

OPEN LETTER TO GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY BOARD OF TRUSTEE

By NBDA - Tuesday, May 9 2006

For more than two decades, National Black Deaf Advocates (NBDA) has been at the forefront, advocating for access and equality on behalf of the Black Deaf Community. During this period, we have strived to build cultural bridges, destroy stereotypes, create opportunity, and remedy often-covert institutional racism.

Events occurring at Gallaudet University since the selection of three finalists and subsequent appointment of a University President-Elect have caused a level of discord on campus unseen since days of segregation. During this difficult period, NBDA has communicated with various organizations on campus and with the Gallaudet's administration.

On April 18, 2006 NBDA President, Thomas Samuels sent an open letter to Pamela Holmes, Chairperson of the Gallaudet Presidential Search Committee (PSC) which express our concerns regarding the elimination of Dr. Glenn Anderson as a candidate for the position of University President. We received no response from the PSC to this letter. (http://www.nbda.org/images/download/Letter_to_Gally_Search_Committee.pdf)

On April 24, 2006, NBDA issued an official position paper describing our concerns regarding the issue of diversity and again reiterating our support for Dr. Glenn Anderson, based not on color but on his credentials and proven record of service to Gallaudet University. (http://www.nbda.org/images/download/NBDA_Position_paper.pdf)

On Tuesday May 2, 2006, NBDA hosted a Press Conference at Shiloh Baptist Church of Washington DC. During this time a delegation of officers from NBDA, BDSU, and APA as well as a representative from PEP were given an opportunity to speak to the press and highlight our concerns regarding the presidential selection process and concerns regarding diversity and inclusiveness of this process as indicative of Gallaudet strategic goals.

On this same day, President Thomas Samuels and Board Member Gerald Miller met with I. King Jordan and Dr. Fernandes to reiterate concerns regarding the process and the need for increased cultural sensitivity and diversity.

We would like to believe that we live in a society where racism no longer exists. We would like to believe we live in a society where sexism is obliterated. We would like to believe we live in a society that is working toward snuffing out audism. The only way to achieve this is by working together in one accord to erase the "ism" that separates us. It is time for a healing to occur at our beloved Gallaudet. It is a time to reach out and to

preserve the symbol of Gallaudet as being a place where all people with varied communication styles feel welcome.

Therefore, we call upon the Gallaudet Board of Trustees, and I. King Jordan, Dr. Fernandes and the student body to remedy the situation at Gallaudet by:

1. Reopening the Presidential Search Process
2. Ensuring that the search is done in a fair and equitable manner with an eye toward cultural diversity and inclusiveness
3. Guaranteeing no reprisals against ANY students, staff, and faculty
4. Restoring honor and respect to Dr. Fernandes who is a victim of this process.