tion breeds progress. A lack of civic engagement has already hurt progressive agendas on the local level, he said.

"I can remember as young men we said, 'Give us the vote and we'll change things,'" Marshall related. "Now, we've got the vote and we stayed home. We can't blame nobody but us if we've got that power and don't use it."

In addition to promoting civic involvement on the state level, Branch President S. Wayne Patterson said Barber's visit gave local chapter members a chance to



Former W-S NAACP leader County Commissioner Walter Marshall speaks as Mayor Pro Tempore Burke sits nearby.

show off their newly remodeled facility. The building suffered significant water damage in November 2010, when a copper water pipe was cut and stolen. It now has new carpet and paint, and its community gathering room is decorated with photographs of local and state leaders.

"We want this to facility to look like the NAACP," said Patterson, who took office earlier this year. "We want the public to understand the rich history of the NAACP."

Mayor Pro Tempore Vivian Burke praised the revamped facility. The for-

mer recreation center once belonged to the city. When it was closed several years ago, Burke was among those who called for it to be donated to the NAACP.

"This is important," she said of the services the building affords to the community, which include a free computer lab. "I want to commend you on how nice it looks."

For more information about HKonJ, visit www.hkonj.com. To learn about seating availability on the local NAACP bus to the march, contact Patterson at (336) 995-3072.

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