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Keeping the light shining

By Bruce Davidson Updated 9:20 am, Monday, February 9, 2015

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Ten years ago, the legendary Rev. Claude Black Jr. and a couple of friends quietly launched an information-sharing group to help San Antonio African-Americans keep track of current events and pursue community and personal goals.

Floyd Wilson, market director for **Frost Bank**, and **Ed Miles**, community relations specialist for the Bexar County district attorney's office, joined Black at the first organizational meeting.

The result was the Lighthouse Group, a loose-knit nonhierarchical association that has no formal membership and welcomes interested individuals of all races.

In 2007, Black explained that the Lighthouse Group "is not a political action group nor an economic action group. It is a group for information only. We hope the information will be effective for everybody."

In part, Black said, the effort was needed because the city's successful African-Americans lived all over town and were no longer segregated on the East Side. Emerging leaders were geographically dispersed and lacked opportunities to mingle.

Wilson delivered a similar message at the group's monthly meeting Monday at the **Plaza Club** atop the Frost Bank building, where he has served as host since the group's inception.

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Black and Miles have died during the decade since the organization began. Wilson is keeping the light on, so to speak. But he is quick to point out that the group has no officers, no dues and little bureaucracy beyond the email list being kept to invite people to return.

Before Black's 2009 death, Wilson recalled, the San Antonio civil-rights icon told his banker friend, "Whatever you do, keep this going."

"I have been trying to make sure that we sustain this," Wilson said. He asked the group gathered this week to spread the word, "Please talk about it. Please come back." Hopefully, those who attend will use the information they gain to "go do the right thing," Wilson added.

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If public service is one's goal. The meetings provide information about pending appointments and other opportunities. Economic development and professional opportunities also are discussed.

Monday's meeting was a homecoming of sorts. Newly elected Bexar County Commissioner **Tommy Calvert**, the first black commissioner to serve in 170 years, was the featured speaker. Calvert appeared before the group when he was virtually unknown, and his many supporters in the room saw his election as a success story for themselves as well.

Calvert briefed the group on the already sizable agenda he tackled in his first month at the courthouse. Public safety and economic development are the priorities, including a push for a Northeast Side sheriff's substation. Another effort involves helping citizens who are on probation or have been in jail find jobs.

Clearly, Precinct 4 is entering a new era of intense, active representation with Calvert on the job.

Attendees ranged from doctors and lawyers to investment bankers and educators. And the dialogue with Calvert covered expanding job opportunities to getting Commissioners Court to appoint a black trial judge because Bexar County no longer has any.

Surely, the Rev. Black would have been pleased to see the group still engaged in policy discussions and networking. The dialogue he wanted to create is alive and well.

Calvert illustrates the progress being made. Still, the battle for opportunity continues in the public and private sectors. As noted in this space a few years ago, the Lighthouse Group is pressing on.

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