

The History of the Antelope Valley National Association for the  
Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

by

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1992-2000

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) has been here, is here and will be here in the Antelope Valley...And we've made a difference! The Antelope Valley Branch of the NAACP was founded in the late 1950's. The refusal to sell homes to African Americans was the driving cause. Founding members Patrick (Pat) and Lois Patten and other Blacks couldn't buy a home in Palmdale. Lois Patten was the first president of the NAACP; she was a schoolteacher. Her husband Pat was the organizing chairperson. He was a very controversial figure because of the segregated housing market here. Housing discrimination was so prevalent in the AV. To keep Antelope Valley white, Blacks were steered to Sun Village. This was the only place for African Americans to live here in the Antelope Valley.

The late branch president Robert Joseph was one of the pioneers confronting this discrimination. When the Fair Housing Act was passed, the NAACP turned up the heat. By the way The Patten's were one of the first Black families to move into Palmdale. It was not long before the branch took on other issues of segregation and racial discrimination. The civil rights era was getting into full swing. The NAACP had won landmark cases in education and housing. The victories were short and sweet, and the battle of the civil rights movement continued. The branch was inundated with complaints of

discrimination, in housing, employment, education, and just L.W.B. (Living while Black) in the AV. On the national front the cry for equal rights was demanded from all four corners of the United States. NAACP national and local branches were fighting in the courts and on the steps of businesses, schools, and in the neighborhoods. During this time we saw the mobilization of young people throughout the civil rights era. President Bob Young organized large numbers of youth to join the cause. President Lily Montgomery had the connections to bring attention here to the valley. The bigwigs from down below and nationally were becoming aware of the Antelope Valley.

As the heat turned up, young people joined forces on all fronts of the civil right battle to push for passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. As you know the bill was eventually passed by congress, but some good ole boys didn't think the law applied to them.

When Bill Taylor became president, Blacks where being hired by Edwards Air Force Base, the NAACP along with the base commander demanded that Black

be allowed to move into Lancaster, after all it was the law. Under Bill 's presidency, the NAACP fought for employment opportunities with businesses here in the valley, with Southern California Edison and the phone company. These were large employers who still had difficulty hiring Black people, even though the law prohibited discrimination in the work place. School districts here in the valley also had a hard time hiring Black teachers. The NAACP demanded that they hire Black teachers proportionate to the number of Black students. Even today, this branch continuously demands the hiring of Black teachers. Somehow, school districts feel that don't need to follow the law.

The good ole boys were so confident and continued to defy the law, decided build a school just for Blacks - Antelope School in the Keppel School District. The NAACP was of course opposed to this action because it was a blatant slap in the face of equal rights and federal desegregation orders. Dr. William Shaw, who is a former educator and the chairperson of the NAACP's education committee brought Dr. Wilson Riles, former California Department of Education here to assist in this case. Dr. Riles was so outraged that he that he said he couldn't see the difference between

Littlerock, Arkansas and Littlerock, California! Keppel School District decided not to have the school just for Blacks.

The branch was not active in the early 80's

The Rev. Samuel Hooker led the branch in the late 80's and early 90's dealt with several police shootings including the killing of an unarmed homeless woman and young AV College student. During this time the branch recorded many complaints from the community and members of the branch. Rev. Hooker was in constant contact with Sheriff Sherman Block.

Lynda Thompson Taylor became president of the branch in 1992 and held office until 2000.

In the 90's, the confederate flag at Quartz Hill High School had to go. QHHS glorified the confederate flag and flew it proudly. This outraged African Americans who were on the move to the Westside. The NAACP mobilized the branch and community and demanded it's removal; after all this is the United States of America, not the Confederate States of America. The battle was on. More than 200 hundred people congregated at

the Antelope Valley High School Union's board room to demand the removal of the confederate flag. It was removed. Also the confederate Johnny Rebel character was removed from the school stationary, classroom walls (including the gymnasium).

In 1996 several incidents of hate crime had been reported. Despite NAACP complaints, the sheriff wrote these crimes off as kids' pranks. When an African American teen was chased down the street and hit with a machete, by a white man, the branch initiated a town hall meeting to address the alarming rate of hate crimes against Blacks. This town hall meeting included the FBI, LA county human relations commission, sheriff & district attorney, several AV school districts superintendents, NAACP regional & state officials, and Antelope Valley community. The community voiced their concerns about safety loud and clear and the panel promised the an inquiry into hate crimes in AV. The Human Relations Committee produced a report on hate crimes in the AV and short afterwards the Antelope Valley Hate Crime Taskforce was form. The NAACP is a founding member of this taskforce. This resulted in training in sensitivity for the sheriffs, schools, and community organizations.

The branch is also a founding member of the Juneteenth Celebration here in the AV.

We've come a long way and still have a distance to go, the Antelope Valley Branch has, is, and will continue to make a difference.

Thanks to past presidents Lois Patten & Bill Taylor; and Dr. William Shaw for their input in the history of the Antelope Valley NAACP.

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