"BLACK JOURNAL" TAKES A LOOK AT THE STATE OF THE NAACP AND ITS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ON

"THE NEW WARRIOR: CAN BENJAMIN HOOKS SAVE THE NAACP?"

WEEK OF APRIL 17

BLACK JOURNAL Poll: NAACP Needs New "Ideological Direction"

Guests Benjamin Hooks, Julian Bond, Earl Graves

NEW YORK -- Since its founding on the 100th anniversary of Lincoln's birth in 1909, the NAACP has fought discrimination as a civil rights group.

"But today, the NAACP is badly in need of some new blood, new ideas and a fresh direction," BLACK JOURNAL's host and executive producer Tony Brown said. "Its existence now is largely based on its past accomplishments and reputation."

A new executive director, FCC Commissioner Benjamin Hooks, has been chosen to succeed Roy Wilkins, who is retiring. "But the civil rights organization is limping badly," Brown said. "Ideologically, financially -- and it suffers from a bad case of integration for its own sake. The accumulative effect just may be terminal."

BLACK JOURNAL examines the future of the NAACP and its new leader on its next edition, "The New Warrior: Can Benjamin Hooks Save the NAACP?" The program will be distributed nationally by the Public Broadcasting Service to its member stations the week of Sunday, April 17, 1977. (Important: Please check local PBS station for correct area broadcast time. In New York, WNET/Channel 13 will air "The New Warrior: Can Benjamin Hooks Save the NAACP?" Sunday, April 17, 6:00 P.M.)

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On "The New Warrior: Can Benjamin Hooks Save the NAACP?" Tony Brown said, "The first three unspoken commandments in the Black community are: thou shalt not be against busing, thou shalt not criticize integration, and thou shalt not criticize the NAACP. On this program, I will be sacrilegious in all three categories.

"...The NAACP has painted itself into an awful political position on the issue of busing ... Although the NAACP calls it desegregation, it's essentially integration they're talking about and the idea is essentially out of step with the times and a Black community strangling from unemployment and broken promises ...

"I feel a fresh challenge must be hurled, and accepted by the NAACP, if we are to move forward rather than glorify past mistakes and let nostalgia replace reality. And the reality is that the NAACP has lost contact with the mood of Black people.

Georgia State Legislator Julian Bond, who was considered a possible successor to Roy Wilkins, said on BLACK JOURNAL that the directorship of the NAACP is "the single most important job a Black man can have in American today in public or private life." He thinks Hooks will be "a splendid director," but sees a problem in the NAACP's lack of young adult membership. "I think they feel there isn't any place for them there."

Newly-designated NAACP Executive Director Benjamin Hooks told Tony Brown on BLACK JOURNAL that he feels, in spite of the accusations, that there are "at least four million Black people who at one time or another have belonged to the NAACP who feel a spiritual kinship. So I think that the potential is great and the amount of support is simply tremendous ... I think that the NAACP can furnish the kind of leadership that will give the young people a bridge to which they can repair ... it's still a great organization."

Hooks also discussed why he decided to take the NAACP leadership position, and his plans to upgrade the NAACP's use of the media. "That is where the action is," he said. "If you're not seen, if you're not heard, then you don't exist. This is why the NAACP is having such a problem... In love, we're trying to say to America, we're going to
make you whole. We hope you like it. If you don't, we'll make you whole anyway."

The BLACK JOURNAL Poll -- consisting of two samples, Ebony Magazine's 100 Most Influential Black Americans and another 100 Black leaders selected by BLACK JOURNAL found that 86% of the Ebony group and 96% of the BLACK JOURNAL group believe that Benjamin Hooks will be an improvement over Roy Wilkins. Eighty-three percent of the Ebony sample and 73% of the BLACK JOURNAL group believe that Hooks was the best choice to be Wilkins' successor.

Although 66% of the Ebony group and 78% of the BLACK JOURNAL group feel that the NAACP needs a new ideological direction, 100% of Ebony's and 97% of BLACK JOURNAL's sample feel that the NAACP will survive its current problems, and 84% of Ebony's and 57% of BLACK JOURNAL's group believe that the NAACP still enjoys widespread support among Blacks.

On "The New Warrior: Can Benjamin Hooks Save the NAACP?", there are three commentaries dealing with the NAACP: One by Tony Brown, and historical analysis by Julian Bond, and an appreciation by Earl G. Graves, publisher of Black Enterprise and Verve Magazines. Writer: M.W. 

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