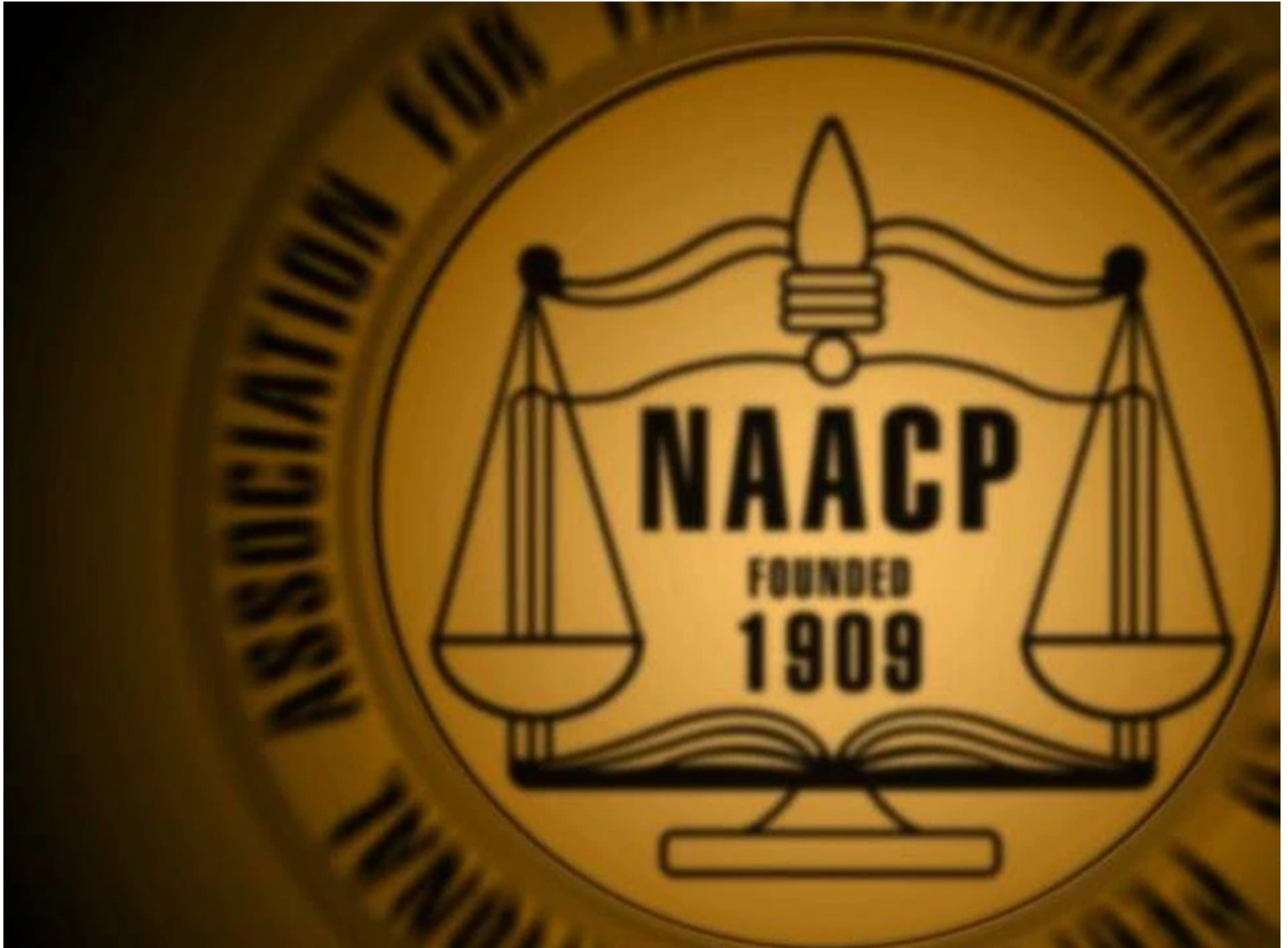


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# NAACP accuses Meriwether County Sheriff of racial discrimination

Published: Sep. 28, 2010 at 9:28 PM EDT | Updated: Sep. 28, 2010 at 9:52 PM EDT



By Laura Ann Sills - [bio](#) | [email](#)

GREENVILLE, GA (WTVM) - The NAACP wants the Meriwether County Sheriff to resign. They are also asking for a criminal investigation into the Sheriff and his department.

Representatives for the Sheriff's Office say the allegations are not true.

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The NAACP tells News Leader Nine they have filed a complaint with the Department of Justice they included a statement from a former employee accusing the Sheriff of using the "N" word to describe inmates.

In a press conference Tuesday morning, Georgia NAACP President Edward DuBose said, "If I had to title this press conference, it would be titled 'sheriff gone wild.'"

One resident responded with, "This County has not gone wild. We got problems like every other county got problems, but it is not the Sheriff."

Emotions were hot on both sides of the issue. The NAACP claims they have evidence of racial discrimination in the Meriwether County Sheriff's office. They say former Jail Administrator Juanita Gates was fired because she reported criminal activity and abuse in a complaint to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. "This is about abusive power. This is about retaliation. This is about discrimination. And, how people on the job are treated," said DuBose.

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DuBose said that this meeting with the US Justice Department also focused on the conditions of the jail.

A few self-proclaimed former inmates were at the press conference. They claim there is black mold in the jail and overcrowding leaving inmates on the floor. "They had us sleeping on the floor. It is cold in there. They treat us like slaves," said Steve Ogletree. Another said, "It does not deal with black or white. It has got something to do with being a human being."

[Read: [Web Extra! Inmate Letter](#)]

Lt. Larry Harris of the Sheriff's Office is backing his boss, saying he is a good man. "We answer grievances on a daily basis, fix cracks and paint. To accommodate the overcrowding we are buying different bunks."

Sheriff Whitlock's lawyer, Rudjard Hayes said his client has done nothing illegal, "It is my opinion Ms. Gates is being used as a political pawn."

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Sheriff Whitlock was not available for comment; his wife had surgery Tuesday morning.

Ms. Gates was not present at the press conference. DuBose said her lawyer advised her not to be there.

#### Additional links

- [Web Extra! Legal claims of Juanita Gates](#)
- [Web Extra! Grand Jury Jail Conditions May 2009](#)
- [Web Extra! Grand Jury Jail Conditions May 2010](#)
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