

**Carolina Black Caucus – 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration**  
May 16, 2014

**Distinguished Prof. Charles Daye – Co-Founder**

Remarks (reconstructed)

Having just heard Chancellor Folt, Justice Timmons-Goodson, and President Fuse-Hall, if I had the wisdom, I would now announce “What they said!” And sit down. But I’m not that smart.

Friends, Colleagues, Caucus Members, Brothers and Sisters:

This 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Black Faculty-Staff Caucus is a great occasion. That the Caucus has endured is a testament to the work done by so many to address the causes that led to the creation of the Caucus.

The purpose of the Caucus was fundamentally to help implement the success of the American Dream with a presence of Black people at the University. Those of us here then, as now, were spread out over a decentralized campus in many roles. All of us had concerns about how we would be able to succeed in an environment of isolation; in an environment in which each of us would not necessarily know exactly what the expectations of us were; in an environment in which our presence would possibly not be appreciated or welcomed; and in an environment in which the rules of accountability might be unclear.

The mission of the Black Faculty - Staff Caucus is to promote (a) affirmative action recruitment, hiring, retention and promotion of faculty and staff persons of the Black and minority races in EPA and SPA positions throughout the University, (b) the attainment of an environment conducive to maximum professional advancement and personal fulfillment for Black and minority persons consistent with the abilities, qualifications and interests of such persons, (c) affirmative action recruitment, admissions and retention of Black, minority and economically or educationally disadvantaged students, as well as all other reasonable efforts which will support such a purpose including, but not limited to, appropriate counseling, financial, academic, social, and educational programs, (d) the attainment of equal justice under law in education, including but not limited to, reasonable and necessary programs designed to correct and ameliorate conditions caused by historic denial of equal justice in education to Black, minority and disadvantaged persons, (e) an open dialogue on matters concerning the ending of all traces of past denial of equal justice in education in the university and the state, and (f) all reasonable and necessary programs designed to foster and achieve a decent, just, humane and free society by making the state's educational benefits more widely available to all persons.

How does one put words to an occasion of celebrating 40 years of existence of an organization? One could focus on the Past, the Present, or the Future. In some ways this is the same question for black folks at Carolina and, indeed, for all who seek to have America live up to her shining and noble, but shame tarnished, creed that “all people are created equal.” How can that be?

Friends ask “How are things at Carolina?” I tell them, “Nothing changes and everything is connected.” The same fundamental issues we fought about 40 years ago are the same fundamental issues we still fight about today. These are the ongoing issues of justice for people of color, of fairness in the opportunity to be an integral part of this great University, of inclusion on decisions about the way the university does business, of defining the value of our work that addresses social and economic uplift, of

working to assure that we get a proper evaluation of the work we do, especially if it concerns, issues vital to our interests, and of how to navigate the paths of our professions to succeed personally and to improve the opportunities for others. These are the issues that won't go away, can't be definitively resolved, and are never completely settled. Rather, if they do anything they recur over and over, or if they don't have the exact same manifestations or context they just migrate to new situations, or if they don't do that they just morph into new versions of the age old questions we, as people of color, have always faced individually and collectively in all of jobs for all these years without end. It would be easy to grow weary and to give up. But we can't really afford to do that. One might be inclined to reminisce on the occasion of 40 years but we can't stand on that alone.

What can the Black Caucus do today? The Caucus is like every volunteer organization I have ever been associated with: To ask, "What can the Caucus do?" is really to ask, "What am I willing to help the Caucus do?" The Caucus will never be more useful or more effective than its members are willing to work to make it. What are the Challenges today?

We cannot take for granted that we have arrived. And we cannot think that we got to where we are entirely on our own merits. For a black boy who grew up in rural Durham County, segregated, and of very modest circumstances in a family of "service workers" who lived week to week, I feel humility upon reflecting on the great American social and political journey that brought me to the Law School as a faculty member at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I note that this is the year 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* desegregation decision in 1954. I feel humility because I know I am a beneficiary of the labors of every person, of all races, who struggled that descendants of slaves should have a fair right to engage their God-given talents to the work of their times and their circumstances. Although I have tried to carry my equitable share of the burden, I know I did not get to the place I am today entirely by my individual efforts or works. I also know that somebody at Carolina Law thought the time was right in 1972 to diversify the faculty. I know this because I didn't hire myself at the Law School. Moreover, I was supported, mentored, guided, and held accountable for succeeding. Everybody wanted me to succeed as the first tenure track African American Law School faculty member.

My coming to Carolina Law occurred after Floyd McKissick, Harvey Beech and others sued the Law School and gained admission as students in 1951. Everything is connected. Here's one example: In 1958 McKissick was a civil rights lawyer in Durham and he came to PTA meeting at my school and made a rip-roaring speech about equality, the constitution, and de-segregated education. His speech inspired me so much that I decided that night: "I am going to be a lawyer." Mind you, I was an eighth grader and didn't have the first clue what lawyers did when they weren't making PTA speeches and I didn't have the first dollar to foster my fancy. But I made it through NCCU and through Columbia Law in New York.

We must not engage the assumption that because we have won a place here at UNC, our progeny or those like us will not have to fight for a place in this world. So the Caucus must continue to work toward a day when America lives up to her noble creed. So the Caucus must work to assure that Carolina takes measures that open wide the doors to all who contribute to its work and to all seeking to improve their lives so they can make a contribution to a better world.