Statement by Benjamin L. Hooks, NAACP executive director, at a news conference with the National Urban League in New York on Thursday, February 9, 1984, to announce the joint sponsorship of a Summit Conference of National Black Organizations on the Black Family.

Last September, the NAACP announced that it would convene a summit conference of black organizations to formulate plans for preserving the strength of the black family.

The announcement was prompted by the NAACP's growing concern about the fundamental, structural changes occurring in the black family. As the NAACP conceived this conference, leaders of national black membership organizations were to join in planning and designing program thrusts to help them work more effectively with families in local communities to address basic social and economic issues. This working conference, The Black Family Summit, would examine the forces working against the family as well as the traditional coping strategies that have enabled black families to survive.

Subsequently, we deemed it appropriate to work jointly with the National Urban League in planning this summit as cosponsors. The Urban League, as many of you are aware, has been wrestling with this problem for a number of years. Thus, we felt that our
sister organization could serve most effectively with us in organizing such a conference.

An even more important reason, of course, involves the nature of our historical missions. As we have explained more fully in a joint statement, both organizations determined from their inceptions that it would be best to divide the struggle for the uplifting of blacks into areas of civil rights activism and social welfare. The NAACP, which was founded a few months before the Urban League, concentrated its strength in the former area of activity while the League devoted its resources to the social field.

Working in tandem, both organizations at various times jointly participated in activities such as the development of crucial civil rights strategies and voter registration programs when there was a need. We face such a need today.

The challenge of preserving the strength of the black family is enormous. Consequently, John and I, after discussions between ourselves and among our staffs, thought it essential that the NAACP and the Urban League pool our resources in organizing the Black Family Summit.

The Black Family Summit will be held at Fisk University in Nashville, Tenn., from May 3 to 5. We have extended invitations to major membership organizations including churches and fraternal groups, to participate.

We plan to develop strategies, action programs and inter-organizational networks and linkages to implement the results of the summit.

For our part, we note that the NAACP has been an organization of advocacy since its inception. It has been and is, involved
in all issues that concern the black family.

The NAACP is unique for its utilization of the courts for revolutionizing principles of law to protect basic freedoms and winning constitutional interpretations that now recognize all citizens as entitled to equal protection under the law.

The NAACP is unique for its use of lobbying techniques that have won passage of civil rights laws to protect the constitutional rights of all citizens.

It is unique for its utilization of legal, political and moral persuasion in changing social mores and customs of this land so that black people can ride in any part of the bus they want, can drink at water fountains, can sit in any part of theatres and public places without fear of being arrested or physically abused because of their race.

The NAACP is also unique in its structure. With its 400,000 members and 1,800 chapters headed by volunteers in every state of the Union, the NAACP has the troops to mobilize for political action on the local, state and national levels.

These are but a few of the attributes that the NAACP will be utilizing in its struggle to preserve the strengths of the black family and to confront the crisis that threatens the survival of black Americans.

###