



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Indianapolis NAACP Declares “We Can’t Go Back”

NAACP Branch #3053 hosts Christmas Freedom Fund to honor community leaders and celebrate branch accomplishments

INDIANAPOLIS – On Thursday, December 2, the Greater Indianapolis NAACP Branch #3053 hosted its virtual Christmas Freedom Fund Event. This celebration was virtually attended by elected officials, civic and business leaders, and guests from the Indianapolis community.

“Together, we declared that ‘we can’t go back’ to the days of voter suppression, segregation and rampant civil rights violations. We have to keep moving forward,” said NAACP Branch President **Crystal Ratcliffe**. “Through the Freedom Fund, we celebrated leaders in the community and re-dedicated ourselves to the fight for equal protection and opportunity under the law.”

The NAACP recognized four people with awards for upholding civil rights and challenging the Indianapolis community with new ideas, experiences and perspectives. The award recipients included **Steve Jefferson**, Emmy award-winning reporter, as the Pathfinder award recipient; **Noah Malone**, 2020 Paralympian, as the Outstanding Achiever award recipient; and **Mali Jeffers** and **Alan Bacon**, co-founders of GangGang, as recipients of the Humanitarian award.

“This is a huge honor to me because the NAACP is the nation’s most prestigious civil rights organization,” Malone said. “This award also encourages me to play a prominent role in this community and to help encourage others and be an advocate when times get hard.”

“It’s an honor to receive this award and it’s an honor to do this work,” said Bacon. “Culture connects humanity, so to receive this award is even more special.”

People for the American Way CEO **Ben Jealous**, a former president and CEO of the national NAACP, was the keynote speaker. Jealous inspired us to create a country that works for everyone, where all our children can prosper and “no one is held back because of their color, the kink of their hair or the fact that they descend from slaves.”

“It’s not enough to talk about police reform. We actually need to make sure that we create a situation in which everybody in our society can be truly safe,” he said, talking about an initiative in Ithaca, New York, to add a social worker division to the city’s civilian-led public safety department. “Half of modern policing is social work. ... If you send somebody who’s not trained in social work — but is trained to shoot to kill — to do social work, very bad things can happen.”

He also talked about the importance of massive voter turnout and passing voting rights legislation, urging President Biden and the U.S. Senate to make a voting rights exception to the filibuster rule. “The only antidote to state voter suppression laws is strong federal voting rights

legislation. And here we are in the 21st century and our voting rights protections have been gutted, and we are paying a severe price across the country for that.”

In response to a recent incident in Indianapolis, he also talked about the history of blackface being used to dehumanize and humiliate black people, making them appear less intelligent and subhuman. “It’s a brutal technique to use to dehumanize an entire group. Oftentimes young people don’t understand all of that,” he said. “And if there can be a teaching moment, no matter what that person’s intentions were, then we’d better make sure it’s a teaching moment because that tradition of dehumanizing people, there can be no tolerance for it.”

Additionally, Indiana **Gov. Eric Holcomb, Congressman Andre Carson and Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett** joined the event and shared their thoughts on civil rights progress.

The branch’s Facebook page contains a recording of the event: www.facebook.com/IndyNAACP

The Freedom Fund event is an established tradition for NAACP branches across the country. Although not able to gather in-person this year, NAACP members generated the same spirit of pride in their accomplishments and determination to continue the fight.

The Freedom Fund is the largest fundraiser and gathering each year for the Indianapolis branch of the NAACP. Proceeds directly support the branch’s civil rights mission and ongoing operating expenses.

For over a century the NAACP has worked to ensure the political, educational, social and economic equality rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination. For more information about the Indianapolis branch of the NAACP and/or how to donate to the branch, please visit www.indynaacp.org.

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About The NAACP

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is the nation's oldest, largest and most widely recognized civil rights organization. Our mission is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights for all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination

