

Chicago “Freedom” Museum Sculpture Captures Immortal Words of Jackson State University Alumni Association President

By Pamela Berry-Palmer

(JACKSON, Miss.) –Jackson State University National Alumni Association President Dr. Hilliard Lackey recently had his words immortalized as part of an historic sculpture in a Chicago museum that celebrates the U.S. Bill of Rights.

The sculpture, dubbed “12151791,” is a suspended timeline of text that is housed in the McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum. It incorporates nearly 850 “freedom quotes” from various Americans throughout history, including former slaves, average citizens and even former presidents.

The voices commemorated in the sculpture were gleaned from poems, billboards, legal codes, letters, stray testimony and various other sources. Lackey’s quote was pulled from an August 15, 2001 editorial newspaper column appearing in the *Mississippi Link*, a weekly newspaper in Jackson, Miss. It reads:

“It is not politically correct to write about race in 2001. Columnists who do don't get published. Writers must pretend that America's greatest challenge has been met and no longer exists.

This is called denial. The social dynamics of an unfavorable occurrence is (1) shock, (2) denial, (3) acceptance, and (4) coping. Until we get to acceptance, we can not really begin to cope.

The Naked Truth: The role of the op-ed writer is to speak to the issues so that readers can see them more clearly, accept them and cope.

Those who stifle such expressions are hindering progress, holding back processes of coping with today’s problems. Nobody benefits. We all suffer.”

Lackey said museum officials contacted him last year to request permission to use the quote after locating it on the Internet.

“I was flattered,” he said. “But it didn’t mean much at the time until I walked into the museum and saw it. I also saw quotes from George Washington, Franklin Deleanor Roosevelt and Ronald Regan....then was elated.”



Lackey, who visited the museum a few weeks ago, said he had penned the quotable column out of frustration with newspaper readers who had taken issue with some of the comments he'd made in an earlier column about the futility of opposing cloning.

“I had a lot of emotions about seeing it in a museum,” Lackey said. “I was happy...humbled. I thought about me and my family and being the son of an ex-sharecropper. I thought about being from Mississippi and how people think of us and then on my being a black male. And then I did some soul searching and wished I had written it better or differently. “

The museum sculpture marks the second time Lackey's words have been immortalized for the masses. The first was on the Gibbs-Green Monument located on the Jackson State campus. The monument commemorates the May 15, 1970 shooting of James Earl Green and Phillip Gibbs by Mississippi Highway patrolmen on campus. Lackey had written about the shooting as part of a class of 1971 tribute to the slain men.

For more information about the McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum, visit www.freedommuseum.us