

# FLORIDA COUNCIL ON THE SOCIAL STATUS OF BLACK MEN AND BOYS

## May 19, 2011 MEETING MINUTES

A Quarterly Meeting of the Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys was held on May 19, 2011 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel Downtown Miami, Florida.

### **Council Members Present:**

Eddy Regnier, Chair  
Albert Simpson, Vice Chair  
Argatha Gilmore  
Shila Salem  
Ben Shirley, Jr.

### **Council Members Absent:**

Jenatta Cureton, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair  
Gypsy Gallardo  
Matthew Gregory  
William Hardin  
Ron Henderson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair  
Lois Scott  
Gary Siplin  
Andre Smith  
Perry Thurston  
Shairi Turner  
Wansley Walters  
Stephen Wise

### **First agenda item: Welcome**

Chairman Eddy Regnier welcomed everyone to the Public Forum in Miami, Florida. Thereafter he made the request for roll call.

### **Second agenda item: Roll Call**

Roll call was executed by Council staff Tawanna Leven-Forbes.

### **Third agenda item: Opening Invocation**

Rev. Albert Simpson gave the invocation.

### **Fourth agenda item: Call to Order**

Chairman Regnier called the meeting to order at 2:50 pm. The agenda was adopted as posted.

### **Fifth agenda item: Chairman's Comments**

Chairman Regnier stated that a discussion on when and how to go about meeting with Attorney General Pam Bondi and the Restoration of Rights issue will be address. He added that the Council will continue the discussion on how to get more members to participate in order to establish a quorum. Chairman Regnier said that he needed to address a letter of attendance to the appointing authorities and that this would be done for the understanding of the appointing authorities to give permission to the designee to attend meetings. He explained that the Council meetings are required and the idea is to draft a letter and send it to the appointing authorities pointing out that the meetings are required and statutorily binding. Chairman Regnier stated that there are so many new people in government who don't realize the responsibilities of the Council. He explained that he would draft a letter and send it to the Council staff to send to the Executive Committee for comments. Chairman Regnier explained that in the letter he would site some of the statutes and include future meetings dates. He said that he would like Mr. Shirley to review the letter. Chairman Regnier moved to the next agenda item.

### **Sixth agenda item: Member Comments**

Chairman Regnier stated that in a previous meeting when discussing the Restoration of Rights, Gypsy Gallardo stated that she would draft a letter and give to the Council to review. He stated that Rep. Perry Thurston was very passionate about this issue but both Council member's are absent. Chairman Regnier asked the Council if this was an issue that needed to be continued or dropped since the opponents of it have not followed through.

Rev. Simpson stated that this is an issue that should not be dropped the Council was trying to get the specificity of the discontinuation of rule 8 for the Restoration of Civil Rights as well as Executive Clemency. He explained the criteria of the years of 5 to 8 saying since the Council is statutorily required to advocate for the targeted population of black men and boys the purpose was in the past former Governor and the team worked hard to get the Restoration of Civil Rights so ex-offenders could receive jobs, occupational licenses and become entrepreneurs. Rev. Simpson stated that he led the charge in requesting to speak with Attorney General Pam Bondi to get acquainted and find out her passion and mission. He stated that he want her to welcome the Council as well as addressing the Council.

Chairman Regnier recognized Mr. Emery Gainey, Director of Criminal Justice Programs of the Attorney General's (AG) Office in Tallahassee, Florida and thanked him for coming. He gave Mr. Gainey the floor for comments.

Mr. Gainey stated that he could address some of the comments. He stated the AG is willing to meet with the Council but obviously her schedule is full but she is willing to meet. Mr. Gainey said that even though there were a few days before the NAACP and ACLU actually voted she welcomed individuals into office to have that discussion. He stated that there were a couple of things he want to talk about; earlier when I heard mention of the 5 to 8, I think there is a little miscommunications. Mr. Gainey stated that the 8 was not changed that it was currently out there and then the process of the clemency board prior to that. He said that the 5 is what's new, and that's simply makes an individual wait for a longer period. Mr. Gainey explained that in the AG's word's was simply for individuals to prove after they were out of the system and that they indeed spent time living as law abiding citizens. He stated that the theory for many years have incorrectly assumed that the process is one in the same, the criminal punishment and loss of rights, but they are not, they are two different events. Mr. Gainey said that the criminal punishment and loss of rights have been tied together often times in the state of Florida and other states as well, but statutorily they are not tied together. He stated that the discussion between the AG, the Governor and other cabinet members was to simply use their discretions as to how they handle clemency.

Rev. Simpson stated that since we are the Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys there's a big disconnection. He stated that he never researched the history, but he heard it said that it never should have been in the clemency because everybody was applying. He wanted to make sure that the civil rights never get defeated. Rev. Simpson stated that for him personally he was happy that Mr. Gainey shared with the Council.

Chairman Regnier thanked Mr. Gainey for sharing with the Council and moved to the discussion about attendance.

Rev. Simpson stated that yesterday the Council had a discussion on how to get more members to participate, and he stated that one of the problems are employees of state agencies with budget restraints.

Mr. Shirley stated that state agencies need to understand that if for some reason the person cannot fill their obligation they should elect and appoint someone else. He said that when this option is given to the agencies this would let them know that attending the meetings are very important.

Chairman Regnier stated that the letters would be address to all Secretaries.

Mr. Shirley stated that in his department there are four levels between him and his Secretary, the level above him have not been informed about the Council. He said the Secretary may think everything is running smoothly. Mr. Shirley stated that the letter will get things started and questions why the member is not attending meetings.

**Seventh agenda item: Discussion on How to Facilitate Fund Raising Efforts**

Rev. Simpson posed a question to Mr. Gainey on how the Council would be supported other than from the approved budget by the Legislature. He stated that the Council is concerned about the mechanics of the Direct Support Organization (DSO) and its efforts.

Mr. Gainey stated that the Legislature established the DSO and there were efforts made by some of the entities who required appointments of members. He said that there are still some that have not been appointed and because of the lack of a quorum is the inability to get started. Mr. Gainey stated that the DSO have a right to solicited funds by writing grants, soliciting private businesses and if effective enough to hire an Executive Director to guide the fund raising efforts. He said that the Council has a seat on the DSO

Mr. Ben Shirley stated that while reading over the statutes of the Council he was not so sure that the DSO is the route the Council should take.

Chairman Regnier recognized Mr. Rick Nuss, Bureau Chief of the Bureau of Criminal Justice Programs in the Attorney General's office and gave him the floor for comments.

Mr. Nuss stated that the Council was established as a research body and is to present a report of the findings to the Legislature and the Governor December 15 of each year with suggestions and ideas to include information gathered through research. He stated that a year or more ago the idea came into play to start a local council, but the statutes doesn't state that the Council had to start local councils, but to provide a strategic plan and assist by giving information on possible funding for local councils. Mr. Nuss said that one of the past Chairman's and the Council put a strategic plan together to forward to a local council to get them off the ground. He stated that the original statute does not allow the Council to go out to solicit funds and later the DSO was created to raise funds for the Council.

Mr. Shirley posed a question to Mr. Nuss on who have the governing authority on the funds and how are they allocated, and what are the rules of allocating funds.

Mr. Nuss stated that the Council has the authority on how the funds should be allocated. He explained that the rules of allocating funds are the same standard guidelines as all other agencies.

Mr. Gainey stated that if the DSO was active we would ask that the Council follow the guidelines for allocating funds. He explained that the theory of the DSO is with the right people in place, power broker's and mini brokers, they should be able to raise more money and raise money more rapidly than the Council independently.

Mr. Shirley stated that by creating a DSO it means hiring an Executive Director and/or an Executive Director's staff which means if the DSO is successful in going out obtaining funds the staff have to get paid.

Mr. Gainey stated that the DSO would have to support its staff.

Mr. Shirley posed a question pertaining to the Sunshine Law, that if a Council member wants to have a few people to his/her home in the attempt to solicit funds such as a power broker does this meeting have to be advertised.

Mr. Gainey responded to Mr. Shirley by saying, as long as there are no other Council members present at the gathering it is not considered a meeting of the Council.

**Eighth agenda item: Public Comments**

Chairman Regnier recognized Mr. Dale Landry, President of the NAACP, Tallahassee, Florida, and gave him the floor for comments.

Mr. Landry thanked the Council for the opportunity to address the Council. He stated that he had a chance to talk to the NAACP's state president. Mr. Landry added that the NAACP met with the Attorney General (AG) earlier leading into the role of the Cabinet regarding the Restoration of Rights. He stated that the NAACP is in litigations to try to modify all these changes because there are certain things that are tied to Federal Law as it relates to voting because Florida was one of the states that are caught up in the legal suit. Mr. Landry stated that when dealing with voting rights in Florida it has to go before the Justice Department and it also goes back to the Civil Rights Act.

Rev. Simpson recognized Dr. Richard Danford, President of the Jacksonville Urban League.

Chairman Regnier gave Dr. Danford the floor for comments.

Dr. Danford gave salutations from Jacksonville, Florida expressing his excitement about the new Mayor being an African American. He stated that he believes that the new Mayor will pull Jacksonville's communities together. Dr. Danford introduced his Urban League (UL) colleagues Mr. Patrick Franklin, UL President from West Palm Beach, Mr. Darrell Daniels, Director of the Derrick Brooks Charities from Tampa, Mr. T. Willard Fair, UL President and host from Miami, and Mr. Earnest Farrell, UL President from Tallahassee, Florida. He stated that the state has a lot of issues and many are the issues the Council is addressing and the local council in Jacksonville. Dr. Danford stated that they are looking for partners who are on the same page and doing similar work not to reinvent the wheel. He said if there are organizations that are focused on eliminating some of the barriers that the Council and Jacksonville is focusing on we need to bring them to the table. Dr. Danford stated that if the Council decides to have a meeting in Jacksonville he would love to host the Council's meeting. He stated that the Urban League have a nice facility that would accommodate all of the Councils' needs and would be honored to have the Council meet in Jacksonville on Thursday, September 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Danford stated that the address for the Urban League is 903 West Union Street, Jacksonville, Florida 32204, telephone 1-904-356-8336. He said that normally people stay at the Hyatt Regency Jacksonville River Front.

Chairman Regnier expressed his appreciation to Dr. Danford and thanked him for his offer to accommodate the Council in Jacksonville for a meeting. He stated that the Council will have a business meeting September 8 at 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. and a public forum September 9 at 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon. Chairman Regnier stated that the Council will meet in Tampa, Florida for a business meeting to finalize the Annual Report Thursday, December 8 from 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Ms. Lima volunteered to be the contact person for arranging that meeting.

Chairman Regnier recognized Mr. Bill Proctor, Leon County Commissioner from Tallahassee, Florida in the audience and gave him the floor for comments.

Commissioner Proctor stated that he was excited about the Council's Annual Report. He stated that the Leon County Commission has on its agenda for Tuesday, the issue of a black male summit which has never occurred before. Commissioner Proctor stated that out of this summit which was called by Leon County Commissioner Nick Maddox, is the hope that we will be establishing a task force which will review the issues that are impacting African American men and boys. He explained that from this task force our hope is that Leon County would establish a standing permanent commission on men and boys. Commissioner Proctor added that he was concern about the fact that Hispanics are taking jobs from black men. He stated that he was looking through the Council's Annual Report and it model's everything that Tallahassee wants to do in Leon County.

Chairman Regnier thanked Commissioner Proctor for sharing with the Council stating that the Council will help as much as possible. He then recognized the Tallahassee Urban League President Dr. Earnest Ferrell,

Dr. Ferrell stated that he was not sure specifically how the Tallahassee Urban League could tie into what Commissioner Proctor was speaking on, but he was sure as long as there is a good effort in the community trying to bring people together and form a common interest and concern it would be something the Urban League would be interested in.

Chairman Regnier recognized Mr. T. Willard Fair, Miami Urban League President and gave him the floor for comments.

Mr. Fair expressed his gratitude to speak on behalf of his colleagues saying that there's not a more significant population then black men and boys. He said that he wanted to respond to the commissioner's concern about the fact that Hispanics are taking jobs from black men. He stated that he would like to come to Tallahassee and talk to Commissioner Proctor and Dr. Farrell about that because if it values true that Hispanics are taking jobs from black men than that's our fault and not there's.

Chairman Regnier gave Mr. Nuss the floor for comments.

Mr. Nuss introduced Ms. Edna Smith, Crime Stoppers Program Administrator from the Attorney General's Office in Tallahassee, Florida. He stated that she does grants and supervise the *National Conference on Preventing Crime in the Black Community* in which this year is her first year and she does other things in the Department.

Chairman Regnier expressed his pleasure in Ms. Smith attending the meeting.

Rev. Simpson asked Mr. Nuss if he had a report on the Councils budget.

Mr. Nuss stated that the Council got funded for \$50 thousand dollars this year; the money was allocated for Council meetings, the Council staff salary and other expenses such as supplies. He stated that most of the cost would come from travel expenses to the meetings of some Council members.

Chairman Regnier asked if there were anymore comments, there were none. He thanked everyone for sharing and attending the Councils meeting.

**Ninth agenda item: For the Good of the Order**

Chairman Regnier stated that for the good of the order is that the Council is going back to the Community.

**Tenth agenda item: Adjournment**

Chairman Regnier asked for a motion for adjournment. Mr. Shirley motioned that the meeting be adjourned; Rev. Simpson seconded the adjournment. Chairman Regnier declared the meeting adjourned.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

