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SCHEDULED SPEAKER STAYS AWAY

Rift appears at parley on black education

By JERRY REMMERS

What was billed as the first annual Countywide Conference on Education of Black Students got off to a shaky start last night.

The scheduled speaker, Assemblyman Willie Brown, D-San Francisco, refused to talk to the group.

John E. Jacob, executive director of the San Diego Urban League, said Brown's office had telephoned him earlier in the day to inform him that the assemblyman preferred not to get involved with Urban League internal affairs..

The conference, with workshop sessions scheduled today at Lincoln High School, is sponsored by the Community Education Committee and the Urban League.

The Urban League has been under fire by some groups in the black community since it sought the firing of councilman Leon Williams as director of the Neighborhood Youth Corps, an Urban League agency.

Robert Russell, a history instructor at Mesa College, addressed the group of about 50 educators and Urban League representatives last night in place of Brown.

After Russell spoke, Conley Majors, a student at San Diego City College, sought and was given permission to address the group.

He called the conference a "farce" because he said it wasn't representative of the black community. Among those not invited, he said, were the Black Studies Institute and George Walker Smith, a black member of the city and community college Board of Education.

Majors said the real reason Brown didn't appear was not that he had received phone calls from black San Diegans urging him not to attend but because the conference was nothing more than a "farce."

Russell said that blacks should put aside their differences and combine forces to improve black education in the city schools.

His talk concentrated on myths about black persons he said school textbooks pass on to all students.

One myth, he said, is that blacks have not had an "African past." He said most people identify with Cleopatra as Elizabeth Taylor but that if the famous Egyptian queen had lived in the days of Jim Crow "she would have to ride in the back of the bus."

A second myth he said textbooks perpetuate is that blacks were always submissive. He said there were at least 200 organized slave rebellions in the United States from 1619 to 1860.

Another myth, he said, is the fallacy that all men are created equal.

Thomas Jefferson wrote that blacks were inferior to whites and that they "smelled" and were "lazy," according to Russell.

Abraham Lincoln wasn't really the Great Emancipator as textbooks would like students to believe, Russell went on. He said Lincoln was a politician and did not want an extension of slavery.

Lincoln's plan, according to Russell's research, is that he wanted slaves returned to Africa and freedom for other blacks to come about gradually by about 1900. This plan ended, he said, upon Lincoln's assassination.

Russell said students have to be taught the truth about black culture. He told those at the conference they no longer have to listen to such slogans as "White is right," "If you're brown, stick around," and "If you're black, step back."

"Rather," he said, "it should be 'White is beautiful and so is black and so is brown, baby."