

**MARIANNE:** Overcast 47. And now, it's time well for my favorite host on MPR, Gary Eichten, in *Midday*. Tell me what's coming up on the show today, Gary.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Thank you, Marianne. Little class on *Midday* today. A distinguished guest to be sure, Julian Bond, the longtime civil rights leader will be joining us. And we'll be talking with Mr. Bond about civil rights issues facing the nation. We'll get started right after the news. Over the noon hour, we're going to hear from the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, Lisa Jackson.

**CAROL VAN DAM:** From NPR News in Washington, I'm Carol Van Dam. The death toll continues to climb from two powerful earthquakes in Indonesia. Officials now say more than 530 people were killed and another 400 seriously injured in the quakes. Thousands are believed to be trapped in destroyed buildings. The BBC's Karishma Vaswani has been surveying the damage in the town of Padang where more than 370 people were killed.

**KARISHMA VASWANI:** Scenes of devastation in the Sumatran capital of Padang a day after a deadly earthquake struck off the coast of the island. Scores of homes and buildings have completely collapsed burying hundreds of people beneath them. In desperation, some have tried to pull their loved ones out manually attempting to claw them out of the rubble. But it's a race against time. This city is one of the worst affected by the powerful tremors. Rescue teams have been working around the clock. But the worry is that time is running out.

**CAROL VAN DAM:** The BBC's Karishma Vaswani in Padang. US diplomats sat across the table from Iranian delegates in Switzerland today. They met on the sidelines of Seven Nation talks in Geneva. UN spokesman Robert Wood says US undersecretary of state, Williams Burns, met with Tehran's chief negotiator. Details were not provided, but it's presumed the Americans and Iranians discussed whether Iran was willing to modify or stop its previously secret underground uranium enriching facility.

A couple of economic reports out today present a mixed bag on the economy. Consumers spent more money in August, but much of that was spending on the Cash for Clunkers program. The Commerce Department reporting consumer spending rose 1.3% in August. Jobless claims were up slightly in the latest weekly figures. But the overall number of layoffs is slowing as we hear from NPR's Debbie Elliott.

**DEBBIE ELLIOTT:** Layoffs have slowed but not stopped according to the latest report on planned job cuts by the global outplacement firm Challenger, Gray, & Christmas. Layoffs announced by US firms fell to 66,400 in September, a 13% drop from August. The figure for the third quarter was just more than 240,000, the fewest number of layoffs since March of 2008.

Government and automotive jobs saw the biggest declines while fewer cuts were reported by retailers and the industrial goods sector. Challenger, Gray, & Christmas Vice President, Rick Cobb, said the downward trend in planned job cut announcements is a sign that employers feel more optimistic about future business conditions. Debbie Elliott, NPR News.

**CAROL VAN DAM:** Construction spending was up unexpectedly in August. It marked the biggest jump in housing activity in nearly 16 years. The government says construction spending rose a tenth of a percent in August. And that's much better than the 2/10 of a percent decline analysts had expected.

On Wall Street at this hour, the Dow Industrials are down 145 points to 9,566. The NASDAQ composite index is down 50 to 2,072. This is NPR.

**MALE SPEAKER:**Support for news comes from the George Lucas Educational Foundation, creator of Edutopia, your source for what works in public education. Learn more at [edutopia.org](http://edutopia.org).

**PHIL PICARDI:** From Minnesota Public Radio News, I'm Phil Picardi. A team of Republican consultants with experience on the presidential level will help run Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty's new political action committee. Pawlenty today launched his Freedom First PAC, a national fundraising committee he can use to aid GOP candidates in upcoming elections. Past presidential candidates have started similar committees to raise their profiles ahead of a White House run, a possibility Pawlenty has not ruled out.

Minnesota has placed its first order for the H1N1 flu vaccine. The health department wouldn't divulge the number of doses it will receive from manufacturers. But vaccine expert, Kris Ehresmann, says the number is far lower than the 51,000 doses the health department hoped to get. And since the batch is so limited, Ehresmann says it will be given to health care workers who have direct contact with infected patients.

**KRIS EHRESMANN:** Hospital settings where we've got some high-risk patients as well as risk for exposure, that type of thing. So that's what our focus is. But as you can imagine, it is challenging when you don't have as much as you need to make the best allocations.

**PHIL PICARDI:** Ehresmann says it was hoped the first doses could be given to people at the highest risk of flu complications. But the initial batch of vaccine is in the form of a nasal mist, which is not recommended for children under two or pregnant women. It's hoped those groups will get their vaccinations by mid-October.

The health department says there are now H1N1 flu outbreaks in 134 Minnesota schools in 67 counties. A school outbreak means at least 5% of students are absent with flu-like illnesses. More than 300 people in Minnesota have been hospitalized with H1N1 flu and three have died from it. Light rain in the Twin Cities. The temperature at 48 degrees. This is Minnesota Public Radio News.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Thank you, Phil. It's six minutes now past 11:00.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

And good morning. Welcome to *Midday* on Minnesota Public Radio News. I'm Gary Eichten. And our guest this first hour is one of America's best known and most respected civil rights leaders, NAACP chairman Julian Bond.

Julian Bond first came to national attention back in the 1960s when he helped found the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. He organized sit-ins, voter registration drives, and the like. And then when he was just 25 years old, he was elected to the Georgia State legislature.

In 1968, he became the first African-American ever nominated for vice president by a major political party. You might recall that he was supposed to run on the ticket headed by then Minnesota Senator and anti-war candidate, Eugene McCarthy. But Mr. Bond had to step aside because he wasn't old enough to serve. However, no doubt about it, Julian Bond went on to a very distinguished career. He helped found the influential Southern Poverty Law Center. As we said, he's currently the chairman of the NAACP, the nation's largest civil rights organization.

And last summer, he was given the NAACP's highest award for his work over the years. He's also been a prolific writer and commentator. And he's currently teaching at the University of Virginia and American University.

Julian Bond is here in Saint Paul today to receive an honorary degree and speak at the dedication of Macalester College's Markim Hall, an award-winning building that's being cited nationally for its energy efficient construction and design. Markim Hall also houses Macalester's Institute for Global Citizenship. And Julian Bond serves on the Institute's international advisory board.

The dedication ceremony begins at 4:30 this afternoon. It is open to the public, if you want to stop by. But in the meantime, Julian Bond has joined us here in the studio to give us a preview, talk about civil rights in the Obama era, and take your questions and comments as well.

Give us a call 651-227-6000, 651-227-6000. Toll free number 1-800-242-2828. The online address [mprnewsq.org](http://mprnewsq.org). When you get there, click on Send a question. Julian Bond, it's a real honor to meet you. Welcome back to Minnesota.

**JULIAN BOND:** It's my pleasure.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Now, as I understand it, Macalester has a special spot in your heart.

**JULIAN BOND:** Yes. I was a speaker at the first moratorium, and it was when I met my wife, I was late to arrive. And Walter Mondale who preceded me had to speak longer than I think he had planned to do so. I did arrive and spoke. And I looked out in the crowd. And I saw this cute little number. And 20 years after that, we got married.

[LAUGHS]

**GARY EICHTEN:** Well, welcome back.

**JULIAN BOND:** Thank you.

**GARY EICHTEN:** It's so good to go to meet you. This time last year, the nation was wondering if history was going to be made, whether or not the first African-American would be elected president. Of course, Barack Obama was elected president. Does that mean now, a year later, that the worst of our racial problems are over?

**JULIAN BOND:** No, not at all. It means that America has taken a great leap forward. I think his election said that the degree of racism in the United States diminished remarkably. It's not possible to measure these things 10%, 20%, and so forth. But it diminished remarkably. But it didn't disappear.

It's still here. It's still among us. And we still have a lot to do to get rid of it and have to be alert to it. And to believe that the election of one man wiped this stain away from our country is just ridiculous, I think.

**GARY EICHTEN:** But doesn't, I mean, the vast, not the vast majority, there was a majority white vote in his--

**JULIAN BOND:** Absolutely.

**GARY EICHTEN:** --supporting Obama. And it would seem that a good many people have put it behind them. Have they not?

**JULIAN BOND:** I think so. I think so. But you can only look at some of the signs that have been raised in opposition to him, some of the things people have said about him that goes far beyond the normal range of political disagreement. In this country, we often disagree about things. You're right, I'm wrong. You're crazy, I'm OK.

But the level of vituperation aimed at him I think demonstrates to us that at least in my mind that his color is a part of this phenomenon. I'm not saying that everybody who opposes his policies is a racist. No, no, no, not at all.

I mean, you can be against his health care plan. You can be against his conduct of the war in Afghanistan and Iraq. You can be opposed to any of the policies he has and not have a single racist thought. But I think at the bottom of some of the opposition, there's a feeling that he is president-- he's guilty of being president while Black. And a lot of people object to that.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Do you see the election of Barack Obama as the culmination of all the hard work that you and others did back in the 1950s and 1960s?

**JULIAN BOND:** Well, I don't want to pretend I'm taking credit for it. But I think if the work the NAACP has done for the past 100 years had not been done, then his election would not have been possible. He wouldn't have been able to run. And he wouldn't have been able to win.

We didn't endorse him. We're nonpartisan. We don't choose candidates. But the voters we registered, the court victories we won over the years, the people we had on the ground who are encouraged to engage in politics, if those people hadn't done that and we hadn't done what we had done, he would not be president today.

**GARY EICHTEN:** When you were a young man, long before you became chairman of the NAACP, you were out in Georgia doing basic work, conducting sit-ins, voter registration. Did you ever think well, by golly, if I keep at this for a while an African-American is going to be elected president.

**JULIAN BOND:** It's a little known fact that I ran for president in 1976.

**GARY EICHTEN:** It is little known.

**JULIAN BOND:** It was little known then, and it remains little known today. I still have a basement full of bumper stickers I'm willing to put on eBay and see if I can raise a little money. At any rate, I ran in 1976 in a tremendously unsuccessful campaign. I mean, I can't tell you how unsuccessful it was. But no, I had no thought that I would do it successfully or that someone else whom I knew might do it successfully.

I thought this would happen someday. But I didn't think it would happen when it did happen. And I wasn't convinced it was going to happen until Obama won the Iowa primary. And I said to myself, if he can win in this overwhelmingly white state and can carry the majority of the votes, then there's a chance he can be elected president of the United States. So it wasn't until then that I was convinced he could do it.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Let me ask you this, Mr. Bond. Has anything changed in America as a result of an African-American being president? Has that made any difference other than the fact that he's holding the office?

**JULIAN BOND:** Well, I think you have to answer that yes or no. Yes, the very fact that this happened, I think, means we've taken a step forward. We're a different country because of this not because of anything he did, but because of what we did.

We said, or at least the majority of the people said race doesn't matter in this instance. And we're willing to cast aside prejudices if we have them and cast a vote for this man. But in a sense, no, nothing has changed because we still seem to have the same problems, the same arguments, still proceeding in the same way we've always done. So it's a sort of yes or no thing.

**GARY EICHTEN:** We're talking this hour with civil rights leader, Julian Bond, chairman of the NAACP. He is in Saint Paul today to participate in dedication ceremonies over at Macalester College. And he's joined us today to talk about some of the challenges facing the United States.

Love to have you join our conversation. Give us a call 651-227-6000, 651-227-6000. Our toll free number is 1-800-242-2828. Or you can use our online service that address is [mprnewsq.org](http://mprnewsq.org). And then when you get there, click on Send a question. Let's go to our first caller here. Wendy, go ahead, please.

**AUDIENCE:** Oh, yes. Hello, Mr. Bond. Thank you for taking my call.

**JULIAN BOND:** Thank you.

**AUDIENCE:** As you may be aware, Minnesota has either the largest student achievement gap for students of color or the second largest I believe in the United States. And this is a major issue for our state. And I'm a teacher at a public school where more than 80% of our students are students of color.

And we are actually leading the nation in student achievement. We actually recently won an award for the student achievement. And I'm just wondering how the NAACP is working with successful schools even in Minnesota to close the achievement gap?

**GARY EICHTEN:** Thanks, Wendy.

**JULIAN BOND:** Thanks for the question. And congratulations on the efforts you've made to close this gap. The NAACP has long been interested in strengthening public education first and winning access to a free public education for everyone. As you know, there was a time when this was denied to people of color. And once that time has passed, we've devoted a lot of energy and efforts to ensuring that the kind of public education people get is as good as that given to every other person.

That's not actually become true so far. But it's more true now than it used to be. And part of it, again, is due to our efforts. We don't take complete credit for having done this.

We have 2,000 local branches around the country, including branches scattered throughout the state of Minnesota. And I'm embarrassed to say I can't tell you precisely what they're doing. But I know that each of them has an Education Committee and each of them is supposed to be deeply involved in discussions about the quality of education children receive in their communities.

They're supposed to be monitoring the school system, supposed to be alert to any charges of discrimination or poor treatment, supposed to be alert to doing something about it to going to the authorities or protesting in some way or the other. So while I cannot tell you with specificity what our units in Minnesota are doing, I can tell you, they're doing something. Or if they're not, the chairman of the board wants to hear about it.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Theory as you well know, Mr. Bond, is that a fair number of African-American families, parents seemingly don't care about education. Number one, is that true? And if so, what might be done to get kids more interested?

**JULIAN BOND:** Well, of course, it's not true. African-American parents care just as deeply about education as do other parents. And most parents, I think, want their children to do as well as they can and achieve at the highest level.

But there are all sorts of things that can be done. I think some parents need to be told things or learn things that they ought to have been doing that they don't just intuitively know. Not every mom and dad comes into parenthood and knows right away what he or she should do to make sure Johnny or Mary achieves at the highest level.

We know if you read to your kids when they're very young, they're likely to become readers later on. You can't wait for them to pick this up on their own. You have to teach them to do it. And you're the best teacher they possibly have.

We know that if the schools they attend have relatively small pupil-teacher ratios, then the chances of the student, whatever their color is, are going to do better than in a crowded classroom. And parents ought to be working for that. We know that if all the schools have an equal number of say computers or books or the kinds of things that we want every child to have, and if there's an equal number of these things, then the likelihood is that the children are going to get an equal kind of education.

And if they don't have this kind of equality in books and computers and blackboards and teachers of quality, then parents need to be engaged in making sure that does happen. So it's a canard to say that Black parents don't have an equal interest in education. It might be fair to say that Black parents sometimes aren't sure exactly what it takes to make sure their child has an equal education. And the NAACP is one of many organizations that help them become sure.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Back to the phones. Gabe, you're next. Go ahead, please.

**AUDIENCE:** Hi, thank you for taking my call. You had mentioned that during some of the protesting, there were signs that were specifically racist in nature. And I just wanted to see-- I didn't see any of that.

I've attended some of those protests. I've been on the sidelines in some of the protests, been in the protests. I didn't see any signs of racist with racist tones in it. And how do you-- do you have specific examples of those signs? And what-- how those compare to the same type of signs that were done during the Bush protests?

**GARY EICHTEN:** All right. Thank you.

**JULIAN BOND:** Well, I don't think any-- I attended some Bush protests and I never saw a sign that made any reference to President Bush's race. I have not attended any anti-Obama protest, but I've seen on television a multiplicity of signs that make references to his race. And I can't remember the exact wording of one particularly offensive sign I saw. It had some reference to a village in Africa. And come on, if that's not about his race, what is?

So these signs proliferated. They weren't held by every anti-Obama protester. I'm not trying to say that everybody who's against President Obama harbors racist thoughts. But I think it's difficult to ignore that a portion of them do. And it was evident in the signs they carried and the slogans they shouted and the things they said. It was evident at least to me.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Some conservatives as you know have criticized you for the things you had to say about President Bush and the Bush administration when President Bush was in office. Fair criticism of some of the things you said. Do you wish you had been a little taken a different tact?

**JULIAN BOND:** No, not really. Some conservatives have said that I stepped across the line that prohibits non-profit organizations like the NAACP from taking sides in political contest. And I've been careful to make sure that I've never taken a side in a political contest. That is to say, I've never said don't vote for George Bush. I've never said do vote for Barack Obama or for anyone else.

During the period when I've been chairman of the NAACP, the tax laws don't allow us to say that. The penalty for doing that is severe. And I've been careful not to do it. So I'm not sorry for anything I've said. I think everything I've said falls in the standard American order of being able to criticize the people who are in your government. If we can't do that, I mean, we've lost an important freedom.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Setting aside some of the comments that you would perceive to be racist, do you think we've become too uncivil in this country? Has the entire debate gotten to the point where it's just nasty and ugly?

**JULIAN BOND:** You know, I'd like to say yes we have. But then I think back in history. I think we've always been like this. If you go back 15, 20, 30, 100 years, our politics have always been angry and vituperative. And the other guy is a dirty dog. And my guy walks on water. I mean, we've always done this. So this is really nothing new, I'm sorry to say. I wish it was a present day descent into ugliness. But I think we've been ugly for a long time.

**GARY EICHTEN:** John, you're up next. Go ahead, please.

**AUDIENCE:** Oh, hi, Mr. Bond. It's a pleasure to speak with you.

**JULIAN BOND:** My pleasure.

**AUDIENCE:** When I was 14, my mom took me and my brother and sister to Resurrection City in Washington DC. And I was wondering if you recall that period of time. And also secondly, when we sit around and talk about our-- we really had a great, very interesting summer that summer.

And when we sit around and talk about it, we always wonder whatever-- I mean, what was the significance of Resurrection City in your mind, I guess I would ask. And what are your recollections of that time?

**GARY EICHTEN:** Thanks, John.

**JULIAN BOND:** Resurrection City was a made up city on the mall in Washington DC. It had been a plan of Martin Luther King that he would bring poor people of all races and colors from all around the United States to Washington to protest the government's failure to be an aggressive attacker to poverty and to aggressively try to find ways to diminish the level of poverty in the United States.

And his idea was to put together this city. He was killed in April of 1968. And his successors had to carry on this campaign without him. And I think his absence from these protests meant that they were less successful than they might have been.

The people who succeeded him worked hard, did everything they could or they knew how to do to make sure that poverty came to the attention of the American people. But for a combination of reasons, it just didn't work as well as it might. And it really ended in I think you'd have to say failure.

The city was dismantled by the authorities in Washington. The people drifted away one by one until almost none were left. There were disputes and conflicts within the city itself. It reigned like nobody's business in Washington. So it almost as if the elements were conspiring to make it unsuccessful. So it did not turn out to be a successful event.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Joe, your question, please.

**AUDIENCE:** Hi. One of the finest memories I have of the '60s is when you challenged the Georgia credentials at the convention in Chicago. And then you were nominated for president after which there was a long pause and you said, I respectfully decline because I'm too young.

**JULIAN BOND:** Right. It was vice president.

**AUDIENCE:** Yeah. Oh, vice president.

**JULIAN BOND:** Yes.

**AUDIENCE:** And I'd like to hear you talk about that a little bit. Also, I was a VISTA volunteer in Atlanta at that time. And I remember hearing your voice on the sound truck, actually one of the last of the sound trucks going by doing a campaign for somebody. But that seemed like an exceptionally vital time that Black leadership, the community organizations that we ran into. I was wondering if that was a special time in Atlanta.

**JULIAN BOND:** Well, I think it was a special time in the United States. That period in the 1960s, almost the whole decade, was a period that we look back on. Some people in horror, but some people in pride and say, gee, I was glad to have been a part of it.

But back to the convention in 1968 in Georgia, the Democratic Party chose its delegates by letting the party chairman do it. And there was no primary with the people running for delegates representing various candidates. The party chairman did it all.

And he picked a delegation that had no one representing Senator McCarthy or Senator Kennedy who were running for president. And in fact included Democrats who were pledged not to vote for any of the Democratic candidates but for Governor George Wallace, who was running as an independent third party candidate, and a delegation that was almost overwhelmingly white in a state that was 25% Black. And so a group of us got together and decided we'd mount a challenge to this. And I was elected co-chairman of the challenge.

We came to Chicago. It's too long a story to tell here. But the end result of it was that the convention decided to split the regular delegation and our delegation in two and give each of us half of the delegate seats. The regulars were upset incredibly by this. And most of them went home.

It meant that we occupied most of the seats from Georgia. And following that settling that, then I was nominated for vice president. And I don't think it was so much because anybody thought I'd make a great vice president. But the convention was very tightly controlled by the Democratic party. It wasn't democratic at all.

And they wanted an opportunity to talk about some of the brutality from the police out in the streets outside the convention, some of the lack of democracy within the convention hall. And they thought they'd use the nominating process. Each nominee was to get two speeches. And asked me to be nominated for vice president. I said, listen, I'm too young. They sort of said we don't care and went ahead and did it. So that's what happened. And as you say, I was too young.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Did you know Senator Eugene McCarthy well?

**JULIAN BOND:** No, I didn't know him well. I seconded his nomination. And I was great to be able to quote from him. When he had nominated a candidate in the past I said, do not turn your back on this man. He was a wonderful, wonderful guy.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Do you think he wanted to be president?

**JULIAN BOND:** Oh yes, I do. I'm the last living nominator of Eugene McCarthy. I spoke at his college a little while ago at the second annual commemoration of his life and works. And some of his family were there. It was a great occasion.

**GARY EICHTEN:** By the way, we have that speech archived on our website [mprnewsq.org](http://mprnewsq.org), Julian Bond speaking at Saint John's University last October.

**JULIAN BOND:** Yes.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Eugene McCarthy Lecture. Julian Bond is in studio this hour to take your questions, talk about civil rights in the age of Obama, if you will. I'd love to have you give us a call 651-227-6000 or 1-800-242-2828. The online address is [mprnewsq.org](http://mprnewsq.org). And then when you get there, click on Send a question. And we'll continue here in a couple of minutes.

**FEMALE SPEAKER:** Programming is supported by Northwestern College, a faith-based college campus in Saint Paul celebrating the groundbreaking of the Billy Graham Community Life Commons building on Friday, October 2nd. More at [nwc.edu](http://nwc.edu).

**CATHY WURZER:** Friday on *Morning Edition*, we'll take a look at the future of the Metrodome after the Twins move to Target Field starting next season. I'm Cathy Wurzer. We'll have that story and the latest from Minnesota and the world weekday mornings until 9:00 on Minnesota Public Radio News.

**PHIL PICARDI:** And from Minnesota Public Radio News, I'm Phil Picardi. President Obama has talked about engaging Iran directly, and it looks like that's happening. During today's Seven Nation talks in Switzerland, there was a one-on-one meeting between a senior US official and Iran's top atomic negotiator. No details of that meeting have been announced. It's the first such encounter in years of efforts to get around to freeze its nuclear program.

Indonesian officials say more than 500 people were killed and more than 400 seriously injured after two powerful earthquakes struck the southeastern Asian nation in as many days. The US Geological Survey says this morning's quake hit about 150 miles south of Padang, a coastal city of 900,000 and the capital of West Sumatra. Many people are believed still trapped under collapsed buildings.

The chairman of the Senate Finance Committee says he has high hopes of finishing work on a sweeping health care overhaul bill by tonight. A final vote on the package wouldn't come until early next week, though, to give senators and the Congressional Budget Office time to review with the legislation. Stocks are falling on the first day of the final quarter of 2009. The plunge comes amid signs the economy's recovery will be slow and bumpy. There are disappointing reports on the manufacturing industry and the labor market today. The Dow is down about 130 points.

A new survey suggests the economy improved considerably in nine Midwestern and Plain states, including Minnesota. The business conditions index for the mid-American region shows signs of growth in September. A Creighton University economist says the improvement shows the economy in the region is recovering from the recession.

Light rain in the Twin Cities where the temperature is 48 degrees. Light rain in Fergus Falls where it's 50. Rain in Winona in 45 degrees. Good chance of showers and thunderstorms in the southern half of the state today, as well as the east. High temperatures in the 50s. This is Minnesota Public Radio News.

**GARY EICHTEN:** And this is *Midday* coming to you on Minnesota Public Radio News, about 29 minutes before noon. And over the noon hour, hope you can join us. We're going to catch up on what's going on at the Environmental Protection Agency. Lisa Jackson, who is the head of the EPA, the administrator, was out at the Commonwealth Club Tuesday night talking about some of her priorities. And we'll hear from EPA administrator Lisa Jackson over the noon hour.

This hour, we are talking with longtime civil rights leader, Julian Bond, who's joined us in studio. Mr. Bond is in Saint Paul to participate in dedication ceremonies over at Macalester College this afternoon, 4:30. They're dedicating Macalester's Markim Hall, which is an award-winning building that's being cited for its energy efficient construction and design.

Mr. Bond will be there to participate in the ceremonies, receive an honorary degree. In the meantime, he's come by the studios here to take your questions, 651-227-6000 or 1-800-242-2828. Online address [mprnewsq.org](http://mprnewsq.org) and then click on Send a question. Craig, go ahead, please.

**AUDIENCE:** I'm just calling in because the name Julian Bond has come up in my life frequently. The first time was in the late '60s, probably 1970 even, when I was going to the University of Minnesota. And Mr. Bond spoke there and made such an impression on me. I just wanted to call and thank him for his tenacity and for standing up when someone needs to stand up.

**JULIAN BOND:** Thank you.

**AUDIENCE:** It's a long and distinguished career. And I just, I really appreciate the work you've done.

**JULIAN BOND:** That's kind of you. Thank you.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Is it tough or has it been tough over the years? Have you from time to time been tempted to say, well, I've done enough. I'm going to sit back and watch some TV.

**JULIAN BOND:** Well, I'm saying I've done enough. Right now, I'm chairman of the NAACP. I've been chairman for 10 years. We have one year terms. I'm in my 10th term. And my term expires in February. And I'm not running for re-election.

I think I've put in my time. I've done what I can. I will remain on the board of directors. So I'll still be involved and engaged in it. But I won't be chairman now. This doesn't mean anything to the radio audience. But when I took this job, I had black hair. And look at me now. So I am saying--

**GARY EICHTEN:** It's a little lighter.

**JULIAN BOND:** Yes. I've had enough, I've had enough of this. But I'll still keep my hand in and still be involved.

**GARY EICHTEN:** James, go ahead, please.

**AUDIENCE:** OK. Thanks a lot for having my call. I wanted to just address the issue that initially, I remember on this radio station that there was a point where everyone was questioning is there a need for the NAACP considering the fact that we have an African-American president? And what is it that the NAACP is doing at this point more or less to equate the rights of colored people to the rest of the majority of the world?

**GARY EICHTEN:** Julian Bond?

**JULIAN BOND:** Well, what we're doing now are really can be divided into two separate things. We are doing what we have done for a hundred years. And that is to fight racial discrimination. And if you can convince me that racial discrimination has disappeared, then I can say we don't have to do that anymore. But you can't convince me of that. And we're going to continue to do that.

We're also trying to do some of the old things we've done in new ways. Our CEO just ran what we think is the first successful voter registration drive in a state prison system in Maine. You may know that people incarcerated can cast votes just as those people who aren't. And we've just successfully registered a great many people in the Maine prison system, most of them white. And we're very proud of that because we believe everybody needs to participate in the political process no matter what he or she may have done.

We've started a program. And I hope I can remember the name of this, Safe and Smart. It's a different approach to law enforcement. How do you make sure the streets are safe for everyone? How do you safely pursue criminals and make sure they get their proper treatment?

And we're taking examples from a number of district attorneys around the country. The woman in San Francisco who's name is Kamala Harris. A man in Houston, Texas who tried to develop a new approach to law enforcement saying that when you break the law, there's some punishment you've got to pay for that.

But perhaps the punishment for this crime ought not be as draconian as it is. And perhaps that there's another way to treat offenders that doesn't just pile them up in prisons, which are really just schools for crime. They just learn how to be better criminals. So that's another thing we're doing.

We've started a new program to take advantage of the technology that everybody seems to have today, cell phones. You can take pictures with cell phones. And if you see a policeman or a law enforcement officer misbehaving badly, take his picture, send it to us. And we'll send you a document so you can explain what the circumstances are. And if it seems as if you've captured some egregious behavior, we'll put this on the web, so everybody can see. So those are some of the things we're doing today.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Jenny says, what would be the signs that we've reached racial balance and harmony that is we've become post-racial?

**JULIAN BOND:** I'm not really sure how you would measure this. But I think if you were to say that people of color are a reasonable proportion equal to their proportion in the population of the jobs, the schools, and all of the things in life where you look to see people. If you could measure them, and they were equally distributed in all these places and fairly distributed in all these places, then you'd say we've gotten there. And I don't think you can do that.

**GARY EICHTEN:** You keep hearing though, boy, well, we may be tainted older folks. But the young kids, they don't even pay-- they pay no attention to race.

**JULIAN BOND:** They don't and thankfully so. At least most of them don't. And thankfully so they don't pay any attention to gender. They don't pay any attention to sexual behavior, not sexual behavior but to--

**GARY EICHTEN:** Orientation.

**JULIAN BOND:** Orientation. That's the word I'm thinking for-- thank you-- as their elders do. And you wonder why do their elders? But anyway, young people seem to be free from some of these biases and prejudices. And that's a wonderful sign. And I'm not denying that we are a different country now than we were before Barack Obama was elected. But we're not the country we need to be. And until we need to be, you're going to need an NAACP.

**GARY EICHTEN:** I'd be remiss if I didn't bring this up. Thomas Friedman had a column this week, which suggested or said that he's worried that we are getting close to an atmosphere in this country where an assassination might be looming. Do you sense that? Is that level of violence rising?

**JULIAN BOND:** I do. I know the Southern Poverty Law Center says the level of threats at least on online against President Obama is many, many times greater than the level that was true under President Bush or any of his predecessors. And the anger about him seems to be at a fever pitch. And there are suggestions that you see from time to time, thankfully not that often, this contest I heard about on the media. Somebody asking what are the odds--

**GARY EICHTEN:** On Facebook, there where they took the poll.

**JULIAN BOND:** Yeah. What are the odds that Obama will be assassinated. I mean, you didn't see this for George Bush. And you didn't see it as far as I know for any president before him. And that suggests a level of enmity against him that I think is driven, at least in some measure by race.

That's frightening and scary because we can't have a country where our leaders are struck down like this. It's OK to criticize people. But you ought to try to be civil. And as I said, a little while ago, I don't think we're doing very well at that. But I don't think we've ever done well at that.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Julian Bond is our guest, longtime civil rights leader, one of the nation's preeminent civil rights leaders currently serving as chairman of the NAACP, in town for dedication ceremonies over at Macalester College in Saint Paul this afternoon. He's been good enough to come by our studios today to field your questions and comments.

Give us a call at 651-227-6000 or 1-800-242-2828. Our online address [mprnewsq.org](http://mprnewsq.org).. And again, when you get there, click on Send a question. Ed, your question, please.

**AUDIENCE:** Yes, Mr. Bond, during the Democratic Caucuses here in Minnesota, I noticed a tremendous outpouring of support or enthusiasm and participation on behalf of President Obama. And it really in some sense, I think, raised the expectation that somehow in this country, we were starting to actually deal with the remnants of racism that have been around for so long.

And yet just as you were saying now here recently, the elements in the society who are feeling the racist pain, whatever that is, are seemingly getting more and more aggressive. And it's hard to square that.

**JULIAN BOND:** Well, I think the feeling you describe is a true feeling. The feeling you saw in the Democratic Caucus as the people thinking now we're on our way. Now, we're about to change the country. Now, we're stepping into a new era. And I think that was a legitimate feeling by those people.

But unfortunately, it wasn't shared by everybody in the country. There was a population that had opposite thoughts about that. And some of them were at least as far as they're concerned legitimately opposite thoughts.

I don't like Obama's program for this. I don't like Obama's program for that. I think he's wrong about this or that and the other thing. And beneath that group is another group of people, I think, who are just upset that he's Black. And that seems to me undeniable.

I'm not saying that everybody opposed him is a racist. I mean, that's not possible. But I'm saying that some of them are and they're vituperation comes out. And it's expressed in this rising level of enmity against him, which I think is just unusual and can't be explained any other way.

**GARY EICHTEN:** What do you say to the person who really truly doesn't like his policies, but is afraid to speak out because they figure well, if I say anything, I'm going to be branded a racist.

**JULIAN BOND:** I'd say if you say it in the way you've just said it, I don't like his health care plans. I think they're cookie or crazy. I wouldn't call you racist for saying that. And I don't think any reasonable person would call you racist for doing that. We celebrate difference in this country. We celebrate the ability to say I think the president is an idiot. We celebrate.

And we've had experience with idiotic presidents most recently, if you don't mind my saying. And we felt free to say that. And I think you feel free to say anything you want to about President Obama. But there's a question about how you say it, what you're saying. And if you say it-- you're against him because of something that touches on his race, that's just wrong.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Lisa, go ahead, please.

**AUDIENCE:** Oh, hi. Yes. I'm also likewise very, very concerned about the level of vindictiveness and hatred that seems to be coming forth from the media just in general. We even want to say whether it's right wing or left wing, but I have my own opinion about that.

But just the anger. And I'm wondering how people who are levelheaded and reasonable but also really, really upset about how the way things are going can fight this level of destructiveness and rancor just in our normal daily lives? How can we do that?

**GARY EICHTEN:** OK. Thanks for the call.

**JULIAN BOND:** I think it takes a degree of bravery because if someone says something that you know to be idiotic and you now to be wrong, then you ought to be able in a reasonable tone of voice to say, listen, I think you're wrong about that and here are the actual facts. What you said is not true. And I can tell you what is true. And I saw this in x, y, z. That's my source for it. So I know that I'm right and you're wrong.

Now, that degree of reasonableness doesn't always really settle the question. The person who feels so angry that he or she is shouting and yelling may not pay any attention to your reasonable voice. And you may have to walk away for your own safety. But I think you do have to counter these things as best you can and say you're wrong about that. That's not true.

Remember the furor about whether or not Obama was an American or not? I mean, come on. You had his birth certificate. You had the story in the Honolulu paper that announced his birth. Now, do we really think that somebody conspired 40 plus years ago to put an ad in the paper in Honolulu announcing the birth of this child so that he would then all these years later become president of the United States through some conspiracy or something?

I mean, people who believe that are nutty and crazy and wacko. And I'm sure I'm going to get some calls saying those things. But I mean, when the level of discourse sinks to that low, low, low, then I think we're really in trouble.

**GARY EICHTEN:** What do you do about that though? I mean, when there is no agreement on the facts, the old expression well, everybody's entitled to their opinion. But there's only one set of facts. Well, when everybody disagrees on the facts, where does that take the conversation? .

**JULIAN BOND:** I don't know. When you disagree about the facts, and when there's one set of facts that seems to most reasonable people to be fixed and solid and the truth, and yet here's another group out here that's saying no, that's not true. You made it up or you're tricking us or something. I don't know. I'm really at a loss to know what you do.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Louie, go ahead, please.

**AUDIENCE:** Hi, yes, thanks for taking my call. I wanted you to comment towards what you think of regional, I would say racial prejudices. I've been in the Midwest now for 40 years. And I was in the South and then over in Louisiana for a while, in Texas for a while, and Arizona and California. And it's pretty thick up here. I think the Midwest is really red.

And I've heard so much anti-Obama. And it just bothers me because I think a lot of these people have never been away from this culture or this type of environment. So they're unaware of it. I would call them ignorant, I guess.

But can you comment to what you think of regional areas of the deep South being racial, the Northwest, the Midwest? I think it's pretty thick up here, I don't know. Can you comment to that? Thank you.

**JULIAN BOND:** I've spent almost the greater part of my life in the Southern states. And I've found it to be the most pleasant part of the country and the part of the country I enjoy being in the most. I was born in Tennessee. I spent a great deal of my life in Southern Georgia and then later in Atlanta. But I have also lived in Pennsylvania and now live in Washington DC.

There used to be an old saying among Black people that in the South, people didn't care how close you got as long as you didn't rise too high. In the North, they didn't care how high you rose, as long as you didn't get too close. I don't think that's true today. I don't think you can point to this part of the country or that part of the country and say this is worse or even say this is better.

I think there's racial prejudice everywhere we look, but it's not as prevalent as it used to be. And I'm convinced that in the future, it's going to be much less prevalent than it is now. So I guess I'm saying you can't say I don't see the Midwest as being particularly racist or the people being particularly ignorant or people in any other part of the country being particularly that either.

I think there's pockets of ignorance, pockets of prejudice everywhere. And our job is to get rid of these pockets and empty them out, and teach people better and make them behave and think better.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Do you think the people-- I'm sorry to interrupt. Do you think the folks who are not acting properly, put it that way, is it out of ignorance? Is it out of spite, meanness? What do you think?

**JULIAN BOND:** For some, I think it is ignorance. I think if you don't know other people, you don't know how they are, and you think they are some way they're not, or you believe things you've heard about them that some ignorant person told you, that's ignorance. And once you've learned better, if you're willing to accept the information, then those thoughts change. You become a different kind of person.

How much of it is meanness? I don't think we can tell. We can't say that 10% of ignorant statements come out of meanness. I don't think we can say. But some of it is meanness. People are mean.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Tanya, go ahead.

**AUDIENCE:** Hi, Mr. Bond. It's such a pleasure to speak with you this morning. I'm just sitting here listening to the conversation. And I recall during the campaign and after Obama was elected, there was just sort of, as you discussed earlier, just this thrill about him for some, of course, finally being elected our first Black president.

But at that time, I just remember thinking that we were going to be complacent. And by we, I mean African-Americans. I am an African-American woman. And I am deeply concerned about the seemingly sort of just acceptance that racism doesn't really exist within our own African-American community.

That now that Obama is President, somehow this means that we as African-American people somehow do not have the responsibility to continue the fight. And I think the fight is even more important and is possibly going to be more of a challenge just because there seems to be such complacency. And I'd love to hear your thoughts on that.

**JULIAN BOND:** Well, I think it probably is more important in the sense that to the degree that people think it has vanished altogether, it is harder to rally the forces to say no it hasn't gone. It's still here. And we need to do something about it.

So in that sense, it is harder now than in the past. But I think this feeling that racism has disappeared can be looked upon, even though it has a bad effect. I think it can be looked upon as a good feeling. We want to think we live in the best country in the world. We want to think that our friends and neighbors are the best people anywhere.

We want to think that everybody treats everybody equally. And because we want to think that so badly, when there's evidence that that's not true, it's a little difficult for us to accept it. But we ought to accept it and say, gee, things are so much better than they used to be. But here's an instance where they're not as good, and we need to do something about it.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Michelle asks, can you comment on how racism plays into the immigration debate?

**JULIAN BOND:** Well, if you look back over a long, long period of years at the history of the United States, we used to have proscriptions against certain kinds of people coming into the United States. We passed something called the Chinese Exclusion Act. I mean, come on, what could that be?

And we're no longer quite at that stage anymore, thankfully. But I think some of the fact that the immigrants we talk about and see the most are people of color, typically Hispanics. That plays into the debate. And again, it's one of these questions where you can't say that's a hundred percent of the debate or it's 50% of the debate or only 10. But at some percent.

And I think it colors, if you will, our perception of what the immigration debate is all about. And if they were English people English origin people or Caucasians, let's say, coming from Germany or France or someplace, I think the debate would be different.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Paul, go ahead, please.

**AUDIENCE:** Yes. Mr. Bond--

**JULIAN BOND:** Yes, sir.

**AUDIENCE:** In the early '60s, I was a student at the University of Minnesota. And students from other parts of the country came to talk about the sit-ins and discuss ways that you could get down to the South. Anyway, I was wondering if you knew what happened to some of those fellows. Because I would watch on TV, they would be getting their brains beat out basically. And they were the same kids that came up to visit with us.

**JULIAN BOND:** Well, they're probably from an organization called the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee that I was a part of. We were among the organizations that put together Freedom Summer 1964. And about a thousand young people, most of them white, came to Mississippi for that summer. And several of them had their brains beaten out or were maimed or hurt in some kind of way. And as you know, three of them were killed.

But the organization that brought those people to the south no longer exists. But it has a very, very active and very opinionated alumni group. And in fact, we're sponsoring a reunion in Raleigh, North Carolina of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in April of next year, April 14th and 15th, I think, of next year at Shaw University, which is the place where the organization was founded.

So those people are still around. Some of them live here in Minnesota. I know a fellow who lives here who worked for the Congress of Racial Equality, was arrested. And a protest was held on a charge that could have resulted in a capital charge against him.

Another fellow who lives here who is chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, who anyway was an active cadre of these people. And they're found everywhere. And if you look hard, you can find them.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Wasn't it, wasn't it frightening to confront the whole Jim Crow thing? I mean, because the people on the other side, at least some of them were not playing around. I mean, they were serious about what they--

**JULIAN BOND:** Yes. And it's foolish to think that these people have disappeared completely. I mean, some of them are still around too. But of course, it was frightening. But we had the protection of the ignorance of youth. It's not going to happen to me. I think it's like I've heard it is for soldiers on the battlefield. The guy next to me is going to get killed, but not me. And I think we believe that we were immune in some way or another.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Julian Bond, what do you see as the major challenges now facing America as we move forward?

**JULIAN BOND:** Well, of course, all these political challenges-- health care and so forth and so on, those are real and serious. And we need to come to grips with them. But I think one big challenge is this forgetfulness we have about what race has meant and still means in the country. And as long as we've put that aside and can't come to grips with it, then it will continue to plague us. And we need to grab it and say we're going to get rid of this for once and for all.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Is there somebody that you personally look to and say, boy, this fellow, this woman, that's the cat's meow. They really are the highest standard.

**JULIAN BOND:** There are many people I feel that way about. But rather than pick out one or two of them, I think we have to think make each of ourselves into that person. Each of us has to do what we can do in our own way. And we can't all do the same thing.

We can't all be-- I used to say, I wrote a poem years ago that said, look at that girl shake that thing. We can't all be Martin Luther King. We can't all be Martin Luther King or speak like him or do the things he did. But we have to do what we can do. And unless we do it, we're giving the people who feel the opposite an opportunity they shouldn't have.

**GARY EICHTEN:** You teach at University of Virginia, American University. The students you encounter on a regular basis, are they active, involved, or would they'd rather just--

**JULIAN BOND:** They're tremendously active. I tell you something that's slightly disturbing to me. When I was a student, I was active in social justice concerns. These students today seem to be active in social service concerns. And I've always thought if you have social justice, you don't need social service.

But social service has greater rewards than social justice. If I help a homeless person on the street and he thanks me, boy, I'm gratified right away. But if I want to help somebody out of a predicament that causes me to spend a lot of time and energy, takes a long time for me to get some gratification out of that. I may get it in the end, but it takes a little time.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Is that message get through to the students say yeah, OK.

**JULIAN BOND:** Some of them do, some of them do. And of course, they're mixed a lot.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Well, thank you so much for coming in today.

**JULIAN BOND:** Thank you.

**GARY EICHTEN:** I really appreciate it. Great, great honor. And you have your dedication. What do you speak, what are you going to say this afternoon?

**JULIAN BOND:** Well, because this is an International Center-- the International Studies Center that's being developed at Macalester, I'm going to talk about the international dimensions of the civil rights movement.

**GARY EICHTEN:** Julian Bond, longtime civil rights leader joining us this first hour of our *Midday* program. Mr. Bond is speaking at Macalester College this afternoon at 4:30. There is a dedication ceremony for Macalester's new Markim Hall building that's being cited nationally for its energy efficient construction and design. It also serves as the home for Macalester College's Institute for Global Citizenship.

But Julian Bond serves on the institute's international advisory board. Julian Bond will be speaking at Macalester this afternoon. That event is open to the public. And he'll also be receiving an honorary degree. We should also note those of you in the Northfield area, we don't have details on this yet as to when, where, and so on, and so forth. But next week, I think 7th and 8th--

**JULIAN BOND:** 7th and 8th.

**GARY EICHTEN:** 7th and 8th, Wednesday and Thursday. Julian Bond will be down at Carleton College in Northfield for a series of events, both with students and public events. So you can mark that on your calendar as well. And again, we want to point out, Mr. Bond was recalling the speech that he gave up at Saint John's last year at the Eugene J. McCarthy Lecture. We have that archived on our website [mprnewsq.org](http://mprnewsq.org).

And I think if you give that an ear, you'll find that pretty interesting as well. We're going to break for news. And then when we come back, we'll shift our focus, talk about the environment. Specifically, we're going to hear from Lisa Jackson who is the administrator, the head of the EPA, talking about some of her ideas about how to clean up the environment. That's coming up over the noon hour.

**MALE SPEAKER:** Each weekday, Minnesota Public Radio News invites you to join the conversation on [mprnewsq.org](http://mprnewsq.org). Today's question, what would a Chicago Olympics mean for the Midwest? Share your answer. Go to [mprnewsq.org](http://mprnewsq.org).

**GARY EICHTEN:** Love to get your thoughts on the Olympics. Join our conversation. Go to [mprnewsq.org](http://mprnewsq.org) and click on Today's question. Or you can text us 677677.

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