

Civil Rights Leader Hooks' Nov. 4 Memphis Talk Will Reprise Earlier Washington, D.C., Speech

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Rev. Benjamin L. Hooks

The Rev. Benjamin L. Hooks will speak at the University of Memphis on Wednesday, Nov. 4, presenting the same lecture he gave in early October at the Rayburn House Office Building in Washington, D.C., which inaugurated a new speaker series on Capitol Hill sponsored by the U of M's Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change. The Memphis speech will begin at 6 p.m. in the Michael D. Rose Theatre. It is free and open to the public.

The theme of the series is *Civil Rights and Social Justice: Past, Present and Future*. Hooks will share his insights on the profound changes in American society that flowed from the American Civil Rights Movement, while also addressing the urgency of eliminating remaining racial, economic, and other disparities in America.

In 2010, on dates that will be announced later, the Hooks Institute will continue its Capitol Hill Speaker Series. Those lectures will feature University of Memphis faculty. Their lectures, like Hooks', will be repeated at the University of Memphis. The lectures are intended to stimulate discussion about disparities in a changing twenty-first century America and ways to address

those disparities.

In announcing the new initiative, Hooks Institute Director Daphene R. McFerren said, "Having witnessed seminal historic moments during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Dr. Hooks first bore witness to an America that denied basic civil rights to African-Americans, then to an America that was forced to hear the voices of civil rights activists who demanded that the nation honor its highest founding principle – that all people are created equal. Those who attend this lecture will become part of a historic moment in which Hooks, a civil rights icon, will share his thoughts about the quest for racial equality and will explain how those experiences are relevant to tackling racial, economic, and other disparities that defeat individual potential."

A native of Memphis, Benjamin Hooks was born in 1925, the fifth of seven children of Robert and Bessie Hooks. He earned his undergraduate degree at LeMoyné-Owen College in Memphis, served in World War II, and later received a law degree from DePaul University in Chicago. After joining the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Hooks felt called to the ministry and was ordained a Baptist minister in 1956.



Dr. Benjamin Hooks visits with U.S. Representatives following his address to a Capitol Hill audience last month. From left are Michigan Democrat John Conyers, California Democrat Diane Watson, Dr.

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Nine years later, Tenn. Gov. Frank G. Clement appointed Hooks to fill a vacancy on the Shelby County Criminal Court. With that appointment, he became the first African-American judge in a court of record in the South. The following year he ran as a candidate for the position and won that election.

In 1972, President Richard Nixon appointed Hooks as the first African-American member of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). During his tenure, he addressed the lack of minority ownership of television and radio stations, the lack of minority employment in the broadcasting industry, and the image of blacks in the mass media.

On November 6, 1976, Hooks was elected Executive Director of the NAACP, a position he held until 1992. In 2007, Hooks was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom – the nation's highest civil award.

In 1996, Hooks and University of Memphis officials received approval from the Tennessee Board of Regents to create the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change at the University of Memphis. The mission of the Institute is to preserve the history of the American Civil Rights Movement and to advance the legacy of that movement through scholarship and community action. The Hooks Institute archives include Hooks' personal papers, which are housed in the Mississippi Valley Collection in the U of M's McWherter Library.

Approved by the Tennessee Board of Regents in 1996, The Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change at the University of Memphis was funded by the United States Congress and the State of Tennessee. The Institute is recognized for its pivotal role in shaping and solving community problems through the witness and wisdom of pioneers like the Rev. Mr. Hooks. The continuing mission of the Institute is to preserve the history of the American Civil Rights Movement and to advance the legacy of that movement through scholarship and community action. The Hooks Institute archives include Hooks' personal papers, which are housed in the Mississippi Valley Collection in the U of M's McWherter Library.

Founded in 1912, the University of Memphis today is a comprehensive metropolitan research university that is recognized nationally and internationally for its academic, research, and athletic programs. With more than 21,000 students, the U of M offers more than 254 areas of study for those seeking Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degrees. It also offers the juris doctor (law) and education specialist degrees.