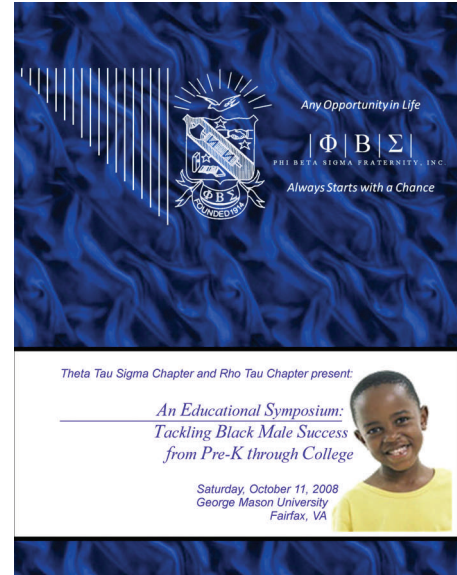


Theta Tau Sigma and Rho Tau Chapters of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated Co-Sponsor : *An Educational Symposium – Tackling Black Male Success From Pre-K Through College*

By Brother LeMont F. Neal, SPHR

After a year of careful planning and deliberation, the Brothers of Theta Tau Sigma and Rho Tau Chapters of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated jointly presented an *Educational Symposium: Tackling Black Male Success From Pre-K Through College* at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia on Saturday, October 11, 2008. The event held primarily for Black male youth, their parents, and advocates, was designed to serve as a resource of information to assist Black male youth in developing personal strategies to help them advance educationally, and gain improved education access. This symposium was Theta Tau Sigma and Rho Tau Chapters' premier joint education initiative that offered a full day program with speakers, panelists, and an afternoon session of various workshops for youth and parents.



Education Symposium Souvenir Journal Cover



Left to right: Dr. Benson G. Cooke, Pres. Elect. National Association of Black Psychologists; Dr. James E. Davis, Professor Temple University; Dr. Yvette Butler, Pres. GAP Buster Learning Center, Inc.; Dr. Edison O. Jackson, President. Medgar Evers College; and Eric L. White, Special Assistant to the President Council for Opportunity in Education

The Key Note Address – “Brother, What Do You Do When You Run Out Of Excuses?”

Dr. Edison O. Jackson, President of Medgar Evers College of the City University of New York, and member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated opened the conference as the keynote speaker by invoking a question: “What do you do when you have run out of excuses?” Dr. Jackson’s rousing speech reflected upon a passage of James Weldon Johnson’s, “Lift Every Voice and Sing” Black National Anthem, asking the audience, of nearly 200 youth and parents, to consider the historic triumphs of Black people

in spite of obstacles imposed by bigotry while also making the choice to be great. Today we have minimal excuses compared to days of old. Youth should make right choices and move forward in their greatness. “Instead of passing tests, youth should be challenged to design tests,” stated Dr. Jackson. We have to elevate our expectations of one another.

Afterwards Washington Post newspaper staff reporter Dion Haynes moderated a panel discussion and audience question and answer session. Mr. Haynes is a noted writer contributor to the Washington Post’s *Being A Black Man* Series (2006) and “Fixing D.C.’s Schools” (2006). The panel composed of five prominent scholar practitioners specializing in education access included the aforementioned Dr. Edison O. Jackson;



Education Symposium Moderator Dion Haynes, Washington Post reporter

Dr. Yvette Butler, Founder and Executive Director GAP Busters Learning Center, Inc.; Temple University Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, Dr. James Earl Davis; Associate Professor of Psychology and Counseling/Coordinator of Counseling Programs at the University of District of Columbia, and National President Elect for the Association of Black Psychologists, Dr. Benson G. Cooke, as well as Mr. Eric L. White, Special Assistant to the President of the Council for Opportunities in Education. The panel discussed a variety of subjects ranging from proposed education policy of Presidential candidates- Barack Obama and John McCain and their potential impact on Black male youth. Other issues discussed included obstacles faced by parents and students in school systems.



Brother Michael A. Ferby, President Theta Tau Sigma Chapter greets audience at First Annual Education Symposium



Brother Keith J. Johnson, Theta Tau Sigma Chapter Education Chair opens program with greetings to distinguished guests, youth and parents at Educational Symposium Tackling Black Male Success From Pre-K Through College)

The panel also offered the audience practical advice on how to encourage academic achievement at home for parents. Dr. Yvette Butler offered parental advice suggesting that parents should limit television viewing and encourage their children to read. She also suggested that parents designate a specific area in the home where their children can study, outside of the kitchen table.

The panel answered questions posed by the moderator and audience of youth and parents for a full hour session. Theta Tau Sigma President Michael A Ferby, Rho Tau Chapter President Thomas B. Epps and Theta Tau Sigma Education Committee Chair, Keith J. Johnson presented moderator Haynes and each panelist crystal honorarium awards thanking them for participation in the enlightening event. Distinguished guests and registrants received continental breakfast and lunch compliments of both chapters.

Afternoon Workshops



James W. Preston Workshop Presenter



Brother Maurice Braxton presents Mr. Preston appreciation and recognition certificate

Workshops were offered to youth and parents during the afternoon session. Workshop topics include: *Maintaining Balance and Respect by Avoiding Conflict – Practical Solutions for Today's Youth* presented by Mr. James W. Preston Sr., Director of Advocacy, Mediation and Court Processing Services at the Justice and Mediation Service Center; *40 Developmental Assets* presented by Dr. Deborah Ranson, Supervisor of Elementary Counseling and Related Services for Prince William County Public Schools

; *How To Prepare Yourself to be Marketable for College Admission* by Brother Stan Jones, Vice Principal Prince William County Public Schools; *Test Taking Skills: SOL and SAT's* by Mrs. Stacey Gray, Supervisor of Middle School Expansion Program, Montgomery County Maryland Public Schools; *Personal Empowerment: Keys to Success in Higher Education (Parent and Youth Sessions)*; by Dr. Benson G. Cooke; as well as *The Scholarship and Financial Aid Process*, by Mrs. Shirley Delgado and Mr. Wister Withers of Northern Virginia Community College.

In James W. Preston's workshop youth ages 8 to 18 were given an opportunity to discuss and explore how they viewed themselves as Black males. Participants discussed conflict dynamics, and how to assess opportunity to cultivate new and better relationships. The workshop overall enabled participants to understand themselves and their ability to accomplish within the African American historical context.

A critical question was finally posed to each participant: "Should you waste your time by not getting the best education you can and participating on the world stage?" When asked about his impression of the symposium, Preston said, "The symposium was a very good first start. Thank you for inviting me and helping address a very important issue – promotion of Black male educational success". Theta Tau Sigma and Rho Tau Chapter members gave each workshop presenter with an honorary certificate thanking them for contributing to this year's event.

From the feedback of students and parents as well as guest presenters, Theta Tau Sigma and Rho Tau presented an overall outstanding event. This education symposium serves a need of our community. It more than likely will be offered again next year to an even wider audience. Special thanks to this year's symposium sponsors and the hard working members of Theta Tau Sigma and Rho Tau Chapters of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated.