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By JAMES W. WADE III

Staff Reporter

The Cleveland NAACP held its 52nd Annual Freedom Fund Dinner at the Cleveland Renaissance Cleveland Hotel in downtown Cleveland. Winnie Mason of MetroHealth was the chair and Supreme Justice Yvette McGee Brown provided the keynote address. Attorney Pinkey Carr served as the mistress of ceremonies.

Brigardier General Bryan Roberts welcomed everyone before presenting the colors of the U.S. Army Color Guards. The NAACP youth led the Pledge of Allegiance and Ashley Woodhall sang

the Negro National Anthem. Bishop F. E. Perry gave the invocation before all the acknowledgements were announced.

Special presentation of the ACT-SO participants performed dance, musical, and vocal selections during the night. These students have won many national awards for their outstanding ability in various categories.

Sybil McNabb, president of the Ohio Conference, welcomed everyone on behalf of the NAACP.

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A special presentation was made to the NAACP Cleveland President George L. Forbes for his many years of dedicated service.

Forbes, who was just reelected, is one of the Cleveland's most powerful political figures. He received a standing ovation while approaching the microphone. While thanking everyone for the kind gesture, he also said "I want to give others a chance to make a difference. This will be last time up here."

Forbes continued to recognize new board members, Councilman Jeff Johnson, Pinkey Carr, Esquire, Vanessa Whiting and others who will hopefully continue the fight for justice in the NAACP Cleveland Branch.

James Hardimon, Esquire, introduced the keynote speaker.

McGee Brown spoke on the theme of "Affirming America's Promise."

“I want to thank the NAACP. It is because of the work of the NAACP and its leaders like Charles Hamilton Houston and Thurgood Marshall that I am able to serve on the Supreme Court of Ohio. It was the NAACP who challenged Plessey v. Ferguson in a state-by-state strategy that ultimately led to the historic Brown v. Board of Education decision that finally struck down the doctrine of ‘Separate but Equal,’” she said.

“I am asking you to affirm the promise of the NAACP, one child at a time. I am asking you to love other people’s children and speak hope into their lives. Take one child and inspire them to excellence. Open their eyes to a world beyond their neighborhood,” she said.

“Every time we accomplish that next goal, we are keeping the promise. Every time we share our stories with a young person, to inspire and encourage, we are keeping the promise. Every time we take the time to mentor a young person, to give a hand up, to tell that young man or woman who might be struggling with self-doubt, ‘I believe you can do it if you are willing to work and get an education,’ we are keeping that promise,” McGee Brown continued.

Forbes said, “We are honored to have Justice McGee Brown as our speaker. She is a distinguished public official but that is only part of the story. She has always been a tireless advocate for the welfare of children and families in Ohio. Her sincerity and integrity have earned her the respect and admiration of all of us.”

Brown graduated from Ohio University in 1982 with a degree in journalism/public relations. She earned her juris doctor at The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law in 1985.

“The Cleveland Branch, established in 1912, was one of the early branches in the NAACP family. The National and Cleveland Branch have experienced congruent growth due to their shared and supportive efforts dealing with the struggle for Civil Rights in housing, education, jobs and the criminal justice system,” said Stanley Miller, executive director of the Cleveland Branch.

Miller further commented, “We’ve made a great deal of progress in our nation and this community, but we have a tremendous amount of work left to do.”

Reverend Jeffrey Jemison provided the benediction.