



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
NORTH CAROLINA STATE CONFERENCE**

114 W. Parrish Street, Second Floor • Durham, North Carolina 27701
866-626-2227 • 919-682-4700 • FAX 919-682-4711

www.naacpnc.org www.ncprosecutorialmisconduct.com www.hkonj.com

Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, II
President

Amina J. Turner
Executive Director

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

15 June 2010

**Contact: Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, II, President, 919-394-8137
Mrs. Amina J. Turner, Exec Dir, 919-682-4700**

**Why We Choose to Break the Law in Nonviolent Resistance and
Moral Witness against the Re-Segregation of the Wake County
Public Schools**

Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, II, President, North Carolina NAACP and National Board NAACP
Rev. Nancy Petty, Senior Pastor, Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, Raleigh
Mrs. Mary D. Williams, Wake County Human Services and mother of three
Dr. Timothy B. Tyson, Senior Research Scholar, Center for Documentary Studies at Duke
University, Duke Divinity School, and UNC Chapel Hill
June 15, 2010

The decision of the anti-diversity members of the Wake County School Board to destroy the socio-economic diversity policy is morally wrong. Their intentional actions lead toward the re-segregation of our schools in violation of the Constitutions of both the United States and North Carolina. This ill-considered decision seeks to wipe away in six months what it took more than a century of tears, sweat and blood to accomplish. Many Americans risked and sometimes sacrificed their lives in order to fulfill the spirit of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision and to move this community, state and country forward. The anti-diversity members of the school board wipe their feet on the labors of our ancestors by equating their own actions with those



Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, II President

of the NAACP and the U.S. Supreme Court in that landmark victory for justice. Today we register our legitimate discontent. And like hundreds who have gone before us here in Wake County, we are willing to break a lesser law and accept our punishment, in order to protect the larger law embodied in the federal and state constitutions and to defend the children of our community. If it is necessary that we be locked up to resist policies that will lock down our children in re-segregated, high-poverty, and unconstitutional schools, so be it.

We are brothers and sisters in the Spirit, coming together to make a spiritual witness in a nonviolent act of conscience, in the service of our God and His children. We have come to this



place in a spirit of prayer, study and sacrifice. We hope to be heard in the spirit of love that brings us here and to promote a deeper public understanding that all of the children are our children, equal in the eyes of God and worthy of the best school system that we can provide. Our reasons for this nonviolent act of conscience include:

1. *The destruction of the nationally acclaimed diversity policy of the Wake County public school system is morally wrong.* It cannot be accomplished without greatly increasing the number of high-poverty schools in the system

Mrs. Mary D. Williams and leading us back toward segregation. This will undermine the education of all students, hurt the life chances of many, and harm the whole community. The relationship between racial re-segregation, poverty concentration, and reduced student and school performance in North Carolina is clear. Virtually all of the 44 lowest performing high schools are segregated: 40 of the 44 are racially isolated, predominantly non-white schools, most by very high percentages. Many are segregated schools within diverse communities, in which student assignment policies are directly responsible for economic and racial isolation. In these schools, it is much harder to keep experienced and effective teachers and administrators, which increases the disparities between rich and poor. The diversity policy is not a cure-all, and the system has inequities and problems that it does not address, but abandoning it will make things much worse. To protect our schools and the children they exist to serve, the destruction of the diversity policy must be stopped.



Rev. Nancy Petty

This catastrophe goes beyond Wake County and has dire implications for the entire state. In 1996, 7.3 per cent of our schools were more than 80 per cent non-white. By 2006, the figure had doubled to 15.4 per cent. Today school boards across the state are abandoning, ignoring, or deliberately undermining policies designed to address segregation. These actions, often motivated by narrow partisan politics, violate the rights of students to a sound basic education under the state Constitution, undercut the state's commitment to quality education, and contravene the U.S. Constitution. This is a public emergency.

2. *We have asked the school board to rescind their decision to abandon the diversity policy. The*



Dr. Timothy B. Tyson

school board refuses to hear us or anyone else who opposes their destructive decisions. We have sought redress by asking for a 45-minute presentation by the NAACP, an organization with a century of experience and widely recognized standing on issues of education, race and inequality. The current 5-4 Republican majority has refused to undertake any research or hear any information about the consequences of their policies, apart from two minutes per person in public meetings, which is not sufficient to explain these issues; the majority has also often implemented ticket policies that make it difficult for many to gain access to meetings, and further has described our serious request as only wanting a circus.

-MORE-

3. *The school board's anti-diversity caucus has persisted in pitting school diversity against school excellence, as if diverse schools could not be excellent or excellent schools could not be diverse.* This is empty demagoguery, unsupported by research or realities in public education.

4. *Spokespersons for the anti-diversity caucus persistently compare their destructions of the socio-economic diversity policy to the victory of the NAACP in the Brown v. Board decision.* They implicitly compare themselves to Thurgood Marshall, Charles Hamilton Houston, and the thousands of ordinary citizens, black and white, whose courage and sacrifice made the Brown decision possible; people who endured racist terrorism, economic reprisals, jail sentences, and even sacrificed their lives. This obscene demagoguery, whether deliberately vicious or merely ignorant, wipes its feet upon the risks and sacrifices of our ancestors and mocks the very idea of education.

5. *In the best American traditions, from Henry David Thoreau to Ella Baker to Martin Luther King, Jr., we recognize the necessary place of civil disobedience: breaking a small and unjust law in order to protect a larger and broadly significant law, honoring the very spirit of law by yielding to punishment in order to meet the necessity of an urgent moral crisis. We seek to make a moral and spiritual witness that we feel is urgent, necessary, and right.*

###