



Troubled clergy have difficulty accessing help

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — Rev. Kenneth Dennis seemed to have it all. At 38, he was the successful pastor of the socially active Greater Mount Moriah Baptist Church in Richmond, Va. He was also serving as the first Black chaplain of the city Police Department. And he was highly respected as a leading clergyman in the community. That was 10 years ago. Now, Dennis could be headed for a jail. Twice convicted of drunk driving and once convicted of cocaine-possession over the past seven months, he has attended a string of court hearings and enrolled in court-ordered drug and alcohol rehabilitation. Next month, a judge will decide whether to send him to prison.

Similar stories are repeated in city after city, leaving behind devastated wives and families, angry and divided congregations, preachers fighting their own leadership boards and ending tortured in personal humiliation and self-loathing.

"It's an epidemic," Bishop T. D. Jakes says in an interview. "Most clergy become clergy because they feel called to make a difference and they have passion for people in pain because they've been there themselves. But just because a doctor is a physician doesn't mean that he can't get the flu. And I think it's important that we understand that our pastors are men. And they have issues and they have problems and the great mistake that we have made and have not corrected to this date — not just Black pastors, but Whites, also—is we have no place for pastors to recover. If you deal with a CEO, you can put him in a Betty Ford Clinic and then rehabilitate them and send them back. Yet, the church, for all of its touting of being a hospital, has no rooms for its shepherds."

Because of that lack, Jakes organized a three-day pastors' conference in September and called it "Leading While Bleeding." It drew more than 6,000 clerics from across the country to his Potter's House in Dallas.

"A lot of clergy feel like it's a disgrace to the cross to get counseling," Jakes explains. "They don't want to admit that prayer didn't fix it. So they're embarrassed to go to anybody and say, 'I need help.' But the Bible says that in the multitude of counsel there is safety."

Some ministers say their denominations haven't provided that safety.

"Unlike the Catholic Church, which has a very clear procedure for this type of behavior, there's not a defined procedure for this type of behavior in protestant denominations, those denominations that have self-autonomy like the Congregational church, the Baptist Church," says Rev. Anthony Evans, president of the Washington, D.C.-based National Black Church Initiative, representing approximately 6,000 congregations committed to promoting physical, emotional, spiritual and mental health among their members and the community. "I believe there should be procedures within that denomination to remove them from pastoral ministry for a length of time to determine that the person is healed from

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NAACP leader steps down

By Hazel Trice Edney
and George Curry

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — Kweisi Mfume, the president and chief executive officer of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, has resigned, effective Jan. 1, after nearly nine years as head of the nation's largest and oldest civil rights organization.

At a news conference Tuesday at the NAACP's headquarters in Baltimore, Mfume said: "For the last nine years I've had the honor and privilege to help revive and restore the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. The people I have met along the way and the lessons I have learned have been invaluable, but sadly for me, the time has come to set sail and chart a new course."

Dennis Hayes, the NAACP's general counsel, will serve as interim president and CEO, until a succes-

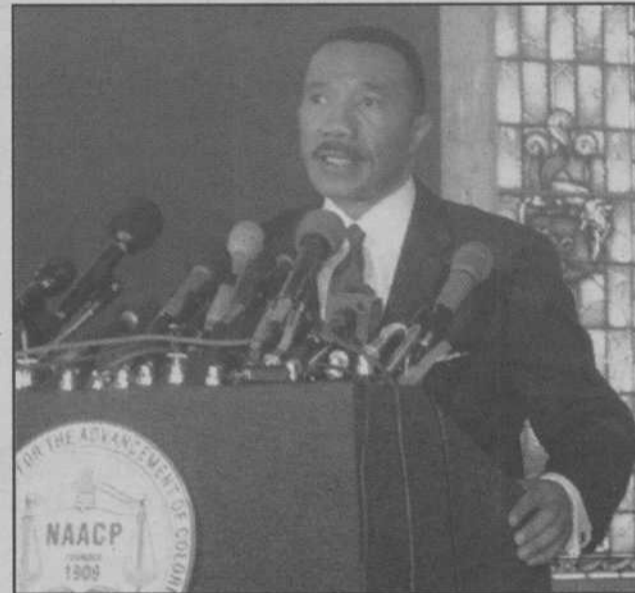


Photo special to Sentinel-Voice from Hazel Trice Edney

Kweisi Mfume announces his resignation, effective Dec. 31, as president and chief executive officer of the NAACP.

sor is picked, probably by next summer. He served in a similar capacity after the resignation of former Executive Director Benjamin L. Hooks.

The NAACP, established in 1909, claims a membership of 500,000. It has 2,200

adult branches and 1,700 youth and college chapters.

Although he is officially resigning, a board source says Mfume, who signed two 4-year contracts with the organization, was not offered a third contract by the 64-mem-

ber board of trustees headed by Julian Bond. However, Mfume, who earns nearly \$300,000 a year, will be retained as a paid consultant for six months, allowing him to maintain his salary and benefits until his successor is selected.

Mfume's resignation caught some NAACP insiders by surprise. The board learned of the decision in a Monday night telephone conference call and a staff meeting was called at national headquarters in Baltimore for 9 A.M. Tuesday, three hours before the news conference.

Sources say Mfume's decision to resign is unrelated to a recent disclosure that the Internal Revenue Service is investigating whether the NAACP violated its federal tax exempt status last summer when Board Chairman Julian Bond gave a speech highly critical of President

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Prosecutor: Pacers to be charged in fight

AUBURN HILLS, Mich. (AP) — Indiana Pacers players will be charged for fighting with fans during the Nov. 19 brawl at the end of a game against the Detroit Pistons, Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorycyca told The Detroit News.

"Whoever was involved in fisticuffs will be charged, regardless if they were wearing a jersey. It's obvious there were several Pacer players and fans that dealt blows," Gorycyca said, the newspaper reported Tuesday.

The prosecutor declined to say which players would be charged or what the charges might be.

Auburn Hills police Lt. James Manning told the newspaper that he expects four members of the Pacers to face assault and battery charges.

Manning said at a news conference Monday that a lawyer for the Pacers told detectives that none of the players would agree to be interviewed by police. Pros-

ecutors could get the police report by the beginning of next week, Manning said.

The fight between spectators and players broke out near the end of the game after an on-court dispute over a foul. A fan hurled a drink at

Pacers forward Ron Artest, who charged into the stands, followed by teammates.

Artest was suspended without pay for the rest of the season by the NBA; Stephen Jackson was suspended for 30 games, Jermaine O'Neal

for 25. The players' union appealed those punishments.

Police determined that a fourth member of the Pacers, reserve center David Harrison, was involved in the brawl, too, but the NBA didn't suspend him.



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

RIDING FOR A CAUSE

A member of the Soul Brothers motorcycle club participates in the 5th Annual African American Candlelight Vigil. Sponsored by Care & Counseling Services Plus, Inc., the Wednesday night vigil marked the observance of World AIDS Day. Featuring speakers and testimonials, the vigil went from the West Las Vegas Library to Nevada Partners.