

LETTERS

READERS WRITE BACK

NAACP NEEDS A NEW MISSION?

FOR CERTAIN, THE NAACP has a long way to go (“The NAACP Is Not Done,” Summer 2015). This article’s opening paragraph illustrates the depth of a two-sided street called prejudice in today’s American black and white cultures. On one side (which includes the news media and political leadership) is a tremendously oversensationalized, organized black response and reaction to incidents that inflame the presence of racism against the American black minority. The other side is an infuriating ignorance of people who continue to demonstrate prejudice in outward racist behavior within a small fraction of the American white majority.

This *Bostonia* article has perpetuated these inflammatory racial issues, which are not represented with accurate and comprehensive accountability. The same, likewise, is true of the NAACP leadership. With these changing cultural times, an organization that represents the advancement of a people also needs to advance from its past and take on the challenges of present times. It’s high time for rebranding the NAACP.

National media questions to Brooks of how today’s NAACP relevancy would be described are right-on. It’s negative leadership to state that our nation has stepped backward in civil rights and voter rights and also add provocative

matters of prejudicial mass incarceration, zero tolerance laws, biased voter ID requirements, and “pandemic” police misconduct when, instead, root causes aren’t being addressed. That should be perceived as a blatant step backward by the NAACP rather than advancement. I’d challenge Brooks, further, to contemplate what Martin Luther King, Jr. (GRS’55, Hon.’59) would answer. The 2015 American black-white cultural issues are far from those of a century ago.

What are the reasons for this tumultuous cultural divide today? Perhaps, the answer should be what the NAACP’s present-day mission is. Today’s NAACP challenge is to address a different mission than those confronting *all* its past leaders, indeed, to make today’s NAACP’s mission relevant. What are the

causes of the high percent of juvenile arrest, youth detention, judicial juvenile court waivers, and state prison admittance that the NAACP can begin to resolve, rather than approach them as prejudicial or as cultural victimization? These are not century-old patterns of prejudice.

BILL DAVIERO (SED’73)
Cape Elizabeth, Maine

A TRIBUTE TO BETTY ZISK
THANK YOU FOR A thoughtful memorial to Professor Betty Zisk (“An Activist and a Trailblazer,” Summer 2015). I was saddened to hear of her passing last October, and surprised to see myself sitting next to her in the

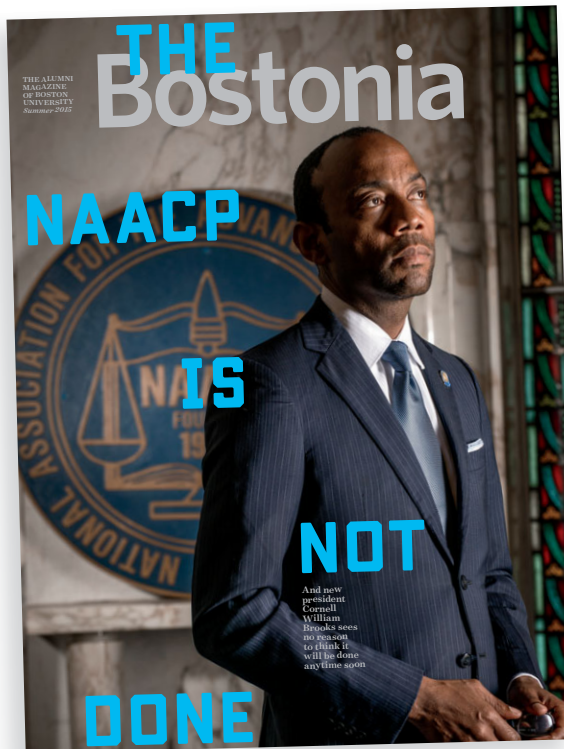


photo of one of her graduate seminars. The photo and my experience with Professor Zisk reinforce her reputation for inclusion: I was an undergrad at the time, and she invited me to take a graduate level course on interest group theory. It was a highlight of my academic career; she encouraged a socially and intellectually immature kid from Dorchester to think big. I can only imagine the impact she had on hundreds of other students. The story, and my memories of Betty, encouraged me today to make a sizable (for me) donation to the scholarship fund that got me to BU in the first place.

JOHN BLUTHARDT (CAS’85)
Jamaica Plain, Mass.

PICKING UP THE TAB FOR TECHNOLOGY

THE ARTICLE “WHO PICKS Up the Tab for Science?” (Summer 2015) mentioned a project, initially sponsored by the US Army, that was undertaken by the BU Optical Laboratory. That project resulted in the development of the largest aerial camera ever built. Named the “Boston Camera,” it was flown aboard an RB-36D and could detect a golf ball from 45,000 feet. The camera today sits under a wing of a B-36 on display at the National Museum of the United States Air Force in Dayton, Ohio.

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WRITE TO US

Letters are edited for clarity, style, and length. Please include your full name and address.
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