

## UNC-CHAPEL HILL HONORS CIVIL RIGHTS PIONEERS WHO DESEGREGATED UNC IN 1955



September 16, 1955: LeRoy Frasier, John Brandon, Ralph Frasier on the steps of the South Building after completing registration.

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, President of the North Carolina NAACP will deliver the Keynote Address at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Recognition Dinner to honor the three African Americans who broke UNC's 160 year-old policy of racial segregation in 1955.

Barber has been arrested twice in Raleigh, for protesting the re-segregation of public schools. Barber has told the Recognition Dinner Organizers that, "I am honored to be in the presence of these men. I want to talk about the mighty historical river of struggle against slavery, Jim Crow, and now the new efforts to restore it that we are all destined to be a part of during our short time here."

### **Background**

Three African-American students from Durham's Hillside High School applied to UNC-Chapel Hill in 1955 and were denied admission by the Office of Admissions because they were "Negro". After their application was rejected, the Board of Trustees passed a resolution barring the admission of Negroes to the undergraduate college. Mr.

Ralph Frasier, his brother LeRoy Frasier and Mr. John Brandon filed suit against the Board of Trustees in the lower Federal District Court in North Carolina.

In a unanimous opinion issued on September 16, 1955, the Federal District Court in Greensboro, N.C. ruled that the University of North Carolina was prohibited from denying admission to qualified black applicants solely because of their race or color. The Board of Trustees of the University of North Carolina appealed the Federal Court's decision to the United States Supreme Court and on September 16, 1955 admitted Mr. Ralph Frasier, his brother LeRoy and Mr. Brandon to the undergraduate college.

Before both the Federal Court and the United States Supreme Court, the three young men were represented by renowned civil rights attorneys Thurgood Marshall and Robert L. Carter, who had both served as legal counsel in *Brown v. Board of Education*. In a one line opinion, the United States Supreme Court affirmed the lower court's ruling on March 5, 1956.

Thursday, September 16, 2010, marks the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of desegregation of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The first three African-American undergraduate students who are responsible for desegregating UNC will be present and will be honored by students, faculty, administration, and the community of North Carolina.

### **Schedule of Events**

#### Friday, September 17, 2010

1:30 p.m.: Stone Center Auditorium. *Open to All*. Discussion and interview of Mr. Ralph Frasier, Mr. LeRoy Frasier, and Mr. John Brandon. Moderated by Geeta Kapur, Civil Rights Attorney; Adjunct Professor – Department of African American Studies, UNC-Chapel Hill; Adjunct Professor – UNC School of Law; Research Fellow, Institute of African American Research, UNC.

3:30 p.m.: Celebration Reception at the Stone Center Hitchcock Multipurpose Room, *Open to All*.

6:30 p.m.: University Recognition Dinner. Reverend Dr. William Barber, N.C. NAACP President to deliver the keynote speech. *By Invitation Only*.

#### Saturday, September 18, 2010

12 p.m.: Kenan Stadium. Mr. Ralph Frasier, Mr. LeRoy Frasier and Mr. John Brandon will be honored by the Athletic Department at the first home football game against Georgia Tech.

### **Sponsors of the Desegregation Celebration**

Office of the Chancellor, Department of Student Affairs Department of African and African American Studies, Department of History, Department of Athletics, Department of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, Institute of African American Research, Student Government, Black Student Movement and the Campus Y.

**CONTACT:** Geeta Nadia Kapur, Attorney & Counselor at Law and Adjunct Professor, African American Studies, UNC-Chapel Hill. 919-260-1977.