



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Reunion set for Palm Beach County's first college for blacks

The Oct. 29 reunion luncheon will be the first since Roosevelt Junior College closed 40 years ago and its students transferred to then Palm Beach Junior College

(West Palm Beach, Fla. – Oct. 19, 2005) For the first time since Roosevelt Junior College closed 40 years ago, former students, faculty and staff are holding a reunion. They plan to go beyond reminiscing to embark upon the first major effort to preserve the school's legacy and its historical connection to Palm Beach Community College.

The Roosevelt Junior College Reunion Luncheon will be held at 11:30 a.m. Oct. 29 at the National Croquet Center in West Palm Beach. It will include remarks by a representative of each of the graduating classes and an address by Walter Smith, a former Florida A&M University president and author of the book *The Magnificent 12: Florida's Black Junior Colleges*.

Roosevelt Junior College, Palm Beach County's first college for blacks, opened in 1958 in West Palm Beach, four years after the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruled segregated schools unconstitutional. It was one of 12 colleges around the state that opened for blacks after the Supreme Court ruling.

It was wrapping up its seventh academic year when the Board of Public Instruction for Palm Beach County voted to close the school at the end of the 1964-1965 academic year and send the students to then Palm Beach Junior College. The Board of Public Instruction had begun to integrate the county's schools. Some people, however, unsuccessfully pushed for Roosevelt Junior College to remain open as a branch of Palm Beach Junior College rather than close.

(More)

By many accounts, Roosevelt Junior College was an educational and cultural pillar in the community, creating opportunities for black students in Palm Beach County who couldn't afford to go away to college or were denied admission to other institutions because of their race. Palm Beach Junior College had begun integration only sparingly in 1963.

To commemorate the 40th anniversary of the closing of the school, a PBCC committee has been meeting with former Roosevelt Junior College students, faculty and staff to ensure that what remains of Roosevelt Junior College's history – the memories, the yearbooks, the pictures and other memorabilia – is properly preserved and woven into that of Palm Beach Community College. They decided to hold the reunion to pull together as many former students and faculty as possible to gain more input on how best to keep the school's legacy alive.

For more information on the upcoming reunion, visit www.pbcc.edu/roosevelt or contact Diane Lester at (561) 868-3502.

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