

## Teacher conference recruits Black male teachers

By Yasmine Register  
Staff Writer

The Thurgood Marshall College Fund Teacher Quality and Retention program has been holding weeklong conferences in hopes of recruiting African American male teachers. TCMF held conferences across the country at four different Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs). The last one was held at Winston-Salem State University and had 25 participants representing schools from all over The United States and the U.S. Virgin Islands. A commencement banquet was held on the last day, Friday, July 30.

The training program is a national outreach effort designed to recruit, train and mentor 10,000 new minority teachers over the next five years from the 47 public HBCUs. Of that number, 30 percent will be science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) majors; and 40 percent will be African American males. The program is currently in its second year.

Applicants were selected based on an essay, biography narrative, and an interview. A GPA of a 3.0 or higher was also required.

The participants learned strategies on how to improve as male teachers in the classroom and how to utilize instructional materials and methods to connect with students. "You can talk about educating the kids, but somewhere in there is a disjoint," said TCMF president and CEO, Johnny C. Taylor. Taylor explained the program teaches the participants how to creatively engage the students, and addresses skills on how to understand how young minds process, grow and develop. "If the person that is teaching doesn't serve as a good role model or doesn't know how to teach then we're doing the children a disservice. If we're going to do

this right, then we need programs like this."

2010 Teacher Quality and Retention Institute fellow, Kraven Cook, noted that it was his fourth

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grade male teacher that made the biggest impact on him in school. "All the kids looked up to him. I want to be able to make an impact on my students the way he did. Some students who don't have a male figure at home come to school and still don't have someone they can look up to." Cook is a 2009 graduate of Mississippi Valley State University and earned a degree in elementary education with a concentration in math. He currently teaches fifth grade math and science at Robinsville Elementary School in Robinsville, Miss. Cook is the first person in his family to graduate from college and the first teacher.

Fifty-eight year old Kenneth Wedge from Washington D.C. is new to teaching after retiring from the U.S. Postal Service in 2005, and the oldest participant at the conference. Wedge says he came into the program not knowing what to expect, but is happy that he did it. "I didn't choose it, it chose me. As an older student, I didn't want to do elementary education and this program has helped fill in the gaps on how to relate to the students." Wedge is currently working on a Bachelor of Arts degree in history at the University of D.C. He will graduate in December 2010 and hopes to teach high school history. Wedge says he plans to approach teaching with honesty. "I would say my teaching style is about honesty. Being a Black male history teacher for our youth, they need to know

their history and have pride in themselves, and not feed into the misconceptions about worthlessness in their race."

Taylor also noted that there is a low number of African Americans who get National Board certified, which allows a person to teach anywhere in the U.S. "There is a startling statistic that the National Board certifies 80,000 teachers a year, but there are only 150 who are African American. Without quality teachers in our schools, our children cannot achieve the highest level of success they can," said Taylor.

Bradley Thomas, a junior education major at the University of the Virgin Islands, is looking forward to becoming a National Board Certified teacher. Thomas said the program taught him a lot about the process to become a National Board Certified teacher. "This program just focused me so much on what I want to do in life, which is to teach," said Thomas. His grandmother was a teacher in St. Kitts.

When he addressed the 2010 graduating fellows, Taylor said to them, "You all will create and make a difference in the world. Fine tune and hone your craft. Be an advocate for education."

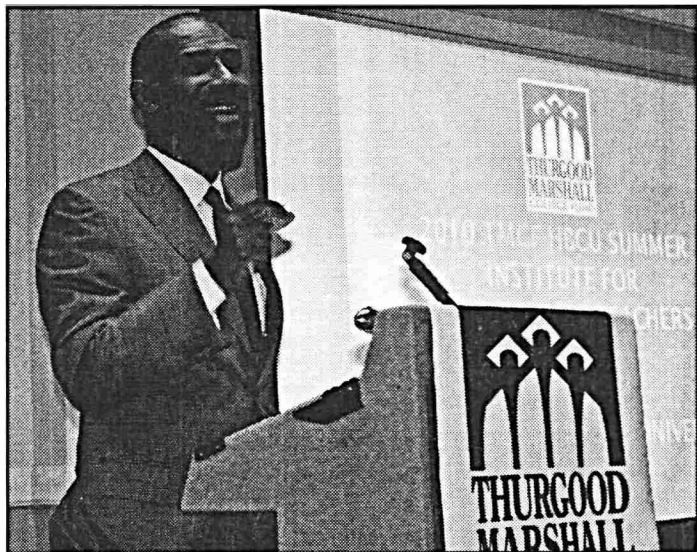
Taylor also said he is currently working hard to secure funding to continue the teacher retention program and other TCMF programs. "We as a community talk about education and talk about valuing education but we don't show it. I want these young men to know that we need to hold our community accountable for not educating our youth properly."

To make a donation visit [www.tcmf.org](http://www.tcmf.org).





Participants of the Thurgood Marshall College Fund Teacher Quality and Retention Institute spent a week learning teaching strategies and methods at a conference held at Winston-Salem State University.



**Johnny C. Taylor, TCMF president and CEO, gave an inspirational speech at the institute commencement dinner.**