

History of the NAACP in Monterey County

The history of the National Association for The Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in Monterey County involves the founding of two Branches of the NAACP – the Monterey Peninsula Branch and the Salinas Branch. The Monterey Peninsula Branch was founded in 1932 and its primary founder was the Reverend Wellington Smith, Sr. then Pastor of First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove, the oldest Black church in the Central California Region.

The Salinas Branch was formed seven years later in 1939 and its primary founder was Mr. William Greenwell. The two branches were responsible for bringing awareness to the fact that racism and racial discrimination in all their forms were rife, virulent and institutionally entrenched. Under the leadership of these two bold Presidents, barriers for Blacks and other

minorities in housing and employment began to break down. Both branches took strong stands against racist police practices directed toward Blacks and others that often culminated in taunts, threats, beatings and wrongful incarcerations. Leaders of both branches, especially the two Presidents, endured long periods of threats to their persons as well as the lives of their families, but they and the members of the branches never faltered in their struggles to rid this county of its most abject forms of racism and discrimination.

While each branch admirably served the interests of their two parts of Monterey County, over the years, the two branches began more and more to work in tandem to confront and resolve increasingly similar issues. For many decades, these two NAACP Branches were seen as the two foremost organizations that were consistently at the forefront of all struggles and movements to defend and

extend the political, social and economic rights of all those who were the victims of injustice. It became clear that it made more sense to have one large branch to carry out the mission and work of the NAACP for the entire county. In 2006, after much discussion and deliberations, the membership of both branches unanimously voted to merge the two branches into one Monterey County Branch of the NAACP.

Over the years, both branches received numerous National NAACP awards for their outstanding work in fighting for equality in all aspects of society for all people, especially Blacks. Most recently, in 2012 the Monterey County Branch won the Claude Hudson Award, an award given to a local branch that demonstrates the NAACP standards by speaking out on the six-point issues in the National Plan and Mr. Jim Black won Treasurer of the Year. In 2013, the Branch won the Ruby McKnight

Williams Award, an award given to the branch with the largest percentage increase in membership.

The Executive Team donates hundreds of hours to ensure the business of the NAACP is handled in an efficient manner. Thank you to the members of the Executive Team for your dedication and to each committee member for your time, knowledge and support. Together, we make the Monterey County Branch NAACP one of the most effective civil rights organizations in Monterey County and the State.