

In a surprise move, President Bush has invited outgoing NAACP President & CEO Kweisi Mfume to the White House today for a private meeting. Mfume wrote Bush on November 5 requesting an opportunity to discuss "some of the domestic and social problems that continue to plague us as a nation."

Four years ago, the Bush White House ignored a similar letter from Mfume. Although candidate Bush appeared at the NAACP's Convention in 2000, in 2004 President Bush became the first President since Warren G. Harding to refuse to meet with the country's oldest and largest civil rights organization when he declined an invitation to speak at the 2004 NAACP Annual Convention in Philadelphia.

"We welcome any meeting with an American President," said Julian Bond, Chairman of the NAACP National Board of Directors. "After being shut out of the White House for four years, we look forward to discussion about our differences - and even agreement when our agendas intersect."

Bond said the NAACP has been wrongly accused of being hostile to Republicans. He said: "We've had good relationships with Education Secretary Rod Paige and Secretary of State Colin Powell, who have spoken at our meetings; with National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice who received an Image Award from the NAACP; and even with Attorney General John Ashcroft, whose appointment we opposed. We object to policies, not to parties, and when we think the policies are wrong, we're not afraid to say so."

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. Its half-million adult and youth members throughout the United States and the world are frontline advocates for civil rights in their communities and monitor equal opportunity in the public and private sectors.

This is the Q & A that the press had with the Press secretary on the subject:

Q And on another topic, real quickly. In a matter of minutes, the President is supposed to meet with Kweisi Mfume, the head of the NAACP -- the outgoing head of the NAACP. What is the

President going to discuss and what's on the President's civil rights agenda for his second term?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, this was a meeting that was requested by Mr. Mfume. Mr. Mfume asked for the meeting to discuss ways we can work together in the future. The President and Mr. Mfume have had a good relationship in the past, and this meeting is an opportunity to talk about ways we can work together in the future on shared priorities. The President is always open to talking to people who want to work together on our common challenges and our shared priorities. So he looks forward to the meeting here shortly. And in terms of the actual meeting, I think we need to let it take place for now.

Q So does this mean that the NAACP -- Kweisi Mfume is the outgoing head of the NAACP. Does this mean the NAACP will now have an open door to come and sit and talk with the President, after years of a chasm between the two organizations?

MR. McCLELLAN: Let me repeat what I just said. The President is always open to sitting down and visiting with and working with those who want to work together on shared priorities. He has had a good relationship with Mr. Mfume in the past. Today's meeting is a way to talk about how we can work together in the future. Mr. Mfume sent the letter requesting the meeting prior to his announcement that he would be leaving as president of the NAACP. So we look forward to hearing what he wants to bring up. The President, I'm sure, will have some things to say, as well, and talk about ways we can work together.

Q Will there be a readout on that?

MR. McCLELLAN: This was scheduled as a private meeting. I will see what else we can get you all later in the day, but the President felt this was a good opportunity to sit down and talk in private about ways we can work together in the future.

Q Can Mfume come to the stakeout?

MR. McCLELLAN: Anybody is welcome to go to the stakeout, April.

In related NAACP news the Ledger.com reports:

The Brevard County chapter of the NAACP is seeking to reopen the criminal investigation into the Christmas Day 1951 bombing deaths of civil rights pioneers Harry and Harriette Moore.

The Moores registered black voters, opposed school segregation and sought higher salaries for teachers. No one was ever held accountable for their deaths, caused by a bomb explosion under their Mims home.

Bill Gary, president of the North Brevard branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said he plans to ask state Attorney General Charlie Crist to investigate. He said the couple's daughter, Evangeline Moore, has decided to pursue justice more aggressively.

"Evangeline is in her 70s and has pretty much been a recluse in the past, but she has become a little more vocal," Gary said.

Over the years, authorities have revived the case periodically but with no success. Gary said he hopes technological advances, such as DNA evidence, may aid the investigation, but he acknowledged that the likelihood of identifying the killers is slim.

"We believe that the FBI had evidence at that time, but decided to quash the investigation for the sake of the South's tranquility," Gary said.

Phone messages left with Crist's office and the FBI's Tampa office Sunday were not returned.

The FBI produced a 2,000-page report on the bombing. Five Ku Klux Klan leaders were suspected, but were never charged. The FBI closed its case in 1955, although it reopened it briefly in 1991.