

NAFEO's Lezli Baskerville Calls HBCU White House Meetings Successful

NAFEO President Praises Omarosa Manigault for Orchestrating Trump's Meetings with HBCU Presidents

By Stacy M. Brown
(NNPA Newswire Contributor)

Through the vitriolic, and sometimes venomous, atmosphere of the presidential campaign, a highly-regarded member of then-Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump's inner circle focused on one issue that was largely ignored: the future of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

"[Omarosa] Manigault was strategically placing HBCUs high on the agenda of candidate Trump and she kept HBCUs on his agenda," said Dr. Lezli Baskerville, the president and CEO of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO), a membership association for the presidents and chancellors of the nation's HBCUs.

The White House meetings on Feb. 27 and Feb.

ships with Republican members of Congress."

Baskerville continued: "NAFEO has consistently advanced the position that federal, state, and private teacher preparation programs should be designed to expand the pool of excellent, diverse teaching professionals, especially African-American, and Hispanic teaching professionals, and Black male teachers."

While Baskerville left the meetings with Trump encouraged, others were more guarded in their optimism.

"As I understand it, it means that the White House initiative on HBCUs returns to the White House rather than remaining with the Department of Education," said Loretta Parham, the CEO and director of the Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library. "This suggests that the president's ear will be closer and it sug-

gresswoman from Utah, participated in the HBCU Fly-In and made a number of thoughtful contributions to the discussion.

"One of the things she said that is telling of who she is at the core is that she is a member of the Republican Study Committee and the Congressional Black Caucus," said Baskerville. "[Love] quipped that, 'there are some things that trump political parties.' This is important, because this is the manner in which the African-American community has always operated."

Baskerville continued: "We have understood through the years that we need friends in all camps and that we have, 'no permanent friends, no permanent enemies, just permanent inter-



Lezli Baskerville, the president and CEO of NAFEO said that she was encouraged by the meetings that were held with President Trump and 88 presidents and chancellors of HBCUs. Photo was taken during a press conference on an anti-hazing campaign at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. in January 2012.

ests.' We have built and maintained bridges to all houses of power and with all political parties.

"We have had a core group of African Americans, who have served in leading positions and

championed the issues and interests of Black Americans and Blacks around the globe."

“We didn't expect to have an audience with the president...it really was a photo opportunity”

28 with HBCU presidents and chancellors, and the signing of the executive order on HBCUs, grew out of the Manigault's understanding of the importance of HBCUs and the realization of so many of the nation's domestic, foreign, security, scientific, technological, research, and innovation goals, Baskerville said.

"It happened, because President Trump knows and trusts the leadership and judgment of Omarosa," Baskerville added.

Baskerville, who also attended the meetings, described them as successful.

"The success must be measured against the reasonable expectations going into the meeting," said Baskerville. "Relative to the 'HBCU Fly-In' on Feb. 28 hosted by Congressman Mark Walker of North Carolina and Senator Tim Scott from South Carolina and others, HBCU presidents were also engaged with leaders of the 115th Congress about inclusion and diversity and about the centrality of HBCUs to American progress, the legislative and appropriations priorities of HBCUs and ways in which the NAFEO-member institutions might move forward and strengthen our relation-

gests that HBCUs will be included in conversations about the economy and education."

Walter Kimbrough, president of Dillard University in New Orleans, La., reflected on the meetings and said that not enough time was afforded to discuss pressing issues.

"We didn't expect to have an audience with the president, and that really, you know—it really was a photo opportunity," Kimbrough told National Public Radio (NPR).

"We didn't have any significant conversation. I mean he's working on his [address to Congress] for the night. So, that was okay, but I didn't go there for that. That wasn't my intent. It's just something that happened."

Kimbrough continued: "I really was interested more in a conversation with [Secretary Betsy DeVos], because she's new. She doesn't really know higher education. She doesn't know HBCUs. And, so this is an opportunity to educate her."

An opportunity that Kimbrough said was missed.

However, Baskerville argued that it's important to note that many, like Representative Mia Love, a first-term con-



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DNA DAY 2: Convincing Family & Strangers to Test & Why; The Four Autosomal DNA Testing Companies; Examples of How Autosomal DNA Testing Solved Genealogical Problems; GEDmatch; DNA Q & A

20th

Start with the Census; Immigration & Naturalization; History of Railroads in the US; Ports & Shipping

21st

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22nd

Cemetery Research; FindaGrave.com; Intro to Photoshop Elements; Intro to Heritage Makers Books; GFO's Resources

23rd

Mexican History for Genealogists; Intro to Mexican Records; Intro to Probate Records; Intro to Military Records

24th

Genealogy Basics; Genealogy for Beginners & More; Using a Timeline; Organizing All That Stuff

25th

French Prairie; The French-Canadian Collection at the GFO; Membership Meeting; British Events Leading to Migration

26th

Ancestry.com; FindMyPast.com; One-Step Webpages of Stephen Morse; HistoryGeo.com; FamilySearch.org

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