

NAACP Life Membership Breakfast. Deeply moved by the Rev. Joseph Brown's address at the New Hanover County NAACP 2006 Membership Breakfast, I felt compelled to share the essence of his message. The article published in the *Wilmington Journal*.

NAACP HOLDS LIFE MEMBERSHIP BREAKFAST, WEEK OF NOVEMBER 16-22, 2006
The Wilmington Journal, Wilmington, NC

"Mama, why are they doing that to those people?" young Joseph queried his mother as they watched harrowing images on the evening news. People with dark colored skin in Birmingham, Alabama were shown falling down and getting up, falling down and getting up, "aided" by dogs and police batons. His mother's reply still stings today, "All they want to do is vote."

Joseph's mother was allowed to vote – as a schoolteacher she was considered "educated" enough to have that "privilege" – a right white Americans then and now take for granted. In 2006 that young boy, the Rev. Joseph Brown of St. Luke AME Zion Church, supports the concept of early voting but he "likes standing in line" to vote so as to never forget those haunting images and to honor the bravery of those who fell – but kept getting up.

Rev. Brown spoke at the New Hanover County Branch of the NAACP's Twenty Third Life Membership Breakfast on Saturday, November 4 held at St. Phillip AME Church. He exhorted the spellbound crowd to be the "voice of the voiceless". Citing Proverbs 31:8-9 (NIV) – "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly. Defend the rights of the poor and needy," Rev. Brown reminded listeners that too many Americans still face inequities and lack of opportunity in education, employment, housing, and the criminal justice system. He ended his part keynote address and part sermon with a rousing call to the audience, "What are you going to do?"

What are YOU going to do? WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?"

Entertainment was provided by young people: Justin McDonald on the violin and Gloria Kinsey performing an interpretive dance to *Thank You* by Smokie Norful

Also speaking to those assembled, which included a bi-partisan array of elected officials and candidates, was Ronald White, 4th Vice President of the North Carolina Conference of Branches of the NAACP. In his Life Membership Appeal, he told listeners that the words "advancement" and "colored" in the National Organization for the Advancement of Colored People are often misunderstood. Advancement does not mean superiority, but progress. And no one is just white or black, we are all people of many different tints; we are all people of color.

Concluding the event, NHC Branch 1st Vice President Harold Beatty spoke of the Branch's "Back to Basics" emphasis and its alignment with the faith-based community to advance their mutual goals. He reminded the audience to "Vote Your Values, Value Your Vote" and to "Arrive With 5" – bring 5 people to the polls when they exercise their precious, bloodstained right to vote.

As with every branch major event, the breakfast ended with "God Bless America" sung with heartfelt emotion by all in attendance.

The New Hanover County Branch of the NAACP meets at 7:00 p.m. on the 4th Thursday of the month

at the Family Resource Center at 11th & Orange. Everyone interested in social justice and opportunity for ALL is welcome to attend.