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Southern Christian Leadership Conference
NATIONAL MAGAZINE

Dr. Charles Steele Jr.,
SCLC President/CEO and
Dr. Bernard LaFayette Jr.,
SCLC Chairman

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Proud of its past, yet focused on the future Montgomery, Alabama

Ninety-one years after the birth of an American icon and 65 years since he first preached from the pulpit of historic Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dream is alive in Montgomery, Alabama!

Proud of its past, yet focused on the future, Montgomery is becoming an international destination for history, culture, technology and commerce. Known as the Capital of Dreams, Montgomery played host to countless seminal moments in this nation's history and boasts a legacy of leadership still propelling the community forward into the future.

As home to both Dr. King and Rev. Ralph Abernathy, its leadership legacy extends far beyond Alabama's River Region. Here, visitors will find tangible links to American history as they follow in the footsteps of the foot soldiers of the Civil Rights Movement and founders of the SCLC. It has also been home to trailblazers like Nat King Cole, the Wright Brothers and Percy Julian.

From the Wright Brothers' first civilian flight school to the Bus Boycott and the Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March, Montgomery's city streets are hallowed ground for both professional and amateur historians, alike. They beckon to those looking to find the perfect mix of history, culture and fun for the whole family thanks to a downtown entertainment and dining district featuring an array of restaurants and experiences.

The city has always played a role in the remembrance of Civil Rights victories, but it has recently received acclaim for its place in America's racial reconciliation and healing thanks to the opening of the Equal Justice Initiative's (EJI) National Memorial for Peace and Justice and the Legacy Museum.

On the eve of the opening of the Memorial and Museum, The New York Times recognized Montgomery on its list of the 52 Best Places to Visit in 2018, further cementing its status as a world-class destination. These experiences have attracted hundreds of thousands, contributing to an already booming tourism industry. Visitors enjoy several new chic hotels downtown located only blocks from the Memorial and Museum – with more on the way. Last month's world premiere of Just Mercy, a biopic of EJI founder Bryan Stevenson, captivated audiences and again spotlights the important work being done in Montgomery by EJI and others. Visitors to Montgomery can now come to pick up where the movie left off and see the setting for several of the film's scenes.

The tourism boom adds to already impressive economic prospects. Several national rating agencies list Montgomery among the most affordable markets in the US for homeowners and a best place to start a business. The community's focus on expanding industry and investing in high-tech infrastructure have created a climate conducive to success for start-ups and tech giants. The city also relies on robust contract opportunities tied to an ever-growing defense presence at Maxwell-Gunter AFB and the 187th Fighter Wing of the Alabama National Guard, which recently landed the F35.

Montgomery's newly elected leader, Mayor Steven Reed, is attracting widespread attention for his dynamic vision of the city's future. With all the excitement and activity, Montgomery belongs in everyone's travel plans. To learn more about Montgomery – a city proud of its past but boldly embracing the future.

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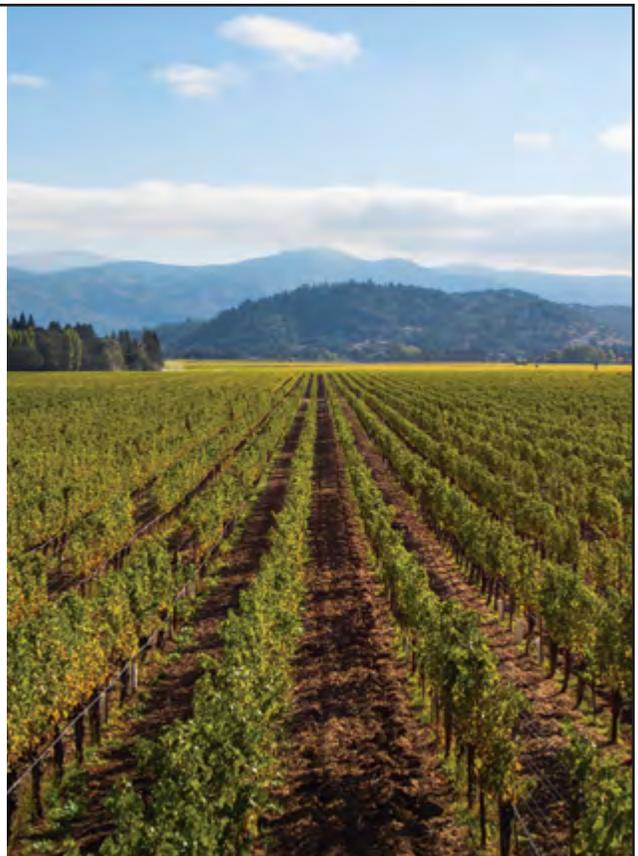
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Vol. 49 / No. 1

Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Issue

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Cover:

Charles Steele Jr. and Bernard LaFayette Jr. at the Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church in Montgomery, AL where Martin Luther King Jr. pastored in the mid 1950s.

Photo Credit: Jacque Chandler

Cover Design and Layout: Monica Blood



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Please register to vote and exercise your right to VOTE! Do it for Rev. Love!

SCLC's 2020: In the Spirit of the Late Rev. Albert E. Love 1945-2020

BY DR. CHARLES STEELE JR., SCLC National President & CEO

Happy New Year! As I look back on 2019, I am still encouraged by the advances we are making as a people. However, every stride taken is not always forward, we have also taken some strides backwards. Today many Americans of all colors, race and creed are struggling financially. Many are living pay check to pay check. So many are going to bed wondering where their next meal is going to come from. This fight for economic justice is one that SCLC has fought since its inception. As I travel the country I have witnessed our schools still lacking equality. Now, we have the legal right to read, but not enough funding in our schools to receive a quality education. Young black men and women are still being shot down in the streets in the name of self-defense by police officers (who are sworn to protect and serve). As I look back on 2019, I still see black males as the majority in prison with no prison reform. Yet, black males are supposed to come out of prison and compete for jobs in a world where even an educated black man with college degrees has a hard time finding work. In 2020, we must stand together and demand change. We cannot wait on the government to make the changes, we must demand the changes.

SCLC is always willing and able to train young people on how to be leaders under the Kingian non-violent conflict resolution training courses. We need more leaders in this country. One or two leaders is not enough. We need leaders in every community and on every corner. We cannot lose this fight...our children's lives depend on it! SCLC is reigniting the fire of Justice. We are lifting the torch high as we transform into an innovative organization ready and willing to take on that silent monster called racism. SCLC has transformed from a national organization to an international organization. Why? Because unfortunately, racism has a passport. As racism transforms, so will



the SCLC. We are ready to devise new strategies to deal with the ever camouflaged monster called racism. We are proud of our legacy and as we transform to deal with an ever changing world we remain rooted in the followings of our co-founders. In this New Year that our Lord and Savior has allowed us to see, SCLC will continue to focus on domestic issues while embracing the international community simultaneously.

What I have learned over the years is that there is no America without the world and there is no world without America. We have to care about the underserved across the globe as well.

Of course, as we move into the New Year, we understand that this is an election year. The year 2020 is significant for America and the world as it is a presidential election year. We will not only be electing a president, but also a new congress in this year. Unfortunately, we will be going into this election year without our beloved Rev. Albert E. Love. Rev. Love is best known for being a voter rights advocate. For over 30 years he was a heavy presence in the community raising awareness about the responsibility to vote. When I was first elected to my position as President and CEO of SCLC, the first thing I did was to hire Rev. Love as my special assistant. Rev. Love had many years working with SCLC having served under Dr. Joseph Lowery as an administrator in the 1980's and early 1990's. He will truly be missed throughout the state of Georgia and the country. As homage to Rev. Love (who was always there for me and the people) we will go into this New Year in his spirit. •

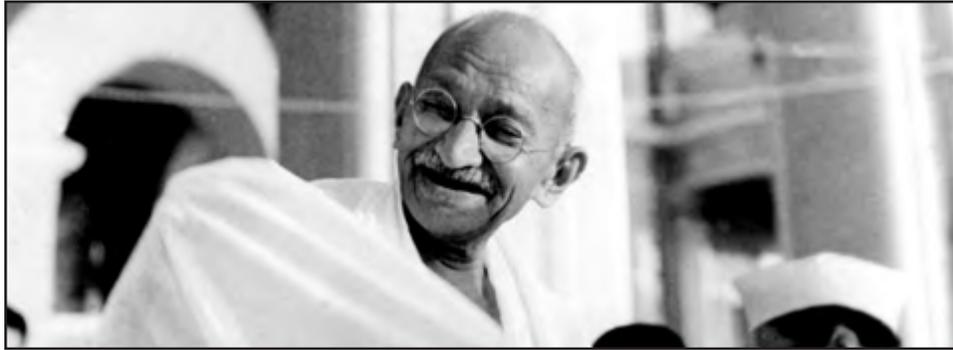
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October Speech During the 150th Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi

October 2019, Durban, South Africa

Speech given by Dr. Bernard LaFayette Jr., SCLC National Chairman

It is an honor to share with you at Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birthday celebration. The movement that was billed by the foundation laid by Mahatma Gandhi and expanded by Martin Luther King Jr. has proved to be one of the most effective and successful approaches for utilizing nonviolence to bring about social change.

Gandhi and King understood that nonviolence was a noble and moral goal as well as a moral method. They both agreed that immoral methods or means could not achieve moral goals. They both agreed that protest was not just a demonstration, but also a test to see if the sympathy and the support of the majority could be won.

While we have differences, we have more in common as human beings than the differences. Most of the differences are out of control. Where we are born, when we were born, who our parents are, our culture and the events in the world were during our lifetime. Could it be that what we have in common is the opportunity to grow and develop to our fullest potential and share it with others?

While Gandhi and King focused on one specific issue at a time when they mounted their campaign, they addressed issues that were not only domestic but issues that had global implications. As a result, people around the world could identify with the same cause. In fact, the violence and

injustice in one country is duplicated in other countries. This is an example of how we share tragedies in our global society.

Violence in our global community is clearly a reaction to the conflict, not a solution. While we examine the specific violence in a country for example, we must not ignore the fact that there are allies in other countries that offer support and assistance in other countries' violence. For example, during the Nelson Mandela presidential campaign, there were other governments who helped to support apartheid in South Africa.

Before I go further, I want to emphasize that women played a pivotal role in the different movements around the globe. Mrs. Winnie Mandela, Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi, Mrs. Coretta Scott King and many others like Rosa Parks from Montgomery, Alabama, AL, who was a part of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. As our movement continues to move forward it will take women who are willing to go forward like Ela

Gandhi if we are going to make a difference in our future.

There are three thoughts I want to leave you with before I close my remarks. First, it is important to listen to our young people. You have heard it said that experiences make the person. This is partly true. Otherwise, how do we explain how to children grew up in the same household and one child ends up in prison while the other child ends up in

“But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like any man, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place, But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do Gods will.”

– Martin Luther King Jr.
April 3, 1968, Memphis



Bernard LaFayette Jr., October 2019, in Durban, South Africa

the court as a judge? More important than the experience is the child’s interpretation of the experience. We must stop, sit down and talk with our children and grandchildren about what they are experiencing and their interpretations of those experiences. Their take-aways are most important. That is the basis upon which they make decisions in their lives and determine their values in life.

Secondly, we can learn from the errors that we make. However, we must not continue to make the same errors repeatedly. It was Kenneth Bolding who said, “that we learn nothing from success except that we succeed. It is only when we fail, then succeed that we learn. “Lessons are learned when errors are corrected. How many errors did Thomas Edison make before he invented the lightbulb?

Thirdly, it is important to examine specifics, but in the context of the whole. Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. were cosmopolites not xerophytes in their search for truth. It is important to examine the smallest particles of any substance; however, the smallest particles of any substance must be seen in the context of the whole. When we look at individual stars in the sky, we must also look to see if the stars are part of a constellation. Otherwise, we will not appreciate the full meaning of the stars.

Finally, each movement has a power base. Effecting that power base is key to bringing about change. Martin Luther King Jr.’s definition of power is simple; the ability to either supply or withdraw needed resources. We must examine to what extent we contribute to our own oppression. In our final analysis, we must recognize the extent to which each of us is affected by the violence that we are all capable of.

Therefore, in our efforts to end the violence, we must build coalitions of individuals and organizations that share our goals and are willing to work with us to build a common purpose. We must never give up and never give in. •



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A Tribute to the Women of the Civil Rights Movement

BY CATHELEAN STEELE, Founder, Justice for Girls

During the 1950's and 1960's women played important roles in the Civil Rights Movement. Their contributions were often overlooked by the media and often overshadowed by men. The Montgomery Bus Boycott was not successful because Rosa Parks, a strong black woman, refused to give up her seat to a white man. The success came because many strong black women who were maids in the homes of white people decided not to ride the buses in Montgomery, Alabama. All of these women were tired of the abuse and now they had a heroine in Rosa Parks and a motivator in Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This rebellion led to the historic 1956 ruling by the Supreme Court that segregation on public transportation was unconstitutional.

Nationwide the movement for equality had been taking root in the minds of the disfranchised prior to the recognition of the movement for Civil Rights. Dorothy Height was a champion of racial equality as early as 1946 when she coordinated the integration of the YWCA. She later co-founded the Center for Racial Justice in 1965. Working with the Civil Rights Movement she organized Wednesday's in Mississippi to bring together white and black women who worked "to demonstrate that women of goodwill, white and black, northern and southern, Christian and Jewish, could come together to quell violence, ease tensions, and inspire tolerance in racially torn communities." She was also one of the coordinators working with the Big Six who helped organize the March on Washington.

Septima Clark started her career as an educator and worked for many years at the Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee. She was tasked with developing literacy and citizenship workshops. These workshops played a significant role in the drive for voting rights for African Americans during the Civil Rights Movement. Clark later established "Citizenship Schools" teaching reading to adults throughout the South. She was able to connect the politics of the movement to the needs of the people. In 1961, with encouragement from friends she transferred the program to the SCLC. Other female activists were on the rise in the fight for equality. Fannie Lou



Hamer, famously known for her 1964 quote "I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired." Hamer was an active participant with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). She also helped to establish the National Women's Political Caucus in 1971 and was one of the Founders of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). In the summer of 1964, Hamer attended the Democratic National Convention as the vice chair of the "Freedom Democrats". Hamer is also known for her quote "Nobody's Free until Everybody's Free."

Well known for her activism was Diane Nash, a member of the Freedom Riders. Diane was one of the most prominent student leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. The student riders faced bus bombings across the South. Attorney General Robert Kennedy reached out to Diane through his assistant, John Seigenthaler, in an attempt to have her call off the Freedom Riders. Nash responded that the students had given her their wills in sealed envelopes to give to their families in case they did not survive. Fortunately, in her words "I was able to return all of those sealed envelopes."

Reflecting forward to the March on Washington, tens of thousands of women participated in the March on August 28, 1963. Many of these women had coordinated civil rights campaigns throughout the South. Unfortunately, none of them marched in the procession with Dr. King and none of the women were invited to speak to the crowd.

Mrs. Coretta King, who after the death of her husband became a great leader in own right. She stated "Women if the soul of the nation is to be saved, I believe that you must become the soul."

As a black woman who has lived through much of the Civil Rights Movement, I have come to understand that the strength of a chain is in the links. Black women were and shall always be a strong link in the chains of justice. •

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SCLC NEW ORLEANS CHAPTER: at the Cross

BY DR. LEVON A. LEBAN, President, SCLC New Orleans Chapter

Members of the SCLC New Orleans (LA) Chapter develop community coping strategies for disasters preparation, response and recovery while volunteering with the American Red Cross.

In 2016, many areas in Louisiana were flooded, none of which were related to hurricanes. The following year, a F3 tornado, with wind speeds of 158-206 mph impacted Eastern New Orleans. Throughout the country, both environmental and man-made disasters appear to be more frequent with an even greater intensity.

“It’s not a question of ‘if’ there will be another disaster, rather ‘when’ will the next disaster occur” says President Dr. Levon LeBan.

Hurricane Katrina impacted the entire Gulf Coast flooding three-fourths of the City of New Orleans. Recently, we have seen volcanoes in Hawaii, wildfires in California, earthquakes in Alaska, hurricanes throughout Florida, Georgia and the Eastern seaboard, and below freezing temperatures in the mid-west. The SCLC New Orleans Chapter is addressing disasters through a state-wide education program emphasizing preparedness, response and recovery.

In addition, SCLC Chapter President and members: Gwendolyn H. DuPree, Jake Hardy, Candi Hardy, Florida C. Hargrove, Alice Lewis, Dr. Samuel Odom and Rev. Marjorie Cobb-Thomas recently participated in the American Red Cross “Sound the Alarm Campaign.” A national initiative, the campaign includes staff and volunteers from communities across the country to install free smoke alarms in the homes of consenting residents.

In New Orleans, SCLC Chapter members assisted the Red Cross with the installation of smoke alarms in homes along the river-front area. The Red Cross launched the campaign in 2014 to prevent the loss of lives from home

fires, usually due to the lack of working smoke alarms. According to the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA), “smoke alarms are one of the greatest fire protection devices of our time” and have significantly contributed to the decline in home fire fatalities since the late 1970s.

But it’s not enough to randomly put up one smoke alarm and forget about it. In addition to placing smoke alarms

in recommended areas, they must be kept in good working order, which includes testing them monthly, changing batteries at least once a year and making sure that they are not disconnected.” The risk of dying in reported home structure fires is cut in half in homes with working smoke alarms.

SCLC Disaster Preparation Through Education Programs will use the “train the trainer” model to prepare members to go throughout Louisiana emphasizing: (1) Making a disaster plan; (2) Updating living spaces to safeguard lives, health and property; and (3) Collaborate, communicate and cooperate with local, state and national organizations active in

disasters. All training will be prefaced with an understanding of the importance of preparation and the American Red Cross disaster cycle services. In general, the training modules will be directed toward local events, that is, West coast Chapters may emphasize wildfires and or earthquakes while mid-West may focus on tornadoes and or below freezing temperatures. Gulf Coast and eastern seaboard chapters will consider extreme water events to include the possibility of a tsunami. SCLC Chapter members will be encouraged to volunteer with the American Red Cross local disaster action teams to better understand the impact of disasters. It is our hope that



SCLC New Orleans Members: (L-R) Levon A. LeBan, Alice Lewis, Judge Terri Love, and Florida Hargrove work to ‘Get Out the Vote’ in Louisiana.

developing disaster preparation through education will become a SCLC national initiative.

The civil rights agenda for the twenty-first century must include environmental impact, preparation, education, and information dissemination. SCLC Members had boots on the ground following the aftermath of Hurricane Michael in both Florida and Georgia. Over 32,000 Georgia residents were without electricity for weeks. Many residents in rural areas currently have electric pumps on their wells; however, no electricity means no water. In the aftermath of Hurricane Michael, SCLC New Orleans Chapter President Levon LeBan, who currently serves as the American Red Cross Louisiana Region's Disaster Spiritual Care Lead and the Community Partnerships Lead, under the leadership of National President & CEO Charles Steele, Jr. and SCLC Chief Operating Officer DeMark Liggins met with Dr. Smyther Fallen, American Red Cross Southeastern and Caribbean External Relations Community Partnerships Manager about relief programs in Georgia and Florida.

Other SCLC Orleans Chapter Signature Programs:

Annual Human Trafficking Awareness Symposium: The initial "Justice for Girls" Human trafficking Awareness Symposium included law enforcement representatives from the FBI, Louisiana Bureau of Investigation, Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms, and other guest with Mrs. Cathlean C. Steele as the featured keynote speaker.

April 4th Memorial Service: The Memorial Service is hosted by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints of New Orleans. The program recognizes community service efforts by metropolitan area activist. Previous keynote was by Fourth Circuit Court of Appeal Judge Terri Love.

Wreath Laying Ceremony: The Chapter assists in planning and laying memorial wreaths several times each year in remembrance of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

January 15th Annual March: For the past 36 years, members of "Recreating the Environmental Ability to Live (R.E.A.L.) organization has marched each year, of January 15th. Last year, SCLC partnered with the group and was selected to lead the march. It begins and ends at the Rev. Abraham Lincoln Davis, Jr. (SCLC Co-Founder) Park.

MLK Holiday Planning Commission, City of New Orleans: Numerous members of the SCLC New Orleans Chapter also serve as Commissioners with the City of New Orleans. With the motto "Remember; Celebrate; Act" the Commission plans and coordinates activities for the month of January in honor of Dr. King.

Annual Gala: This summer, the SCLC New Orleans Chapter will return to New Zion Baptist Church – the site of the organization of SCLC by Dr. King and others – for its First Annual Gala. The Gala will feature awards and recognition, Creole Cuisine, and New Orleans style music.

Expungement Information Program: Next year, thousands of incarcerated men and women will be released in Louisiana. Information of expungement and voter registration for formerly incarcerated individuals is vital in reducing levels of disenfranchisement. The Chapter sponsors several initiatives each year.

High School 20/20: A local initiative, the goal of High School 20/20 is to register every high school student aged 17 and up to VOTE. In the State of Louisiana, individuals must be at least seventeen to register to vote however, one must be eighteen to vote.

For more information about the "2019 National SCLC Chapter of the Year," the SCLC New Orleans (LA) Chapter, see: www.sclcnola.org.

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Voting Rights Advocate Albert E. Love Dies at Age 74

BY ERNIE SUGGS

Election seasons come and go. Candidates change. But the Rev. Albert Eugene Love was a constant. “Mr. Vote,” as he was called, was always there, recruiting political newcomers, registering and mobilizing voters, reminding people of the importance of casting that precious ballot.

“He has done voter registration consistently for the last 30 years,” said his wife, Juanita Love. “He believed that all

politics were local. It was his concern that we didn’t give enough time and effort to local politics and that we focused too much on national elections. He wanted everybody involved all the time.”

The longtime Atlanta resident died of pancreatic cancer, just two months after he was diagnosed, his wife said. He was 74.

“He never had any pain,” Juanita Love said. “He died peacefully.”

A big man who loved basketball as much as he loved service, Rev. Love seemingly walked around with a permanent smile on his face. He was as comfortable with U.S. Rep. John Lewis as he was with the people he shuttled to church.

“That was my man,” said Charles Steele, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. “He was always there for me, and he was always there for the people whom he loved so much. He had a love for the movement, and he believed in helping people.”

When Steele was appointed to his position in the SCLC, the first thing he did was hire Love as his special assistant. Love had years of experience working with SCLC, having served as an administrator under the Rev. Joseph Lowery in the 1980s and 1990s.

“He had just left the Christian Council of Metro Atlanta and just felt that it was time for him to contribute his skills of organization to our community,” Steele said. “And he was impressed with Dr. Lowery’s vision.”

Between those SCLC stints with Lowery and Steele, he worked in Lewis’ congressional office, doing voter outreach, housing and veterans services.

A founding member of the Concerned Black Clergy of Metropolitan Atlanta, Love also worked with Love in Action Ministries, Future Voters of America and the Voter Empowerment Collaborative.



Albert and Juanita Love

“He was always there for me, and he was always there for the people whom he loved so much. He had a love for the movement, and he believed in helping people.”

– Dr. Charles Steele Jr.

“We can transcend the religious lines, the faith lines and the class lines and work toward a common agenda,” he told *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* in 2007. “Whenever I am despondent about some things, I can always point back and say, yes, it is possible that we can work together.”

Love was born Aug. 2, 1945, in Durham, N.C. to Herbert and Geneva Richmond Love.

In 1963, at the age of 18, he went down the road to Raleigh to enroll at St. Augustine’s College, where he played basketball. During orientation week, he met another freshman, Juanita Sneed, from the tiny town of Kittrell in Franklin County.

“I could tell right away that he was smart and intelligent,” she said. “I liked him from the beginning.”

The two were together nearly every day and got married on March 14, 1970.

He joined the United States Air Force that same year and served in England until his discharge in 1974.

The couple moved to Atlanta after he left military life. He got a master’s degree in social work from Atlanta University in 1974 and attended Emory University’s Candler School of Theology.

The Loves were members of Wheat Street Baptist Church, where he was ordained as a deacon in 1975 and as a minister in 1977. In 1983, he became the founding pastor of Boatrock Baptist Church.

He was still pastoring Boatrock upon his death.

He was also a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., pledging the Gamma Psi Chapter at St. Augustine’s in 1967.

“He was amazingly close to the descriptions I have seen on social media about him,” Juanita Love said. “Integrity and hard-working. But humility would be at the top. He knew how to bring diverse groups of people together.”



ERNIE SUGGS has been a reporter at the *AJC* since 1997, currently covering a variety of breaking news and investigative stories. He previously reported for newspapers in New York City and Durham, N.C. A veteran of more than 20 years as a newspaper reporter, Suggs has covered stories ranging from politics to civil rights to higher education. A 1990 graduate of North Carolina Central University, with a degree in English Literature, Suggs was also a Harvard University Nieman Fellow.



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JANUARY 20



“Rev. Fred Taylor has proved to be America’s classic civil rights foot soldier.”

– Dr. Charles Steele, Jr.

SCLC’s Rev. Fred Taylor Honored for his Lifelong Work in Civil Rights

BY MAYNARD EATON, Managing Editor

It was akin to a civil rights reunion or an SCLC convention. Dozens of fervent fans had convened at Atlanta City Hall to salute the life and labor of civil and human rights activist Rev. Fred Taylor.

“He is an individual who has literally been on the front lines of the civil rights movement since the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955,” said Atlanta City Councilman Michael Julian Bond, the son of Julian Bond, the late social activist, civil rights leader, politician and prominent professor.

Rev. Taylor is not a civil rights celebrity like Julian Bond was deemed. He’s better known as an SCLC “foot soldier” and member of SCLC’s revered and renowned “ground crew”. For decades, he’s been a wily warrior who has been beaten and jailed repeatedly for his human rights activism.

“They’re many people involved in ‘The Movement’ that their particular thread sometimes went unnoticed,” Councilman Bond continues. “But, if you look at the annals of SCLC, and look at their documents and the writings you will find Rev. Fred Taylor’s image; you will find his impressions and his words throughout the history of the civil rights movement, and in particular SCLC.”

Rev. Taylor admits his job has always been as a background player to SCLC leaders, but argues his, and others of his ilk, have been the soul and substance of civil and human rights advancement triumphs.



Rev. Taylor is arrested at an unidentified march or rally, circa 1980s.



Maynard Eaton interviews Rev. Fred Taylor, Civil Rights Unsung Legend Tribute at City Hall.

“I’ve never considered myself a front line or drum major kind of person,” Taylor tells this reporter. “I’ve always played the supportive role with the main characters of the movement. It was never my desire to be out front.”

Georgia State Senator Ed Harbison grew up with Fred Taylor. He now marvels at the meaningful man he’s become.

“He’s the solid gold; the real deal example of what dedication and what the true civil rights foot soldiers are all about – not about the press, but about the press on fight he’s waged for social justice,” opines Sen. Harbison. “His efforts helped all of us get here because he fought the fight.”

This is Taylor’s 50th year with SCLC, but at 13 years old he was passing out leaflets for the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

“When reconciliation failed, when negotiation failed, then the people you would see next would be Rev. Fred Taylor,” opines SCLC chapter president Rev. Nathan Knight. “They

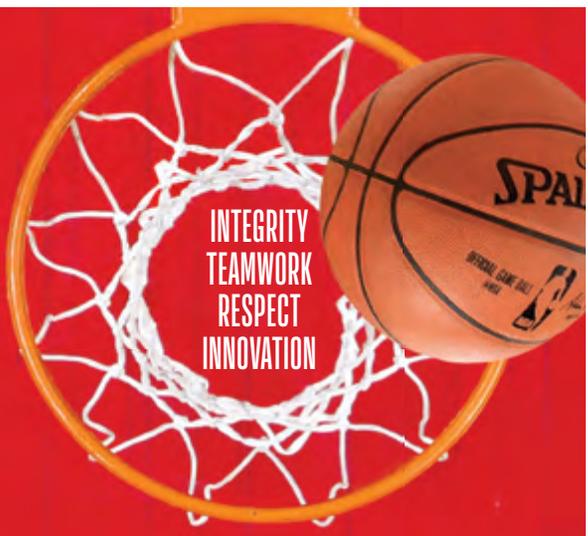
wore the red shirts and the blue overalls when they were out in the field because there was a strong possibility they would be going to jail. And, the red symbolizes the blood and tears that men and women in 'The Movement' would have to give up. It was a life and death struggle for freedom."

Jeremy Ponds is a 35-year-old SCLC National Board Member. Here's his take on Taylor. "You see a lot of people who have the name recognition, but these are folks that when others gave up, Rev. Taylor and his crew continued," he says. "Even when Dr. King couldn't come in, they were the ones taking the beatings."

SCLC president, Dr. Charles Steele Jr., says Rev. Taylor is the quintessential civil rights activist. "Rev. Fred Taylor earned his right to be at the helm of the civil rights movement. There is no 'Movement' without Fred Taylor, especially when he serenaded the freedom song, 'Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Us Around'. That song was his signature.

"SCLC and the civil rights movement was his calling," Dr. Steele continues. "Fred Taylor deserves the right to be up there with (former SCLC president) Dr. Joseph Lowery, Dr. Martin Luther King, and with myself as the current SCLC president. It wasn't just for a moment; Fred Taylor is a Movement!"

Fred Taylor is no star, but he has been the heartbeat, the soul and the substance of SCLC. For decades he has been an unsung leader of SCLC's praised "ground crew" who is now receiving his long overdue recognition as a civil rights gladiator. •



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Misconceptions About King's Methods for Change

Commentary by HEATHER GRAY

When the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday is celebrated often the popular “I Have a Dream” speech is featured as if it was one of his primary messages. Yet, King was about far more than dreaming. His mission was about “action” coupled with concrete and definitive change. And, as organizing for social change is often a matter of life and death; everyone concerned about injustice should take another look at King’s nonviolent methods. Nonviolent social change requires long, hard and sustained work, research, development of solutions, and, importantly, on-going commitment. It demands far more than bringing folks together to march and wave banners.

The considerable risks in social change work can be demonstrated in the 1989 Chinese democracy movement. The Chinese students wanted to demonstrate their dislike of the Chinese system through organizing a mass mobilization. And, like many, it was as if they seemingly had the mistaken notion that the mass gathering was an end in itself.

In June 1989, while in the Philippines, I talked with Filipinos activists who had been in constant communication with the young Chinese “democracy” leaders in Beijing who helped plan and implement the 1989 Tiananmen Square hunger strike. It was a mobilization that ended in tragedy.

There was a lack of political consensus and unity in the impromptu coalition between students and workers and because of this, confusion prevailed in their negotiations with the Chinese government. It was just a matter of time before the brutality of the Chinese state would violently demonstrate its impatience.

On June 4, 1989, at the behest of Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, troops descended upon the students and workers encamped in the square and against the solidarity movement throughout the country. In what is now known as the Tiananmen Square Massacre, estimates of some 4,000 Chinese were killed and 20,000 wounded.

What concerned my Filipino friends was the lack of unity, organizational infrastructure, and clarity in the demands of the students and workers to the Chinese government, which, they said, likely helped contribute to the violent response from the Chinese government. They were by no means apologists for the Chinese violent behavior but rather stressed the need for clarity and unity in any demands for social change when challenging a powerful state.

Mass mobilization or direct action, in fact, is only ‘one’ part of the non-violent methods for social change. Here’s a description of the steps King and other used in their social change work.

Based on the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, the Kingian method for nonviolent social change is a systematic one. Here is a brief summary: (1) once the problem is identified it is essential to research the issue (i.e. define the problem, who are the key players, who or what is being affected) – the research and analysis should be above reproach as disputed or incorrect facts and figures can completely undermine the efforts for the evolving campaign; (2) based on the research, state clearly what needs to change to solve the problem and identify the strategy for solving the problem; (3) recruit others to join the struggle, share your findings and strategies, get their input if necessary, but essentially seek a commitment from them (i.e. this is the problem, this is what we intend to do, are you with us?) (4) teach them in non-violent tactics (i.e. being non-confrontational during direct action); (5) attempt to resolve the problem through negotiations (i.e. negotiations with whoever controls the policies needing to be changed); (6) if that doesn't work, apply pressure through direct action techniques, which at times need to be sustained for a lengthy period (i.e. boycotts, mass demonstrations); (7) negotiate again, if necessary engage in direct action again – often more research is required or more clarity on the solutions needs to be developed; (8) finally, if the problem is solved, seek reconciliation.

The first issue that gets lost is that King sought “reconciliation” with adversaries and an improvement of life for everyone. This is the end goal and if victory is all that’s wanted then that’s not Kingian nonviolence. Reconciliation is also probably the most difficult aspect of the Kingian philosophy for activists to embrace. In his book “Stride Toward Freedom” King said that the nonviolent methods are *“not an end in themselves; they are merely means to awaken a sense of moral shame in the opponent. The end is redemption and reconciliation. The aftermath of nonviolence is the beloved community, while the aftermath of violence is tragic bitterness.”*

There is almost always a misunderstanding of how to define the adversaries in nonviolent social change. Dr. King said it is not a “battle” against individuals who commit evil acts but against the evil itself. Regarding the Montgomery struggles, he said, *“The tension is between justice and injustice. and not white persons who may be unjust.”* King said further that *“the nonviolent resister would contend that in the struggle for human dignity, the oppressed people of the world must not succumb to the temptation of becoming bitter or engaging in hate campaigns. To retaliate in-kind would do nothing but intensify the existence of hate in the universe. Along the way of life, someone must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate.”*

Another misconception is that complaints can be made without concrete demands for change. Those who seek

change should always develop the solutions because you don’t want to leave that in the hands of your so-called “adversary” – otherwise you’ve wasted your time. King also called for a fair hearing from the adversaries and to listen to them, as there might be some wisdom to gain from that experience. However, if you don’t like what politicians or others do, you certainly don’t want them to be the chief architects in resolving problems. So, don’t just engage in a “feel good” march in front of the White House, Congress, State House or the WTO and assume that you have completed your mission, made your statement. If you haven’t developed your solutions to the problems you’re addressing, you’ve only done a quarter or less of what is necessary.

It is often thought that nonviolence and pacifism are the same. Not so! It is probably true that most advocates of nonviolence are also pacifists. Nevertheless, nonviolence is a “method for change”. Pacifism is “being against war”. Within this misconception is the assumption that nonviolence is cowardly, a “turn the other cheek” method, which is not true. As a method for change, nonviolence is confrontational. King said, *“it must be emphasized that non-violent resistance is not a method for cowards; it does resist. If one uses this method because he is afraid or merely because he lacks instruments of violence, he is not truly nonviolent. This is why Gandhi often said that if cowardice is the only alternative to violence, it is better to fight.”*

King noted that every nonviolent campaign should be anchored in a boycott and, importantly, voter education and voter registration. Rarely these days, however, do U.S. activists choose to challenge the bulwark and muscle of corporate America, even in spite of the unfettered capitalist abuse in which we live. King wisely recognized that going against corporate America was one of the most vital ways to change behavior. Referring to the Birmingham movement, King said, *“it was not the marching alone that brought about integration of public facilities in 1963. The downtown business establishments suffered for weeks under our unbelievably effective boycott.”*

King also said that the *“Arc of the moral universe is long and it bends toward justice.”* I would venture to say that the progressive community throughout the world needs to place consistent and considerable pressure on that arc!*

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.



Photos: Tom Griscom

Madam C.J. Walker Museum Honors Legacy of Local Entrepreneurs

BY NEDRA RHONE

Ricci de Forest was breezing up Hilliard Street in his Alfa Romeo Spider Veloce when he saw a sign that made him stop the car and jump out. He was stunned to see the lettering in the window of a red brick building: Madam C. J. Walker’s Beauty Shoppe.

De Forest, a hairstylist who at the time had a salon on North Highland Avenue, recognized the writing as one of the original salons of Sarah Breedlove, aka Madam C.J. Walker, the laundress who amassed a fortune in the black hair care industry. Walker’s salons, run by women who had trained as Walker agents, had closed in 1981 but right there in Sweet Auburn stood an unblemished vestige of the woman who helped hundreds of black women become self-employed and support their families and communities with their earnings.

“I was freaking out because I know the significance,” said de Forest, seated in the Madam C.J. Walker Museum which he founded 15 years ago. “Black women back in the day doing hair provided the financial foundation for the next generation. It is empowering. Once you know this history, you are obligated to let someone else know.”

De Forest, 68, would later learn the building also once housed WERD, the first radio station owned and programmed by African Americans, from 1949 to 1968.

“I was enraged. How did no one bother to preserve WERD?” he said.

It would take many years, but de Forest would eventually lease the space for his own business and make it his mission to preserve and honor the historical legacy of women who served as financial pioneers in their communities and those who brought music and news to their people. “It is far more important than anything I have ever done,” de Forest said.

“Ricci is a visionary,” said David Mitchell, director of operations for the Atlanta Preservation Center. “He has taken that space and instead of making it boring, has made it engaging to all the senses—sound, sight, smell and vibe. He hasn’t made it singular; he has made it open and he should be applauded for that on multiple levels.”

Madam C.J. Walker came to be recognized as the first self-made black female millionaire, but she was one of several black women, including Annie Malone and Sarah Spencer Walker, who started businesses in the hair industry that would generate sizable revenues and use a model that allowed other black women to earn money in the field as product representatives. Walker and the others were known as much for their wealth as for their philanthropic donations to educational, community and civil rights organizations.



The museum has been featured in several documentaries and recently made a cameo on “Love and Hip-Hop Atlanta.”

De Forest hopes his efforts help bring the women the acclaim they deserve. He knows the struggle involved in making a way when there is no clear path. Growing up in East Cleveland, Ohio, Ricardo de Forest (he later went by Ricci) was shuttled through foster homes for at least a decade. Foster care made it easy to get in trouble—he landed in the juvenile justice system as a teen—but it also prepared him to face almost anything in life, he said. When he decided he wanted to pursue a career in fashion, de Forest figured he would fly to Paris, knock on the door at 31 rue Cambon and get a job at Chanel.

It didn’t work out that way, but de Forest did make his own mark in the industry as a makeup artist for Ebony Fashion Fair cosmetics and later as an international hairstylist. When he landed in Atlanta in the early 1980s, he



opened his own salon—a haven of style with tools of the trade hanging from the ceiling, mirrors suspended on invisible wires and lipstick red floors — where he served clients until the day when driving past Madam C.J.’s old salon was no longer enough.

When de Forest took over the space, the interior was the same worn-out green as the barbershop next door. The biggest find was the hair tools from the 1940s and 1950s—a pressing comb, a curling iron—that had been left behind. De Forest began curating other period items for the space,

including a collection of Jim Crow era signs, other hairstyling tools and old cameras.

When he learned that WERD had been housed upstairs, he set about preserving that as well. Donated albums, some delivered by the truckload, began flowing in from visitors who supported his mission. De Forest continued investing in the space, adding large blow-up images of musicians across the ceiling and a working record player with a hand crank. While he has received some donations and has filed for nonprofit status, he has funded most of the project out of his own pocket.

The museum has been featured in several documentaries and recently made a cameo on “Love and Hip-Hop Atlanta,” all of which has helped expose a new generation to the space. Visitors come to the space for special events



to engage in intergenerational conversations, something de Forest sees as vital to the museum’s development. Growing up, black people had spaces where they could listen to music and debate the issues of the day, he said. “For a certain generation, they have been robbed. I wanted to make this space that version of what I had when I grew up.”

De Forest watches as museum guests gaze wide-eyed at the images in the space, the wall of thousands of albums, the signs and the tools from decades past. “They are floored with the feeling and the ambiance,” said de Forest. “They take two to three steps and the spirit attacks them.” He is transported as well to that moment, when driving down the street, he saw Madam C.J.’s name on the window and took a turn that would alter his life’s mission. “I realized how significant and selfless were the individuals that came through here,” he said. “What they did is unbelievable.”



NEDRA RHONE is a graduate of Columbia Journalism School, has been a features writer for the *AJC* since 2006 covering people, places, pop culture and news, in and beyond metro Atlanta. She writes and manages the *Talk of the Town* blog.



BETTING ON BOOK!

BY MAYNARD EATON, Managing Editor

Throughout the nation urban education is in crises, but a four-year-old, Atlanta-based nonprofit called Better Outcomes for Our Kids (BOOK) may be the best bet yet for its future success. It is one of the city's few nonprofits that have been founded and operated by African Americans primarily focused on public charter schools.

Better Outcomes for Our Kids, Inc. (BOOK) is dedicated to increasing the access, awareness and accountability of high quality, publicly funded, educational options for African American children.

"BOOK is a passion; it's a calling that I'm trying to turn into a movement," opines David Mitchell, BOOK's founder, President and CEO. "I have been a champion for saying public charter schools should be an option for African American families."

"It's definitely a calling for me to educate people on the different educational opportunities, particularly with my parents both being educators," adds Otis Threatt, BOOK's engagement officer. "It's very important that we are informed and aware about educational opportunities for African Americans."

Most of the growth of the Quality School Movement in Atlanta, which introduced charter schools to many African American communities struggling to educate their children, followed the "Atlanta cheating scandal" in 2014.

"The whole thing about school choice resonated with me because I believe parents must have options that fit their child, and you have to advocate on behalf of your child," says Jennifer Freeman, a business development and political consultant who joined BOOK a year ago. "It's really making sure that all parents know what their options are, and that's what BOOK is really all about. We're not trying to be in the middle of a political fight, rather just letting people know what's on the menu."

BOOK unabashedly advocates primarily for public charter schools as an education alternative. "We think that the public charter schools have been a vessel of innovation," says Mitchell, a corporate capital professional. "In most cases that innovation has been formed in areas supporting 'the least of these'. We just felt like African American families, in many cases, were not aware of that vehicle. We're not telling African American families that's a vehicle they should choose. We're simply saying African American families need to know that vehicle exists."

The Charter School Movement has provoked a national controversy and produced a cadre of naysayers. Take Lisa Leake, an Alexandria, Virginia educator, for example, who argues, “I am passionately against charter schools, as they are portrayed as saviors for children in poverty, but in fact they are not! Have you seen the education documentary ‘Waiting on Superman’?”

Ed Johnson, who writes a social media commentary column called an Advocate for Quality in Public Educa-

tion says he is concerned about the ongoing survivability of public education, and “BOOK as an organization is contrary to that concern.”

tion says he is concerned about the ongoing survivability of public education, and “BOOK as an organization is contrary to that concern.” Mitchell vehemently disagrees with his chorus of critics. “Since the beginning of what is now called The Quality Schools Movement, which used to be known as The Public School Charter Movement, this tension between communities that support traditional schools is [viewed] as a threat which is less about children and more about money, and more about control, and more about power than making sure kids are getting educated,” Mitchell maintains. “You’ve

“The work that we do is so important, because these are our kids. We can no longer accept failing schools. We know that all children can learn.”

— JENNIFER FREEMAN, BOOK V.P.

He adds, “BOOK is not an organization to engage the community in doing the hard work of improving our schools, as opposed to trying to promote easy fixes such as Charter Schools,” argues Johnson, an unsuccessful Atlanta School Board candidate and former Morehouse adjunct professor whose weekly email blasts are reportedly ‘read everywhere’. “There is no magical fix. What BOOK stands for is wanting

got folks on the other side who will say public charters are destroying the framework and foundation and formula for public education. I beg to differ.”

The charismatic Mitchell continues: “Most African Americans that go to traditional schools in economically struggling communities are typically going to public schools that are also under performing.”

Greg Clay is a politically savvy businessman who leads BOOK’s advisory committee called The Men of BOOK. He’s the captain of a growing seven-member team of African

got folks on the other side who will say public charters are destroying the framework and foundation and formula for public education. I beg to differ.”



American men that consists of educators, businessmen, civic leaders, and former elected officials.

“Before I got intimately involved, BOOK was super controversial,” Clay reveals. “Although Dave [Mitchell] says BOOK is an organization where we are the waiter bringing all these options for parents and students, there was this stigma in the community that we are just pro-charter schools. We’ve had to beat back on that narrative. The organization really has evolved. To look at where BOOK was last year comparable to this year, it’s very different in the way it is perceived and the way we have moved closer towards the center. As an organization we are saying there are some good options out here in addition to charter schools.”

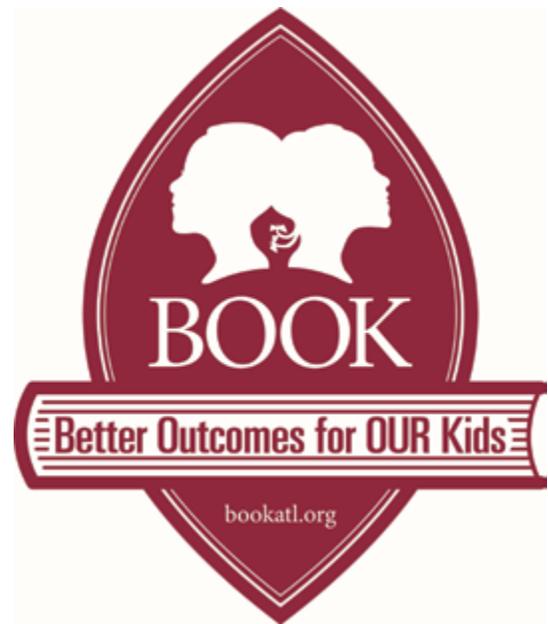
That’s what Mitchell wanted for his boy/girl twins – a good school option – and that’s why BOOK was born. His children were designated to attend an elementary school in his southeast Atlanta neighborhood that he deemed totally unacceptable. Then good fortune intervened.

“It was really an act of God that my wife was recruited to be a board member of Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School, and as a result my children were able to get into one of the best schools in Georgia,” Mitchell recalls. “A school that was the 2015 Georgia Charter School of the Year.”

But Mitchell didn’t stop there.

“BOOK is the brainchild of me saying I didn’t want another family like mine to find themselves in a position, where because of poor test scores, sub-standard physical plant, or fear for their safety, not to know what there other options are,” recounts Mitchell, whose mother is a retired former inner-city art teacher. “BOOK was founded for that reason only. Not to tell parents what’s good or bad; not to tell parents to go left or right, but to say here is the menu of options for your child. Pick one that’s best for you and their educational needs.”

Jennifer Freeman, a former educator who is revered within Atlanta political and business circles for being a “fixer and problem solver” applauds Mitchell for his



vision, dedication and fervent pursuit of a formula for his “BOOK movement.”

Mitchell is an articulate and knowledgeable Morehouse College graduate with a background in finance who is the younger brother of former Atlanta City Council President Ceasar Mitchell.

“This is David’s baby. It was his idea,” Freeman says about BOOK. “It was created out of an experience he had as a parent and a father, which is the nucleus of why we do this work.”

Freeman, Mitchell, Threatt and Clay contend that the only difference between a charter school and a traditional school is that the school principal has more flexibility to try different and more innovative things to get kids educated with public dollars.

Mitchell tells this reporter that he tries not be a scorekeeper, but believes if test scores, innovation, and parent engagement are the templates used for evaluating a school’s performance, that African American parents need to understand how to navigate this eco-system. Charter schools are a lot more flexible, and inventive; Mitchell and others say. There’s far more “autonomy” and much less “red tape” for school leaders to “positively move the needle,” they allege.

“When you start looking at schools that are doing well on the standardized tests; when you start looking at leaders encouraged to work ‘outside the box,’ and are taking the time, effort, and the patience to learn their community, learn their kids, and develop the strategies needed to get those kids educated, that success begins to show up in classroom performance and test





scores,” he opines. “And, that’s a school in my mind that needs to be duplicated. Anytime I’ve gone into a school, be it a traditional or charter public school, the difference I’d see was built around the teachers and the person who was leading it.”

And, where is the riveting and robust Mitchell leading BOOK? Freeman, his principle partner, says BOOK has rebooted, reorganized, refocused and refined its mission. BOOK has reportedly regained its momentum and made some meaningful change and impact in 2019.

“We are making a difference when it comes to getting the word out about who BOOK is and who BOOK is not,” says Freeman. “For you to feel like you are making a positive dent in this work, you have to make sure your foundation is laid. That is the hard, but necessary work that BOOK has done.

“BOOK is a baby for our babies,” she continues gleefully. “In the lifeline of a nonprofit, especially a black nonprofit, we are in infant stages right now. It is going to become a well-oiled machine.”

“It’s been a rough road,” is how Mitchell assesses where BOOK is now. “We have been running an organization that’s trying to make monumental change, in a sometimes hostile environment, with very little funding.”

Mitchell has skillfully crafted a new marketing message for BOOK’s future growth. “BOOK’s new marketing imagery is going to be focused around the concept of ‘the waiter.’

The waiter is the person that comes to your table, gives you a menu of all the options available in the kitchen, and then comes back to take the order that’s best suited to feed your family. He believes wholeheartedly, that this represents the foundation of the American Dream.”•



David Mitchell, BOOK Founder, President and CEO



Millennial Involvement and Understanding Could Help Stem the Tide of Black Land Loss

BY BRIAR BLAKLEY

On a crisp fall November evening, when I was 23, my family was gearing up for the Thanksgiving holiday. My mom was preparing her famous pecan pie as she made a call to her brother. While assisting her and listening to the holiday chatter throughout the house, I was able to hear my uncle say through the phone “What’d the timber guys say?” I couldn’t understand the reason for this question, and wondered was my family interested in purchasing timber? Were they considering starting a timber company? As the conversation continued, my curiosity grew and finally, I heard my mom say “It’s done and I’ll call you and let you know when they’ll start cutting”. The call ended but my curiosity continued. I finally asked her what the conversation meant, hoping not to overstep an adolescent boundary that could be interpreted as being disrespectful. The answer was shocking, inspirational and educational. At such an early age, my consciousness was raised far beyond that associated with most millennials today, such as pursuing media popularity and fortune. My mother’s willingness to openly discuss land-related business with me made me realize the need for elders to include the next generation in conversations around land, as they could be the heirs to this valuable resource.

There now appears to be a growing trend of millennials becoming interested in all aspects of agriculture, especially sustainable farming but also land-based community economic development with a focus on all things “green”. This trend is driven in part by the need to know the source of their food and to have a choice of what kind of food they will eat.

Monica Rainge, Director of Land Retention and Advocacy for the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund (Federation/LAF), contends that “Millennials have become one of the fastest-growing groups of new landowners and farmers.”

Because so many millennials (born between 1981-1997) could eventually own their family farms and land, intergenerational conversations on succession planning and other land retention tools are paramount to ensure the transference of this wealth-generating asset for generations to come. The Federation/LAF, a non-profit organization with a focus on black landowners, farmers, and cooperatives, noted that, at the turn of the 20th century, African Americans owned 15 million acres of land. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s 1982 census reported there were 3.1 million acres of black-owned farmland; the recent 2017 census reported black

farmers now own roughly 1.8 million acres of land. Therefore, since the birth year of the millennial generation, African Americans have lost over forty percent of their farmland along with untold dollars in future wealth.

One of the primary reasons for the drastic decline in black land ownership is heirs property. Heirs property is the result of a landowner dying without a will or other forms of estate planning. Heirs are left without clear title which makes the land susceptible to tax or partition sales, it also hinders access to capital which is essential to a successful farm operation. A recent report from 'Pew Social Trends' noted that "In the United States today, 76% of African Americans do not have a will; consequently, their land will likely become heirs' property."

The question becomes – how can the conversation on Black land ownership, retention, and wealth-building amongst black families help millennials protect this transformative asset for themselves, as well as future generations?



In the article, "Progressive Governance Can Turn the Tide for Black Farmers" (American Press) it is noted that "Black households hold about 10 percent of the wealth of white households". This is due primarily to a lack of resources. Landownership and sustainable development can go a long way toward closing the racial wealth gap. Therefore, the conversation with millennials about land ownership needs to be centered on economics as well as history and culture.

In researching this topic, I reached out to a few friends for their perception of Black land ownership and how it does or could impact their lives. I was met with a running 'emoji' (tiny smiley faces) coupled with typed sarcastic, "runs to Google". Although there is a trend among millennials toward a return to the land; there is still much work to be done. One way to educate millennials is to introduce them to successful farmers and landowners within their age group such as John Frazier of Salters, South Carolina.

Frazier, a 4th generation farmer, left his position in corporate America to farm. His understanding of intergenerational wealth fueled his ambitions to return to the land. Frazier is the only millennial landowner in his family. He runs a successful produce and livestock farm on the land he was able to keep in the family. He utilizes churches, schools, civic organizations,

and his farm to share the importance of land ownership and its many economic opportunities. It is also critical for elder farmers to involve their children in the business of farming and millennials need to share their unique skills, especially those related to appropriate technology.

Many black landowners assume their land is safe and will automatically transfer to the next generation, however rarely do they involve and educate the next generation about the complexities of farm and land ownership. A well-informed millennial can help with land and farm-related problems and can also help prevent future problems.

What can both elders and millennials do to join forces and help create a stable and productive Black land base that supports communities and creates a means of economic independence? It is no longer enough to conduct research for research's sake and develop disjointed initiatives that do not affect real change.

Our collective "return to the land" is critical to the sustainability of Black rural communities and the creation of intergenerational wealth. Many of us are positioning ourselves to take on inherited land or are interested in purchasing land. However, we must take a much stronger stance in the way we show up in our local communities and how we value its people and resources. It is also important to understand that land ownership today is more multifaceted in that you can work a job or own a business in the city while also managing and utilizing the land you may not live on. How and why we show up might be different from our elders but millennials and elders need to have the shared goal of creating intergenerational wealth through securing and developing our most important asset, which is 'land'.

I learned early in life that you can make a pretty penny selling timber from the land you own. My mom says it was my grandmother's wish that her relationship to the land and its economic benefits would be transferable to future generations; she said, "this land is going to provide for my children's children someday". My mom and her siblings used the \$30,000 sale of the timber to pay off my grandmother's home. They also reaped small financial benefits from what was left over. The benefits of land ownership are real and measurable – we cannot afford to lose our land due to a lack of communication and trust. We must realize that there has to be an elder/millennial partnership in the struggle to save Black-owned land. •



BRIAR BLAKLEY has created a multifaceted career as a music songwriter, singer, and recording artist while also working in media production and non-profit communications. As a supporter of social justice for marginalized, minority communities, she became passionate about media as it pertains

to social impact. She currently serves as a communications and outreach specialist for the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund. As a millennial activist, she began her search of the challenges of black land loss, food sovereignty, and sustainability.



Bring Back Civility or Saving Civility

BY CICONE C.A. PRINCE

Civility (*noun*) – formal politeness and courtesy in behavior or speech.

What's the first thing that comes to mind when someone mentions Civility? For me, the image that I see in my head is of a smiling face with open hands to help and an open heart to love. Regardless of the image or definition that we hold on the inside, the real question is, "Does the ideal and the real reflect each other? We wouldn't have to go far to find out that they don't.

My question is, "Why?" Why does the world in which we live reflect a totally different picture than the one in our mind? Why is it that we face increasingly harsh environments almost everywhere we go? It seems that being rude and obnoxious has become the rule instead of the exception. Even in the service industry, there seems to be, at least it's been my experience, a growing chasm between what is acceptable and civil and what is offensive and distasteful.

I know I'm not the only one that is witnessing the deterioration of our societies' moral compass and the slow death of all things civil.

Now, if I stop writing here, the only thing I've done is reheat leftover issues. If I stop writing now I have just pointed out the obvious. That may serve those who are seeking attention but I want to do more than point out what we've lost. I want to offer a sustainable solution that will help us all.

There is a scripture which I honestly believe has the solution to this very issue and run pass it every time we read.

Matthew 22:33-39 King James Version (KJV)

³⁷ *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

³⁸ *This is the first and great commandment.*

³⁹ *And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

Love thy neighbor as thyself...

As thyself...

I'm of the belief that the real reason that we are seeing a decline in civility in our society, nation and even our world is because we have forgotten the fundamental truth of this scripture. We have not taken the time to truly love and appreciate the person that God has made us to be. We spend so much time looking over the fence in the yard of our neighbor envying their gift abilities and talents that we have gone blind to what we have been given.

Do you know that one of the greatest theological truths I learned was not in Sunday School, Church or Bible Study. One of the greatest theological truths I learned came from a Saturday morning cartoon. The cartoon was Spiderman and His Amazing Friends. The truth was in the following statement:

"With great power comes great responsibility."

This statement is really a paraphrase of Luke 12:48b *For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*

If we took the time to evaluate what we have been given then we would see the VALUE of it along with the value in ourselves. Once we've realized our own value, we can then see the value in others. I believe that taking this simple to identify and acknowledge our God-given gifts should do two things:

It should humble us.

It should cause us to realize we are accountable for that which we have been given.

When you realize that what you have on the inside of you is not for you then you look at it differently. Dr. Myles Munroe said, "The fruit is not for the tree!" and your gifts, abilities and talents are not for you. They are to be shared with the world.

Several weeks ago I did a video on Responsibility. (The video can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/deRas6jXhsU?t=73>).

In the video I talked about "What's Your Responsibility?"

I broke down the word Responsibility, which is your Ability to Respond. If you have the ability to respond to a situation then it becomes your Responsibility. This understanding is at the root of what it means to be civil.

Civil Right (*noun*) – the rights of citizens to political and social freedom and equality.

Moving from Civility to Civil Right shouldn't be hard at all. As we consider our own responsibility when it comes to sharing our gift with the world we move from doing that individually to doing it corporately. We start seeing how we as a group of like-minded people, put the needs of the many about the needs of the few. We start to look for solutions that benefit the major as opposed to a select few. And we do so with a clear conscience knowing that our work has not only met the current need but that generations to come can use our efforts as a road map to get to their promised land.

We don't hide the conclusion of our findings or lock them away in a secret value. We eagerly put them on display for all to see and model because the end result will be a better world.

I did not want to end this article with fulfilling the mandate of my company's slogan:

"We Make Motivation Personal By Introducing You To Yourself!"

In order to get the right answers, we have to ask the right questions. These questions don't need to be directed outwardly but inward. There is a quote I heard that said,

"The keenest eye is the one that looks within."

When was the last time you did a personal inventory?

When was the last time you acknowledge the gifts, abilities and talents that you have?

When was the last time you share them with the world?

I believe if we identify, acknowledge and exercise our gifts, then we can bring back civility and make civil right the rule instead of the exception. •



Cicone C.A. Prince is a highly sought after Motivational Speaker, Award Winning Author, and Personal Development Strategist that helps people take an objective look at themselves. He is the CEO of *CiconePrince.com* where their slogan is *"Making Motivational Personal by Introducing You to Yourself."*TM

With an Associate's Degree and a Bachelor's Degree in Electronic Engineering, Mr. Prince has used his love of learning to continue educating himself. He then passes on those lessons via engaging stories and illustration during his motivational speeches.

Mr. Prince is married to Yolanda Prince and they have 5 children, Marcellus, Christin, Jessica, Taylor and Johnathan.

“From Rosa to Obama”

BY SHRISMA KIMBROUGH



I'm Shrisma Kimbrough and I am a product of the civil rights movement. Growing up in Montgomery, AL, I was gifted to be raised by my grandparents both of whom had witnessed the injustices of slavery, segregation, civil and human rights history. Racism was no aloof secret or rare conversation throughout my upbringing. Surrounded by those of a past generation, memories of the rough side of racism abounded. Values of hard work and equal rights were instilled into me from an early age. That's why, I continue to carry a torch for efforts to shed a memorial light on the unfortunate events that took place surrounding the renowned “*Civil Rights Movement*.”

The United States Congress has called Mrs. Rosa L. Parks “the first lady of civil rights” and “the mother of the freedom movement”. It is a mandate that the sacrifices Rosa Park's made are never forgotten and will always be upheld in society as a beacon of light and a memorial that ‘she-roles’ like her paved the way for other African Americans to sit in powerful positions.

With civil and human rights being a concurrent battle in our society, paired with an opportunity to pay homage to two of the world's most influential people in black culture, I was inspired to invent, design and exclusively manufacture the world's first civil rights flag entitled “From Rosa to Obama” which was inducted and archived into the children's wing of Troy University's Rosa Parks Museum in Montgomery, Alabama on Feb. 4, 2009, the 96th birthday of Rosa L. Parks.

“America, this is our moment, this is our time. Our time to turn the page of the policies of the past,” said

President Barack Obama and I couldn't have agreed more! We literally went from being told to sit at the back of the bus and being arrested for occupying front seats of the bus, to sitting in the highest seat available in America, The Oval Office. This speaks volumes to how much African Americans have overcome.

I can remember a time when my sister and I were at the grocery store with my grandmother and a Caucasian woman asked if she could pass her to the front of the line because she had to get back to her garden work and my grandmother became furious and began to have what I call an ‘Equality Outburst’ right there in the store as to make a scene. I was around 7 years old and it was the first time I had witnessed such turbulence between two races of people. This moment stuck with me throughout my life until I came to a mature place of realization that the events which took place in our society were very real and had a harrowing effect on, not only my grandparents, but every person of color. Reflecting, and due to racist encounters, I've endured personally in Montgomery, Alabama – I can now say I understand my grandmother's traumatic reaction that day.

Rosa Parks dedication for equal rights has made an enormous impact on me as well as many others. From my grandparent's participation in the 1965 Selma to Montgomery March, we've since witnessed the first African American President.

My grandparents walked to work during the Montgomery bus boycott, triumphantly overcoming those obstacles. During that time, my grandmother became the first African American supervisor of a Veterans Affairs hospital.



Shrisma Kimbrough designed the “From Rosa to Obama” Civil Rights flag to debunk racism and inequality in America. “My flag is a depiction of how Blacks went from being jailed for sitting in the front seat of a bus to sitting in the highest seat in America – The Presidential Office.”

I respect the stance taken, so I feel I must also take a stance to empower women and men of color to continue the fight for equality and justice, and one of the ways I do this is artistically. Hence, my “From Rosa to Obama” flag creation.

So, the honorariums continue – In a recent memorial dedication to the late Mrs. Rosa L. Parks, the mayor of Montgomery, Steven Reed, and the Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey pulled back a cloth to unveil a statue before a crowd of about 400 spectators. The ceremony coincided with the anniversary of Mrs. Park’s Dec. 1, 1955, arrest that sparked the Montgomery bus boycott, a pivotal part of the civil rights movement. A bronze statue of Mrs. Parks was unveiled on the 64th Anniversary of her refusal to give up her seat on a public bus to a white man.

“This depiction will inspire future generations to make the pilgrimage to our city, to push toward the path of righteousness, strength, courage and equality,” said Steven Reed, who recently became the first African American mayor of Montgomery, at the ceremony. This is resounding evidence that the world is still in awe, honor and gratitude of the sacrifices made by Mrs. Rosa L. Parks.

Also, recent park upgrades for the Rosa Parks Square in Macon, GA. were approved. Commissioner Elaine Lucas’s sponsored proposal received \$900,000 in funding to add features to the Rosa Parks Square and I am once again inspired to make a historical mark in history by proposing “From Rosa to Obama” historic memorial flag be installed to fly high on the park’s grounds.

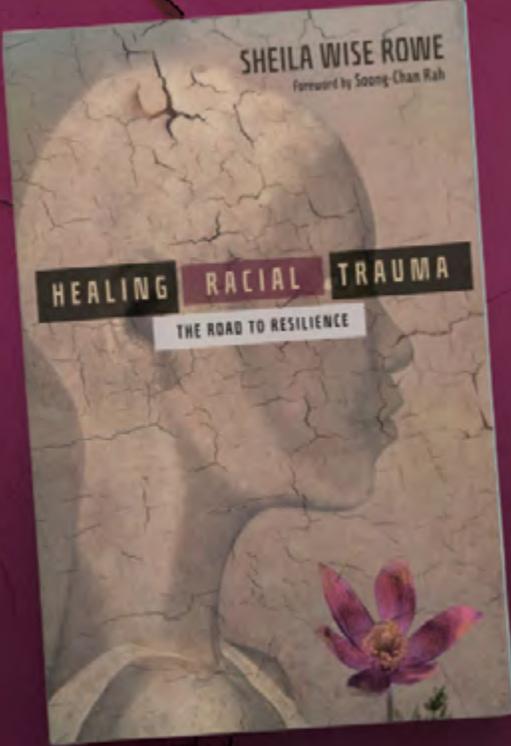
Macon Commissioner Joe Allen said, “It’s to make the downtown area a place where we can make people feel safe when they come.”

My historic flag design “From Rosa to Obama” was created to support such efforts.

To be able to honor Mrs. Rosa L. Parks and President Barack Obama within the same artistic work has been a revolutionary opportunity, while simultaneously honoring the 40,000 African American men and women who stayed off of the buses for 382 days, is indeed a step in the right direction. •

SHRISMA KIMBROUGH is an Artist and Entrepreneur, Owner of *Shrisma Enterprise, LLC*. Shrisma has received dual degrees in Business Management/Human Resources and Marketing Management/Entrepreneurship from Central Georgia Technical College.

Creator of the civil rights flag “From Rosa to Obama”. is now nationally recognized by the North American Vexillological Association – the largest organization in vexillology and camaraderie. Shrisma’s civil rights advocacy garnered her the title of “Unsung Hero” by the NAACP Association and she is also a member of SCLC-Atlanta. In past roles, she has served as Affirmative Action Assistant for the Duval Democrats as well as the voice of the political rap initiative entitled “Rap the Vote Campaign”. Shrisma is the Founder of “Macon-Bibb Fashion Week” and Co-Founder of “Fashion in The Streets Festival” both event Proclamations issued by Mayor Reichart of Macon-Bibb County.



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Sheila Wise Rowe, MEd, has counseled abuse and trauma survivors in the United States and South Africa for over twenty-five years.



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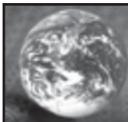
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The Southern Christian Leadership Conference focuses on national issues that shape our lives. This mission perfectly aligns with that of the 2020 Census, the results of which will shape our lives in many ways. Population counts coming out of the 2020 Census will shape each state’s representation in the U.S. House of Representatives for the next 10 years. That means some states will gain seats and others will lose them. The results are also used for distribution of federal funds, and decisions by state and local governments and businesses to plan for services in our communities.

Monica Dukes, Recruiting Coordinator at the Atlanta Regional Census Center expressed her feelings about working on the 2020 Census, “I feel honored to work for the Census Bureau and be part of a project that affects so many communities in a positive way. Being part of the 2020 Census workforce allows employees to play key roles in the bigger picture of accurately counting everyone in the nation, and more importantly in their own communities.” Cheaka Burise, also a Recruiting Coordinator in Atlanta, added, “One of the best ways you can have a lasting impact on your community is to work for the 2020 Census. For every person that is counted, there will be approximately \$20,000 returned to their community over the next ten years.”

When asked why they would encourage others to work for the 2020 Census, Monica replied, “The jobs offer competitive pay, flexible work hours and the opportunity to get out into your community and make a difference.” Cheaka added, “Everyone deserves to be counted, and this is where our own accountability matters. Why not get paid to make a difference?”

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