

WINTER 2019  
January – March  
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# sclc

Southern Christian Leadership Conference  
NATIONAL MAGAZINE

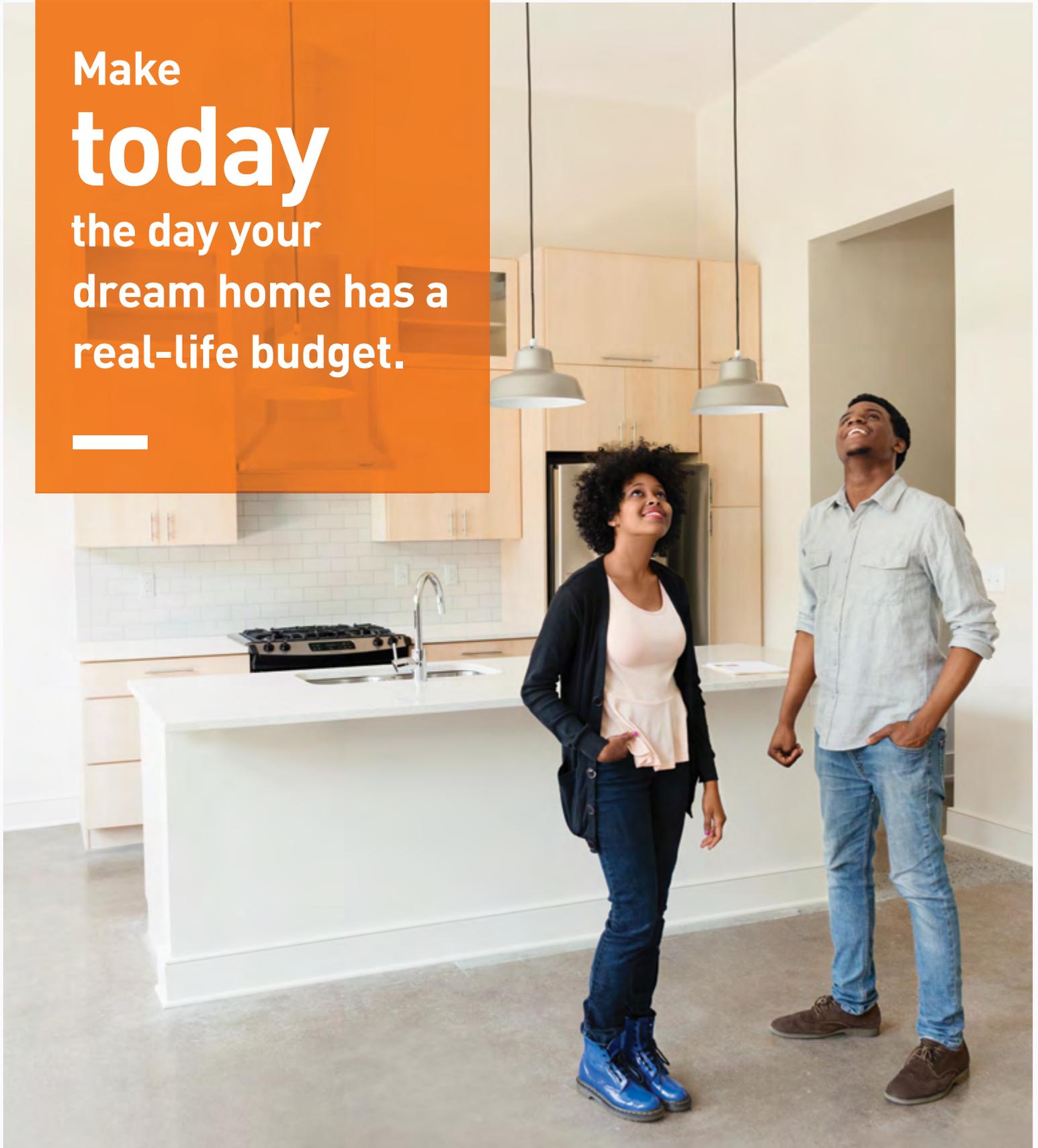
## SCLC Then, Today, & Tomorrow

The Martin Luther King Jr.  
90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Issue



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# The Martin Luther King Jr. 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Issue

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## contributor:

**MAYNARD EATON** is an 8-time Emmy Award winning TV News reporter, who is SCLC's National Communications Director and Managing Editor of the SCLC National Magazine. Eaton is a former TV news reporter who is now Executive Editor of Newsmakers Live/ Journal and The Maynard Report. He is also President of Eaton Media Group, and a journalism professor at Clark Atlanta University.

## COVER:

Dr. Charles Steele Jr., Charles Steele Jr. building, SCLC International HQ, Atlanta  
Photographer: Faith Swift  
Cover Design and Layout: Monica Blood



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# sclc

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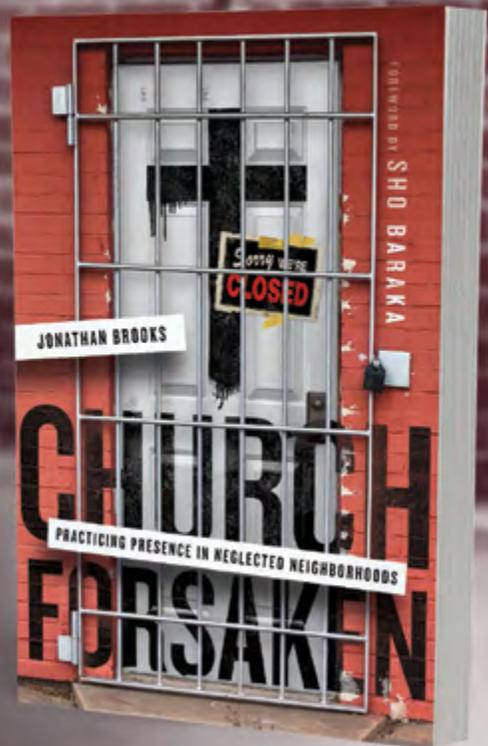
Raised on the south side of Chicago, Jonathan Brooks moved as far away as possible as soon as he could. But through unforeseen events he found himself not only back in Englewood but also serving as a pastor and community leader.

In *Church Forsaken* he challenges Christians to be fully present in their communities, helping local churches rediscover that **loving our neighbors means loving our neighborhoods.**

*"I exhort the reader to be challenged by the anecdotes of Jonathan Brooks's theology of place."*

—**SHO BARAKA**, artist and author

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## A Civil Rights Conversation Between Dr. Charles Steele Jr. & His Daughter Keisha Ray



*“We are quick to celebrate  
and slow to educate.”*

– DR. CHARLES STEELE JR.

**KEISHA RAY:** Hello Dr. Steele, thank you for taking the time to speak with me today and answer a few questions about your experiences as a civil rights leader and your opinion on where we as African-Americans are today.

**CHARLES STEELE:** Absolutely, I love sharing my experience and the knowledge I have learned from so many wise people I've come across in this journey we call life. Knowledge is everything and if we don't share it, we are depriving our community, the country and the world of the most precious tool we have.

**RAY:** When did you realize that you wanted to be a civil rights leader?

**STEELE:** I was between 15 and 18 years of age when I knew that civil rights was my calling. I was always intrigued by what I could bring to the movement to help push progress forward. I admired the many brave men and women who marched for what they believed in. During that time there were so many people sacrificing their lives so that others long after them would have an opportunity to see a much better society.

**RAY:** Who inspired you the most as a young inspiring civil rights leader?

**STEELE:** When I was a young boy in Tuscaloosa, Alabama I remember watching Rev. Ty Rogers, pastor of First African Baptist Church as he stood up to injustices around the Tuscaloosa. He inspired me to look at myself and see the possibilities I had to help and inspire others in the era of the civil rights movement.

**RAY:** Do you think Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. would be proud of today's accomplishments?

**STEELE:** Well, I think he would be proud of some things and disenchanted with some very important things as well. I definitely believe he would be proud that we had our very first African-American president, President Obama. This was an accomplishment many people did not think they would see in their lifetime. However, I believe Dr. King would be disenchanted over the fact that economically people of color have not realized that we must come together and collaborate in our efforts to have access to capital. In the early twenties we had what was called “Black Wall Street” in a community called Greenwood located in Tulsa, Oklahoma. During these times people of color understood the importance and the significance of doing business with each other. In 2019, the financial experts have predicted that there will be NO black banks by the year 2021. I think he would also be disillusioned with the lack of our knowledge that African-American children and young people know about our history. We do so little teaching about what we have been through as a people. We are quick to celebrate and slow to educate.

**RAY:** What do you think are some of the biggest obstacles young people face today?

**STEELE:** I believe the biggest obstacle young people face is not knowing our history from the last four hundred years from slavery to today. Many young people don't even understand the very real threat we face today with the stripping of section 4 and section 5 of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Gutting these sections diminishes the accomplishments we

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*"Life's most persistent and urgent question is, what are you doing for others?"*

*Martin Luther King, 1963*



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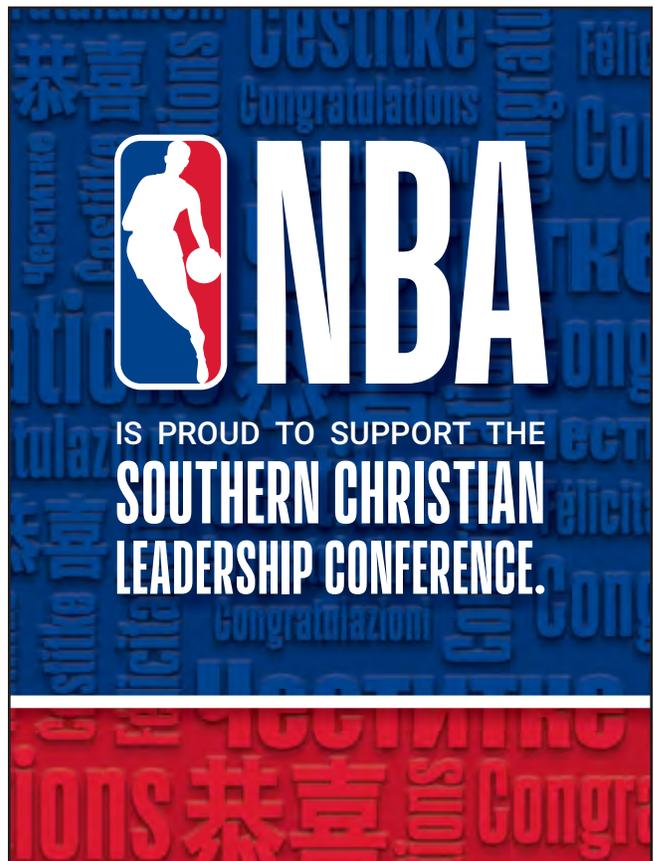
Vice Presidents, Terry Dittes, Cindy Estrada, Rory Gamble

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made in the civil rights movement to gain our freedom and citizenship. This is HUGE! Yet, so many people don't understand what we are facing. Let's get registered to vote. We need to teach our young people the importance of registering to vote. We need to get our youth excited about the opportunity to exercise the right that so many have died to for them to have. This should not be an issue in our community! Too many have died for us to have this right! Let's celebrate our young people turning the legal age to vote by motivating them to get registered! Voting should no longer be our obstacle...voting should be our tool!

**RAY:** What steps do we need take to get back focused on progress and regaining what we have lost in the past 50 years?

**STEELE:** We need to get focused on dealing with the infrastructure of our families. Let's start at the dinner table by talking to our children about our history. We as a people need to tell the story of our past. Next, let's start back addressing the issues of today in our churches. From the schools let's address the systemic deprivation of teaching a standard curriculum of African-American history in text books. It is imperative that our youth understand their past so that they understand the terrain in which they must navigate in their future. Everybody needs a road map! I don't go anywhere without my GPS, yet we are sending our youth through life without a road map. They are lost and confused. Let's start today by focusing on the spiritual, mental and educational tools that we all need to navigate our way through life. sclc





# The King Who Was a Servant



BY DR. BERNARD LAFAYETTE JR.

**I**t is true that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was not considered a wealthy man, however he was not nor was his family impoverished. Because he was a man of means and was able to have a secure income, he had some resources to share. The most important resources he had to share was his knowledge, commitment and loves for others. King treasured the opportunity to share with others.

Despite his background and prestige of his family he embodied a humility that made the people with limited resources have a sense of worth. When it came to taking a righteous and religious stand for what was right, just, and truthful, there was no hesitation on his part.

Dr. King believed that change was possible and the first step toward change was to change one's own thoughts and behavior. He understood that changing one's thoughts is one thing but changing one's behavior was another. Changing one's behavior could sometimes risk one's life. But, not only one's life, but the lives of one's love ones.

In the spirit of nonviolence, Dr. King was prepared to sacrifice his life for a cause that he thought was worthwhile. For him, his life was not too much to give.

Martin Luther King's service to others was in the form of leadership, despite his chorus of critics. He was a quintessential servant leader. First his leadership was in the form of an educator. He himself was a scholar in the area of theology of social change. He understood why people thought the way they did, but also how to change the way people thought. King was a strategist who understood the different sources of power and how to use the different kinds of power to change behaviors. He was able to change the behavior of the oppressed as well as the behavior of the oppressor.

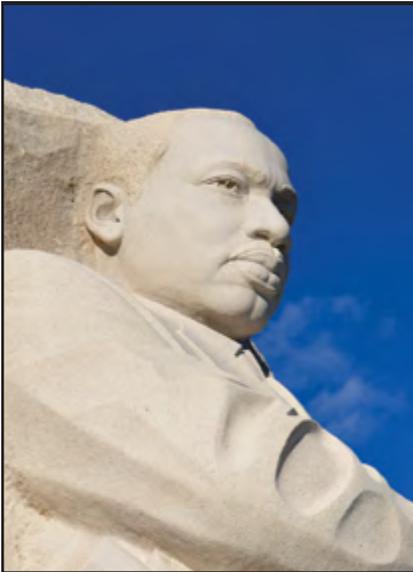
King was also a master at demonstrating how to put love in action even when others dramatized hate into violence in the most vicious sense. He proved to be an extraordinary servant leader. Dr. King, who I knew well and admired much, gave himself even to those who did not know or did not appreciate the fact that they needed him. There are those who do not know or may not even know that they are better off today because of the service he gave with his short-lived life that he gave to the people of the world. Perhaps we will never know how much he gave to the people of the world.

That's why he remains the most prophetic, profound, respected and revered civil and human rights leader ever. sclc

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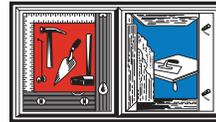
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## ZARIA HALL: A Rising Star

*During these last few years I have worked to enhance the lives of many young girls. I am excited to introduce to you Zaria Hall a shining star in music and theater. After observing her talent and talking with her mother, I drove them to Alabama State University in Montgomery, Alabama and introduced them to Dr. Tonea Stewart, professor, professional actress and dean of ASU's College of Visual and Performing Arts. Upon request and without preparation – Zaria auditioned in front of several department deans and received a full scholarship.*

*I am pleased to introduce to you to this talented, rising star. In her own words, she will share with you her story. I know that you will enjoy reading about her journey. I would implore you to follow and support her as she strives to show the world what determination and preparation looks like.*

— CATHELEAN C. STEELE, Founder, Justice for Girls



BY ZARIA HALL

**I**n April of 2018, I, Zaria Hall, and my scene partner, Jazzmin Carson made history. We traveled to Washington, D.C. to compete in the National Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (K.C.A.C.T.F) Irene Ryan Acting Competition. There, we performed on the stage at the Kennedy Center and won, two black girls attending THE Alabama State University, won the national Irene Ryan Acting Competition, making history for our school.

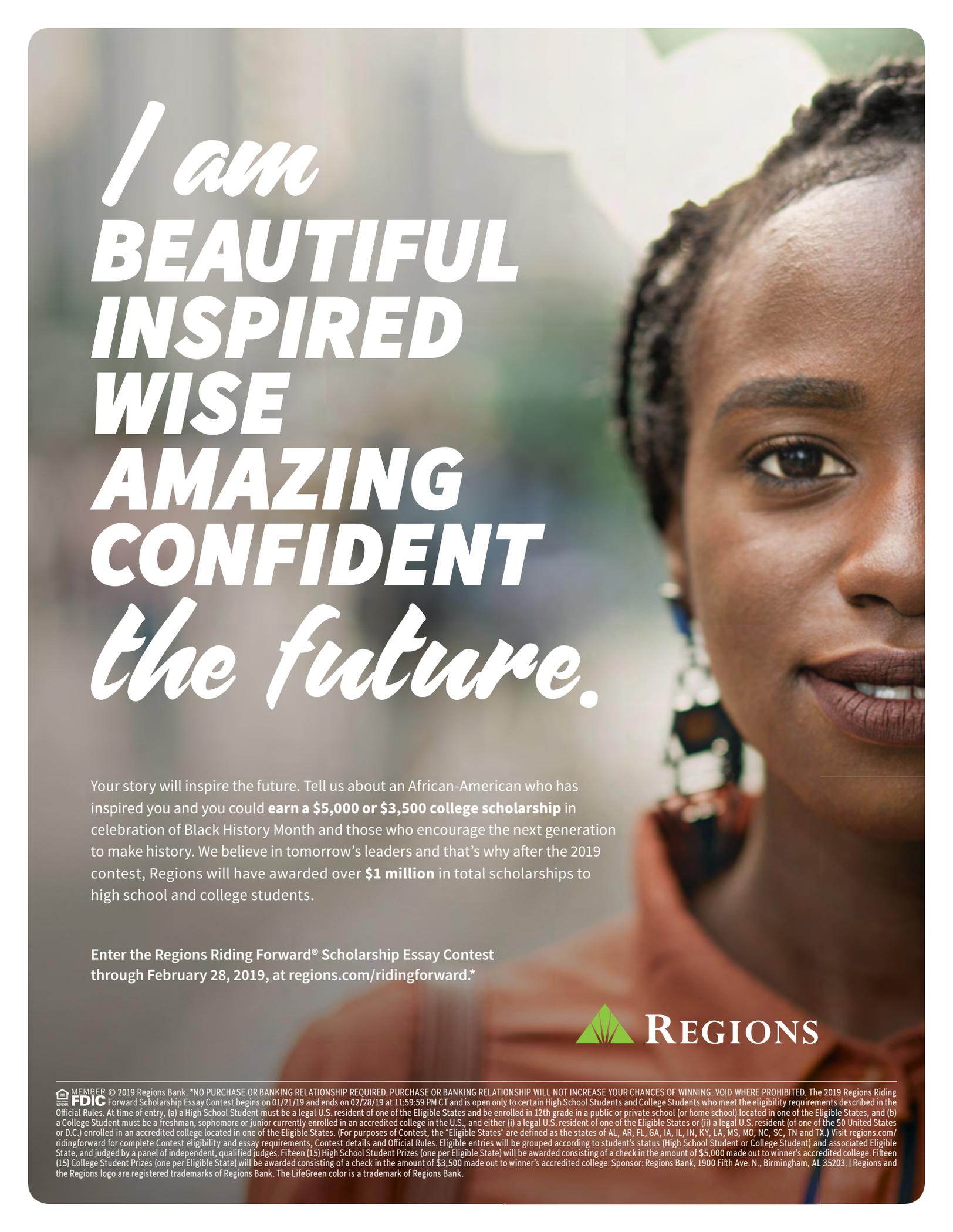
Performing is my passion. It is, honestly, a love of mine. I started learning music at a young age. My parents put me in piano lessons at the age of four. I attended class once a week for ten years. I hated piano, initially. It was boring, and I always messed up the songs I had to learn. I kept going... against my will; My parents would not let me quit. I was

forced for four years to take piano lessons until one day I got on the piano and couldn't stop playing. I was eight years old. I got on my piano and stayed on it for hours. The thing I once hated was now my passion. It gave me a thrill. I started learning music and performing at the same time because every year I would have to play in a piano recital. Those recitals taught me to keep going even if I mess up.

Along with piano, I grew up singing. I come from a family of singers. Both of my parents sang in the church (Turner Chapel A.M.E., Marietta, Ga) and I eventually began doing the same thing. I sang in the children's choir called the "1st Steppers". There, I was guided and taught by Ms. Dell Alford, Ms. Kim Sackey, and Ms. Lily Gather. I believe that without these three women, I wouldn't be singing and performing today. They gave me my first solo at the age of ten and after singing that song, I cried and cried. After that moment, I knew what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.

After being introduced to piano and song, I picked up the viola and joined my school's orchestra. There, I was the leader of my section from the beginning of my middle school career to the end of my high school career. Somewhere in between that time span I picked up the guitar and theatre.

I fell hard into the world of theatre. I began attending Young Voices United (Y.V.U. Marietta, Ga) and learning under the instruction of Mr. Nic Starr and Ms. Princess Starr. At Y.V.U., I grew. I grew more and more in love with performing. I grew as a person. And I grew more as an artist. At Y.V.U., I was taught "Meisner", a method of acting, and I was taught all things August Wilson, a famous, yes black,



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**“Along with singing, dancing, acting, playing piano, playing viola, and composing – I am also a visual artist.”**

– Artwork by Zaria Hall

but American Playwright. There, I performed. Throughout my high school days, in high school and Y.V.U., I was able to perform shows such as “The Wiz”, “Hairspray”, “Godspell”, “12 Angry Jurors”, and much more.

Even though I loved theatre, my heart was still set on music. That’s what I wanted to go to school for. I attended Georgia State University my first semester of my freshman year as an undecided major. I auditioned for their music program, received a high score on my audition, but I was never contacted with the news of being accepted. That was nothing but God because as I was battling that, the plans for me to attend Alabama State University, were already in motion.

Mrs. Cathelean Steele, the first lady of the National SCLC, was instrumental (the ultimate instrument) in getting me to Alabama State University. I came to know Mrs. Steele when I was invited by Dr. Ben Williams to perform at one of the National SCLC’s Annual Conference in Atlanta. Since then, she has personally taken me under her wings. She has done many things for me since then but what takes the cake is her getting me to Alabama State, literally. Mrs. Steele drove me and my mom in her personal vehicle to Montgomery, Alabama to meet with Alabama State University Theatre’s dean, the well-known Dr. Tonia “Tommie” Stewart. There, I auditioned, was given a scholarship to attend as a theatre major, and the rest is history.

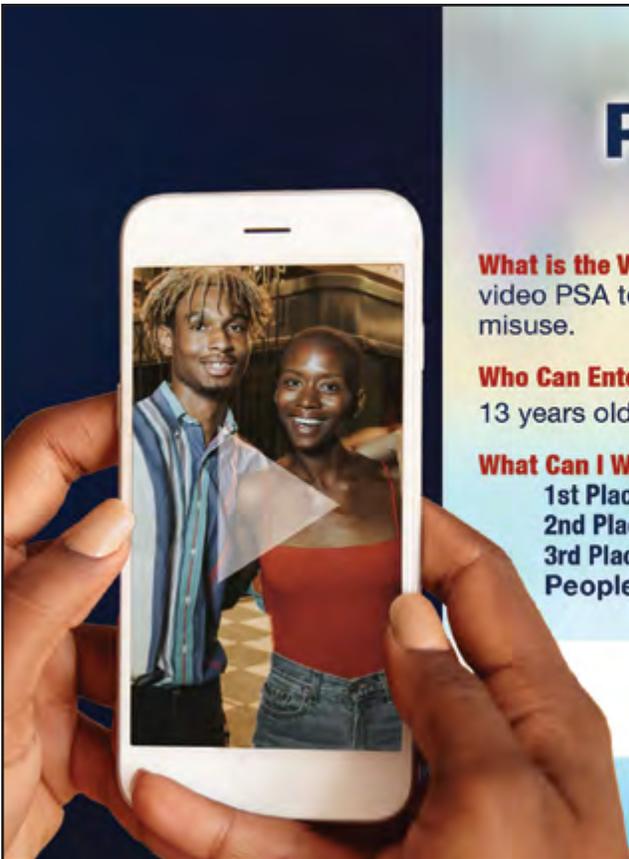
Since attending Alabama State University, I became the first freshman to be a finalist in the regional K.C.A.C.T.F. Irene Ryan Acting Competition. I became the first person ever to be a finalist for the acting competition as well as a finalist in the Musical Theatre Initiative (M.T.I.) competition, at the same time. Since attending, I have won K.C.A.C.T.F., nationally, and performed on the Kennedy Center stage, I have traveled to New York, New York and studied in the Open Jar program, which is a week long intensive for students to study under Broadway professionals. I have continued performing all over Atlanta and Montgomery and I have grown. I am continuously growing as an artist and as a person. I am grateful for my father Walter Hall III, I am grateful for my mother/ managed, Delores Hall. Without her faith in my God given talents I would literally be nowhere. My mom is the one who gets me the gigs I perform at and who connects me with well known, powerful people. She is the one that even when she is in pain and tired, she puts me, my career, and my future first. I am grateful for my family. I am grateful for the SCLC and I am grateful for any and everyone that has pushed me and nurtured me and elevated me to where I am now and where I am going. And last but certainly not least, I am forever grateful that God has gifted me with the gifts He has given me to one day share with the world. sclc

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## Cathelean Steele Keynotes SCLC New Orleans Chapter First Annual Symposium on Human Trafficking

**F**all 2018, the New Orleans SCLC Chapter hosted its first annual “Justice for Girls” Human Trafficking Symposium with SCLC First Lady Cathelean Steele, founder of the national initiative—Justice for Girls. The Symposium was held in uptown at Second Free Mission Baptist Church, pastored by long time SCLC Member Rev. Dr. Warren J. Ray, Jr. New Orleans.

The program was highlighted by a series of resource presentations by: FBI Special Agents; agents from the Louisiana Bureau of Investigation; the Louisiana Alcohol and Tobacco Commissioner; the Orleans Parish Sheriff; and the New Orleans Independent Police Monitor. In addition, Louisiana State Senator Troy Carter; Dr. Samuel Odon and Dr. John Penny of Southern University; and Dr. Sean Gibbs of Dillard University. Author Pamela E. Lockridge (Rapides Parish), shared childhood experiences with trafficking; and, authors Norma Chapman (Orleans Parish) and Ella Davis (Jackson Parish) also shared their experiences. The program was followed by a reception at Dillard University which featured performances by the Zulu Social Aid & Pleasure Club Ensemble.

Statistically, of the number of persons reported as confirmed or prospective trafficking victims in Louisiana, 641 (94.1%) were sexual trafficking victims; 9 (1.3%) were labor trafficking victims; 29 (5.1%) were victims of both sexual and labor trafficking; and there were 2 additional trafficking victims for whom the type of trafficking was not reported. Of all reported victims, 356 (52.3%) were identified as juveniles, a 77% increase over the previous year. For adult victims there was an increase of 25.7% (55 victims) identified from the previous year.

There were 269 adult victims in the current report on Human Trafficking in Louisiana by the Department of Children and Family Services (2018) and 214 in the previous year. The age was unknown or not reported on 56 confirmed or prospective victims. There were 72 sexual trafficking victims age 12 and under. This was an increase of 52 victims (260%) over the prior year. The age range of all Sexual Trafficking victims is from age 2 to age 65. The number of all

confirmed victims was 438 (64%), and the number of high risk (prospective) victims was 219 (32%). Twenty-four (24) victims (6%) did not have a victim status identified. The increases for adults and juveniles can be partly attributed to an increase in the number of agencies providing data.

With the motto: “Redeeming the Soul of America,” the current areas of focus of the SCLC New Orleans Chapter are: education; criminal justice; economic sustainability; and healthcare. Specifically, the Chapter has aggressively engaged in Voter Engagement to include registration, education, and active participation. In addition, the Justice for Girls Committee centers on assisting young girls to reach their greatest potential. Also, the Chapter partnered with the Peace Keepers of New Orleans to receive community engagement training. Another partnership is with the Louisiana Region of the American Red Cross, assisting with the “Sound the Alarm” Campaign which educates residents on the importance of having an escape plan in the event of a fire and to provide free smoke detectors. Members of the Chapter actively participate in the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Holiday Planning Commission for the City of New Orleans and have entered into a memorandum of understanding with faculty from Southern University and Dillard University to provide a series of forums on justice. Finally, the Chapter initiated a “keep toy guns from our children” campaign. That campaign seeks to eliminate “realistic-looking” toy guns from area stores and homes.

It is our belief that the issue of economic disparity is an issue that Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would be fighting against today, as he did with the creation of Operation Breadbasket and other similar programs. The SCLC New Orleans Chapter will continue in the tradition of Dr. King, by developing, partnering and collaborating with programs that will close the economic gap, enhance the education of our youth, address employment and stimulate economic development within working poor, poor and “po” communities.

For more information, visit our website at [www.sclcnola.org](http://www.sclcnola.org); or, contact us at [sclcnola@gmail.com](mailto:sclcnola@gmail.com). sclc



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*I envision SCLC becoming an organization with a very strong global presence. To support this vision, I am focused on building a worldwide network that is interconnected with others in a very real and significant way.*

**– DR. CHARLES STEELE JR.**

Dr. Charles Steele Jr., SCLC International HQ, Atlanta  
Photo: Faith Swift



# In the Shadow of a King

BY HAROLD MICHAEL HARVEY

Charles Steele, Jr. was 22 years old on the day that Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on the third-floor balcony of a colored motel in Memphis, Tennessee. By that time, King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference had won two important victories.

First, congressional passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This measure opened areas of public accommodations to the nation's Negro citizens. Despite King's work in this area, on his April 1968 visit to Memphis, he chose to patronize the Black owned Lorraine Motel.

Secondly, the next year, King did something that President Lyndon Baines Johnson had told him a year earlier it would be impossible to do. He had maneuvered congress into placing the 1965 Voting Rights Act on Johnson's desk. This Bill codified federal oversight into state and local elections in the American South, among other things, requiring Justice Department approval to any changes made to election laws – primarily in the “deep south”– where the vote had been denied to Negroes since the death of Reconstruction.

Both legislative achievements grew out of civil disobedience, bloodshed and the loss of life. Such is the ethos of SCLC: struggles, deaths, and monumental achievements. Those who signed on to work for the civil rights goals of this organization understood and embraced this methodology. Although, time and the skillful use of this stratagem brought about many different tools, there are members and affiliates of SCLC who want to continue to wage the war against “poverty, war and militarism” via the affliction and death inherent in this tool.

By age 22, Steele had gained valuable civil rights experience. In 1954, he was eight years old when the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People successfully overturned Plessy versus Ferguson. This epic case outlawed the segregated caste system that economically and socially separated white citizens from Black citizens in America.

Today, he aptly notes that “Every significant civil rights advancement made in America, except the Brown versus Board of Education case, has been brought about through the work of SCLC.”

He is extremely proud of this fact.

In 1954, the US Supreme Court declared, “that public education should be desegregated with all deliberate speed.” Steele was ready for the desegregated school, but his parents, a mortician and an elementary school teacher, sent him off to school in the segregated Black school system in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. It was separate from the school attended by white kids from Tuscaloosa and unequal in terms of educational facilities and learning resources.

During this time, Steele had a dream. The University of Alabama campus abutted “The Bottom,” the segregated Black neighborhood where he lived. The Black kids were not allowed onto the campus, so during baseball season, they would sit on the outfield fence that separated the races and watch white college students play baseball. Steele dreamed of sitting inside the stadium to watch a baseball game. Over time, the University of Alabama relaxed its policy and allowed Blacks to attend their baseball games in designated segregated seating. Steele knew in his heart that there was something inherently unfair in being relegated to second class citizenship.

Then in 1963, he was hit with the SCLC bug. In his book, *Easier to Obtain than to Maintain: The Globalization of Civil Rights* (Cascade Publishing House, 2016, Atlanta, p. xxix), Steele tells the story this way:

“I remember the 1963 Civil Rights Movement in my hometown of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, as if it was yesterday. A young man at the time, I was active in the ‘Movement.’ My friends and family lived on every word of Dr. Martin Luther King. The Tuscaloosa community was especially fortunate to have Reverend T. Y. Rogers, a member of Dr. King's staff living and pastoring in our town. Reverend Rogers held weekly rallies, usually on Monday nights at the First African Baptist Church where he pastored.”

Rogers had a big influence on the type of civil rights leader Steele would ultimately become. In 1963, the Tuscaloosa News captured the fiery rhetoric of Rogers. You can see similarities in the retorts of Steele today. During a Monday night Mass Meeting Rogers averred:

“We will continue to demand that justice be served. The United States Constitution and the rights of every American

citizen must be protected. We will not stop, we will not back down. We will march, we will have sit-ins, and we will boycott every business in this town [Tuscaloosa] that refuses to respect the dignity and rights of all citizens regardless of color. We will not stop until Jim Crow laws and segregation are removed from this town and everywhere else in this country.”

Coming under the tutelage of Rogers, Steele learned King’s approach to civil rights agitation. Thus, it came as no surprise that as a young adult, Steele would lead the local Tuscaloosa SCLC Chapter and that he would eventually become State President of the Alabama Chapter of SCLC.

As a young civil rights activist, Steele once barricaded himself in the Tuscaloosa Board of Education office for about a week. He refused to come out until concessions were made on providing equal educational opportunities for Black children in his hometown. After days without food and water, Steele emerged famished and victorious.

The hometown rallied around their native son, electing him as one of the first Black members of the city council and later sending him to the State Senate in Montgomery. As a

Lowery retired in 1998. He was succeeded by Martin Luther King, III., son of a major organizer of SCLC.

King, III had not grown into the leader he is today, and the board of old civil rights stalwarts had a hard time following his leadership. Perhaps they expected him to be his father, which of course, no one could ever be. No Black leader in this country has ever had Dr. King’s training in religion, philosophy and politics. No Black leader, not even President Barack Obama, can avoid being in the shadow of King. The young King moved the National SCLC headquarters from the Masonic building on “Sweet” Auburn Avenue to Edgewood Avenue in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Historic District.

Suffice it to say, SCLC on the backdrop of the Clinton Presidency and coupled with an improvement in the condition of middle-class Blacks, entered a quiet period in its history. As did all civil rights organizations. They all began a search for relevancy in the new millennium.

When King, III resigned in 2004 to pursue other opportunities, the SCLC board turned to the steady hand of Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, whom Dr. King had called

“*Dr. Steele was a natural choice. He is not a newcomer. He is clear on his values, which are consistent with the values of SCLC. He does not bite his tongue...*”

– DR. BERNARD LAFAYETTE JR.

city councilman and state legislator, he learned how to build relationships, which enabled him to negotiate deals without the necessity of facing the police violence which characterized marches during the leadership of King.

While Steele engrossed himself in negotiating a deal to bring a Mercedes Benz manufacturing plant to a Tuscaloosa suburb, to bring high paying jobs for the Tuscaloosa Black community, the national civil rights movement stalled. With the 1992 election of President William Jefferson Clinton, Black people felt they had elected the first Black President. Clinton, a southerner from Arkansas knew the language of good race relations. Black leaders felt comfortable with him and let down their guard. Civil rights activism was at an all time low. Towards the end of Clinton’s second term, Dr. Joseph Lowery retired as the President and CEO of SCLC.

For the first 41 years, SCLC was led by three men - King, Ralph David Abernathy and Lowery -all of whom were included in the original seven conveners of the organization. Fred Shuttlesworth would later serve after the organization declined in the early years of the 21st century. The remaining conveners Ella Baker, C. K. Steele, and Bayard Rustin never served as President. King, Abernathy and Lowery were steady at the helm of the premiere civil rights organization in the 20th century. They had a firm grasp on the founding principles of SCLC.

the most “courageous man he knew.” Shuttlesworth, never a man able to tolerate foolishness well, quickly grew tired of the palace intrigue on the board and went back home to Birmingham.

The board looked for someone outside of the founding inner circle. Charles Steele, Jr. was their leader. At the time he was growing in stature and power as a senator in the Alabama Legislature. The organization was broke. The rent on the building was due, the lights and telephones were cut-off and the staff was living on promises that one day soon, they would receive a paycheck.

Steele heard the call. It tugged at him. Since the early 1960s when he listened to Rev. T. Y. Rogers during Monday night Mass Meetings, SCLC had held a special place in his heart. On November 12, 2004 Steele left his seat in the Alabama Senate and drove over to Atlanta, Georgia. The first night in Atlanta, Steele called his wife Kathleen and told her he had checked into a five-star hotel and would send for her in a few days. Instead, he fell asleep in his car the first night he was in town. The next day he visited with Rev. Timothy Flemming at Mount Carmel Baptist Church.

He told Flemming about his dream: “As a result of the changing face of America, going forward, we must revolutionize the way we think about our approach to conflict reconciliation, economic development, and increasing our world-wide exposure.”

Flemming was so impressed with the new direction that Steele wanted to take SCLC, that he, in the Biblical sense, “sowed a seed of \$25,000” into SCLC to keep it afloat.

Steele paid the rent, turned on the lights and telephones, then he got busy with plans to build a permanent home for SCLC.

“Before I became President and CEO of SCLC, only one civil rights organization (NAACP) in this country had ever built a headquarters from the ground up. If we were going to make civil rights a permanent institution in America, we needed our own building, we needed a place where we can hold workshops on nonviolence,” Steele said.

Steele rolled up his sleeves and went to work. He lobbied corporate America to partner with SCLC to build a state-of-the-art headquarters on Auburn Avenue, two doors down the street from where Dr. King had his office. The public utility kicked in \$20 million for the construction of the building.

Under the leadership of Steele, SCLC marched when it was necessary as in the 2006 case of the “Jena Six” and at other times he brokered peace between a group of Black Jews and the Israeli government.

“I envision SCLC becoming an organization with a very strong global presence. To support this vision, I am focused on building a worldwide network that is interconnected with others in a very real and significant way,” Steele said of his vision for SCLC in the 21st century.

In 2009, the construction of the headquarters building was completed. When SCLC moved into the building, it was free and clear of any debt. The organization was able to make payroll and meet its expenses. Steele had done what he was brought on board to do, so he resigned to pursue a career in international consulting.

Soon after Steele departed, there was in-fighting on the board. Some members of the board indebted the headquarters building, and checks were written on the organization’s bank account without accountability. There were lawsuits and counter suits. Little civil rights work was being done.

“Leadership on the board level was not that good,” said Dr. Bernard Lafayette. “I was not chair of the board at that time, I was just a board member. We went through several presidents, which is problematical. When I became chairman of the board, I looked for a leader who could raise money, manage a staff and had the ability to identify the critical issues that had to be addressed,” Lafayette continue.

SCLC again turned to a proven and trusted leader. In 2012, Steele was asked to come back to get the ship back on course.

“Dr. Steele was a natural choice. He is not a newcomer. He is clear on his values, which are consistent with the values of SCLC. He does not bite his tongue. He is a family man and the fact that he gives him sympathy towards people in prison and those living in poverty. Anything that he would say is in the best of the people,” Lafayette said.

Steele came back and cleared up the debt on the building, “so SCLC will always have a home,” he said at the time. The board rewarded him by naming the international headquarters, The Charles Steele, Jr. Building.

“I have to say that Dr. Steele is the number one reason that SCLC is still in business today. Look around you, SNCC is gone and CORE is gone, but because of Steele SCLC is still here,” Lafayette said.

Now a group of disgruntled civil rights warriors in search of the glory days of SCLC have started a petition to force Steele and Lafayette to resign. Marching and protesting is what these warriors did in the second half of the 20th century and marching is what they want to do in the first quarter of the 21st century. They applaud Steele for joining a voter’s suppression law suit in Georgia but decry him for not yelling racism loud enough in the streets.

As Steele lingers in the shadow of King, he has the added burden of giving SCLC relevancy into the next century, while the warriors of old clamor for his demise.

“It’s like Jesus and the fig tree,” Steele posited, “God gave us a gift in SCLC, but the people had stopped being fruitful. When I saw the shape that SCLC was in, I said to myself, God is about to curse SCLC if she doesn’t start bearing fruit again. These critics were here before I came to SCLC the first time. They were here when I came back, but they were not bearing fruit. Now they claim we are doing a poor job, hello somebody,” Steele said, as only he can say “hello somebody.”

“My job is bringing the street to the suite and the suite to the street,” he said.

Steele believes he can negotiate monumental achievements without shedding blood and without the assassinations of the 1960s. It is an extension of the behind-the-scenes negotiations that King orchestrated in winning passage of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. It is the nitty gritty work that champions civil rights. It is not as romanticized as marching down the street with several hundred thousand protesters waving placards and shouting slogans.

Several years ago, in his home Rev. C. T. Vivian, King’s Director of Affiliate Chapters, revealed the following to this writer.

“Following the passage of the Voting Rights Act, I told Martin (Dr. King) that he had brought about all the change that could be done in this generation. I left the organization to develop a social service program in Chicago and was not around the last two years of his life. Many of us had left before Martin started the “Poor People’s Campaign. We thought it was time to use other methods to solidify the benefits of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voters Rights Act of 1965,” Vivian said.

This seems to have been the consensus coming from King’s inner circle. It’s hard to imagine that at 90 years of age King would still be a proponent of street marches as the central means to bring about social change.

In any event, Steele remains steadfast on the case. He toils in the shadow of King. This is precisely why his labor of love is misunderstood.

“I’ve saved this organization twice,” Steele said, adding, “I’m not going anywhere.” sclc

*Harold Michael Harvey is an American novelist and essayist.*



John Hope Bryant and Andrew Young during a special screening of “Andrew Young Presents: The Color of Money” honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s dream of financial inclusion.

## The Color of Money, Says Andrew Young, is Green

*Andrew Young presents “The Color of Money”, earmarking the 50th anniversary of Dr. King’s assassination – continuing SCLC’s Poor People’s Campaign.*

BY MAYNARD EATON

**I**t is no accident Ambassador Andrew Young ends 2018—the 50th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination in Memphis—with the airing of “The Color of Money”, the latest in the “Andrew Young Presents” documentary TV series.

The horror of that moment in Memphis—and the ever-present spirit of Martin Luther King, Jr.—has Young confront what he calls the “unfinished business” of his commander-in-chief, his teacher, and his friend.

In short, poverty.

The two-term Atlanta mayor and thrice-elected Georgia Congressman shared this as the impetus the documentary segment at the Dec. 11th, 2018 VIP screening and panel discussion in the very Hyatt Regency ballroom Dr. King held his last annual SCLC staff meeting.

Young points out in a promotional video about “The Color of Money”, that of the triple evils Dr. King emphasized in redeeming the soul of America—race, war, and poverty—“the one we have just started struggling with is poverty.”

Young framed the “evil” of poverty this way: If you don’t vote, you’re a slave...If you don’t understand money and capitalism, you are even more of a slave—economically. This poverty “evil” impacts blacks and whites alike, Young emphasized.

Explaining why the title of the documentary is “perfect”, Young begins, “The Color of Money—it’s not black

or white.” Pointing to his tie, he finishes with a slight smile, “It’s green.”

He went on: “People struggle with their money problems, regardless of what color that they are. It’s important to understand the meaning of the economy—to respect money, and understand it. Just like it’s important to understand democracy and to get out and vote.”

Young went further in laying out the dynamics of the poverty “evil”, even suggesting “let’s not just talk about poor people.” Young ensured that the talk was not just by blacks about blacks, either. Young invited Dennis Lockhart, former President of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, who is white, to be one of the three panelists.

“You cannot wait to finish 4 years of college, or get an MBA—to be active in today’s finance world,” stressed Young, a former Congress member of the Banking and Urban Affairs and Rules Committees...“You get a college degree and four credit cards—and you trade in intellectual slavery for plastic slavery... Money and finance have got to become a part of everyone’s curriculum.”

The last words were spoken during the panel discussion in response to a question from the VIP audience. The inquiry dealt with why Young had stated in the documentary that a 700 credit score in today’s American economy is just as important as a college degree—perhaps even more.

Dennis Lockhart added weight to the criticality and strategic focus of addressing credit scores. The initiative is a

major theme in “The Color of Money” documentary.

Confirming that the income/wealth disparity in America is “worse than many years ago”, Lockhart expressed there are “many, many reasons” as to why the question “Why are people poor?” is still a pertinent, pressing question 50 years after King’s assassination.

“The answer isn’t just one thing,” Lockart acknowledged, “but one element is people being smarter about how they use money.” Dennis conveyed his opinion that focusing on improving people’s credit score was “simply brilliant—so concrete, so real, so actionable—you can do something about it.”

Founder, Chairman, and CEO of Operation HOPE—John “Hope” Bryant—used graphic terms and images to paint the picture—particularly the impact—of the “economic slavery” condition/terminology introduced by Ambassador Young.

“Credit scores... it’s simplistic,” Bryant explained. “It doesn’t require someone else to love you. To admire you. To respect you... In fact, if your credit score goes up 40 points, what happens to your self-esteem?” The attending audience murmured, “Goes up.”

He continued: “Your confidence [goes up]... Your belief in the banking system [goes up]... Your ability to negotiate yourself into this world... Half of African Americans... have a credit score below 620... You cannot get a small business loan below a score of 700. Half of African Americans are locked out of... the free enterprise system... You pay the most—and get the least.”

Quoting interest rates for car loans as a real life example, Bryant emphasized, “If you have [a credit score of] 550, your interest rate is 18-24%—if you have 700+, your interest rate is 2%. Night... and day.”

SCLC National Communications Director Maynard Eaton posed the question of Ambassador Young, “So is the work of Operation HOPE a continuation of Dr. King’s Poor People’s Campaign?” The question fleshed out the background inference being made in the documentary as well as in the panel’ discussion there was potential momentum for a financial empowerment “movement.” Equivalent in scope, perhaps, to impacting poverty as Dr. King’s Poor People’s Campaign had intended. In his extended tenure as SCLC President, Dr. Charles Steele, Jr. has consistently communicated about “continuing in the shadow” and in pursuit of Dr. King’s Poor People’s Campaign objectives.

Ambassador Young’s and panelists’ answers were elaborated affirmations.

Attending panelist Susan Johnson, Chief Marketing Officer of SunTrust Bank—a major funder and strategic partner—communicated she saw parallels between Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s Poor People’s Campaign and the financial empowerment initiative that was unfolding.

“I’m thrilled that so many people came out to talk about this topic,” Johnson enthused. “It’s a topic that’s very important to me personally... but also very important to SunTrust. You

heard [Chairman/CEO] Bill Rogers say [in the documentary], ‘Build your community. Build your bank.’ That’s the fundamental guiding principle of what we do... So we’re trying to carry on some of what you [Ambassador Young] started in the Poor People’s Campaign, we’re trying to do our part.”

A part, Ambassador Andrew Young has called “understanding money”.

“Understanding money,” Young mused with the VIP audience. “Frederick Douglass understood we needed access to capital.” Young went on to share the history of the Freedman’s Bank—a concept that Douglass proposed and then-President Abraham Lincoln came to an agreement about. “He [Lincoln] gets killed 3 days later. Martin Luther King starts talking about money...” The ambassador’s voice trails off.



Andrew Young with Martin Luther King, Jr.

Ambassador Andrew Young at 86—having endured the re-living and re-telling of the fateful, horrific scene in Memphis, TN of fifty years ago, physically collapsing momentarily at Fisk University shortly thereafter this year—has said he can never forget the relentless imperative and injunction of his commander-in-chief, his teacher, and his friend, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

It is the “unfinished business.”

### About “The Color of Money”:

This final segment of the “Andrew Young Presents” documentary series for 2018—now in its 11th year of national syndication—is being aired across the United States on 140 television stations through the month of December 2018. It speaks to the final, unfinished work focused on poverty eradication by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his team of advisors—including (now Ambassador) Andrew Young.

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*Carrie L. Williams contributed to this story.*



The funeral of George Dorsey and Dorothy Malcolm, two of the four African American victims of a mob lynching, near Monroe, Georgia, in 1946. AP Photo

## Tyrone Brooks Talks About the Moore's Ford Bridge Lynching's Meaning and Legacy Now!

*A Compelling 1 on 1 Conversation with SCLC Magazine Editor Maynard Eaton*

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was going there next, and on April 4, 1968 SCLC field staffer, Tyrone Brooks, was standing at the Monroe, Georgia airport to meet him for his arrival from Memphis. Dr. King was coming to launch a new SCLC Civil Rights Movement, at the behest of his friend Dan Young, the activist coroner, who had buried the four victims of the Moore's Ford Bridge Lynching's and was an aggrieved protester of their murders. Dr. King never arrived. And, sadly we know why!

The 1946 Moore's Ford Bridge mass murders by a white mob was a trauma and tragedy that consumed Martin King's head and heart since he was a 17-year-old Morehouse College student. It remained on his psyche and troubled him for years.

"It's billed by the media as the last mass lynching in America," says former Georgia State Rep. Tyrone Brooks during a riveting and revealing December interview at our SCLC headquarters on Auburn Avenue in Atlanta. Brooks, who remains a seasoned and savvy SCLC operative, tells me, "Nobody's going to be arrested. We know that".

Brooks continues, "Dan Young used to come to our old building there on the corner of Auburn Avenue, and he would bring money and resources, and he and Dr. King had a unique relationship.

"Young comes into our church meeting from Monroe and he said, 'Martin, I need you and Ralph [Abernathy] to come on and help me with this Moore's Ford case because the suspects are getting up in age now and we don't want this case to just, you know, disappear.'"

Dr. King said, 'Dan, I promise you, Ralph and I are coming to help you as soon as we finish up with the sanitation workers in Memphis.' That never happened, but it has been Brooks' civil rights cause and crusade ever since then. Moore's Ford Bridge has been Tyrone Brooks' life calling and civil rights commitment.

Brooks recalls remorsefully what he learned about that April 4, 1968: "We have this theory that it was all set up to keep Dr King out there for another hour and that's why he was on that balcony talking to Jesse Jackson and Ben Branch and James Orange when he was assassinated.

"I was devastated. I was crying like a baby and I drove from the airport in Monroe, and I got the news from Walter Cronkite, CBS News" He said, 'Ladies and Gentlemen, Dr Martin Luther King is dead.' "I felt like I died that day."

"As time went by, we started working on The Poor People's campaign, The Poor Peoples March on Washington, you know, all kinds of stuff. But I never ever, ever forgot about Moore's Ford because that's where I was. I never forgot about Moore's Ford. America's Civil Rights Movement leaders" will never forget!"

**EATON:** But what is the new story about the Moore's Ford Bridge Lynching you want reported now?

**BROOKS:** "The story today is we've gotten to the point now where we've gathered all these files. We have the FBI files; we've got the GBI files, and we've had access to the grand jury testimony that a federal judge ordered released and then the federal government came back and said, we don't want it released. But it was already out.

"Syracuse University is our repository of this information. We have two lawyers up there, the Cold Case Institute that works with us. So, we have reached a point now since the cases have been closed by the FBI and the GBI, we can say truthfully that we have solved the Moore's Ford Bridge Lynching."

**EATON:** Yet, without any arrests, you have continued to promote and produce reenactments of the Moore's Ford Bridge Lynching every year to focus media attention on the injustice, correct?

**BROOKS:** "Correct. We have a reenactment in July. We have a march on the bridge in April, the last Saturday in July we conduct the reenactment."

**EATON:** And that's been going on 15 years?

**BROOKS:** "Been going on 15 years. We're getting ready for the 16th annual march on April 6th of 2019. That's when we'll conduct the 16th annual march on the Moore's Ford Bridge to remember Dr King and his initiating this movement as a 17 year old student"

**EATON:** Now the 16th year, there's seemingly a new attitude; there's new disclosure that is not shrouded in mystery anymore?

**BROOKS:** "In 1999, I walked into Gov. Roy Barnes' office and he asked, 'Where you been today?'" I said, "I've been over in Monroe, Georgia." He said, 'You're working on that Moore's Ford case, aren't you?' I said, "Well, you know, it's been a part of my life for a long time with SCLC and now in the legislature." He said, 'What you want me to do, Tyrone?' I said, "Roy, why don't you order this case reopened. He didn't hesitate. He walked over to his desk, got on his laptop, emailed Buddy Nix, and he said in the email, 'I'm here with Tyrone Brooks, and we're talking about the Moore's Ford Bridge Lynching. I'm ordering this case reopened with the full resources of the state of your disposal.'

Buddy Nix, who had worked for the FBI, came back to Georgia and Gov. Zell Miller appointed him director of the GBI. Buddy gets the email and he responded, 'Yes, Governor, we're on the case.'

"A year later, after the GBI followed up on leads and went all over the country interviewing people, they gave us a briefing in the state capitol one Friday morning, early at 7:00 AM, 2001.

Buddy Nix walked in with his team of 20 agents from the GBI and he said, 'Mr. Representative I just want you to know something. We're honored to be on this case and I want to thank

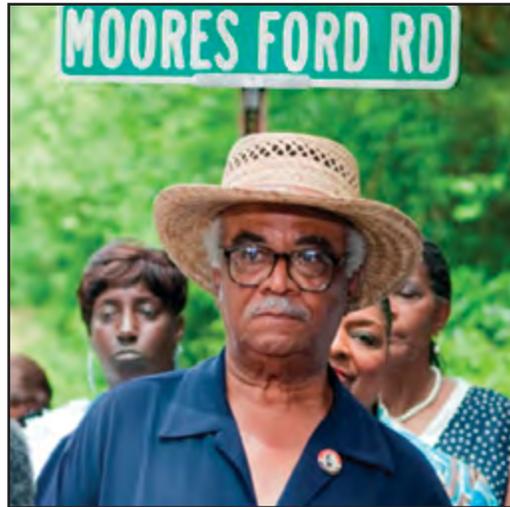
you for asking, Governor Bonds to reopen it.' I said, "It was the easiest sell to Roy because Roy was a law student at the University of Georgia down the road in Athens, GA. And he told me that, his law professors would always talk about Moore's Ford in law classes and why no one was ever arrested and why no prosecutions ever occurred.

**EATON:** So, it has always been a celebrated and controversial case because there's been no justice?

**BROOKS:** "Because of the dynamic of four black people being lynched when they were demanding to vote. They were lynched at a bridge openly and publicly because you know all these lynching's occurred in the daytime. They didn't lynch us at night."

**EATON:** It was a public gathering, a public spectacle?

**BROOKS:** "Yes, a public gathering. It's billed as the last mass lynching in America. That's the way journalists refer to it. But Maynard, here's the key to putting us on the right track, Buddy Nix said to me and the group sitting there that morning, that the Moore's Ford Bridge Lynching never would have occurred were not for active participation of law enforcement agencies and he said the case never would have



Tyrone Brooks, Photo: Jeoff Davis, Creative Loafing

remained unsolved. Those same agencies being complicit in creating a conspiracy of silence now. I said, Gov. Barnes, I don't expect anybody to ever be arrested and prosecuted. In 1946 was they were all in the Klan. You had to be a card-carrying member of the KKK to become a sheriff. Chief of police, get a job with the GBI or, any position of power. Your connection to the Klan was your inroads to power and we didn't understand that until I think we began to study the history of America in depth in terms of power. any symbols of power. Buddy Nix said law enforcement was really leading the mob and drove people to the bridge.

**EATON:** Nix told you about this, about how law enforcement had been complicit? Well, why did you continue? Why did all this continue and other investigations?

**BROOKS:** "We continued on. We were so determined to work it and to bring out all the history that we could find and discover. We've interviewed many, many people. We have solved the Moore's Ford Bridge Lynching in this way. We now know that law enforcement agencies were responsible. We know that former Georgia Governor Eugene Talmadge, who was running for his fourth term as governor, was a major instigator because he was there, and his speeches were found in the archives and his fingerprints and footprints all over Monroe and Walton County. All this combined to create an atmosphere where people felt like we can do this. We can send a signal to these, you know, use the N word. They better stay away from the polls because if they don't, this is what will happen to them. The whole voting issue got lost in these lynching's.

**EATON:** That's really what it was about?

**BROOKS:** "It was about voting.. The real story here from SCLC, is that the disciples of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, have solved America's last mass lynching, the Moore's Ford Bridge Lynching case in Monroe, Georgia, which was launched as a movement by 17 year old Martin Luther King Jr while a student at Morehouse.

**EATON:** You say solved now, but you knew much of this before, right? What's the difference today than it was last year.

**BROOKS:** "We didn't know the law enforcement angle as we know it now. and here's the point. The law enforcement agencies from multiple counties created a conspiracy of silence and the grand jury that was convened called people over and over for months and months and months, and nobody would ever implicate these law enforcement groups because they were afraid. They were like, well, if I tell, I tell the law enforcement officials that it was the sheriff or the chief of police for one of these counties, I might end up lynched.

**EATON:** How do you feel about this now? You've put a lot of time and energy into this and nobody's going to jail. It really remains an open case.

**BROOKS:** "It's open for all practical purposes. We do not expect anyone to be arrested and prosecuted even though some of the suspects are still alive today. They're in their eighties and nineties."

**EATON:** Do you feel frustrated? You've been doing this for a while, it's your life.

**BROOKS:** "Really, this has been the biggest part of my life. I always say this has been the most difficult dangerous assignment in my civil rights career."

**EATON:** Why should America care? Why? Why would we still care about something that old?

**BROOKS:** "Maynard, we should care because justice delayed is justice denied and we should care as much about the lynching's at the Moore's Ford Bridge, which is America's last mass lynching, as we care about the Holocaust."



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# The Moore's Ford Lynching Story: THE BEGINNING

By D. Alan Mills

In the aftermath of WW II, there was considerable social unrest in the United States, especially in the South. African-American men who were veterans, resented being treated as second-class citizens after returning home. But many white supremacists resented them and wanted to reestablish dominance. The number of lynchings of black people rose after the war, with twelve lynched in the Deep South in 1945 alone. The states' exclusion of most black people from the political system had been maintained since the turn of the century, despite several court challenges.

In April 1946, the Supreme Court ruled that white primaries were unconstitutional, making way for at least some African Americans to vote in Democratic Party primaries. In Georgia, some black people prepared to vote in the summer's primary, against the resistance of most whites. In the 21st century, some commentators have related this to the lynching's as a voting rights issue.

In July 1946, J. Loy Harrison employed two young African-American couples as sharecroppers on his farm in Walton County Ga. The first couple consisted of George W. Dorsey and his wife Mae (Murray) Dorsey. George W. Dorsey (born November 1917), a veteran of WW II who had been back in the United States less than nine months after having served nearly five years in the Pacific War. He was married to Mae (Murray) Dorsey (born September 20, 1922), who was then seven months pregnant. The other couple consisted of Roger Malcom (born March 22, 1922) and his wife Dorothy (born July 25, 1926).

On July 11, Roger Malcom had allegedly stabbed Barnette Hester, a white man; Malcom was arrested and held in the county jail in Monroe, Ga. The Walton county seat. On July 25, Harrison drove Malcom's wife Dorothy and the Dorsey's to Monroe, where he personally posted the \$600 bail for Roger Malcom to be freed. At the time, Hester was still hospitalized from his wounds.

Harrison drove with the two couples back to his farm. At 5:30 p.m. that day, he was forced to stop his car near the Moore's Ford Bridge between Monroe and Watkinsville, where the road was blocked by a gang of 15 to 20 armed white men. According to Loy Harrison:

A big man who was dressed mighty proud in a double-breasted brown suit was giving the orders. He pointed to Roger Malcom and said, "We want that nigger." Then

he pointed to George Dorsey, my nigger, and said, "We want you, too, Charlie." I said, "His name ain't Charlie, he's George." Someone said "Keep your damned big mouth shut. This ain't your party."

Harrison watched. One of the black women identified one of the assailants. The mob took both the women to a big oak tree and tied them beside their husbands. The mob fired three point-blank volleys. The coroner's estimate counted sixty shots fired at close range. They shot and killed them near Moore's Ford Bridge spanning the Apalachee River, 60 miles (97 km) east of Atlanta. After Mae Murray Dorsey was shot, a man cut her fetus from her body with a knife.

The mass lynching's received national coverage and generated outrage. There were large protests and marches in New York City and Washington, DC against the lynching's. President Harry S. Truman created the President's Committee on Civil Rights. The Truman administration introduced anti-lynching legislation in Congress, but was unable to get it passed against the opposition of the Southern Democratic bloc in the Senate. Together with outrage about the Colum-



**About 10,000 marched in silence down 5th Avenue in New York City to protest lynchings of African Americans across the U.S.**

bia, Tenn. 1946 race riot, the Moore's Ford lynching's garnered awareness and support from more of the white public for the Civil Rights Movement.

Georgia Governor Ellis Arnall offered a reward of \$10,000 for information, to no avail. After the FBI interviewed nearly 3000 people in their six-month investigation, they issued 100 subpoenas. The investigation received little cooperation, no one confessed, and perpetrators were offered alibis for their whereabouts. The FBI found little physical evidence, and the prosecutor did not have sufficient grounds to indict anyone. No one was brought to trial for the crimes! sclc



# Iconic Civil Rights Group Honors Susan G. Esserman

**Esserman is the founder and executive director of the University of Maryland Support, Advocacy, Freedom and Empowerment (SAFE) Center for Human Trafficking Survivors.**

BY MARY T. PHELAN

**A**s a girl, Ambassador Susan G. Esserman, JD, founder and executive director of the University of Maryland Support, Advocacy, Freedom and Empowerment (SAFE) Center for Human Trafficking Survivors, was inspired by the work of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the historic civil rights organization whose founding and longtime president was Martin Luther King Jr.

The SCLC, whose roots trace back to the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955, when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white man, awarded Esserman with its Justice for Girls Award for her advocacy in assisting survivors of human trafficking.

“It is such an honor to participate in this very inspiring program and join the other honorees today,” Esserman said as she accepted the award July 13 at the SCLC’s 60th annual convention at the Renaissance Hotel in Washington, D.C. “It is especially meaningful to receive this award from SCLC, whose work has inspired me since my childhood.

“Your powerful history and enduring legacy have changed our nation and your commitment to social, economic, and political justice and to the principles and vision of Dr. King is as vital today as ever,” Esserman told the

estimated 175 SCLC members in attendance.

“Your attempts to bring attention to the human trafficking situation are pivotal as so many are unaware of the extent of human trafficking across the country and how brutal it often can be,” said Esserman, a visiting professor with a joint appointment at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law and the University of Maryland School of Social Work (SSW). She also is a partner at the international law firm of Steptoe & Johnson LLP. She served in four senior positions in the Clinton administration, including deputy U.S. trade representative with the rank of ambassador.

In May 2016, the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) and the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) announced the opening of the SAFE Center near College Park, the country’s first university-based program to combine comprehensive services for sex and labor trafficking survivors, legal case management, medical, mental health and economic empowerment with research and advocacy to combat trafficking. It is an initiative of UMCP and UMB through its formal collaborative program for innovation, the University of Maryland Strategic Partnership: MPowering the State, and draws on the combined resources

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**L-R: Event host SCLC's first lady Cathelean C. Steele; honoree Susan G. Esserman; and Josephine Mourning, chairperson of the Prince George County (Md.) SCLC Chapter.**

and the wide range of disciplines at both institutions. Since the SAFE Center opened, more than 80 trafficking survivors have been served.

In her acceptance remarks, Esserman recalled how at the March on Washington in 1963, King called on the nation to “make real for all within its borders America’s founding ideals—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

“But the tens of thousands of human trafficking victims in America know neither liberty, nor happiness. Their lives play out against a backdrop of intolerable cruelty,” Esserman said. “So much remains to be done, not only to support victims in escaping from their traffickers, but also to help restore them to a life of dignity. Only with a sustained and broad-based effort, working together, can the victims of human trafficking be freed from the trauma they have endured.”

“We are so proud that Susan Esserman and the SAFE Center have been recognized by the SCLC,” UMB President Jay A. Perman, MD, said. “It’s fitting that this historic organization honor a woman working every day to restore health, happiness, dignity, and power to people who have been so cruelly stripped of them. We’re grateful for the vital support and services Ambassador Esserman provides to the most vulnerable among us.”

SSW Dean Richard P. Barth, PhD, MSW, described Esserman as a “highly skilled and committed fighter for the safety of every client and for policies that fully prevent and respond to the injustice of human trafficking.”

“The intensity of her work to create the SAFE Center and to ensure effective work there is extraordinary,” he said. “The University of Maryland is immensely fortunate to have her applying her talents and helping us to develop greater capacity on this critical area of practice and policy.”

Esserman was one of six honorees receiving awards during the group’s Women’s Empowerment Luncheon, the theme of which was “The Hands of Empowered Women: Reaching Down, Reaching Out, and Reaching Back.” The event was hosted by SCLC first lady Cathelean C. Steele, founder of Justice for Girls, an initiative that seeks to empower girls and heighten awareness of human trafficking within communities. Through seminars, workshops, public forums, roundtable discussions, and partnerships with other organizations, Justice for Girls educates and increases awareness of sex trafficking of children in the United States.

“We honor women who are doing extraordinary things in the community,” Steele said, explaining why Esserman was chosen to receive the Justice for Girls Award. “We really are excited to honor Ambassador Esserman because she is doing great things for the survivors of human trafficking.”

“We are trying to train our girls to feel good about themselves, and to defend themselves, and not to just fall for any and everything, but there are so many girls who get trapped,” Steele continued. “Girls have the comfort of knowing that people like Ambassador Esserman are looking out for them and giving them a second chance.” sclc

*Mary T. Phelan is a Senior Media Relations Specialist at University of Maryland, Baltimore.*



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# The National Black Arts Festival 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

*“Art was a big deal 30 years ago to be focused on the African Diaspora, so we are really excited to be enjoying the celebration and NBAF’s tomorrow’s.”*

— VIKKI MORROW, NBAF President & CEO



Vicki Morrow, photo by Okeeba Jubalo

BY MAYNARD EATON

**N**ow that the National Black Arts Festival [NBAF] has jubilantly celebrated its 30th Anniversary with a well attended \$500 per plate gala, the notable organization finds itself at a crossroads. This is a critical juncture for the revered arts group, NBAF president and CEO Vicki Morrow told WAOK-AM talk show host Rashad Richey recently.

“One of the things that we are trying to do in this 30th anniversary year is make a pivot and start to reimagine how we continue to support the next generation of artists,” Morrow explained to Richey during their live interview. “We will always focus on our established artists because our audiences love to see artists they already know and have been exposed to, but we want to make sure that we are following our mission and make sure we are reaching back to the next generation of artists.”

Founded by former Fulton County Commission Chairman Michael Lomax, and funded by a budget twice its current size, NBAF became a delightfully popular cultural celebration with a 30-year legacy of outdoor festivals showcasing performing artists of different disciplines.

“We have brought some phenomenal artists here of all different disciplines,” said Morrow, who has been the NBAF’s dynamic leader for a year now. “That means visual artists, performing artists, literary, film, theatre –bringing the Black diaspora to Atlanta. So national artists and national audiences would come in the summer to experience Black art.

“[Black] visual artists weren’t displayed as often years ago in museums or in galleries,” Morrow continued. “It was and continues to be important for us as a people to support and experience our culture, and see ourselves through the work of these artists.”

That’s why the NBAF is returning to its roots and dedicating this anniversary to the visual arts, where it’s had its

biggest impact and influence over the years. The anniversary gala recognized renowned artist Radcliffe Bailey.

“Visual arts is the one we are most known for changing lives and making sure those artists really had a platform,” Morrow told Richey’s radio audience. “I remember going to the arts festivals at Greenbriar Mall and/or Piedmont Park and seeing artist display their work—whether they were sculptures or paintings— and getting a chance to take some piece of that home.”

She continued, “One of the things for NBAF is that we must continue to evolve. A lot of our supporters are over 45 years old, so we have to make sure that we continue to reach back to younger audiences, and younger artists.”

Morrow laments that “we’ve missed a generation of young people that understand the importance of collecting and understand how to collect visual art. We can’t let all of the collectors age out.”

Najee Dorsey, founder and CEO of Black Art in America calls Morrow “a breath of fresh air” to America’s black visual artists who believe they’ve “been neglected” over the past decade by NBAF.

Visual artist and passionate arts entrepreneur Okeeba Jubalo gives Morrow high marks for effectively engineering a comeback for the NBAF.

“I think this is definitely a turning point, and it’s a turning point in the right direction because now [NBAF] is willing to listen to what’s happening in the community,” Jubalo said.

Jubalo likens Morrow to the new general manager of a losing professional sports franchise hired to reverse the

teams fortunes. “She’s in that turning it around space, so the negative things attached to the [NBAF] brand were not of her doing. Now she’s trying to undo plays made by other CEO’s.”

When asked is this a new day for the NBAF, Jubalo replies: “It could be, if the execution matches up with the intent.”

But, Imara Canady, board chairman of the Hammond House Museum, is convinced Morrow is a change agent, and NBAF is on the rebound.

“As NBAF celebrates its 30th anniversary, I am encouraged by the great possibilities of what’s in store for its future, under the leadership of Vikki Morrow,” Canady said. “During my extensive tenure in public service, I’ve had the pleasure of personally knowing Vikki and working with her on an array of community projects that have positively impacted this region. Given her executive-level, visionary leadership, her commitment to excellence and her desire to continually be an agent for change in our community, I truly believe that Vikki will build a collaborative coalition of community and arts leaders that will define the next chapters of this critical institution.”

Richey admonished his devoted listeners to support local artists like other cities do. “They get better support if they go to New York, Miami or Charlotte,” he said sadly. We’ve got to stop that.”

The popular political pundit continued, “I think it is important you continue to highlight the arts especially from our perspective. The [NBAF] is something that needs to live on.” sclc



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# LEADING FROM BEHIND

**NCCU playwright and theatre lighting artist Prof. Arthur M. Reese's new musical drama, *A Need Fulfilled*, brings to life the true events of the black nurses who served in WWII for the university's winter theatrical production. Right, actors playing out a scene in the play.**



BY KIARA COOK

Throughout American history, women have always played a significant role in the advancement of the nation and its countless victories. Primarily, men have received recognition for their leadership and accomplishments while the women took a backseat to their success. Despite the circumstances and situations, women have always stood tall next to their male counterparts and worked together in unison to complete any goal and defeat any enemy. However, this great sense of unity between man and woman has been deeply buried by this nation's patriarchal society and we must not let their truths go unheard—truths addressed in the premiere production of *A Need Fulfilled*, which opens February 22, 2019, in Durham, N.C. at North Carolina Central University.

World War II proved crucial to the United States for various reasons, and it directly affected gender roles and racial equality here in America. African-Americans and women were allowed to lend their assistance to further advance the war effort. This was a significant change for Americans, for it allowed countless African-American men and women to share equal opportunities with their Caucasian counterparts.

People have the tendency to confuse and associate leadership with the frontlines. However, not all great leaders lead from the front; some instead wisely guide from the rear of the pack. Nelson Mandela once sagaciously commented, "It is better to lead from behind and to put others in front..." This quote perfectly explains the significant role of the 600 African-American nurses and how they created a model of excellence for future leaders to follow.

There were approximately 600 African-American nurses deployed for the war effort, to provide healthcare assistance to American soldiers. Although they were a part of the American military force and assisted with the war effort, black nurses and soldiers faced great adversity from some colleagues, and their lives were also threatened by the enemy. Their story has been buried deep by society, however, after twelve years of research, Dr. Arthur M. Reese is shining a light on their unimaginable experiences.

NCCU playwright and theatre lighting artist Professor Arthur M. Reese's new musical drama, *A Need Fulfilled*, brings to life the true events of the black nurses who served in WWII for the university's winter theatrical production. He has also intertwined the story of black soldiers who have served throughout American history with that of the nurses. The setting takes place in Africa, the southeast Asian jungles of Burma (now Myanmar), and on the American homefront. The plot focuses on the nurses' and soldiers' journey across the Atlantic to England, the realities of their deployment overseas, and their shocking return to American soil.

Professor Roberta Laws of NCCU, also a world-class performer, is leading the musical direction of the performance. Professor Laws opted to use classic hits from the era as well as sensational original compositions. One of the most notable songs incorporated into the performance, "Take My Hand, Precious Lord," by Jim Reeves, further illustrates the critical necessity of strength, unity, and spiritual faith amongst the characters. The musical selections further enhance the production by creating an emphasis on the experiences that the characters encountered during their

deployment. The piece is produced by Sean Callot of Never Stop Productions. Dr. Reese describes the production as “a historical drama with music that chronicles the struggles of these brave caregivers as they fought at home and overseas to serve their country.”

Furthermore, the purpose of this musical drama is not solely limited to entertainment, but also to enlighten others and provide additional insight into such remarkable black women and men. These 600 extraordinary “melanated” women may not be viewed as your traditional heroines and leaders, yet they ultimately displayed a model of excellence that others are able to use as a guide. They were able to inspire countless African-American women and men who remained in America during the war. This inspiration drove numerous African-Americans to assist with the war effort and to also pursue their career aspirations.

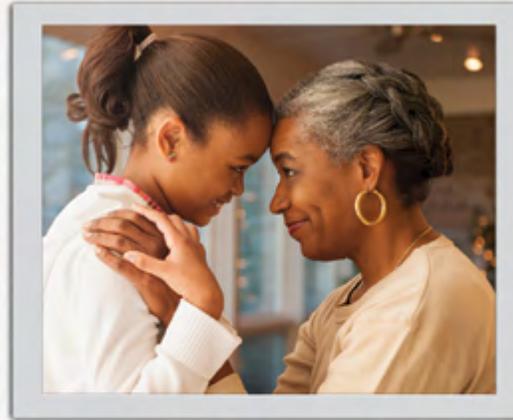
In today’s society, African-American women have a large influence over our communities and currently hold ample leadership titles. The mayor of Atlanta, Keisha Lance Bottoms, is a black woman. The highest-paid female athlete, Serena Williams, is a black woman. One of the top female leaders in the financial sector and on Wall Street, Suzanne Shank, is a black woman. According to Fortune magazine, as of 2018 black women are the fastest increasing group of entrepreneurs, and their number has increased by 322% since 1997. An article in Essence magazine states that “by both race and gender, the study [by the National Center For Education Statistics] also shows that Black women are enrolled in college at a higher percentage than any other group.” These are a few prime examples of what some would consider “Black Girl Magic” and “Black Excellence.”

Conclusively, Black women have displayed an extensive degree of resilience, brilliance, strength, longevity, and grace. In the famous words of the phenomenal Maya Angelou, “Cause I’m a woman. Phenomenally. Phenomenal woman, that’s me.” We must celebrate these black nurses and remember that wise leaders put others before them and guide from behind.

For tickets, please call (919) 530-6242 or visit [www.neverstopprod.com](http://www.neverstopprod.com). [www.sclc](http://www.sclc)



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# Rev. Jasper Williams Jr. Tells Eulogy Critics:

*“I was just telling the truth.”*



BY MAYNARD EATON

**T**he international controversy created by Aretha Franklin’s blistering eulogy continues unabated. The embattled, “OG” Baptist preacher Rev. Jasper Williams Jr., who was handpicked by The Queen of Soul to deliver her last word, has been vehemently savaged by a chorus of social media critics for what his supporters argue was a “courageously correct” assessment that Black America has lost its soul.

Now, according to the Associated Press, Aretha Franklin’s family have weighed in, saying they found Rev. Williams’ “political” eulogy “very offensive and distasteful”, according to Aretha’s nephew Vaughn Franklin.

When he learned of their caustic comments, Williams restrainedly replied to this reporter: “That’s their opinion. I certainly respect their opinion, and I understand it. I just regret they feel that way.”

Since August 31, 2018 Rev. Williams, has either been vilified or widely applauded for his challenge to, if not condemnation of, African Americans. Despite being immersed in this firestorm of controversy, the 75-year old “pulpit prophet” has remained resolute, if not bold and shameless and undaunted.

“You know I don’t care nothing about that,” Williams told me exclusively about social media uproar about his eulogy. “I said we have lost our soul as a race and by that, I mean we have turned our backs on God; that we don’t care what we do or how we live, and I think all of that is pertinent to the success of failure or us as a race.

“I don’t know if they would look upon [the eulogy] as being correct or not, but Aretha was an activist for civil rights in her own way and she always wanted to see our people aggrandize themselves. She posted bail for Angela Davis and it was very, very controversial but she wanted to see the race progress. And, because I’m the eulogist, I’m the one who determines what I want to say at the funeral.”

Rev. Jasper Williams Jr., pastor emeritus of Atlanta’s Salem Bible Church for the past 52 years, is such a renowned and respected Baptist preacher, that his peers and parishioners reverently refer to him simply and succinctly as “Jasper”! He is truly and uniquely one of a kind – so much so that Williams is said to be the “nation’s quintessential African American pulpit preacher.”

“Rev. Jasper Williams is not only one of the most prophetic voices of our time, but one who effectively articulated what the life of Aretha Franklin has meant and will mean to the world,” says Dr. Gerald Durley, pastor emeritus of Atlanta’s Providence Baptist church, and former president of The Concerned Black Clergy.

Rev. Williams was personally requested by Aretha Franklin to eulogize her, he says. “She asked me to do that, so here we are,” Williams told reporters. “I was the eulogist. I feel I did it appropriately. I think I honored Aretha through it and I feel in honoring her, I picked out various conditions going on in our community. I tried to do the best that I could. I meant nobody no harm and yet I meant the truth.”

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Vaughn Franklin disputes that; telling the Associated Press the family selected Williams because he had previously eulogized Franklin's father, minister and civil rights activist C.L. Franklin, 34 years ago. Despite that argument, Williams' "provocative preaching and teaching" says civil rights activist Tyrone Brooks, proved to be so captivating and contentious and compelling, the nation is still buzzing about it.

When asked how he was handling the discord his eulogy has caused, he told a gaggle of journalists following his Sunday service.

"We ought to respect each other enough to listen," he opined. "I don't care what another person's opinion is. My opinion alone is not all gold. I am willing to listen to those kids. They've got somethings about themselves we all ought to pattern after, so if I am going to stand up here, I'm not standing up here to be the Lone Ranger, like I know everything, like I have been everywhere and done everything, because I have not. It is going to take all of us to turn Black America around, even those who don't want to help," he said.

"Jasper" has been preaching since age 7 and was once known as "The Young Son of Thunder" and has contested controversy during various times in his stellar career. And, once again, he finds himself in the national spotlight—unbowed.

Rev. Williams contends his eulogy was designed to challenge, chide and confront African Americans, and laments his message has since been misconstrued.

"We can't expect people outside of our race to do things for us. We have to take some initiative on our own," Williams tells this reporter. "Our problems start at home. In other words, there is no real, real parenting and for that reason our children run wild; we have killings in our streets



Rev. Williams was personally requested by Aretha Franklin to eulogize her.

from the children that have not been properly parented in the home. And, if somebody says something negative about that, they're part of the problem.

"I know I'm correct," Williams adds authoritatively. "From a biblical, spiritual perspective, I don't have to wonder if I'm correct."

Comfortably back at home in his Salem Bible Church pulpit in NW Atlanta, Williams received a standing ovation from a near capacity audience of parishioners and well-wishers. They know their religious leader has been studying and working on this contentious issue for several years. His tribute to Aretha was deliberately and dutifully intended for Black America. It was no mistake.

"Much of what I am about and tried to articulate in that word on that day has been turned around, but I know you know what I'm trying to do," he preached. "I don't want to see Aretha Franklin's life left at the funeral or the graveyard. I want to see Aretha Franklin's life immortalized; to live on forever because she touched so many ethnic groups across this world. So, the mission that we have in terms of bringing

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pastors in from across the nation and putting together our parenting curriculum; getting it in the homes. We need to turn our race around. And, our race cannot be turned around with our hands out begging white folks. Our race can only be turned around if we come from within ourselves, and make it happen.”

Williams also explained to his congregation and, perhaps, his critics that “Black Lives should not matter, Black Lives ought not matter, Black Lives must not matter unless Black people start ‘RESPECT’. I didn’t just go to Aretha’s funeral to say what I said, I’ve been doing this for a long time.

“I’m going to be all right because the one thing I’m not is scared,” he asserted confidently.

There have been dozens of Williams supporters who steadfastly supported the crisp cleric’s comments. Rev. Gerald Durley is among them.

“He has spoken truth to power,” Durley told the Salem congregation. “All of these Black churches ought to be standing with what Jasper Williams has said in his prophetic message. We see the murders, we see the killings, most of us are afraid to go the gas stations in our neighborhood.”

“I’m saddened by the ire, and this intergenerational disconnect where you have these young preachers and educated critical thinkers and how they have no RESPECT, says Bishop Darryl Winston. “I think way Jasper approached it as a senior statesman, I don’t think his intent was to be malicious yet that’s how it has been construed. The irony is his call for unity fell on deaf ears, or did it?”

Newsmakers Live executive producer and co-founder, Jim Welcome says Rev. Williams “went out on a limb” and effectively used Aretha’s eulogy to send a message to Black America.

“Jasper has done what no other preacher has done in recent times when they had the attention of the media and



**Pallbearers carry the gold casket of legendary singer Aretha Franklin after arriving at the Greater Grace Temple in Detroit.**

had a significant portion of the African American community watching,” Welcome says. “It was an eye-opener, an awakening of our condition. He basically said, our race is in disarray and these are some of the key things we need to do to fix it.”

Rev. Williams was asked by reporters if he was distressed or disturbed by the harsh language his critics have pelted him with in the media.

“I understand the pain. I understand the hurt,” he said. “I understand a community where we don’t have any economic growth anymore. We own no drug stores, no grocery stores, no banks. We don’t have anything in our community but devastation, so I understand the pain. I understand the hurt. All I am asking is, I will listen to you and whatever you say to me is fine, but I am not going to respond to you sweet people negatively. All I ask is for you to come on board. I’ll help you, you help us and together we turn our race around,” he answered. sclc

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## Myrna Clayton: Cultural Ambassador and World Bridge Creator

*“It was never just a U.S. thing – it was always a global view.”*

BY CARRIE L. WILLIAMS

**B**orn and raised in a family who experienced the throes of the American Civil Rights Movement, Myrna Clayton has found a unique role for herself in the world. Not just as a singer-performer of Jazz and other American music. Not just as a nonprofit human rights leader for performing artists with disabilities.

Try cultural ambassador. Or even better, a world bridge-creator—creating a world bridge between continents, between cultures, and especially between generations connecting the hearts of people/citizens.

Having her first singing performance at the age of 5 in her father’s church, Myrna’s family moved from Alabama, by way of North Carolina to Atlanta, Georgia in 1969, one year after Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination. Myrna’s family would move into Cascade Heights, then historic Collier Heights, one of the first communities in the nation “built by Blacks for Blacks”.

Her mother, Mrs. Minnie H. Clayton, would be hired by Mrs. Coretta Scott King to be the research librarian at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social

Change, helping to organize the papers of Dr. King, Jr. Myrna was in the first grade when that took place, and from that time forward, she would be in the space of Civil Rights icons, meeting Fannie Lou Hamer and others. She didn’t realize until she was older the ramifications and the

significance of the environment she grew up in.

Myrna reflects, “What I was exposed to as a child—not knowing I was being exposed—has been the impetus all along, I now recognize, in preparing me to be a world bridge-creator for the generations, the cultures, and globalism of today. Even now, it’s still unfolding in my conscience.

“Often, when school would let out, my brother and I would walk to the King Center from Oglethorpe Elementary School, until Mama would get off work, and then we’d all go home together. We learned firsthand to appreciate and honor the sacrifices of Civil Rights workers and foot soldiers, known and unknown.

“It was never just a U.S. thing—it was always a global view.”

Last year, Myrna and her band “The Myrna Clayton Experience” toured EurAsia as a Part of the U.S. State Department’s “American Music Abroad” Program.

Selected out of 400 bands to participate in a performance tour for US Embassies in five EurAsian countries (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Belarus, and Moldova) Myrna and her band—The Myrna Clayton Experience—toured with an intention of bringing smiles to

the faces of music lovers, creating a palpable sense of community through culture and music that transcended politics and language barriers.



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## A young Myrna Clayton...



In spite of the American presidency, and current undertones regarding Russia's President Vladimir Putin, the dialogue exchange and results Myrna and her band experienced while on the EurAsian tour were extraordinary. In fact, Myrna feels their results were starkly reminiscent of the original mission of the State Department's Jazz diplomacy program initiated in the 1950's to counter Cold War propaganda.

Myrna shares: "I discovered that the Jazz Diplomacy of the Cold War era allowed Jazz legends like Dizzy Gillespie, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, Dave Brubeck, etc. to interact with citizens of many Asian, African and European countries around the universal language of music and the free form styling of Jazz.. Documentary books written since that time have shared the success of these Jazz artist "diplomats" in bridging relationships beyond political constraints or implications—where sharing the enjoyment of this uniquely American Jazz, together, brought camaraderie and Understanding.

"That was our experience, too, some five decades later," Myrna relates. "What's even more confirming."

Dr. King pointed to this particular quality within Jazz," King was asked to write the Forward of the first annual Berlin Jazz Festival in 1964. In that opening address, he expresses:

*"Jazz speaks for life. The Blues tell the story of life's difficulties, and if you think for a moment, you will realize that they take the hardest realities of life and put them into music, only to come out with some new hope or sense of triumph."*

*"This is triumphant music."*

"Dr. King's language so resonates for me," Myrna affirms. "That has my commitment in my performances—whether abroad, or here at home."



Myrna shares how she ends every performance with an expression of her faith and a prayer that all in attendance have their needs met. To expand her commitment a step further, she's holding a monthly International Jazz series, leading up to International Jazz Day. She'll be releasing a CD "LIVE From Lithuania" in the first quarter of 2019 that reflects her expanded commitment.

"It is my deepest desire to connect the world's various, diverse communities across geography, culture, and generations. I am especially committed to being a bridge to our generations of today that have no first-hand experience of the Civil Rights Movement era—in the creating a sense of community across the world. The relevancy, the commitment to world human and civil rights remains critical for us all."

As a cultural ambassador and world bridge-creator, Myrna Clayton is unquestionably leading the way, encouraging those of us in America to seriously consider:

It is not just a U.S. thing. It never has been. It is a global, world view—one that includes all humanity.

Not only has Ms. Clayton and the Myrna Clayton Experience received acclaim abroad for their results, they have received recent acclaim by the Performing Arts Exchange of South Arts. They are now touring across the state of Georgia into areas that have little been traveled by urban performers, and receiving rave reviews from locals, especially seniors who remember enjoying Soul and Jazz music in their youth. Ms. Clayton's "Iconic Ladies of Soul and Jazz" touring concert keeps favorites front and center, while telling a story of Georgia, the environment, and a hope for a world that includes all.

To learn more, follow Myrna Clayton at [www.myrna-clayton.com](http://www.myrna-clayton.com). sclc

**Carrie L. Williams** is a writer, independent journalist, media and communications consultant, and manager of the news outlet *S.E. Region News*. She is committed to the ongoing work of civil and human rights in the 21st century.



### Dr. King Opening Address to the 1964 Berlin Jazz Festival

*God has wrought many things out of oppression. He has endowed his creatures with the capacity to create—and from this capacity has flowed the sweet songs of sorrow and joy that have allowed man to cope with his environment and many different situations.*

*Jazz speaks for life. The Blues tell the story of life's difficulties, and if you think for a moment, you will realize that they take the hardest realities of life and put them into music, only to come out with some new hope or sense of triumph.*

*This is triumphant music.*

*Modern jazz has continued in this tradition, singing the songs of a more complicated urban existence. When life itself offers no order and meaning, the musician creates an order and meaning from the sounds of the earth which flow through his instrument.*

*It is no wonder that so much of the search for identity among American Negroes was championed by Jazz musicians. Long before the modern essayists and scholars wrote of racial identity as a problem for a multiracial world, musicians were returning to their roots to affirm that which was stirring within their souls.*

*Much of the power of our Freedom Movement in the United States has come from this music. It has strengthened us with its sweet rhythms when courage began to fail. It has calmed us with its rich harmonies when spirits were down.*

*And now, Jazz is exported to the world. For in the particular struggle of the Negro in America there is something akin to the universal struggle of modern man. Everybody has the Blues. Everybody longs for meaning. Everybody needs to love and be loved. Everybody needs to clap hands and be happy. Everybody longs for faith.*

*In music, especially this broad category called Jazz, there is a stepping stone towards all of these. sclc*



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# Jamil Al-Amin: A Life of Seeking Justice

BY HEATHER GRAY  
(in consultation with Karima Al-Amin)

**J**amil Al-Amin (formerly H. Rap Brown) was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in 1943 and it didn't take long for his journey of seeking justice to begin. The depiction of how his philosophy evolved overtime is a fascinating one that we will briefly describe in this article. He began with a focus on civil rights which evolved into human rights and ultimately to a concentration on religious community building and cohesiveness. His influence in all these movements in the United States and internationally was and remains profound. There is much for all of us to learn from his life and mission which included collaborations and interactions with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Without doubt, Jamil Al-Amin ranks as one of the country's most profound and inspirational leaders in seeking justice with and for the people.

When born, Jamil Al-Amin was given the name of Hubert Giroir Brown. He was eventually known as H. Rap Brown that changed, in 1971, to Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin when he became Muslim.

If you are Black, young, astute and living in the South, along with your introduction into the Jim Crow

South of white supremacy and arch-segregationists, it is almost a given that you will explore what needed to be done to end the oppressive behavior and policies that you, your family and community were confronted with on a daily basis. This describes Jamil Al-Amin who learned that while the unjust racist system has historically been particularly entrenched in the South, the country as a whole was and is not much better.

The activism in the Brown family was remarkable. Al-Amin's older brother, the late Ed Brown, engaged in countless movements for justice across the South including, of course, working with Fannie Lou Hamer in Mississippi and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in the 1960s. Ed Brown was ultimately living in Atlanta where he served as the head of the Voter Education Project and other activist roles. Invariably, he was there on the front lines for justice and he inspired his younger brother.

It is also a given that anyone involved in the civil rights movement in the 'South' in the 1960s, means that they would know and/or have heard about H. Rap Brown in his early organizing work for social change.

Early in the 1960s, Brown was involved in the Nonviolent Action Group (NAG) that was developed by students at Howard University in Washington DC; In 1966 he became the field director of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in Greene County, Alabama; and then in 1967, Brown became the head of SNCC.

The young H. Rap Brown, along with his SNCC colleagues, sought changes first through their organizing work in Alabama by assisting the Black community in becoming an integral part of the society, as in voting, after the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The passage of the Voting Rights Act was one thing, but the implementation of it was quite another, as people invariably needed protection when they voted. This meant that Brown and the SNCC activists, while assisting and protecting Black voters, challenged Ala-

enforcement to arrest him, and “slam the doors” of the prisons behind him.

On April 11, 1968, the “Rap Brown” Federal Anti-Riot Act passed as an amendment to a fair housing law. This law against dissent made it illegal to travel from one state to another, write a letter, make a telephone call, or speak on radio or television with the “intent” to encourage any person to participate in a riot. By 1970, Brown was placed on the FBI’s “10 Most Wanted List,” simply for failing to appear for trial on the fabricated ‘inciting to arson and riot’ charges.

From 1971 until 1976, Al-Amin was imprisoned in the State of New York on charges related to eradicating drug activity in African American communities. Upon his release, he relocated to Atlanta, Georgia, where he immediately began to establish and organize a Muslim community.

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*Before he was Imam Jamil Al-Amin, he was H. Rap Brown. Virtuoso of the oral tradition, master of the rhyme and rhythm of Black folk talk – this charismatic brother was the clear, militant, unapologetic voice of a generation’s struggle and resistance. History arguably regards him as similarly revered, respected and renowned as Dr. King to another generation of activists. — Michael Thelwell*

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bama’s Governor George Wallace and the South’s prevailing white supremacists that wanted to maintain the status quo. It was a dangerous mission, but they prevailed in assisting the voters!

Additionally, it was in Alabama where the Black Panther symbol was used, thanks to H. Rap Brown and his SNCC colleagues, to symbolize “One Man – One Vote”.

While those around the country and the world recognized H. Rap Brown’s brilliant leadership, clearly the U.S. government did as well, but it was instead with disdain rather than appreciation. The government began to undermine and challenge Brown in whatever way they could, as through its Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO).

In an August 1967 memo outlining COINTELPRO, J. Edgar Hoover spelled out different tactics to neutralize the movement, that they referred to as the “Negro Movement” and against what they called ‘nationalist’ organizations. The following individuals and organizations were referred to in Hoover’s memo and they were: Martin Luther King, Jr with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC); Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown with the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC); Max Stanford with the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM); and Elijah Muhammad with the Nation of Islam (NOI).

During Brown’s earlier years, the United States government and its state and local branches charged and imprisoned him for inciting to arson and riot, federal fire arms violations, and bond violations. These charges were fabricated and unfounded. By 1968, while under house arrest, U.S. Congress members and governors were calling for law

When Al-Amin settled in Atlanta, he established and became the Imam of the Community Mosque in the West End area of Atlanta. As a Muslim leader, Al-Amin’s presence in Atlanta was transformative in countless ways. As the Imam of the Masjid, he created an Islamic community that offered one of prayer, cohesiveness and integrity. Visiting diplomats, renowned national athletes, local Atlanta activists, including many Atlanta sheriffs and other leaders, wanted to spend time with Al-Amin at the Masjid as his experiences and reflections about life and movement work were informed and enlightening. This included sitting and talking with him outside the grocery store that he owned and operated. Additionally, visiting diplomats to Atlanta also wanted their children to meet, spend time with and learn from Al-Amin.

“Imam Jamil had a commanding, compelling presence and a dynamic spunk and spirit,” opines former Emmy Award winning Atlanta news reporter, Maynard Eaton. “This nationally revered, and often reviled activist, would make appointments for me to meet him at his ‘stadium’, which was just a bench in front of his community store to teach, preach, cajole and correct me about my news reporting when I first arrived in Atlanta. It was off-the-record insight and information; a mesmerizing experience!”

As part of the mission of religious and community building, Al-Amin consistently attempted, among other goals, to end the drug invasion in Atlanta’s West End community. Since early in his activism career, Al-Amin was familiar with the insidious efforts by the government and/or its informants to be disruptive of the Black community by introducing drugs. He importantly worked against this,

which created conflicts with some of the authorities and those who benefited from the selling of drugs, at the expense of both individuals and the community itself.

During this period, he devoted years to traveling throughout the United States, the Sudan, Pakistan, India, the West Indies, and Saudi Arabia. He also served on boards of major Islamic organizations with a national and international agenda. This importantly expanded his international leadership in the Islamic world.

After 24 years in Atlanta, however, he was arrested on March 20, 2000, and charged with the death of one and the assault of another Fulton County Georgia Sheriff's deputy, yet all the indications are that he was not the killer. In fact, evidence is that Otis Jackson confessed to be the shooter on the evening of March 16, 2000 in Atlanta, Georgia. Yet, this was never introduced at trial by the prosecution or defense. Otis Jackson continues to maintain that he was the assailant. It is suggested that the Atlanta judge in the trial was told by the FBI that COINTELPRO could not be mentioned by the lawyers during the trial.

The 2002 trial ended in the conviction of Jamil Al-Amin who is now in the United States Prison (USP) in Tucson, Arizona where he is housed in the general population. During his 18 years of incarceration, however, he was previously held in solitary confinement for seven years in the Supermax Prison in Florence, Colorado where he became ill from medical neglect. He continues to declare his innocence, and supporters are advocating for his return to a Georgia facility where he will be able to assist his legal team in appealing his conviction.

### **Brief Analysis of the Philosophy of Jamil Al-Amin**

The scholar and activist Harry Edwards, of the 1968 Mexico Olympic demonstration fame, noted that virtually every leader evolves over time. This was true both with Jamil Al-Amin and Dr. King. Both of them began their activism with a focus on 'civil rights' that then evolved into a focus on 'human rights' with the realization that what was severely lacking in U.S. culture and politics was the respect of human beings altogether. And, while King always had a religious focus, for Jamil Al-Amin, religion became the next important phase of his life.

Regarding the importance of human rights, Dr. King would, on occasion, contact SNCC organizers for discussions about issues, as he did in the late 1960s regarding the Vietnam War. Dr. King invited Brown, Stokely Carmichael and Stanley Wise for lunch at Dr. King's house to advise him on their perspectives of the Vietnam War issue. They gave him their perspective and encouraged King to take a position against the war, which he ultimately did!

Like Dr. King, Harry Edwards contacted H. Rap Brown when organizing the 1968 Olympic demonstration in Mexico. Edwards knew that Brown could recruit youth to be involved and take a stand for human rights to present to the international audience during the Olympics.

Harry Edwards noted further that H. Rap Brown told him that "you can't assume that when you have a victory that



**Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) and H. Rap Brown talking to reporters outside Hamilton Hall, April 1968. Photo: Columbia Magazine**

it will be sustained and therefore there is a need for the work to be on-going."

We have been blessed with the ongoing activism and wisdom of Jamil Al-Amin to encourage us all to continue toward achieving justice and human rights in the world. As Al-Amin wisely stated:

"There has to be a social commitment, a social consciousness that joins men together. On the basis of their coming together, they do not transgress against themselves and they do not transgress against others." sclc

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*Heather Gray has a history of activism on civil and human rights for decades in the southern region of the United States as well as nationally and internationally. She expresses this background and activism in media both on the radio and in articles. She holds an undergraduate degree from Emory University and Georgia State University in Anthropology and a Masters Degree in Sociology from Georgia State University.*

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# Photographer Horace Henry Chronicles the First MLK Jr. Memorial Service in “One Day in January”

BY KAREN ROHR

On Jan. 15, 1969, at the first memorial service to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on his birthday, nine months after his assassination, photographers from national media outlets descended upon Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta to cover the event. While all of them left the service early to meet deadlines, one photographer remained to capture the remainder of the tribute and the procession to King’s grave-site—Horace Henry.

Henry, a 21-year-old student from Clark College (now Clark Atlanta University), had grabbed a camera on his way out the door that morning as he and his fellow Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity brothers got on their way to honor King.

Upon arrival at the service, someone, seeing the camera around Henry’s neck, ushered him to the front of the church, and he began to do his best to take photos, despite the fact that he had no idea how to operate the camera, which his brother had just sent to him from overseas.

Henry captured events that day in over 40 black and white photographs. The pictures include such notables in the civil rights movement as Coretta Scott King; Harry Belafonte; the Rev. Martin Luther King Sr. and his wife Alberta Williams King; Ralph David Abernathy; Andrew Young and Rosa Parks.

In honor of Black History Month, the Nancy Guinn Memorial Library will host Henry, who will talk about that day covering the service, how it changed the trajectory of his life, and how he ultimately decided to self-publish a book containing the photos, entitled, “One Day in January.”

Henry regularly visits libraries, churches and colleges to lecture and sign copies of his book. The Atlanta resident said that he went on to work in the admissions department

of Clark Atlanta and then in the mortgage business but couldn’t shake his passion for photography.

“I’m a professional full-time photographer now, and I’ve never looked back for the past 18 years,” he said.

Henry said the photos he took at Ebenezer 46 years ago recorded an important time in U.S. history, as the service laid the groundwork for the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day observance we celebrate today.

“It chronicles the ecumenical service which led to a national holiday and the significance of that is that the national media had to get in and get the photos and get out, but I was fortunate enough to record all of the program on film. It’s a clear documentation of what happened that day,” he said.

Henry said he kept the photos in a shoe box for years, until friends encouraged him to publish a book of the pictures. He also contacted the Smithsonian National Museum to see if they had any interest in the photos, and the museum sent a curator to his house.

“(The curator) said, ‘Mr. Henry, we must have this

collection at the Smithsonian,’” said Henry.

Henry donated the photos to become part of the permanent collection at the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Photo collections at the museum will rotate, and he hopes his is the first on display when the museum opens in the fall of 2016.

“Long after (we) are gone, the photos will be there for everyone to enjoy,” said Henry. sclc

*To learn more about Horace Henry’s book or to purchase a copy, visit [www.horacehenryphotography.com](http://www.horacehenryphotography.com) or email him at [hhenry5675@aol.com](mailto:hhenry5675@aol.com).*



Horace Henry

PHOTOS BY HORACE HENRY  
From the January 15, 1969, Dr. King Memorial Service



A Crowd gathered outside of Ebenezer Baptist Church after the first birthday celebration of Martin Luther King Jr.



Coretta Scott King arrives at Ebenezer Baptist Church.



Street scene on Auburn Ave. outside of Ebenezer Baptist Church after the first memorial service for Martin Luther King Jr.



Rosa Parks seated with Congressman John Conyers, Ralph David Abernathy and Cleveland Robinson.



Harry Belafonte with Coretta Scott King while seated next to Martin Luther King Sr. and Alberta King.

# Horace Henry Captures History on Camera

BY ANNISA NASH

**O**n a cold day in January, a young college student stood outside of Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church hoping to get a glimpse of the events unfolding inside. The nation's civil and human rights leaders —along with a host of the nation's African American celebrities—gathered in preparations for Dr. Martin Luther King's first memorial service, and all Horace Henry had was curiosity and his camera.

Determined to capture the scene, Horace found his way into the crowded church, and stood on the wall, camera over his shoulder. From there, an usher grabbed him and guided him to the front of the congregation, where he found himself among professional photographers, who were there to document the event. Shocked by great fortune, Horace began snapping pictures left and right, endeavoring to capture every meaningful moment. These images would later be viewed and valued by hundreds of thousands, all thanks to Henry's curiosity and his new camera.

Award-winning photographer and story teller, Horace Henry is still teaching history through his work throughout the decades of his career. From the small country town of Palmetto, Georgia, to the National Museum of African American Culture in Washington D.C., Henry is nothing short of an exceptional talent, and eye. He has captured some of the most iconic events in history, which would eventually teach generations to follow.

"The man with the camera" was often how someone would refer to Horace, considering it was with him at all times. This attachment would eventually lead former Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama to the front of his lens. This accidental gift of a camera he'd received would open the doors for him into the front of Ebenezer Baptist Church to capture the first birthday celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. following his assassination. In that very church, he captured President Obama receive blessings prior to the 2008 presidential election. The amount of history on Henry's memory cards are enough to educate a generation.

## Country to City:

Henry is from what he says is a "small country town" of Palmetto, Georgia, where he lived a rather simple life. After graduating from high school, he planned on heading to the city to attend college. Where he ended up however, wasn't somewhere he'd first considered when searching for a school. His elementary school principal was a Clark Atlanta

University graduate, and he encouraged Henry to check out the school during his selection process. His final decision was to attend Clark, where he majored in music. Throughout his college years, he was active on campus, and the years to follow were no different. He became accustomed the city of Atlanta through his university and music life. Horace Henry describes himself as a hippie in his early adulthood. He and a group of his friends formed a band that performed



Horace Henry with Clark Atlanta University journalism students

around the world. Throughout his Rock star years, he's performed with Marvin Gaye, Graham Central Station, The Commodores, The Temptations, and many other iconic musicians. Little did he know, this wouldn't be the end of his accomplishments.

## The Man With the Camera:

During Henry's junior year of college, he was sent a camera from his brother. The camera was intended to be something used by his brother, however, he found it wasn't for him and decided to gift it to Henry. After this, Henry says, "The camera and I were inseparable." The attachment was so pronounced that the people on campus began calling him "The man with the camera". From there, a creative eye was developed, and his journey of photographing began. Henry says, "I was always taking pictures. I brought my camera everywhere", and this was simply how he gained his experience. Being a freelance photographer in Atlanta allowed him to, "see people from the street who don't have anything, to people who have everything". sclc

*Annisa Nash is a journalism student at Clark Atlanta University.*

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## Crossroads School for Arts & Sciences Launches Equity & Justice Institute

Crossroads School for Arts & Sciences is proud to honor the indelible legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in this issue of Southern Christian Leadership Conference magazine. Founded in 1957, helmed by Dr. King as president, the SCLC led the nonviolent movement for civil rights and desegregation. Today, in the spirit of Dr. King, the SCLC continues to promote human rights, community service and racial equity, both nationally and internationally.

The Crossroads School Equity & Justice Institute was established, in part, to advance the vision of the SCLC and help bring about a more just and equitable world. Since its founding in 1971, Crossroads School for Arts & Sciences, located in Santa Monica, California, has been a pioneer in social justice-based curricula and institutional outreach. Indeed, among its five founding commitments are those “to the greater community” and “to the development of a student population of social, economic and racial diversity.”

In keeping with this mission, the School launched the Equity & Justice Institute in September 2018. This groundbreaking, fully endowed program will empower students and community members to take meaningful action on local, national and global issues through a variety of transformative educational activities, partnerships and initiatives.

Funded by generous donors, the new Institute is in the process of developing a cohesive and comprehensive approach to social justice teaching and community engagement, solidifying Crossroads’ founding commitment to the greater community. Through a reimagined service learning program as well as an innovation laboratory, the Institute will establish avenues for collaboration with nonprofit organizations and wide-ranging support for students and faculty.

After a nationwide search, Derric J. Johnson was hired to lead this ambitious new program as the Institute’s founding director and member of the School’s senior leadership team. Johnson has extensive experience in establishing and implementing youth-focused programs. He has served in a number of leadership positions in nonprofits, including the California Community Foundation, the MLK Community Health Foundation, the Alliance for Children’s Rights and the Community Oriented Correctional Health Services in Oakland.

Johnson recently served as senior deputy for public safety and justice for the Office of Los Angeles County Board Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas. During his tenure, Johnson’s numerous legislative achievements include establishing the Civilian Oversight Commission of the sheriff’s department

to increase transparency and decrease officer-involved shootings; establishing a Fair Chance Ordinance that would eliminate restrictions on employment opportunities based solely on criminal convictions; and attaining a \$30-million increase in state funding for court-appointed counsel for foster youth. He also procured \$5 million in state funds to support restorative justice and community-based programs to divert youth from the juvenile justice system.

Shares Johnson, "I could not be more thrilled about the prospect of establishing an Institute focused on service learning for students with the intent of facilitating good in the world. I'm appreciative of Crossroads for being bold, innovative and having the intentionality to extend this Institute's reach beyond the campus gates."

Equity and justice are already woven into the fabric of Crossroads: in institutional community service programs, student and teacher activism, student-run clubs, community outreach and daily coursework. Through the establishment of the Institute, the School is strengthening this commitment by hiring a founding director, an endowed position which will exist in perpetuity; creating a cohesive platform for educating students on major societal issues; and channeling resources to find impactful solutions to the world's great challenges.

"Crossroads has a remarkable opportunity to become a national and even international leader in the field of equity and justice," Head of School Bob Riddle says. "Our students are ready and eager to apply their skills, intellect and passions to tackle some of the world's toughest problems. The Equity & Justice Institute will provide the framework and resources to help the leaders of tomorrow make tangible, meaningful change in the world today."

The Institute is founded on three core commitments: deepening teaching and learning; supporting community action; and providing resources for the public good. Through the Institute, students will develop a commitment to activism and community engagement; devise solutions to address equity and justice issues locally and globally; tackle questions of power and privilege while learning understand and interact with others; and enhance skills in collaboration, communication, entrepreneurship and leadership.

Included in the Institute is the School's newly established Younes and Soraya Nazarian Equity & Justice Distinguished Lecture Series, which will help stimulate dialogue among students, educators and community leaders committed to tackling the problems of racism, poverty, war, environmental degradation, educational inequities, religious persecution, genocide and other forms of injustice. The lecture series began in February 2018 with a "Recovered Voices" presentation by Maestro James Conlon, the music director of LA Opera, about music suppressed during the Nazi regime. The second lecture was an interfaith dialogue, in partnership with the Guibord Center, following the November 2018 murder of 11 congregants at a Pittsburgh synagogue.

For more information about the Crossroads School Equity & Justice Institute at Crossroads, visit [xrds.org/equityandjustice](http://xrds.org/equityandjustice).

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