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The Fight For Civil Rights Is Not Over, According to Civil Rights Icon H.K. Matthews
More than 500 students assembled to hear Matthews discuss his civil rights battles and his current fight for equality

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., Jan. 15, 2008—The Rev. H.K. Matthews addressed a crowd of over 500 students and local dignitaries at The Potter’s House Christian Academy on Tuesday. Matthews shared his experiences during his fight for equality that began in the 1950’s and how his battle for civil rights is still underway.

Matthews, civil rights icon and minister, is a revered figure in the Florida civil rights movement. He marched with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Selma, and then worked tirelessly in Pensacola and other Florida cities in the struggle for equality.

Matthews has dedicated his life to being a guardian of civil rights and continues to fight for basic liberties. The Reverend has recently determined that parental choice in education aligns with his continued fight for equal opportunities and delivering this liberty is an extension of his life’s work.

“The fight for parental choice brings flashbacks of the civil rights movement, during which I was jailed thirty-five times as a political prisoner for the staging of various protest demonstrations,” Matthews said. “It shouldn’t matter the color of your skin, or your socioeconomic status—we are all Americans and have the right to a great education.”

Matthews stated his support for Step Up For Students Scholarship Program, a Florida nonprofit, that empowers parents to choose the best school for their child by providing scholarships to low-income families. Currently, there are over 20,000 children throughout Florida benefiting from this program.

The assembly was held on King’s birthday and launched the school into Black History month. Matthews’ fight for educational freedom is fueled by the staggering statistics facing African Americans. According to the Harvard Civil Rights Project, less than 50 percent of African American students graduating, with males even lower at 38 percent.

Among the dignitaries who attended Matthews' celebration was Representative Terry Fields (D-Jacksonville) who continuously pledges his support of parental choice in education and honors his promise of representing his constituents' best interest.

"Parental choice is a bold and powerful idea that I will continue to support," Rep. Fields said. "I am here today to celebrate the civil rights victories that we all enjoy due to the dedication of Rev. HK Matthews as well as other civil rights heroes and to illustrate the bipartisan support of the Step Up For Students Scholarship Program."

Lady Narlene McLaughlin, wife of Bishop McLaughlin who founded Potter's House in 1996, introduced Matthews to the students and welcomed him into the school. Potter's House Christian Academy currently educates over 300 students who are benefiting from the Step Up For Students Scholarship, locally administered by Children First Florida.

"It is such an honor to stand before such a distinguished individual who has dedicated his life to the betterment of others," McLaughlin said. "The students at Potter's House are talented and aspire to do great things with their lives. We are committed to providing a quality education to each of these children that will lay a solid foundation for a successful and full-filling future."

At the conclusion of the general assembly, Matthews joined 25 of the upper classman at Potter's House to have a panel discussion on his life's battles and answer questions generated by his presentation.

About Step Up For Students

The Florida Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship Program - also known as "Step Up For Students" - provides K-12 scholarships that allow over 20,000 low-income Florida students to attend a private school or out-of-district public school. Step Up For Students scholarships are funded by corporations that redirect up to 75 percent of their corporate state tax liability to a qualified Scholarship Funding Organization in exchange for a dollar-for-dollar tax credit. One hundred percent of corporate contributions go directly to fund scholarships - not a single penny can be used for administrative costs. For more information, visit www.stepupforstudents.com

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