

Urban League: African-Americans responsible for parity in the 1990s

By PATRICIA SMITH-DEERING
Chronicle Staff Writer

For African-Americans to achieve parity by the year 2,000 they are going to have to develop the leadership that will take them beyond the political and economic gains made to date by some in the African-American community. That was the message that Mike Espy, Democratic congressman from Mississippi, brought in his keynote address to over one thousand guests attending the Winston-Salem Urban League's 11th Annual Equal Opportunity Day Dinner, Thursday, Sept. 6, at the M. C. Benton Convention Center.

Espy, the first African-American congressman to represent Mississippi since John Roy Lynch was elected during Reconstruction, told the group that bridging the gaps that exist in education, income, opportunity, and economic development for African-Americans in the 9-1/2 years that remain before the year 2,000 was "a tall order." He said, "While America enjoys the continuation of its longest peacetime period in history, black Americans remain mired in recession."



Photo by L.B. Speas Jr.
Rep. Mike Espy drives home his point during the keynote address at the annual EOD dinner.

Referring to the advances that have been made politically with African-Americans as governors, mayors, and other elected officials, Espy cautioned against resting on those achievements. "We've come a long way, but we have a long way to go. We are here, but we have not arrived." To achieve parity he stressed that it would take everyone rolling up their sleeves and using their consciousness, mentality, good will, and spirit to make things happen.

"It's going to take more than the politicians..." Espy said. "It's going to take you," he added, pointing to the group. One of the first places he said change needs to take place is with African-American youth, particularly the males. "We have seen on the news the tragedy of blacks killing blacks in the homeland of South Africa," he said. "But, in cities all across this nation black males are doing the same thing to one another."

Espy said that parity would take African-Americans doing what it takes to obtain what they want because the "peacetime dividend" that was supposed to result from the country's improved relations with the Soviet Union have been eroded by the military response in the Middle East. "Thanks to Saddam

Hussein, the peace dividend is now in Kuwait...in Saudi Arabia...we have to do more because the pie is shrinking," he emphasized.

"If we want to reach parity in the 1990s, we will have to do more, and that requires something from each one of us," Espy advised. "We've come a long way from slave ships to championships." Then in a bid for a candidate for whom he had provided support at an earlier rally, he added, "We've come this far despite the other Jesse (Helms). But I know you're all going to do something about that on November 6."

Four awards were given at the dinner to recognize individual and corporate efforts exemplifying the Urban League's mission of improving the quality of life for all citizens. Honorees were: Velma Friende, president of the Winston-Salem Urban League Guild, Achievement Award; Ernest H. Pitt, publisher of the *Winston-Salem Chronicle*, Achievement Award; Morris Robertson, retired assistant police chief, Community Service Award; and R. J. Reynolds Tobacco, Corporate Leadership Award, accepted by James W. Johnston, the company's chairman and CEO.

Retro-fit modifications to homes of the elderly make life more comfortable

Chronicle Staff Report

A news conference by city government at the home of a citizen who lives in Winston-Salem isn't an every-day event. But that's what happened Tuesday, Sept. 11, as officials from city, state and federal governments met at the home of Eddie and Hattie Vaughn to tell about the benefits of Retro-fit, a new program to help the elderly.

D. Ritchie Brooks, director of the Winston-Salem Housing Services Department, said the city tried to incorporate the Retro-fit modifications into the ongoing rehabilitation programs. When the Vaughns' roof and ceiling was repaired, Retro-fit modifications were also done.

A tour of the Vaughn home was given by Ronald E. Carter, rehabilitation project supervisor. Improvements included rails added to the bathroom to make it easier to get out of the bathtub, and a telephone

jack installed in the bathroom so that if someone did slip, they could call help. Other rails were added on the front steps to make them easier to climb. In the kitchen, cabinet handles were lowered to make them easier to reach and throughout the house, doorway thresholds were lowered to reduce the possibility of tripping.

Other housing modifications in the Vaughn home include installing door knobs that are turned by a lever rather than having to turn a handle (a problem for arthritics) and installing mailbox slots in the front door to keep the Vaughns from having to go outside for mail and to provide security for social security checks and other mail.

The Vaughns live at 2333 Booker Street in Winston-Salem. Brooks, Mayor Martha S. Wood, Lenny Rickman and Jason Roth representatives from the National Research Center, and Harry Weiler from the Winston-Salem Home-



Photo by L.B. Speas Jr.
Eddie and Hattie Vaughn pause as they descend their front stairs with the aid of Retro-fit handrails.

builder's Association, attended the press conference.

The program is designed to make cost-effective physical modifications in the homes of elderly people so they can stay in their homes in old age rather than relocate to special housing, such as a home for the elderly.

The Vaughn home is one of three houses in the city now completed with Retro-fit modifications. The other houses are located at 1600 19th Street and 1879 Kentucky Avenue.

Brooks said after the Retro-fit modifications on the Winston-Salem houses are completed and evaluated, he hopes to recommend they become a part of the ongoing rehabilitation program.

Winston-Salem is one of only three cities in the United States selected to demonstrate the Retro-fit program. The other cities are Tucson, Ariz., and Miami, Fla. The National Association of Home-

builder's National Research Center is under contract with the U.S.

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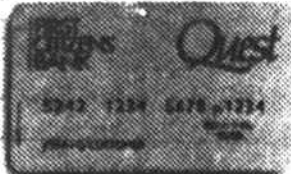
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