

**Trump**

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tion to kill Osama bin Laden and Muammar Gaddafi.

Reactions to the fatal airstrike have been swift — Iran has vowed a “forceful” revenge against U.S. assets in the region, they have withdrawn from JCPOA, and mobilized ballistic missiles across the country. The Iraqi government approved a resolution (170-0) to eject the U.S. military from their country — Shiite lawmakers drafted the language and led the vote with Sunni and Kurdish factions abstaining.

Trump quickly promised to strike 52 sites across Iran if they attack Americans or American interests overseas. He even went one step further, declaring cultural sites would be included on the list, which is a war crime. Around 3,500 soldiers at Fort Bragg have been deployed to the region.

Some pundits argue Trump’s tough response may lead us into a new major conflict in the Middle East and even predictions of another world war have been leisurely thrown around.

America has invested trillions in Middle Eastern conflicts and most would argue the country is in no position to continue wasting dollars or American lives in the region. The most informed military aides capable of advising Trump on restraint and effective planning no longer work in the administration — Mattis, Kelly, and McMaster — all resigned or have been pushed out.

Trump will need well-informed expert advice to navigate this mounting crisis while averting further conflict with Iran and

their allies. Any POTUS is justified when they respond to threats against the American people, but the response must be commensurate to the action — no one doubts Trump should have responded, but only time will tell if his response was appropriate.

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**Emancipation**

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the equation.”

Jones, who is a native of Little Rock, Ark., said despite lingering effects of slavery, we have the power to overcome. He said race is only the pigment of one’s skin and to overcome those lingering effects, the African American community needs to adopt a new mindset and value system. He also encouraged the crowd to do their part to ensure that the young people in our community know that they can achieve anything they set their minds to.

“Rev. Dr. James Cone, a black liberation leader out of Arkansas, said the oppressed can take the value system of the oppressor or the oppressed can set his or her own value system,” Jones continued. “If we do to others what others have done to us, then

we’re no better than the others. My Bible says do justly and love mercifully, that is the will of God.”

Although Jones delivered the keynote address, Judge Denise Hartsfield read the Emancipation Proclamation aloud, and several elected officials spoke and encouraged citizens to exercise their right to vote. The highlight of the service came toward the end when seven students from local high schools received \$1,000 scholarships. According to Dan Piggott, longtime member of the Emancipation Association, it was the most scholarships they have awarded since the service was established. Scholarship recipients were Najashi Belchor, Allen Choyce, LaJada Flowers, Darian Lowe, Taylor Martin, Stephen Minor and Todd Ryan.

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## Black News Channel Network launch fulfills lifelong dream of J.C. Watts

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — On January 6, 2020, the Black News Channel (BNC) became the nation’s only 24-hour news and information television network focused primarily on African Americans. The historic launch of the BNC fulfilled the business dream and vision of J.C. Watts, Jr., a nationally known entrepreneur and former U.S. Congressman representing Oklahoma’s Fourth District.

Programming includes special news features on topics that most affect the quality of life of communities of color — like Sickle Cell disease and hypertension — that generally aren’t given much attention by other news outlets. The BNC has also established a news-content alliance with the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA), representing the Black Press of America, via 225 African American-owned newspapers and digital companies throughout the United States.

The Tallahassee, Florida-based BNC counts as the brainchild of J.C. Watts, Jr., who is described by Tommy Ross, the network’s director of communications, as “a father, husband, grandfather, business owner, entrepreneur, author, elected official at the state and federal level, a pastor, and a rancher who grew up in a small town in Oklahoma.”

In reality, Watts appears as much more, and those who know him, understand that he’s a Republican conservative whose accomplishments cross party lines. Watts is also a former All-Star quarterback who played college football in Oklahoma and pro ball in Canada.

His congressional accomplishments and living legacy are noteworthy, including:

\*Helped black farmers get some justice on a discrimination suit against the United States Department of Agriculture.

\*Helped push through legislation for the African American Museum of History and Culture.

\*Sponsored HBCU summits to establish relationships and better understanding between students and Republican policymakers.

\*Sponsored anti-poverty legislation (community renewal/new markets tax credits).

\*Led Congress in highlighting minority health care disparities.

\*Led on the Republican side against sentencing disparities between crack/powder cocaine.

\*Led in getting funding to fight malaria in West Africa.

\*Sponsored Africa growth and opportunity legislation.

“We’ve done a lot as African Americans,” Watts stated before referencing a recent statue unveiling that took place in Richmond, Va., earlier this month. “Rumors of War,” a statue by artist Kehinde Wiley, was unveiled on December 10 during a ceremony at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. The figure depicts an African American man dressed in contemporary clothing riding a horse, echoing the equestrian sculptures of Confederate soldiers.

“Rumors of War” was reportedly Wiley’s response to the Confederate monuments that pepper the U.S. and the South in particular. The new memorial arrived amid an ongoing debate across the country about what do with Confederate imagery. “This was history,” Watts said of the statue. “Because, if we talk about the slave owner, how can we ignore the slave? African Americans contributed mightily to the United States, and you don’t see enough statues of African Americans.”

“Think about what Rosa Parks contributed, Harriet Tubman’s sacrifice, Martin Luther King’s sacrifice, and Frederick Douglass. Their contribution was to raise the conscious level of America to



J.C. Watts

say that you know, we are all human and all created by the same God,” Watts emphasized.

He said the BNC would highlight the contributions of African Americans. And, to successfully accomplish that mission, Watts said it was essential to partner with NNPA.

“NNPA already has people in the trenches that report on African American life, whether it’s Chicago, Atlanta, Birmingham, Detroit or Oklahoma City, they report on African American life every day,” Watts stated. “I don’t know if I can put into words how important that partnership will be, and that’s just in terms of content. When I was in politics, we used a strategy where you’ve got people knocking on doors and leaving literature, and that’s your ground game,” Watts continued.

“But you also need an air attack to augment that ground game, so with NNPA being on the ground and giving us information and data, and us being able to launch an air attack, it’s critical,” he stated.

Watts believes that a significant component of the BNC is providing knowledge to a community that’s starved for information.

“Our viewers will be able to find out more

about Sickle Cell and black men and black women’s health,” Watts stated. “They will also be reminded that black history isn’t just about Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement, which was extremely important, but it isn’t the only part of our history. We are going to take a deeper dive and have a deeper relationship with our community.”

Watts’s background as a Republican and a conservative has often been a topic of both his supporters and detractors. However, Watts refuses to allow stereotypes and presumptions to define him.

“Conservative means many things to different people. To me, it means living the way my grandma taught me,” Watts stated. “She taught me to treat people the way that I want to be treated. In a black home, you rarely saw people leaving their lights on at night because grandmama taught that it was a waste of electricity. If the lights were on, you knew that something pretty serious was happening.”

Watts continued: “The bottom line about being a conservative is that you treat people with respect, and you don’t believe in wasting things. That’s important. And, another primary place that I get my conservative values

is the Bible. I was taught that I shouldn’t just be concerned about Oklahoma University, my alma mater, but I should also be concerned about Morehouse. That’s why I sponsored anti-poverty legislation because sometimes you have to put extra resources into different communities to give them the infrastructure to attract industry and jobs.

“My biblical principles drove me much more than the Republican Party. Look, the National Football League recognized that having successful teams in every market would benefit everyone, and that’s why the team with the worst record gets the top pick in the draft. They know that if the Cincinnati Bengals perform better, everybody wins because you would have more advertising and a better television contract for everyone. So, I feel the same way about underserved communities. If we can help them to be stronger and create more opportunities within those communities, then that’s good for all communities.”

Conservative values also sparked Watts’s desire for criminal justice reform, he stated.

“When I talk about conservative principles, you know you don’t waste money,” Watts stated. “So,

why should we spend \$28,000 a year to incarcerate someone for a low-level, nonviolent drug offense?”

“You can spend significantly less on community service. And, when you look at the facts, the sentencing disparities were big. People on Wall Street were using powder cocaine just like people on Main Street, or people in poor communities, but the sentencing disparities were off the charts. I voted my conscience on this when I was in Congress,” Watts stated.

With the launch of the BNC, Watts hopes that viewers will get a similar feeling to what he experienced after recently taking his daughter to dinner to celebrate her birthday.

“My daughter recommended the restaurant, I’d never been there before,” Watts stated. “After dinner, she asked me what did I think of the restaurant? I said, ‘I’d come back to tomorrow.’ And I think that’s our mission with the BNC, not just to grab the imagination and the attention of the nation, but especially our demographic and to have them come back. I think it’ll be a mission accomplished.”

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., a progressive Democrat and president and CEO of the NNPA, without any reservations asserted, “The launch of the Black News Channel (BNC) is very timely at the beginning of 2020. This is good news for all in Black America. The BNC transcends the current partisan divide in the United States. The interests of African Americans, as well as all other people of color and all of humanity who cry out for freedom, justice and equality, will be more effectively addressed as direct result of the daily 24/7 diverse and news-packed broadcasts of BNC in the U.S. and throughout the world.”

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