

Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee continues her campaign to clear errant Federal Watch List

Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Chair of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection, will host a hearing entitled "Ensuring America's Security: Cleaning up the Nation's Watch list." During this hearing, Congress will hear from key witnesses who are on the terrorist watch list as well as top official from the Transportation Security Administration from the Department of Homeland Security.

"As Chair of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection, I believe that it

is the duty of the United States Congress to ensure that TSA enacts vigorous security measures to keep travelers safe. However, it is also equally important to make sure that we protect innocent travelers from unnecessary scrutiny and delay when traveling across the nation," stated Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee. "We must fully understand how so many innocent individuals are unknowingly placed on the terror watch list, limiting their freedom, and focus on a more effective approach to placing real threats on to the list."

The Witness List includes:
Representative from the



Sheila Jackson Lee

Transportation Security Administration U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Denise Robinson, mother of 8 Year-Old James Robinson Who is on Terrorist Watch List, Richard "Rick" Kopel, Principal Deputy Director Terrorist Screening Center, Ms. Cathleen Berrick, Director Homeland Security and Justice Issues U.S. Government Accountability Office, Lillie Coney Associate Director Electronic Privacy Information Center and John M. Meenan, Executive Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer Air Transport Association.

UH-Clear Lake announces senior program schedule

Since 2002, seniors throughout Bay Area Houston have had the opportunity to learn more about a variety of subjects and socialize with both new acquaintances and old friends through the Clear Lake Association of Senior Programs at University of Houston-Clear Lake, known to many as CLASP. A community outreach initiative of UH-Clear Lake's Office of Alumni and Community Relations, CLASP provides both educational and informational programs to the local community.

"Through CLASP, community friends of all ages are invited to enjoy learning about new and varied subjects from a range of presenters including civic and industry leaders, professors, authors and astronauts," said Charity Ellis, UH-Clear Lake director of alumni and community relations.

The idea for CLASP came from local community leader and university friend Marilyn Lunney.

"This program was something I had wanted to do for many years and I was constantly talking to folks with this idea," explained Lunney. "I always have been involved with UH-Clear Lake and when I described my idea to them, they were enthusiastic and CLASP was created. We started with Visions in Our Midst as our first program and, today, CLASP sponsors three different programs.

"Although I developed the idea/program, so many others contributed to its success."

For 2008-2009, CLASP again will be hosting Visions in Our Midst, a monthly evening lecture series that is on a variety of topics and held in UH-Clear Lake's Garden Room, 2700 Bay Area Blvd., Houston. CLASP also offers two series of daytime minicourses. For the past few years, CLASP has collaborated with Harris County Precinct Two's Bay Area Community Center to offer a monthly mini-course at the Center. This year, CLASP is offering a second minicourse at the Clear Lake City-County Freeman Branch Library.

"Since we offer our programs both during the day and the early evening, we have a really good turnout," said Lunney. "There is no

charge to attend Visions in Our Midst or the mini-courses and all of the community is invited to attend."

The CLASP 2008-2009 schedule is as follows:

Visions in Our Midst (5:30 - 7 p.m.)

Sept. 18: "Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership: The Past, Present, and Future of our Bay Area," by BAHEP Vice President Jim Reinhartsen;

Oct. 2: "Dolphins: From Black & White to Pink," presented by UH-Clear Lake adjunct professor Michael Hunt;

Oct. 16: "Native American Indians & the Velvet Glove: The Indian in the Spanish Empire," presented by Assistant Professor of History Daniel Haworth;

Nov. 6: "NASA: 50 Historic Years of Manned Space Flight," presented by retired space executive Glynn Lunney and those who lived it;

Dec. 4: "The Science of Happiness," presented by UH-Clear Lake Associate Professor of Psychology Robert Bartsch;

Jan. 8: "Astronaut Training: What it Takes to be an Astronaut," by NASA Simulation Supervisor Henry Lampazzi;

Jan. 22: "Texas EquuSearch—Standing Ready to Find the Lost," presented by Texas EquuSearch director Tim Miller;

Feb. 19: "Taiwan and the International Education Experience," by UH-Clear Lake Professor of Management Louis White;

March 5: "Meteorites & Cosmic Dust: Visitors from Outer Space," by NASA Associate Curator for Interplanetary Dust and Co-investigator of the STARDUST Discovery Mission Michael Zolensky;

March 26: "The Iditarod: The Last Great Race on Earth," presented by Veterinary Specialists Bill Daly and Kyle Brayley;

April 2: "TV Violence is Good for You," presented by UH-Clear Lake Professor Emeritus of Communication Jib Fowles;

May 7: "How to Effectively Protest Your Property Values for Taxes," presented by Galveston County Tax Assessor-Collector Cheryl Johnson.

Bay Area Community Center mini-courses (Tuesdays, 10:30 a.m. - noon)

Sept. 16: "History of Ellington Field," by historian Kathryn Morrow;

Oct. 21: "Guardianship in Texas: How it Applies to Seniors and How You Can Avoid It" by UH-Clear Lake Associate Professor of Legal Studies James Benson;

Nov. 18: "Charlie Chaplin: The Tramp," by local historian Betty Crockford;

Jan. 20 & 27: "Memories to Memoirs," by UH-Clear Lake Associate Vice President for University Advancement and writer/photographer Dion McInnis;

Feb. 17: "Wildlife Rehab & Education: Rescuing Injured & Abandoned Wildlife to Improve Their Survival Chances," by Margaret Pickell, educational director for the Wildlife Rehab & Education organization;

March 17: "The Patriot Guard Riders: Their Mission for Our Troops," by historian Richard "Boomer" Ford

April 21: "Trekking to Mt. Everest's Base Camp," presented by trekker Russell Herring;

May 19: Game Day: Scrabble, Cards and Other Mind Challenges.

Clear Lake City-County Freeman Branch Library minicourses (Fridays, 10:30 a.m. - noon):

Oct. 3: "The Mayan Culture," by UH-Clear Lake Alfred R. Neumann Executive Director Karen Wielhorski;

Nov. 7: "Anatomy of an Adverse Event," by John James;

Jan. 9: "The Churchill Letters," a dramatic reading by Walt Hansen, Shirley Wettling and Ron Loehc with the script compilation by local historian Betty Crockford;

Feb. 6: "Voices from the 1900 Galveston Storm," by UH-Clear Lake University Archivist Shelly Kelly;

March 6: "An Overview of the U.S. & Texas Court System and Constables' Office" by retired Judge M. K. Lunney, Judge Louis Ditta and Constable Chief Phil Sandlin, Pct. 8;

April 3: "A Lifetime of Writing," presented by local author Lionel Garcia.

Reservations are requested for all minicourses. For more information or to make reservations for the minicourses, call UH-Clear Lake's Office of Alumni and Community Relations, 281-283-2021, or e-mail clasp@uhcl.edu.

HBCUs Should Produce Quantum Physicists, Not Quarterbacks

By B.B. Robinson

by teaching agriculture, computer science and the physical sciences, athletic program lost around \$400,000.

Our nation's future lies in science and technology. Already in high demand, engineers and scientists will be needed even more in years to come. It creates an opportunity and a challenge for America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities

(HBCUs). There is a clear and present need. Microsoft founder Bill Gates warned Congress last March that American companies "face a severe shortfall of scientists and engineers with expertise to develop the next generation of breakthroughs." Among black students, there is a distinct technological training deficit. According to the report Science and Engineering Indicators 2008 from the federal National Science Board, the percentage of blacks among all graduates who received undergraduate degrees in science and engineering fields in 2005 was only 8.4 percent.

There has been a slow and steady increase of black science and engineering graduates over the surveyed period of 1985 to 2005, but this black progress was nonetheless outpaced by Hispanic and Asian gains.

Compounding the problem of so few blacks receiving science and engineering degrees is that a consistent rate of over 30 percent of incoming black freshmen over the years regularly intend on pursuing such majors while less than a third actually obtain a degree.

Catherine Riegler-Crumb, a sociologist at the University of Texas at Austin, told Science magazine: "What is holding minority students back is not a lack of interest in science but rather the fact that educational disadvantages are cumulative in nature, so that failures or low performance early on in school make it difficult for them to attain the prerequisites they need to continue."

To address this need, the America COMPETES Act in 2007 dramatically increased funding for physical science research as well as for promoting math, science and foreign language studies in our schools. In signing it into law, President Bush said he hoped it would provide "a comprehensive strategy to help keep America the most innovative nation in the world by strengthening our scientific education and research, improving our technological enterprise, and providing 21st century job training."

While HBCUs are already making a substantial contribution



Dr. B.B. Robinson

it's time for them to do even more. We need not look further than George Washington Carver for inspiration. To serve the greater good, Carver passed up other opportunities to head the agricultural program at Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute and helped revolutionize farming. How wonderful it would be if today's HBCUs could begin producing scientists and engineers with Carver-like potential. Given that their budgets and access to resources are limited, how can HBCUs increase their science and technology focus?

They should not "Rob Peter to pay Paul." They should simply take "Peter" out of the equation. The HBCUs' Peter is money-losing athletic programs. HBCUs should consider converting resources set aside for athletic programs into resources for scientific research and development.

For example, Howard University reported that its athletic program in fiscal year (FY) 2006 would have incurred a nearly \$1.1 million loss without revenues from the NCAA and sponsorships, which cut the overall loss to a little over \$100,000. For FY 2007, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) reported that, without \$1.4 million from the NCAA and sponsorships, it would have incurred an operating loss of \$1.8 million. As a result, FAMU's

Preserving the status quo won't change anything. Consequently, if black Americans desire a different set of outcomes, they must take new and different action. High-quality scientists and engineers are in demand, and their compensation level rank high on the nation's wage scale.

To gain access to these salaries, to improve job prospects and to contribute to our nation's progress, shouldn't HBCUs implement programs to produce more scientists and engineers? Isn't it logical to accomplish this outcome by converting financial, physical and human resources from the cultivation of athletes to the cultivation of scientists and engineers?

For the future of black America, HBCUs and the nation, it seems appropriate that HBCUs turn their athletic and competitive swords and spears into productive and scientific plowshares and pruning hooks.

B.B. Robinson, Ph.D. is a member of the national advisory council of the black leadership network Project 21. You can visit his website at www.blackeconomics.org. Comments may be sent to Project21@nationalcenter.org. A version of this appeared on *The Root.com* in mid-August. Note: *New Visions Commentaries* reflect the views of their author, and not necessarily those of Project 21.

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