GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings in the Name of the Lord our Savior, Jesus the Christ!

As president of the National Black Evangelical Association, I welcome you to the annual gathering of our 51st year. After having met in Chicago for the last several years, we are glad to convene this year in Kansas City, MO. We believe the Lord led us this way, and we trust that the presence of NBEA in this locale of the nation will glorify God and become a blessed legacy of all who attend the convention.

A word of thanks is always in order to those who have done so much work in prayer and labor to help bring this meeting into being. We especially thank our Chairpersons, the Briscoes, and the local and national managers and support persons who pitched in to give assistance—whose names are too numerous to mention. The NBEA is most appreciative of your labor of love and sacrifices you have made. May the good Lord reward you for your service.

The rationale below explains our theme, and gives the essential message that runs through our gathering. I will allow the exposition of this word to speak to our hearts and set the tone for our fellowship and ministry.

Don’t Get It Twisted!

Jesus Answers Our Core Issues

“...the Lord shall renew their strength...”
Isaiah 40:27-31

“27 Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God? 28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faileth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. 29 He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. 30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: 31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:27-31).

Don’t Get It Twisted” – The Straight Up and Sobering Meaning

To bring home her point, the totally serious sister says, “Now I’m telling you, don’t get it twisted!” Perhaps she was preparing to defend herself in an all-out street battle. On the other hand, maybe she was warning someone who shortchanged her on a purchase and was messing with her money. Perhaps she was reproving a brother who got too familiar and up close by crossing the line into her very personal and private space. Whatever the circumstance, the sister used the phrase to abruptly check the hearer and turn the conversation in a different direction.

“Don’t get it twisted!” has found its way into the ever creative vocabulary of black culture, even as have many other turns on the King’s English. Often, African-Americans communicate in
straightforward and very powerful phrases. We “tell it like it is” to “get it straight.” So, what is the straight up meaning of “Don’t get it twisted”? 

First, the phrase means “don’t get it wrong.” This indicates that the listener may not know what is right in the first place, or has downplayed the status of the person he is dealing with. Second, it means, “don’t be confused about it.” This indicates that the listener has a garbled understanding of the matter at hand. Third, it means, “don’t rush to unfounded conclusions.” In this sense, the phrase indicates that the listener should hear the full story before jumping to a conclusion that does not fit the facts. So at the least, the phrase “Don’t get it twisted” indicates three basic things: the hearer is wrong, is confused, or is rashly presumptive—needs to take into account better information before making a move. The one who says “Don’t get it twisted” quickly sober up the conversation.

Twisted Black Young Adults and Christian Believers

The idea of being “twisted” generally characterizes the black young adult generation of our times: their thinking and living is twisted; many are obviously perverted. Many black young adults—certainly not all—are morally and spiritually wrong, are confused about the truth, and are impetuous in their living—living for the right now without building their future on a holistic view of all the relevant facts. A sense of hopelessness characterizes them—a weakening spirit that gives deep feelings of uneasiness to their elders who ask, where in the world are our people going? Where is this generation of our young black men and women taking us? In contrast, former generations of African-Americans were not as wrong, as confused, or as unthinking and headstrong as the present generation of black young adults.

Strangely, the phrase “Don’t get it twisted” also analyzes the unhealthy mindset of other Christian and social groupings that veer from biblical teachings. For instance, many believers and churches are getting it twisted about the true nature of Christ-centered mission—to proclaim the Jubilee of Jesus to the poor (see Luke 4:18). Some white believers (and some blacks too) get it twisted about the genuine nature of racial reconciliation—that it moves beyond building personal friendships into other areas that are high on God’s agenda for our society, like effecting social justice and breaking yokes of systemic racism and prejudice. Many who are culturally bereft of the meaning of black history get it twisted by thinking America is in a post-racial climate, and diversity answers everything. Sadly, many in pursuit of social equality have some very twisted thoughts about human sexuality, relationships, and the male with female constituents of the union of marriage from a biblical perspective. Other instances of wrong, confused, and reckless and uncritical thinking abound.

Untwisting the Twisted—Focus of the NBEA 2014 Convention

Now how does the phrase “Don’t get it twisted” connect with the National Black Evangelical Association? Well, that phrase has become the theme for our 2014 meeting and movement in Kansas City, MO. The organizers chose this culturally catchy saying because it speaks especially to black young adults, as well as to a real problem in Christian circles.

NBEA loves our black young adults and desires to impart to them a deeper experience of the Good News of Jesus Christ. So we appeal to this trouble-laden generation in the language they may understand. We cherish and respect our offspring; they are the hope of our future. We know the value of black young adults before God our Creator and Redeemer. So speaking the truth in love, we say to them, “Don’t get it twisted. Jesus answers our core issues.”
Prophesying Salvation to the Twisted

“Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8, NLT). Once again, Jesus our God is speaking His voice through the 2014 gathering of black evangelicals. He is warning our churches, our generation, our society, and our world: “Don’t get it twisted.”

God’s eternal voice is speaking in our day as He spoke long ago to His people in the days of Isaiah. In Isaiah’s day, the children of Israel spread twisted thoughts about the Lord. At the time, God’s people were awaiting deliverance and restoration from the aftermath of their Babylonian captivity. Times were hard for them, and some of the people lost their theological and spiritual moorings. They exchanged truth and sound beliefs for unspiritual thinking.

Some Israelites were saying, “My way is hid from the Lord,” meaning “God doesn’t know what I’m going through.” Others were saying, “My judgment is passed over from my God,” meaning “God is not concerned about social justice.” This twisted and unspiritual thinking labeled God as ignorant and powerless to intervene in human affairs, and to deliver His people from their bondage and social troubles.

The prophet Isaiah spoke out against the ungodly and prevailing mindset of God’s people in his day. In essence, the prophet challenged his people by saying, “Don’t get it twisted. Your thinking about the Lord is wrong. Don’t be confused, and don’t jump to hasty conclusions.”

Isaiah admonished his people by proclaiming the truth about God and His involvement in the affairs of their life. He shared vital theological information that the people to their own detriment had dismissed from their thinking (Isaiah 40:27-31).

• First, the prophet Isaiah asked the twisted people several penetrating questions. His provocative questions directed his hearers to consider attributes of God’s divine nature that impacted their social condition and experience.

  • “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding” (28).

  Don’t get it twisted.

• Second, the prophet proclaimed the everlasting power of God for those suffering and weakening under the stressful weight of their human and social experience.

  • “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength” (29).

  Don’t get it twisted.

• Third, the prophet analyzed the weaknesses and failings existing in the Israelite young adult generation.

  • “Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall” (30).

  Don’t get it twisted.
•Fourth, the prophet offered his twisted generation the spiritual and ultimate solution to their problems.

•“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (31).

Don’t get it twisted.

•Salvation, strength, power, deliverance, and restoration come to all who “wait upon the Lord.”

The NBEA invites the entire community to join with our gathering as we trust and wait upon the Lord. We shall explain the meaning of God’s eternal Word, and prophesy life-changing truth to a twisted generation of struggling and downtrodden African-Americans. By proclaiming Jesus Christ the Lord, Who is “the way, the truth, and the life,” we shall untwist those who are twisted by sin, social oppression, and Satan (see John 14:6; 10:10). Empowered by God’s Spirit, we shall give personal and community witness to the great salvation of Jesus Who died on the cross of Calvary, resurrected Himself from the dead, lives forevermore, and grants forgiveness, spiritual power, abundant life, and hope to every person who trusts in His Name.

So, don’t get it twisted. Jesus is our answer for time and eternity. He is the God-answer for each one, every people, and all the issues of life. Jesus redeems our fallen humanity, restores us back to God our Creator, transforms our being and our ways of living, works for our justice and social progress, and prepares for us who die in Him an eternal home in Heaven.

Don’t get it twisted.

REV. DR. WALTER ARTHUR MCCRAY © 2013

GREETINGS FROM THE FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT OF NBEA

We have eagerly awaited our visit to Kansas City, Missouri and what we believe is going to be one of our best conventions. It is a significant event when believers from different churches and denominations get together to pray, fellowship, worship, celebrate their unity, network, build up and encourage one another, challenge and learn together.

Christians from all across the USA look forward to meeting with new friends and reuniting with old friends in this great city at NBEA’s 51st Convention in March of 2014.

At our beginning, we felt the need to band together to overcome our problems as we worked for our Lord’s kingdom. I challenge all to recommit to that same vision at this convention and may God’s blessing be upon each participant.

REV. RUSSELL L. KNIGHT, JR.
GREETINGS FROM THE TREASURER AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I have been privileged to be a part of NBEA from its beginning in 1963, an organization borne in the midst of the Civil Rights movement. I’ve seen many changes over the 51 years of our existence. At the time, I was working with Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship on predominantly Black college campuses. In the midst of seeking to lead students to Christ, I saw one hindrance that my studies had prepared me to see – many students, as I had been, were victims of “The Myth of Black Inferiority.” We truly got it twisted! Via non-Christian and Christian circles, messages were sent deep into our souls that we were not as good, as smart, as beautiful, as worthy as white people, in particular. As some psychologists suggested, we were part of a master-slave syndrome – believing our state was the way things were supposed to be, the master, of course, was superior; and often we even expected that we should “stay in our place.” Of course, there were always Black people courageous enough to rise above the syndrome in a variety of ways. We know the names of many of those folk over the centuries and up to the present time.

As an organization thoroughly committed to the Lordship and salvation of Jesus Christ, NBEA helped us in accepting our own identity and worth as people who were beautifully formed in the womb (Psa. 139); and that we could love God fully and love other people just as we loved ourselves, Mark 12:29. The formation of the National Black Christian Students Conference reinforced this for college students who needed to see themselves as God’s beloved and then return to the community as change agents for Jesus Christ.

NBEA stepped into the Civil Rights era flush with the belief that God had called us to minister to the whole person – body, soul, and spirit; and that we could do that best by joining together in true Koinonia (fellowship) and encouraging and supporting the various ministries God has placed in the body. We saw ourselves involved with a variety of core issues that Black people faced, including our children, youth, women, and men. Areas included education, the economy and employment, politics, communications, the Black family, racism and racial reconciliation, other aspects of social justice, and, of course, evangelism and missions. Black evangelical theology and later, the black and African presence in the Bible, became important theoretical and foundational parts of our evangelical witness. We were a diverse group coming from many different denominational and para-church groups. To merge those groups into the unit needed to do God’s work led us to develop the Umbrella Concept and the theme, “Unity in Diversity without Enforced Conformity.”

We see our convention here in Kansas City as a continuation of that vision, and we look forward to working together with you in reaching our people for Christ here as well as across the United States, and, indeed, the world.

RUTH LEWIS BENTLEY, Ph.D.
GREETINGS FROM THE LOCAL CONVENTION CHAIRPERSON

To all Board members and to all friends and family of the National Black Evangelical Association, greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We welcome you to Kansas City, Missouri, the heart of America. The last time the NBEA met in Kansas City was in 1985 when Aaron Hamlin was the executive director. It is with warm memories that I look back on the time that Aaron Hamlin led the work for the Kansas City convention. He was a genuine man of God and a real asset to the NBEA.

In my personal devotion, I am going through the book of First Samuel. My heart was greatly arrested when I came to First Samuel 2:35. The Lord God is speaking and He says: "then I will raise up for myself a faithful priest who shall do according to what is in My heart and in My mind. With all my heart and soul, I believe that God today is looking for fateful priests and faithful people and faithful pastors who will do what is in His heart and is in His mind.

As we gather in Kansas City, let us faithfully do all that is in God's heart and in His mind. We encourage all delegates to the convention to go back to their respective cities and do what is in the heart and mind of God.

In His Eternal Peace,

PASTOR CHARLES J. BRISCOE

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