

Fed Chairman Gives Morehouse Students 'Optimistic' Overview

Contributed by W. Hassan Marsh -- Black College Wire
Thursday, 16 April 2009

Ben Bernanke discusses global economy

Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke sat down on April 15 with Morehouse College students to discuss current hot-button economic issues such as the global financial crisis, monetary policy, and their effects on students.

"I am fundamentally optimistic about our economy," Bernanke said in his prepared remarks before the discussion. "Among its many intrinsic strengths are universities and colleges like Morehouse, which help talented students gain not only a command of knowledge but also the capacity to think creatively and independently." Bernanke evoked Jewish tradition when he explained the current global recession by answering four questions, as would the youngest child during Passover. Put in simple terms, they were: How did the economy come to where it is now; what is the Fed doing to act; will these actions encourage inflation down the road; and why did the Fed and Treasury act to save some financial institutions.

After his initial remarks, Bernanke fielded questions from a panel of senior economics students. The conversation ranged from very basic ideas to more technical concepts such as the role of credit default swaps.

Students did not hold back in asking questions. Anthony Roberts, a top ranking senior economics major, asked Bernanke if the Fed considered significant and persistent wealth disparities between whites and African Americans.

"This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to have the Fed chairman come to Morehouse in a time when our economy is in a bad shape and when, quite frankly, the African-American community is in particularly bad shape," said the Richmond, Virginia native. "I wanted to know whether or not the Fed thinks about those sorts of things when they make it policies," he said. "Hopefully, it got him thinking about that sort of thing."

Bernanke responded by saying the Fed does monitor statistics but it is limited in what it can do because of their macroeconomic focus. He also explained that a lack of financial education was a leading cause for the disparities.

College administrators count Bernanke's visit as a boon to the campus. "This says that Morehouse College is a respected convener of thought leaders and change agents of the nation and Morehouse is a community of intellectuals and activists who are respected by national and international leaders," said Morehouse president Robert Franklin.

{moshaloscan}

W. Hassan Marsh is senior editor of The Maroon Tiger, the Morehouse College student newspaper, which originally published this article. He is also a former Black College Wire summer intern.