April 9, 1992

The Editor
Wall Street Journal
200 Liberty Street
New York, New York 10281

Dear Editor:

The column of Mr. Dinesh D'Souza which was published in the March 25, 1992 issue of the Wall Street Journal is a classic example of the dissemination of misinformation, the perpetuation of half-truths and the fundamental ignorance on the part of many writers who are either ill-informed or who feel that questions of race can or should be treated in a casual manner.

Mr. D'Souza's premise that the NAACP had discarded the Booker T. Washington thesis of self-help is patently untrue. The NAACP from its founding has been an organization that advocated self-help and economic development. While the NAACP fought to desegregate America's "aparthied-like" economic, social and political structure, it simultaneously advocated that African-Americans acquire "habits of thrift, intelligence, high moral character, and the gaining of the respect and confidence of their neighbors," both black and white. The educating of our young has been a priority of the NAACP since its founding. No other secular group or organization has given more assistance to African-American young people than the NAACP. Our efforts have not been restricted to the Courts, but has included for years tutorial programs, Stay-In-School efforts, and Academic, Cultural, Technological, Scientific Olympics (ACT-SO) which for the past 10 years have reached 50,000 young people in more than 400 communities on an annual basis. The NAACP has had for over a decade a program called Fair Share whose mission is to assist blacks in securing economic opportunity and to provide a mechanism for African-American entrepreneurs, thus generating economic development in our communities. To say that the NAACP has not been dealing with the self-help philosophy of both Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DeBois shows a profound ignorance on Mr. D'Souza's part of even the most basic of the NAACP's historical and on going efforts.

"The Struggle Continues . . ."
Mr. D'Souza mentioned The Crisis Magazine founded by W.E.B. DeBois. Before writing his column it would have been helpful had he read the February, 1992 issue [The Crisis is the official voice of the NAACP]. That issue dealt at length with the "Great Debate" between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois. Had he bothered to read this current issue he would have read for himself a number of articles that made the point that the self-help philosophy of Booker T. Washington's view, is treated with the respect that history has taught us that it deserves.

We do not apologize for our record in fighting and agitating for political and social rights while we fought simultaneously for economic parity, nor do we apologize for utilizing the philosophy of W.E.B. DuBois. We believe that political and social programs go hand in glove with economic rights.

It is ironic on the one hand, and a compliment on the other, that the NAACP is being blamed for not being able to solve the problems of African-Americans with an annual budget of less than $16 million dollars [1991 total budget of the NAACP], while the federal government and state and local government can't solve the same problems that we are accused to not solving spending trillions of dollars on every year. It would be helpful if those who write and those who publish, would at least take the time to get the facts before making belittling accusations about groups and organizations who have done so much for so long with so little that now it appears we are expected to do everything with nothing.

Sincerely,

Jerry M. Guess,
Director of Communications & Policy

JMG:ndb