

March 6, 2007

From: Bruce S. Gordon

To: NAACP National Board of Directors

It has become clear to me over the past 72 hours that there is considerable discussion about the circumstances surrounding my resignation. It is important to me, and hopefully to you, that there is a clear and accurate account of what has taken place that got us to this point. Let me begin with a chronology that is my best attempt at succinctly summarizing the key events that led up to the media coverage of my departure. I will close with a list of issues that are representative of the lack of alignment between the CEO and Board.

Sat, Feb 17, 2007--At the early morning Executive Committee meeting I submitted my written resignation to the Chairman and full committee. It was not immediately accepted and a lengthy discussion followed exploring the possibilities of me continuing in my role as CEO. Because we were delaying the start of the annual meeting, we agreed to reconvene the committee following the conclusion of the annual meeting. We agreed that my resignation was not to be discussed outside of the Executive Committee members.

When the group reconvened, it was clear that word of my resignation had leaked. We continued to discuss my decision to resign. Some committee members seemed determined to convince me to stay. Others were less determined or indifferent. We eventually agreed that it was highly probable that I would leave my position. However, we acknowledged that a transition plan was needed. I suggested that a subgroup of the committee be formed to develop the plan. The Executive Committee agreed. Once again, we agreed that there would be no discussion about my resignation beyond those in attendance. I later suggested to Chairman Bond that the subgroup include Hazel Dukes, Bill Lucy and Leon Russell.

Fri, Feb 23, 2007--I participated in a meeting that included Chairman Bond, Vice Chair Brock, Bill Lucy and Leon Russell (Ms. Dukes was not invited). The meeting lasted roughly four hours. We gave further consideration to the possibility of me remaining in my position but determined, in fairly short order, that our points of view were far too divergent. For instance, I expressed my concerns about my relationship

with the board, particularly the Executive Committee. I was told that there was little or nothing that could be done to change the size, structure, roles, or responsibilities of the Executive Committee, Board of Directors, or [Special Contribution Fund] Board of Trustees. From that point, we spent the balance of the time considering alternatives for when and how I would leave the association. The timing ranged from two months to the year's end. I agreed to make a decision and inform Chairman Bond the following week.

The subject that commanded much of our attention beyond the timing of my departure was my fundraising activities. The board members in attendance wanted me to raise as much money as possible before leaving. We evaluated the practicality of how effective I might be, knowing that my exit was imminent. I encouraged Chairman Bond to talk with Phil Murphy, Centennial Campaign Co-Chair, to get his perspective. Having worked closely with Phil on the campaign, I was certain that he would have a point of view that deserved careful consideration.

Sat, Mar 3, 2007-7:30 AM PST--Tawana and I met with Hazel Dukes and Bishop Graves in LA. Each had asked for a meeting to offer their thoughts on my plan to resign. Bishop Graves was acting in response to a request from Chairman Bond. I shared with them what had gotten me to this point. They offered their perspective in light of their long tenure with the board and we listened. At the end of the meeting Bishop Graves said he would get to the Chairman and provide some feedback.

Sat, Mar 3, 2007- 10:30 AM PST--Chairman Bond left me a voice message explaining that he was headed to the airport to fly home from the Image Awards. He said that I was overdue in giving him an answer about the timing of my departure and asked that I get to him asap. While I was, in fact, overdue, I knew that Phil Murphy had been trying to reach him and wanted to arrange a meeting involving the three of us. I thought that the potential outcome of the proposed meeting would have an impact on my decision, not only about when I would go, but if I would go (Of interest, Phil sent Chairman Bond and me a memo from London on 3/5 outlining a recommendation on what it would take to reconcile our differences). However, despite the fact that meetings involving Bishop Graves, Phil Murphy, Chairman Bond, and myself had not taken place, Chairman Bond's reminder that my answer was overdue led me to respond. I told him that I thought it would be in our mutual best interests for me to leave "sooner rather than later". Given the context of the 2/23 meeting, "sooner" meant two months; "later" meant end of year.

As republished by Afro-Netizen.com on Saturday, March 10, 2007

**It is important to know that media inquiries were starting to come in. I was actually called by a USA Today reporter while backstage following the Image Awards, asking me to confirm the rumors about my resignation. I opted to put off the reporter as well as others who had attempted to reach me.

Sun, Mar 4 , 2007-10AM PST--Chairman Bond left a voicemail message in which he said, "...I am going to release a statement and I want to read it to you. The NAACP is sad to announce the resignation of CEO Bruce Gordon...I have chosen Dennis Hayes to serve as Interim CEO..." After listening to this voicemail, I reached Chairman Bond while I was traveling to the airport for my flight to NYC. He confirmed that he was moving forward to release the statement asap and that the decision to appoint Dennis Hayes was final. Chairman Bond informed me that he was in the process of notifying the board.

In light of his decision to release the statement I was concerned that it would hit the newswires while I was in the air on a five hour flight. I was certain that this would cause a media flurry and I would not be reachable for comment. At that point, I made the decision to contact the Associated Press to give them my input on the announcement. The only reason I contacted the press was to offer my perspective in light of the statement coming from Chairman Bond. In the afterglow of Friday's spectacular Image Awards and the commemorative activities in Selma, I had no intentions of announcing my resignation on Sunday. However, I was certainly not willing to board a five hour flight without offering my perspective on such an important issue; important to the NAACP and to me personally.

I think you know what has happened since Sunday afternoon. However, let me make a few observations about the media coverage surrounding my resignation. My public statements have not involved any finger pointing. I have been consistent in my position that this decision is about "lack of alignment" and not about "right or wrong". My interviews with Tavis Smiley and Soledad O'Brien have been balanced and accountable. My assessment was validated by an email I received this morning from Chairman Bond regarding the Tavis interview that said, "By all reports, you were magnificent on the show tonight." The Chairman and I have not had any other contact.

I have consistently said that the NAACP is bigger than one individual (me), and I believe that. Rupert Richardson's quote confirmed the basis for my decision. I did not accept this position to follow orders. I did come here to help the association become more effective.

You should also know that I have spent the past two days trying to contact prospective donors that I have been cultivating for major gifts. I do not want them to "leave the table" in the wake of my departure. I will continue to make those calls but my initial efforts have not been fruitful. I don't want to set false expectations. I have, however, succeeded at keeping two important Centennial Campaign volunteers involved in that initiative. That is good news.

I have read and received direct feedback from board members questioning what it is that is out of alignment. You deserve a response. Let me mention some examples:

§ Some Executive Committee members want to be directly involved in how I manage the staff. They want to approve organization structure. They want to make hire and fire decisions. They want to influence vendor selection. I view that as micromanagement.

§ Many directors and trustees do not feel that they have an obligation to fundraise. They are offended when I express appreciation for the success of some and the non-productivity of others. I believe that board members have an obligation to "give or get" money, particularly the SCF trustees.

§ I believe that the Centennial Plan (The "Pitch") presented at last year's annual meeting was a superb piece of work. It was developed with the consultative support of Booz Allen Hamilton. While it is not perfect, I see no evidence of a better strategic planning effort in recent years. The staff and I have subsequently provided detailed plans of execution for almost every part of the "Pitch" but my failure to stakeholder the effort has resulted in the Executive Committee asking me to develop a new document. I think there are more effective ways to use the limited capacity and resources of our staff.

§ From the beginning of my tenure I have been criticized for actions that I considered to be progressive. For instance:

Ø We initiated a Katrina Relief Fund that raised \$2.6M but were chastised for not getting board approval first.

Ø I convened a meeting of national high profile leaders from across the country. The purpose of the meeting was to develop a unified position on post-Katrina government response. Instead of applauding this effort, I was faulted for attempting to “set policy.”

Ø I arranged one-on-one meetings with the President, Secretary of State, and Attorney General and was challenged for violating association policy planning to attend these meetings alone.

Ø We initiated a Medicare Part D enrollment effort and enlisted Bill Cosby and Danny Glover to create public service announcements but were told that this was a service initiative and we are an advocacy organization.

I have come to accept that my view of my role and the association’s role is not aligned with the board. I am willing to accept that our points of view regarding governance and strategic direction are in conflict. This is not about right or wrong...this is about difference. We can agree to disagree. We also could have found a way to blend the best of our respective points of view but in 19 months that did not happen.

It could be said that this is all about a failure to communicate. I agree. Maybe we can all learn something from this experience. I have written more than I intended. Hopefully you now know more about what happened, and why.