

Hill gives frank truth and reconciliation speech

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ROBERT HILL

bad along with the good) and a making an ongoing commitment to not repeat the mistakes of the past.

Before a near-capacity ballroom in the Omni William Penn hotel, Hill linked Pittsburgh's history of economic prosperity to the region's present day predicament of being poised to take the next great leap forward while grappling with the fruits of neglect by turning a blind eye to the continuing carnage on our streets.

Hill picked up where Glen T. Meakem, the tech entrepreneur and managing director of Meakem Bocker Venture Capital, last year's

It was a fitting sequel to last year's keynote address, Pinch-hitting for Chancellor Mark Nordenberg (sidelined due to an injury sustained while attending to his mother's house), Robert Hill, the University of Pittsburgh vice chancellor of Public Affairs, expanded on the theme of the ninth annual meeting luncheon of the African American Chamber of Commerce of Western Pennsylvania's "The Road Ahead."

Part of the itinerary for the road ahead includes a stop of truth and reconciliation by acknowledging the role of 250 years of Pittsburgh (the

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keynote speaker, ended with the admonishment, "This blood in our streets is the ultimate evidence that the economic policies of the state of Pennsylvania are just not working."

In his remarks, Hill elaborated on not just the economic policies, but the overall social policies that marked 250 years of structured inequalities vis a vis slavery, Jim Crow and segregation to collectively bring us where we are now.

Again and again, Hill used history to illustrate his point of truth and reconciliation, citing the recent discovery of slave documents by county recorder Valerie McDonald Roberts as evidence of Pittsburgh's past.

Hill attributed the area's spiraling homicide numbers of the last two years to an in-exorable truth—"the system is designed to work against Blacks and, said Hill, "has taught them to fail themselves," in reference to the disparity between Black and white public school students and the resulting gaps in performance and achievement.

The referenced much publicized reports that have documented the gaps in achievement with poor performance of public schools in education along with a disparity in

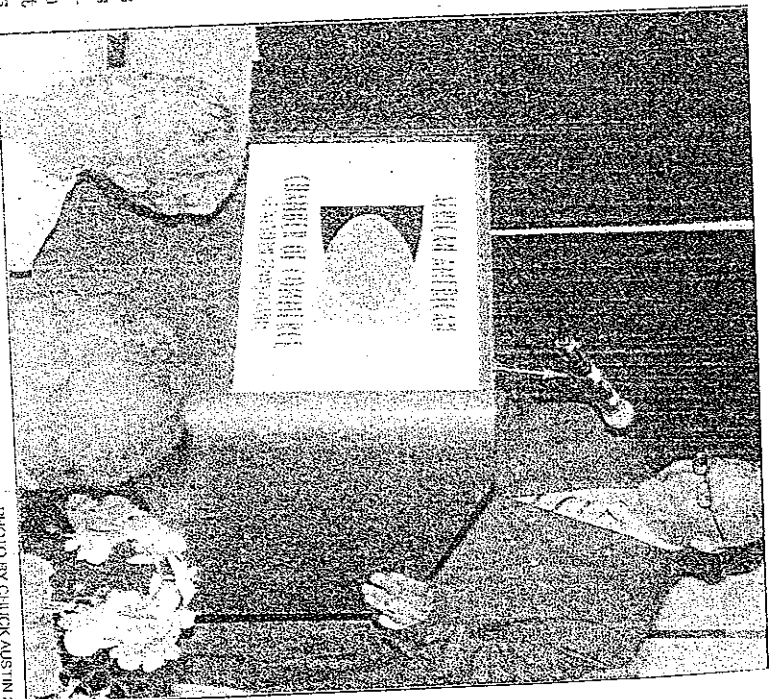


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TRUTH TO RECONCILIATION—Pitt Vice Chancellor Robert Hill addresses the ninth annual Business Luncheon of the African American Chamber of Commerce of Western Pennsylvania as President/CEO Doris Carson Williams and chamber board President Sam Stephenson listen.

Blacks and white educational environments that have created a seemingly insurmountable gap.

All of these factors, emphasized Hill, "Deprive Black students of quality education," which in turn, denies reaching one's potential.

"We must take strong measures to prepare Blacks" for the future of Pittsburgh said Hill.

Earlier in his address, Hill also congratulated the chamber on the eve of its first decade in existence for its development and accomplishments under the watchful eye of Doris Carson Williams and her bend in growing from membership of a handful to membership now calculated in the hundreds while men-

tioning Pitts' Katz Business School initiative with the chamber.

He then paralleled the development of Black-owned business nationally from the visionary pioneers in the early 1900s to the variety and size of businesses cited in Black Enterprise's annual Top 100 listings.

Pitt has also played a significant role in the region as an economic and educational engine for the region, Hill shared, generating a \$1.6 billion economic impact to the region.

Pitt pays \$115 million in taxes to local governments and, over a five-year period, has done more than \$16 million in procurement with Black businesses.