**ACCEPTANCE SPEECH**

**FOR**

**JERRY HARDEE**

Hello everyone and thank you for "showing up." I don't want you to think that is a flippant or offhanded remark. The truth of the matter is that today is the day we all show up, rollup... our sleeves, and get to work to insure that the history and legacy of Paine College endures. Although I am deeply honored to begin this new chapter in both **MY** life and the legacy of this institution, this isn't about me. It's about nothing less than the survival and sustenance of dignity, integrity, community, and respect. As President of Paine College, it is clear to me that there is work to be done and it will take the generosity, enthusiasm, and sense of urgency within this entire community and beyond, to discover and implement the means to successfully and effectively support and sustain this fine institution.

Marian Wright Edelman said, "Unless children have strong education and strong families and strong communities and decent housing, it's not enough to go sit in at a lunch counter." The era of complacency, the philosophy of "Let The other guy do it," the notion that someone else will step in and solve the problems facing all of us today... are just antiquated, archaic, and useless. Starting **TODAY**... right here and right now, I invite you to join me in building a stronger, more committed, and more viable future for Paine College.

I have a question for all of you.... you don't have to respond out loud... just acknowledge your thoughts to yourselves.... has anyone noticed that the world has really.... and I mean **REALLY** changed over the past several months and years? (**Wait for the laugh**). It's almost as though somehow we wound up in a parallel universe. It has become eminently apparent that it is **OUR** responsibility as a community, to do what is needed to support our educational institutions. The **ONLY** way I know to fend off ignorance is with education. I believe it is my mission and our mandate to infuse new life and possibility into Paine College, and in the process we will **ALL** learn. We must acknowledge our strengths and address and overcome our challenges. It is urgent that we explore new and effective ways to support this school at every level while leveraging modern techniques and technologies in the process. It is imperative that we realize that ALL of us have lessons to learn, and the importance of an open mind cannot be underestimated.

Herbert Spencer said, "The great aim of education is not knowledge but **action**." The time has come for all of us to examine the actions that are needed in order for Paine College to go forth for the next one hundred years and beyond. All of us that are connected through this school are an integral part of its legacy. Now is the time to use our resources.... intellectual, financial, social, to define the Paine College of the future. I invite careful examination and discourse at every level.... how do we strengthen our history while forging a relevant path in the present? How do we modernize and strengthen our curriculum? What is needed to attract the talent and minds that will define the future of education, finance, politics? We are on the cusp of a new era for this school and while success will rely on firm partnerships on all levels, the good news is that we all have a golden opportunity to experience unprecedented growth and advancement of our mission.

In Proverbs 9:9 we are taught, "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wise; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning." The future of this institution has begun. From today on, I pledge to use wisdom and thought, integrity and innovation for the purpose of enriching the assists and impact of Paine College and it's contribution to our community of the tomorrow. I look forward to our partnership in all aspects that are required to insure our growth and success from now on. Thank you!