

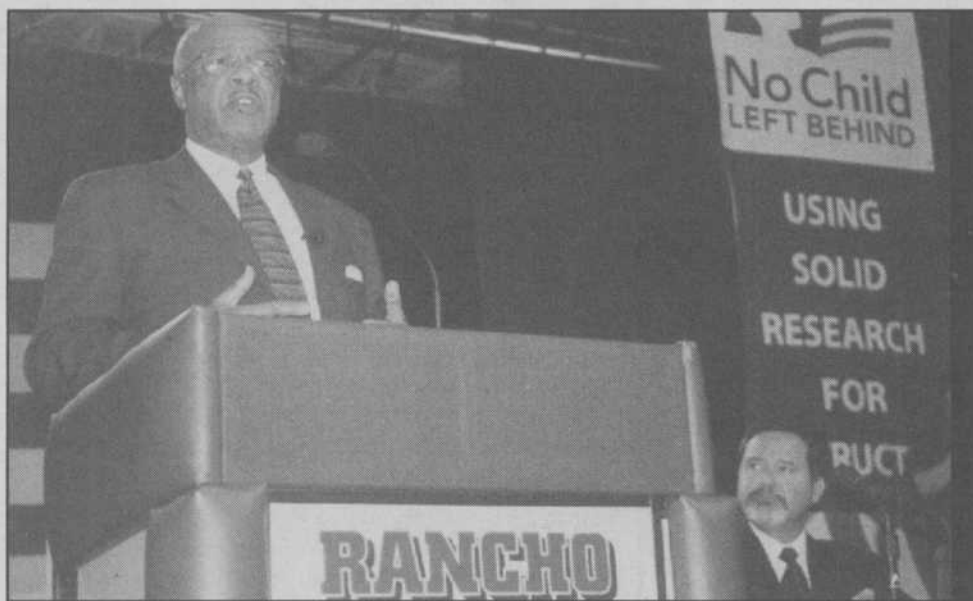
Paige blasts 'hateful' NAACP rhetoric

WASHINGTON (AP) - Rod Paige, the nation's first Black education secretary, condemned NAACP leaders Thursday for saying some Black groups are fronts for White conservatives.

"You do not own, and you are not the arbiters of, African-American authenticity," said Paige, who rose from segregated Mississippi to become President Bush's education chief.

Paige's comments, in a Wall Street Journal column titled "Naked Partisans," appeared on the same day Bush's challenger, Democrat John Kerry, was speaking at the annual convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Philadelphia. Bush is at odds with the NAACP and has not spoken to the civil rights group since his 2000 campaign.

Paige took aim at two NAACP leaders, chairman Julian Bond and president Kweisi Mfume, for what he called "hateful and untruthful rhetoric about Republi-



Sentinel-Voice File Photo

Education Secretary Rod Paige chided as "hateful and untruthful rhetoric about Republicans and President Bush" recent comments by NAACP officials that some Black groups are fronts for White conservatives. He noted the NAACP's own multicultural history.

cans and President Bush." At the convention, NAACP officials have described some Black organizations as mouthpieces of White conservatives and have said Bush's education law disproportionately hurts minorities.

The No Child Left Behind law of 2001, Paige said, is dedicated to closing the learn-

ing gap between Blacks and Whites and giving school choice to poor and minority students.

Paige said he is a lifelong NAACP member, yet now sees the organization betraying its origins.

"The civil-rights movement has historically been multicultural, and many of

its founders, including those who established the NAACP, were in fact White," Paige said.

"I long for the day when our nation's education policy will not be grist for the partisan mill — when we can work together, Black and White, rich and poor, for the sake of our children."

Hazel O'Leary plans to energize Fisk University

By Queshonda Moore

Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON, DC -

Former Secretary of Energy Hazel R. O'Leary, named new president of Fisk University, says her top priority will be to update the educational and fund-raising strategies of the 138-year-old historically Black university in Nashville so that it will become an "academy of the 21st Century."

"The first and most important thing is really to refine the strategy of the university within the context of the 21st Century," O'Leary says in an interview. "It's extremely important that our students graduate, learn to be critical thinkers, to deal with change, and to indeed embrace change, to work as members of the team... And the most important thing in teaming is that they must be global because the world has opened via the Internet."

O'Leary will be replacing interim President Charles R. Fugeton August 15, who succeeded Carolyn Reid-Wallace who resigned last fall. A 1959 Fisk graduate, O'Leary will be the university's 14th president. Fisk board members are hoping she will be able to strengthen the university, both educationally and financially, as well as stabilize an institution that has had sev-



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—Hazel R. O'Leary
President of Fisk University

eral presidents over the past decade.

"Among the many outstanding candidates, we selected President O'Leary because she has the energy, wisdom and courage to guide Fisk into the future and the track record to deliver results," Reynaldo P. Glover, chairman of the Fisk trustee board, says in a statement. "We know she will be a mentor to our students, an outstanding collaborator with us and she will get the job done."

University trustees expect her to have a strategic plan within 90 days.

Her approach will be to win over new educational and financial partners for the university, she says.

"I bring a new approach which is quite frankly from the business and governmental sector. Those are key constituents for Fisk University," she says. O'Leary says she will involve the university from its leadership to its fac-

ulty and students in her vision for drawing in new partners.

Traditionally, Fisk has a wide range of students who already have field experience in service programs and internships outside of the university, she points out. "I want to strengthen that program. We are an urban campus and we really need to be present in our urban community to be facilitators to help community leaders achieve their community goals."

O'Leary says Fisk has other significant accomplishments on which to build.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, the 825-student university ranks sixth in graduation rates among more than 95 Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Fisk is among only six Black colleges in the nation that graduated more than half of its entering students last year, according to the Journal of Blacks in

Higher Education. The others are Spelman and Morehouse in Atlanta, Miles College in Birmingham, Hampton University in Virginia, and Elizabeth City State in North Carolina.

Also, many of Fisk's programs are already highly respected in the academic community. Physics, information technology as well as the Department of Fine Arts and Humanities are among them.

"We have a challenge of offering a look at Fisk University so that talented students up and down the economic strata see the benefits from an experience at Fisk," O'Leary says.

And, she says, she wants more outreach to students who are in need and deserving. "It goes back to the money," she says.

In order to stabilize the institution and raise money for the financially-troubled university, O'Leary says she must convince foundations, charities and the large donors that Fisk is an experience that is worthwhile for the leaders of tomorrow. "We have to gain an audience, write proposals, and get responses. At the same time, we would rely on our alumni to help us."

O'Leary was the first African-American and the first woman to serve as secretary of energy. In her position

(See Fisk, Page 15)

Kerry tells NAACP: I won't divide U.S.

PHILADELPHIA (AP) - Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry accused President Bush on Thursday of dividing America by race and riches, taking advantage of a White House feud with the NAACP to declare himself a leader of "all of the people."

With Bush refusing to address the civil rights group, most of whose members support Democrats, Kerry said Bush "may be too busy to talk to you, but I have news for you: he's going to have plenty of time after Nov. 2," which is Election Day.

Bush skipped the annual convention to protest the NAACP's criticism of his policies, but will address another influential Black organization, the Urban League, next week.

"The current leadership of the NAACP has clearly crossed the line in partisanship and civility, making it impossible to have a constructive dialogue," White House spokesman Dan Bartlett said.

The Republican incumbent has not spoken to the NAACP since the 2000 campaign, when the NAACP National Voter Fund ran an ad that portrayed Bush as unsympathetic to the dragging death of James Byrd in Texas.

Since that campaign, which angered many Blacks who complained they were disenfranchised by confusing ballots and mechanical errors in Florida, the NAACP has called Bush an illegal president, compared his anti-abortion views to the Taliban and called his trip to Africa a photo-op.

Bartlett said Bush was at odds with NAACP leaders, not his "many friends who belong to the NAACP." Nonetheless, his absence was viewed as a snub.

Coralee Boulware, an NAACP member from Connecticut, said Bush, "showed disrespect to the people of this country and convention by not coming." NAACP Chairman Julian Bond mocked Bush for avoiding a hostile crowd. "If he didn't go anywhere people criticize him, he'd never leave home," Bond said.

With the soul anthem "We are Family" blaring, Kerry cut through the crowd, shaking hands and patting backs, before delivering an address tailored toward the supportive — yet skeptical — Black community.

"We learned our lesson in 2000," he said of the disputed election recount, "and I add my voice to those who have vowed: Never again."

In a foreign policy tracked closely by Blacks, Kerry said as president he would use "the full weight of American leadership" to help stop genocide in Sudan. A spokeswoman said that could include military force, but not as a first step.

Otherwise sticking to his stump speech, Kerry said repeatedly, "We can do better!" as he outlined his plans to improve education, health care, civil rights and the economy. He said the unemployment rate for Blacks is 10 percent, twice the rate for Whites.

Though polls show Democratic voters united against Bush, the Democratic presidential candidate is not be-

(See Kerry, Page 15)

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