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New NAACP leader: I'm Brown v. Board beneficiary

By Jesse J. Holland

WASHINGTON (AP) - As a Head Start and Yale Law School graduate, Cornell William Brooks calls himself a direct beneficiary of Brown v. Board Education.

Now the lawyer and activist is taking over as the next national president and CEO of the NAACP, whose legal arm brought that landmark legal case challenging segregation in public schools.

On the 60th anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision that said separating black and white children was unconstitutional, the nation's oldest civil rights organization announced Brooks' selection.

The NAACP's board made the final decision May 16, and chair Roslyn Brock told The Associated Press about Brooks' new position on May 17.

Brooks will be formally presented to the Baltimore-based organization's members at its national convention in Las Vegas in July.

"I am a beneficiary, an heir and a grandson, if you will, of Brown versus Board of Education," Brooks told the AP.

"My life is the direct product, if you will, of the legacy of the blood, sweat and tears of the NAACP and so today I'm particularly mindful that the NAACP has made America what it is, and certainly made my life possible and we are all grateful heirs of that legacy."

Brooks, 53, of Annandale, New Jersey, will become the NAACP's 18th national president, replacing interim leader Lorraine Miller. Miller has served in that position since Benjamin Jealous ended his five-year tenure last year.

"I am deeply humbled and honored to be entrusted with the opportunity to lead this powerful historic organization," Brooks said in an interview. "In our fight



CORNELL WILLIAM

to ensure voting rights, economic equality, health equity, and ending racial discrimination for all people, there is indeed much work to be done."

Brooks, a minister, is originally from Georgetown, South Carolina. He currently is president and CEO of the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, a Newark, New Jersey-based urban research and advocacy organization.

He graduated from Jackson State University, received a Master of Divinity from Boston University School of Theology and got his law degree from Yale.

Brooks has worked as a lawyer for the Federal Communication Commission and the Justice Department. He also ran for Congress as a Democrat in Virginia in 1998. He still owns a home in Woodbridge, Virginia.

"Mr. Brooks is a pioneering lawyer and civil rights leader who brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the association," Brock said. "We look forward to leveraging his legal prowess, vision and leadership as we tackle the pressing civil rights issues of the 21st century."

The organization had hired The Hollins Group Inc., of Chicago to lead its search for a new CEO, and Brooks was selected

from more than 450 applications, Brock said. The organization held more than 30 interviews, she said.

Brooks said he would start talking to and listening to the NAACP's membership to plan for the organization's future.

He said he would present his vision for the NAACP at the organization's convention after he's held conversations with the members.

"As long as America continues to be a great, but imperfect nation, there will be a need for the NAACP," Brooks said.

Jealous called Brooks' selection "the beginning of a new and exciting chapter for the NAACP."



WASHINGTON - The Board of Directors of AARP, one of the nation's largest and most powerful nonprofit advocacy groups, has unanimously selected Jo Ann Jenkins as its new chief executive officer, to succeed longtime CEO A. Barry Rand on September 1, 2014. "After an extensive, thoughtful and deliberative national search, the AARP Board unanimously selected Jo Ann Jenkins as our new Chief Executive Officer," said Gail Aldrich, chair of the AARP Board of Directors.



President Barack Obama slides across a counter to pose for photos with staff following lunch at the Dupont Circle Shake Shack in Washington, D.C., May 16. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

Obama hosts Brown v. Board families and lawyers

By Darlene Superville

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Barack Obama on May 16 marked the 60th anniversary of the Supreme Court's landmark Brown v. Board of Education school desegregation decision by recommitting to "the long struggle to stamp out bigotry and racism in all their forms."

Obama also met May 16 in the White House East Room with families of the plaintiffs, lead attorneys Jack Greenberg and William Coleman and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. Greenberg argued the case; Coleman was a leading legal strategist.

Obama said in a statement that the decision, issued on May 17, 1954, was "the first major step in dismantling the 'separate but equal' doctrine that justified Jim Crow," the racial segregation laws that were in place at the state and local level across the South.

"As we commemorate this historic anniversary, we recommit ourselves to the long struggle to stamp out bigotry and racism in all their forms," Obama said. "We reaffirm our belief that all children deserve an education worthy of their promise. And we remember that change did not come overnight, that it took many years and a nationwide movement to fully realize the dream of civil rights for all of God's children."

Obama pledged to never forget the men, women and children who took "extraordinary risks in order to make our country more fair and more free."

"Today, it falls on us to honor their legacy by taking our place in their march and doing our part to perfect the union we love," he said.

First lady Michelle Obama observed the anniversary by visiting Topeka, Kansas, site of the lawsuit that initiated the case. She met May 16 with high school students in a college preparatory program and delivered remarks at a pre-graduation event for seniors in the Topeka Public School District.

North Carolina NAACP, Forward Together Moral Movement Statement on Return of Moral Mondays to Raleigh by Rev. Barber

Durham - This afternoon at 5 pm, the North Carolina NAACP and the Forward Together Moral Movement will join together at Moral Monday in Raleigh to petition our lawmakers to repeal these laws that are hurting our state's most vulnerable and to restore our confidence in their ability to govern for the good of the whole.

To explain the return of Moral Mondays to Raleigh, we have released the following public statement: "Nearly a year ago, we joined together in moral witness against the extremist assault on North Carolina's working families and the poor, our state's unemployed, the hundreds of thousands without healthcare and our embattled public schools. Despite the state constitution's mandate that citizens have the right to 'assemble to consult for the common good' and 'apply to the General Assembly for redress of grievances,' the General Assembly authorities ordered seventeen of us arrested for violating the vague and unconstitutional building rules. Eventually, tens of thousands joined our protests. By the end of the session, the authorities had jailed 945 protestors on the same shaky charges. The whole nation took notice of our moral stand, and citizens organized similar protests in many other states.

"The growing Moral Monday - Forward Together Movement refused to allow Thom Tillis and his extremist 'super-majority' to pursue their morally bankrupt agenda in the dark. We shined a bright light on what was happening in our General Assembly. Most North Carolinians did not like the hard-hearted, ideologically driven and morally bankrupt policies that were shoved into law. As Gov. McCrory and the extremist legislature saw their poll numbers plummet, our protests swelled with large numbers of youth becoming engaged, many seniors offering their wisdom, North Carolina's clergy on fire for justice and mercy and our movement taking the moral high ground. Independents, Democrats and Republicans alike joined our volunteer army of love, which was black and white and Latino, Asian and native American, Jewish and Muslim, uninsured workers and health professionals, educators and students, gay and straight, environmentalists and labor. Moral Monday won the endorsement of United Methodist, Jewish, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Lutheran Evangelical and Roman Catholic denominational leaders, among others.

"Despite public disapproval, the General Assembly:

- * cut education, health care and environmental protections as well as enacted a regressive and fiscally irresponsible tax plan, raising taxes on the poor and working families while giving huge tax breaks to the super-wealthy;
- * rejected the federally-funded Medicaid expansion, risking the health of half a million uninsured and damaging the state economy;
- * slashed unemployment insurance to give North Carolina the most severe unemployment laws in America, creating a disastrous and sudden cut-off of benefits to unemployed workers and their families;
- * created a school voucher program that directs ten million tax dollars to private, unaccountable private and religious schools;
- * passed a monster voter suppression law that will undermine voting rights and impede voting for thousands;
- * intruded into the relationship between women and their doctors;
- * and issued administrative rules that expedites "fracking" and endangers the state's water supplies.

"When the legislative session ended, the Moral Monday - Forward Together Movement took our protests to cities, towns and rural communities across North Carolina, from Mitchell County in the mountains to Dare County at the Outer Banks. In February, tens of thousands came to a Moral March on Raleigh.

"Despite our efforts, the policies pursued in these chambers have had a devastating effect on hundreds of thousands of North Carolinians who were already suffering. The leaders of this extremist 'super-majority' remain deaf to the cries of the needy whom Jesus called 'the least of these.' Gov. McCrory, Thom Tillis and other Tea-Party-backed extremists called us 'outsiders,' mocked us as

"morons" and derided us as "losers," but they still could not explain how their legislative agenda meets the basic standards of human decency. And now they hide behind a cloak of civility while they pass laws that take away our voting rights, deny us health care and put government in the service of the rich.

"We have come back to call upon Thom Tillis and his extremist 'super-majority' to repent from their attacks on our public schools and our teachers, to repeal the shutdown of the Earned Income Tax Credit for 900,000 lower income families and the fat tax cuts for the rich and to restore North Carolina to its traditional moral values of kindness, decency and fairness. We have come back because our religious traditions and moral reasoning lead us in a different direction, away from the unwise and inhumane policies being pushed by the extremists in the General Assembly.

"The Moral Monday - Forward Together Movement is coming back to follow our rights under the North Carolina Constitution and once again 'assemble together to consult for the common good' and 'apply to the General Assembly for redress of our grievances.'" Not surprisingly, however, the extremist leadership has already changed the rules of the building, which Thom Tillis publicly referred to as "my House," in order to restrict our freedom of speech. In response to the thousands who gathered at the People's House during the last session, the extremists have banned signs or speech that may "imminently disturb the General Assembly" and banned press conferences. Some of the new rules are plainly unconstitutional, while others are unfair or invite selective enforcement. All this is merely an effort to bully and intimidate the people of North Carolina.

"The book of Micah asks all of us to ponder a serious question. 'What does the Lord require of you? But to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God?' It is in a spirit of openness to the Biblical prophet's question that we gather here as people of faith and citizens of North Carolina. We have written to Gov. McCrory and to both legislative chambers, asking them to reconsider their assault on the poor, the many thousands of our state's unemployed, our many citizens without healthcare and our embattled public schools.

"So we have no other choice but to assemble in the People's House where these bills are being presented, argued and voted upon in hopes that God will move in the hearts of our legislators, as he moved in the heart of Pharaoh to let His people go. Some ask the question, 'Why don't they be quiet?' We remind them that it was our collective silence that unwittingly opened the city gates to these extremist forces. If we must pray forgiveness for anything today, it will be the silence with which we once allowed this to happen quietly and without protest. Thoreau said in his famous essay, 'Civil Disobedience,' that if he had to repent of anything, it would be his good behavior. 'What possessed me,' he asked himself, 'that I behaved so well in the face of such wrong?'

"We welcome old friends and new to this celebration of the spirit of justice, love and freedom. We are glad to recognize the faces of our fellow citizens and for each of us to know that we are standing together for the highest values that we hold in common. We are grateful to everyone who has come to Raleigh to be a voice for the voiceless and to resist the spirit of domination and the rule of money.

"Make no mistake about it: this has become the making of something new in the Old North State. We are calling together a coalition of goodwill, a nonviolent volunteer army of love, to oppose this legislature's heartless, ideologically driven agenda. We call on all people of good will to join us, that we might build the bridges of understanding, not the walls of division. We call on all residents of North Carolina who believe in the common good to pray and partner with us as we use the tools of protest to illuminate for the nation the shameful acts taking place here. We are not alone. We shall speak and we shall act. We will become 'the trumpet of conscience' and 'the beloved community' that Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called upon us to be, echoing the God of our mothers and fathers in the faith. Now is the time. Here is the place. We are the people. And we will be heard."