

WALDORF, MD - Congressman Steny Hoyer attended the 23rd Annual Black History Month Breakfast in Waldorf on Saturday where he was joined by Senator Paul Sarbanes, and Leon Harris, news anchor for WJLA Channel 7, who gave the keynote address. Over 400 community leaders from Charles, Calvert, St. Mary's, Prince George's and Anne Arundel Counties attended the event to pay tribute to Black History Month and to celebrate the theme, African Americans Reaffirming Our Culture.

"For the past 23 years, this breakfast has provided our community with an opportunity to recognize the critical role African American's have played in the founding and developing of our country," said Congressman Hoyer. "In sharing a morning of friendship and fellowship we touch on the importance of looking back on the country's rich Black history - which is America's history - but we also look forward with great hope for the future. I greatly appreciate everyone who participates and makes this such a special day and a successful event."

"We are honored to have Leon Harris join us today, a historic American who, as an extraordinary journalist, has not only enriched our lives but has been a participant in our history," Hoyer added.

This year, in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court decision, each of the 26 high schools in the 5th Congressional District were invited to send a student representative to the event who Congressman Hoyer recognized during the breakfast as "talented young African Americans who will and are making history."

Leon Harris participated in this year's breakfast at the request of Congressman Hoyer. Harris joined WJLA, Channel 7 in October of last year where he co-anchors the evening news with Maureen Bunyan and Kathleen Matthews. Throughout his journalistic career, Mr. Harris has been honored with numerous awards. His most recent accolades include Best Newscaster in the 17th and 19th annual CableACE awards and recipient of the Louis R. Lautier Memorial Award.

Mr. Harris spoke of his recent trip to Africa where he stated he, "learned something about his bones," and directed his message to the students who were at the breakfast. He spoke of the DNA that was born in Africa, survived the slave trade, and through his trip, returned to Africa. And he imparted to the students that "if your DNA is here today, it is not by accident. You must maximize upon the miracle that you are." He concluded by stating that they could "reaffirm their African-American culture by reaffirming yourself," and that everything they needed to do this

was “in their bones.”

Following Mr. Harris’ remarks, Congressman Hoyer added, “Martin Luther King, Jr. talked about DNA. He called it content of character.” He expressed his gratitude to Mr. Harris by articulating to him “what a compelling contribution you made to that today.” Hoyer added, “your message was extremely powerful and we thank you for what you said, and who you are.”

Congressman Hoyer concluded the event by stating, “I am privileged to be your Congressman, but not just your Congressman, I am honored to be your friend and your joint laborer in this enterprise we call democracy. It is here that we remain committed to continue making history and making history better.”

The breakfast was held at the Waldorf Jaycees Community Hall and over 400 community and civic leaders attended. Pastor Darren Poullard from the Fort Washington Baptist Church gave the Invocation and Minister Roland Barnes from the St. Luke United Methodist Church gave the Benediction. COMCAST cable, Enterprise Rent-A-Car and Dupont Corporation sponsored the breakfast and the Bowie State University Singers provided entertainment.

Previous guest speakers who have participated in this Black History Month celebration include Vernon Jordan, Donna Brazile, Jesse Jackson, Elijah Cummings, Kweisi Mfume, Congressman John Lewis, Carmen Turner and Anthony Williams.

Congressman Hoyer presented Mr. Harris with a Black History Month poster produced by art students at Bowie High School which honors African American horsemen.

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