

In a rare occasion The Soultown happened to share time and space with someone who loves and loves serving his community. His voice was an instrument—elevated, pitch-perfect, and heavy with the texture of a thousand lived experiences. With every sentence he spoke, he didn't just recite facts; he painted breathtaking, vivid pictures of yesterday. For the storytellers and the orators among us, it was a masterclass. We were utterly mesmerized, hanging onto his every syllable, soaking up the history, and finding ourselves beautifully entertained by the rich metaphors that rolled off his tongue. He spoke directly to the longing in our spirits, answering the unasked question that beats in the heart of our culture: "How did we get here?"

This King. This Orator. This master storyteller. This beautifully aged, brilliant Black man who poured his wisdom into our souls was none other than the legendary Dr. Frank Omowale Satterwhite.

TS: Who is Dr. Omowale Satterwhite?

Dr. Omo: I am a Black man of African descent... historically from Africa but born, raised, and cultivated in the USA. I am the father of four children and grandfather of four grandchildren. I am a community builder whose life has been devoted to serving the Black community.

After completing degrees at Howard University, Southern Illinois University, and Stanford University, I had a rewarding and productive career as a nonprofit consultant serving the Black community and other communities of color throughout the country.

My guiding philosophy is that communities with viable economic, political, social, and cultural institutions are empowered and have a significantly better quality of life than those that do not. Thus, my calling has been to develop stronger community institutions so that our people can thrive.

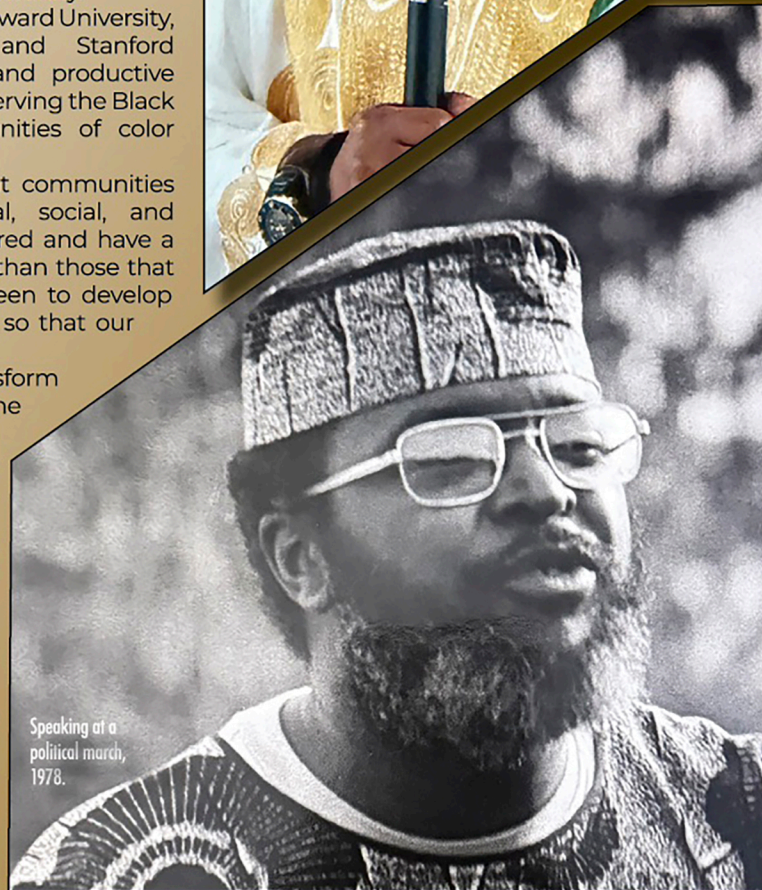
During my career, I helped transform an elite university, created the inaugural Black Studies program at a renowned liberal arts college, founded (with others) a new city, served about 1300 community organizations in 120+ cities, and played a role in changing the nonprofit consulting field.

TS: Why do you do what you do?

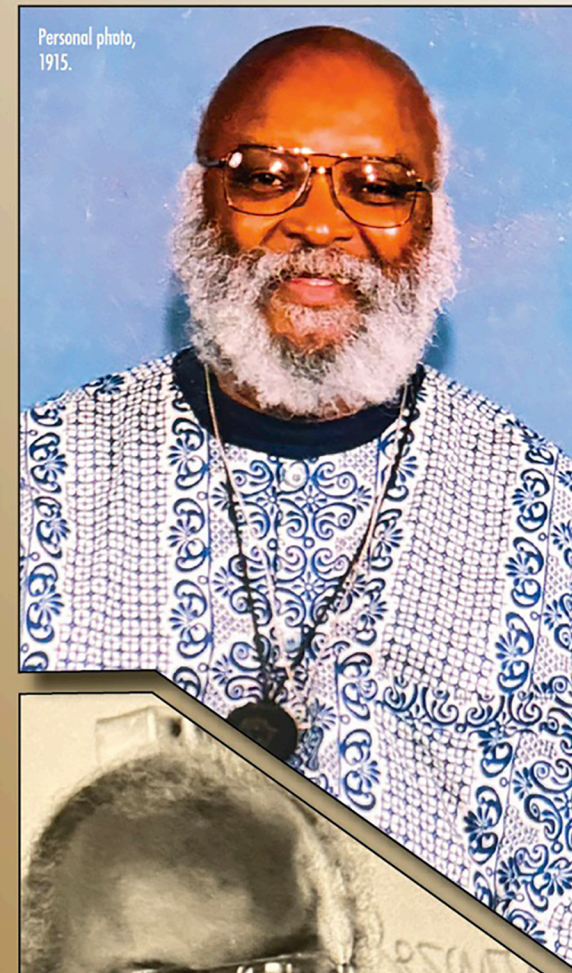
Dr. Omo: My personal motto is "Honor the Work and the Work Will Honor You". All that I am and do is based on this fundamental principle. Listening to and showing profound respect for community voices



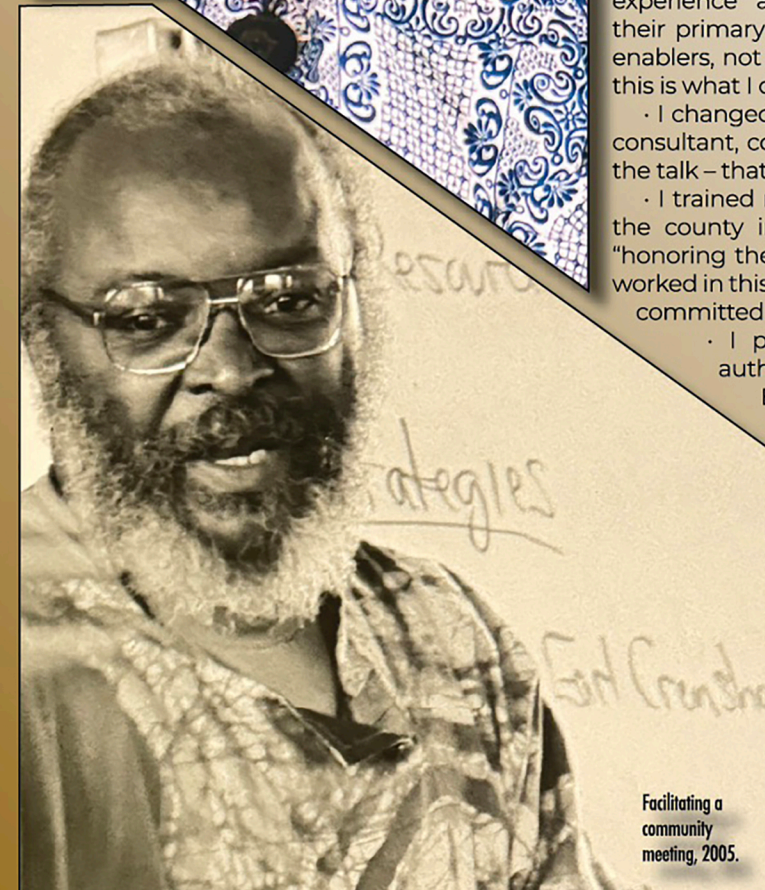
My daughter's wedding (Onira Tares Satterwhite), 1916.



Speaking at a political march, 1978.



Personal photo, 1915.



Facilitating a community meeting, 2005.

honors the work. Building trusting relationships with community members honors the work. Showing up as a peer, not as an expert, honors the work. Supporting (not leading) community members in the social change process honors the work. And challenging communities to be more hopeful, think more broadly, and work more collaboratively honors the work.

As leaders are developed, organizations are strengthened, and communities are empowered, knowing that I contributed to these changes is my biggest reward and the way that the work honors me.

"As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence...When the best leader's work is done, the people say, "We did it ourselves!" - Lao Tsu

TS: Share a challenge you've had to overcome in your life that has led you to where you are now.

Dr. Omo: One of my biggest challenges was figuring out how to change the nonprofit consulting industry so that communities of color were empowered to control the consulting experience and consultants understood that their primary role was to serve communities as enablers, not as decision-makers. Looking back, this is what I did:

- I changed my way of working as a nonprofit consultant, constantly reflecting on how to walk the talk – that is, "honor the work".
- I trained more than 600 consultants around the county in the philosophy and practice of "honoring the work". These individuals not only worked in this way but also became ambassadors committed to changing the nonprofit field.

- I published several articles and co-authored a book called "Honor the Work: Building Capacity for Social Change in Communities of Color". This book became a "bible" of our movement.

- I attended conferences and hosted professional meetings – always using my position to sound the alarm about the role of nonprofit consultants in communities of color.

- I joined the board and eventually chaired the trade association for nonprofit consultants called the Alliance for Nonprofit Management. I used my bully pulpit to make the clarion call.