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President Barack Obama visits a Dignity for Children Foundation classroom in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Nov. 21. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

Black pastors press Trump on tone during closed-door meeting

By Jill Colvin

NEW YORK (AP) - Dozens of black pastors pressed Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump on Nov. 30 to address what some called his use of racially charged rhetoric, with several describing a meeting that became tense as attendees raised concerns about his blunt language.

While some left the gathering at Trump's skyscraper in midtown Manhattan with hopes their message had resonated, Trump said afterward he had no plans to change his approach, which he said had taken him to "first position in every single poll."

"The beautiful thing about the meeting is that they didn't really ask me to change the tone," Trump said. "I think they really want to see victory, because ultimately it is about, we want to win and we want to win together."

At a rally later Nov. 30 in Macon, Georgia, Trump told a nearly all-white audience of about 5,000 that the meeting was "inspiring" and "unbelievable."

"It was a really terrific day," he said.

But several pastors who met with the billionaire real estate mogul and reality TV star, who has held a consistent lead in preference polls of GOP voters for several months due in large part to his aggressive style of campaigning, told a different story.

Bishop George Bloomer, who traveled to the gathering from North Carolina, said he arrived in New York with concerns about "the racial comments that have been made and the insensitive comments that have been made," including an incident earlier this month in which a black protester was roughed up by Trump supporters at a rally in Birmingham, Alabama.

Trump said after the incident, "Maybe he should have been roughed up because it was absolutely disgusting what he was doing."

"I asked him: 'Are you a racist? People are saying that about you,'" Bloomer said. "If you are seeking the African-American community to support you, at the least, you're not helping with these kind of things that are going on."

Bloomer said he told Trump that "if he wants to have our ear as a community, to at least tone down the rhetoric some kind of way, tone it down. And he said that he would."

Pastor Al Morgan of Launch Ministries in Raleigh, North Carolina, said part of the group's discussion focused on whether Trump should lighten up a bit.

"What he said was that he would take that into consideration," Morgan said. "So the thing was trying to be who he is, so you have to remain true to yourself. And, in his defense, that's gotten him where he is. So the thing is, how do you convey a person's heart with their personality? That's the dilemma."

Trump is seeking to replace President Barack Obama, who won two terms in the White House by bringing together a coalition of young people, single women and black and Hispanic voters.

Democrats maintain an enormous edge with African-American voters, with Republican presidential candidates faring poorly among minorities in the past two elections. In 2012, according to exit polls conducted for The Associated Press and television networks, 93 percent of black voters backed Obama. In 2008, the number was 95 percent.

But Trump has been courting the support of evangelical black clergy members and other African-American leaders as he works to broaden his appeal in a crowded Republican field.

In Georgia, radio host and failed 2012 presidential hopeful Herman Cain was among those who introduced Trump. Cain was the lone major black

Republican candidate four years ago. Trump also interrupted his own 75-minute speech to bring another black Georgia Republican to the microphone. Bruce LeVell, who has served as party chairman in suburban Atlanta's Gwinnett County, announced his endorsement, drawing roars from Trump's backers.

Rep. G.K. Butterfield, Performers and Speakers to Commemorate 150th Anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery Dec. 6

Raleigh - December 6, 2015 marks the 150th anniversary of the passage of the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution, which officially outlawed slavery in the United States. One of the most significant days in United States history comes and goes with no fanfare or even solemn recognition. However, this will not be so on the 150th anniversary. Abolition Day: A Celebration of Freedom commemorates this monumental moment in the history of our country.

On Sunday, December 6th from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at The Garden on Millbrook located at 2400 E. Millbrook Road, Raleigh, NC 27604, there will be a celebration featuring performances that range from African drumming to theatrical presentations.

"We are excited to celebrate the day when the United States broke its own chains by freeing all of the people in bondage and finally began to truly live the promise of America," says Chris Hill, Co-Chair of the Celebration of Freedom event.

The primary sponsor of the event is the Berean Community Center, Inc., a nonprofit corporation based in Raleigh that serves the community through educational programs like this. Yasmee Benton, Executive Director of the BCC, says "it is vitally important for our teens and adults to know this history." She continued, "The Center is proud to bring this educational event in the form of a celebration with arts and living history to show young people as well as adults that this day should be remembered."

The event will feature special presentations by the Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus and long-time U.S. Representative, The Honorable G. K. Butterfield, and UNC-Chapel Hill Associate Professor of History and African American Studies, Dr. Reginald Hildebrand.

The afternoon will also feature special performances by Chuck Davis and the African American Dance Ensemble, Mike Wiley's dramatic presentation of "Fire of Freedom," a play that explores events surrounding this historical period, and a stirring performance by world-renowned opera singer and chair of the UNC-Chapel Hill Music Department, Dr. Louise Toppin. The celebration includes additional music performances by Shades of Harmony and the Berean Baptist Church of Raleigh's Praise Team.

The Master of Ceremonies for the afternoon will be The Honorable James A. Wynn, Jr., Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, 4th Circuit.

If you would like more information about Abolition Day: A Celebration of Freedom, please contact Chris Hill at AbolitionDayNC@gmail.com. For general information about Abolition Day, visit abolitionday.com. For event ticket information, visit abolitiondaync.eventbrite.com.

University to dedicate building to Parren Mitchell

COLLEGE PARK, Md. (AP) - The University of Maryland will dedicate a building in College Park to Parren Mitchell, the first black person elected to Congress from Maryland.

The university will dedicate the Art-Sociology Building on Dec. 3. Mitchell was the first African American student to earn a graduate degree from the college.

Mitchell was elected to Congress in 1970, and was one of the 13 founding members of the Congressional Black Caucus. He died in 2007.



REP. PARREN MITCHELL

CCU Trustee & Alumnus To Lead Commerce For Philadelphia

North Carolina Central University Board of Trustees member and alumnus Harold T. Epps has been appointed to serve as commerce director for the city of Philadelphia by Mayor-elect Kenney.

In this role, Epps will ensure that the city's commercial projects benefit from economic development. As the new commerce director, Epps plans to focus on ensuring that the city's commercial corridors benefit from economic development.

Epps is a Philadelphia business leader and official of one of the nation's largest minority-owned firms. Epps has more than 30 years of corporate experience providing high performance products and solutions for complex and compliance-driven industries. He has served as president and CEO of PWRT since 2007. He was appointed vice chairman of PRWT earlier this year. Serving in executive roles with Quadrant and Manasha Corporation, Epps led subsidiaries and divisions with annual revenues of up to \$175 million and 2,000 employees. He also serves as co-chairman of the Comcast National African-American Advisory Council, as an executive committee member of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce and on the board of directors of Center City District U.S. Facilities, Inc. and PRWT Services.



HAROLD T. EPPS

Epps also serves as the co-chairman of the Comcast National African-American Advisory Council, director and executive committee member of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, director of the Urban League of Philadelphia and on the board of directors of Center City District U.S. Facilities, Inc.

After obtaining a B.S. degree from North Carolina Central University in 1974, Epps earned his M.B.A. from Western New England College.

Obama honoring Streisand, Spielberg, Sondheim and more

By Stacy A. Anderson

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Barack Obama recognized 17 Americans with the nation's highest civilian award Nov. 24, including giants of the entertainment industry such as Barbra Streisand and Steven Spielberg, baseball legends Willie Mays and Yogi Berra, and politicians, activists and government innovators.

In addition to filmmaker Spielberg and singer and Oscar-winner Streisand, Obama presented the Presidential Medal of Freedom to musicians Gloria and Emilio Estefan, singer James Taylor, composer Stephen Sondheim and violinist Itzhak Perlman.

Mays was among the first African-American players in Major League Baseball. Berra, who died in September, was a Yankee great at catcher, an 18-time All-Star and 10-time World Series champion.

The politicians getting the honor are Democrats: Sen. Barbara Mikulski of Maryland, who championed equal pay and women's health during her 44 years of public service; former Rep. Lee Hamilton from Indiana, a longtime advocate of American national security and international relations; and the late Rep. Shirley Chisholm from New York. Chisholm was the first African-American woman elected to Congress and a founding member of what would become the Congressional Black Caucus.

"Today we celebrate some extraordinary people: innovators, artists and leaders who contribute to America's strength as a nation," Obama said.

Of Hamilton, Obama said he helped guide the nation through the Cold War and had a consistent commitment to bipartisanship. Of Berra, the president said he was born to play baseball but noted that he also served in World War II. Of Taylor, he said the singer could turn an arena into a living room. Mays, he said, was such a giant that it allowed "someone like me" to consider running for president.

Obama spoke about each recipient; among the other honorees were:

-Bonnie Carroll, a veterans advocate, who founded the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) to support families and loved ones of military heroes killed during their service.

-Katherine G. Johnson, a NASA mathematician, whose calculations influenced every major space program, including the flight of the first American into space.

-William Ruckelshaus, a former chief of the Environmental Protection Agency, who shaped the guiding principles of the agency, including a nationwide ban on the pesticide DDT and an agreement with the automobile industry to require catalytic converters to reduce automobile pollution.

Posthumous recipients include Indian tribal advocate Billy Frank Jr., who led "fish-ins" similar to sit-ins during the tribal "fish wars" of the 1960s and 1970s, and civil rights leader Minoru Yasui, who challenged the constitutionality of a military curfew order during World War II on the grounds of racial discrimination and spent months in solitary confinement during the legal battle.