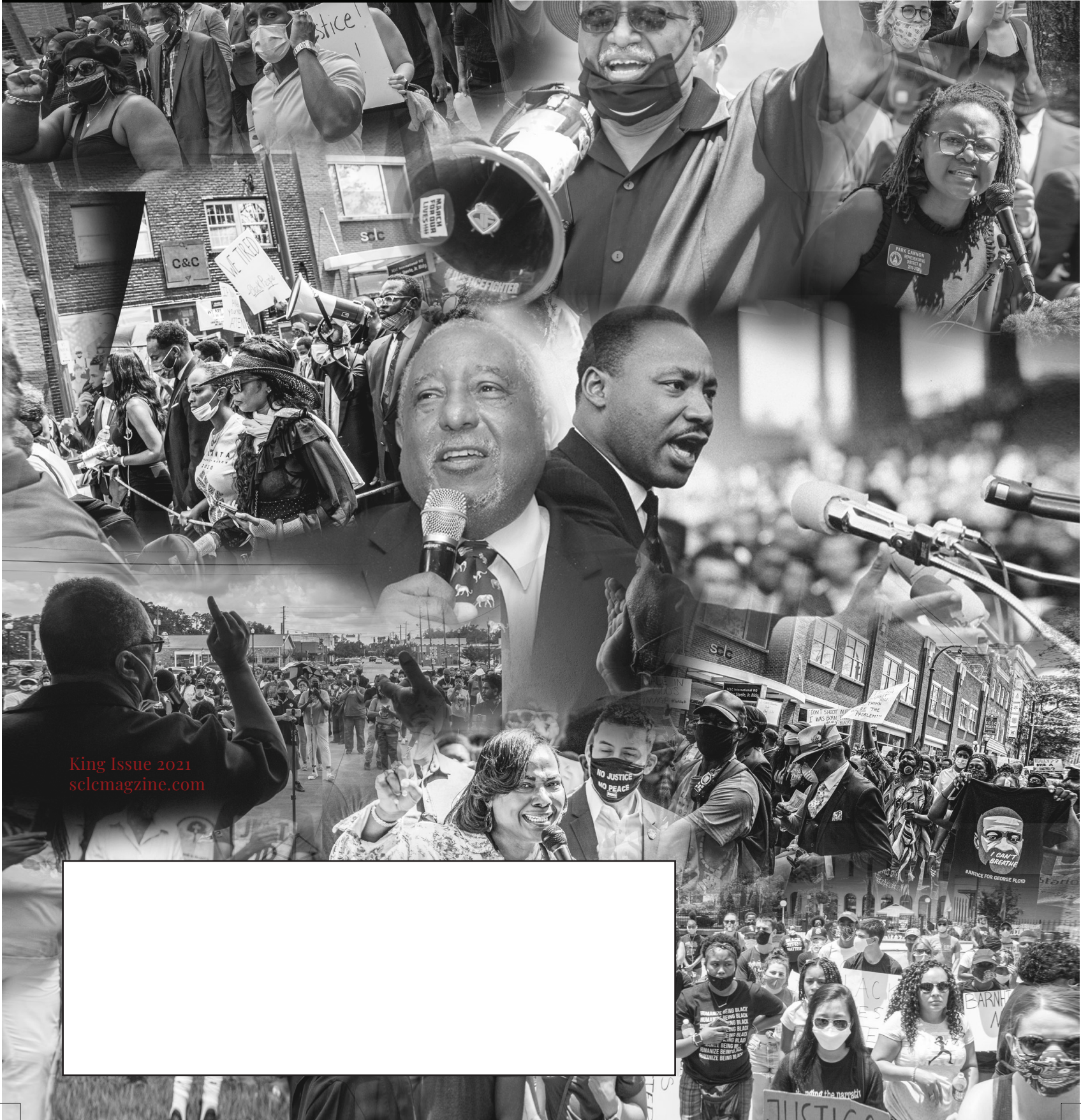


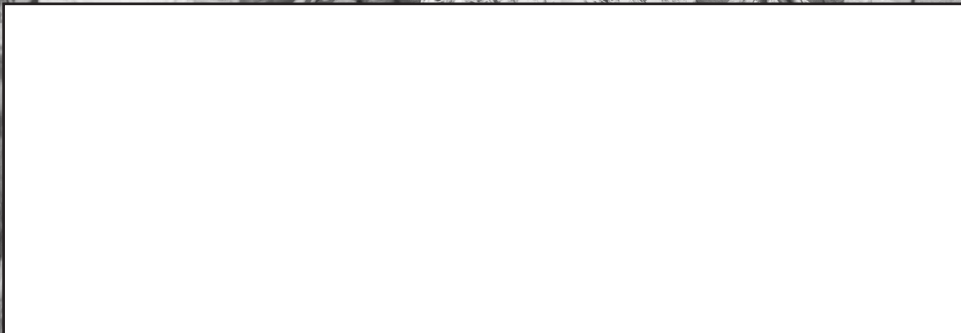
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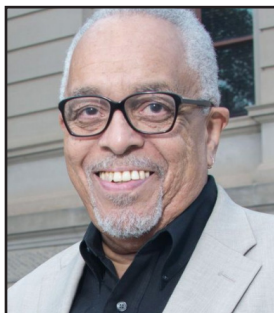
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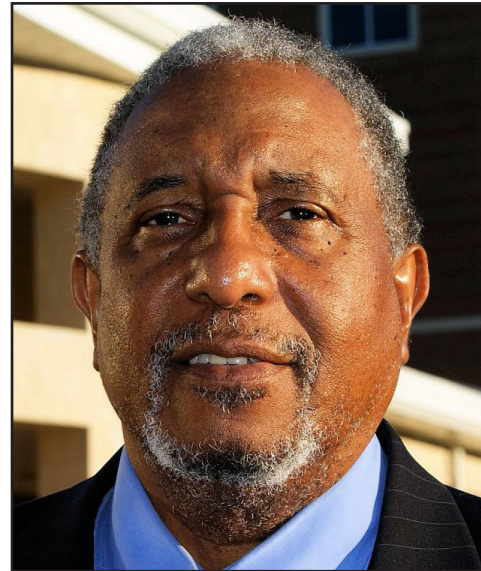
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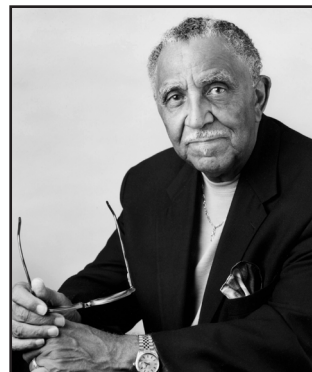
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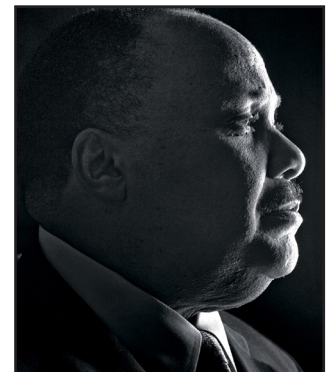
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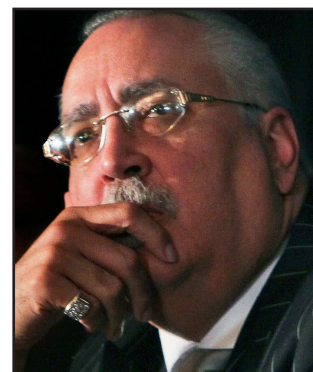
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PRESIDENTS CORNER

By Dr. Charles Steele Jr., *SCLC National President & CEO*



I am rarely without words, speechless or floored. However, I am completely shocked at how the process of the 2020 election has played out. All of our hard work, all of the tears, the bloodshed and the marching to get us to the point where we can freely vote. Vote without guessing the number of jellybeans in a jar, but to stand in line proud and in awe of the sacrifice of our ancestors. We have sacrificed too much for a free America to let anyone take us back 250 years to Jim Crow.

“Becoming too comfortable always poses a risk. We have become too relaxed in electing officials to represent us.”

Unfortunately, we have been witnessing our democracy and our right to vote as African Americans be challenged. However, my response is...NO, we shall not be moved. We must keep up the good fight, but there is much work to be done.

Let's be honest...we can never allow ourselves to get comfortable. Believing the days of Jim Crow and oppression were over caused us to be jolted back into reality. The reality is that racism is systemic. We never cut the root of racism in America. We merely cut the grass and added pretty flowers, but we never got rid of the weeds.

Becoming too comfortable always poses a risk. We have become too relaxed in electing officials to represent us. We have become complacent in registering to vote and keeping up with current legislation.

I have been speaking about the 1965 Voting Rights Act being in jeopardy for years and in 2013 the Supreme Court struck down section four of the Voting Rights Act. The Supreme Court vote gutted the crucial part of the legislation that designates which part of the

country must have changes to their voting laws cleared by the federal government. This part of the legislation is so crucial because it would allow the federal government to ensure that the states follow the law pertaining to voter procedures. Before any changes can be made regarding redistricting or any changes politically to the 1965 Voting Rights Act it must be pre-cleared by the federal government. Section four and section five were the heart of the Voting Rights Act. This particular section was the catalyst which led the way to all of our civil rights. This means we have gone back to state rights, which means states can return to their wrong doings of the past. Sounds like Jim Crow is sticking its ugly head up, again.

We cannot afford the clock to be turned back in terms of us being first class citizens. We must continue under the protection of the federal government like we have been for almost 50 years. If we do not have this protection, we are destined to repeat our past. We are witnessing in real time how it is absolutely possible to go backwards. Alexander Hamilton said it best when he made the statement “history is always watching.”

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SCLC FROM THE CHAIRMAN

THE LAST WORD

By Dr. Bernard LaFayette, Jr., *SCLC National Chairman*

It was in Memphis, Tennessee, April 4, 1968 that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke his last words to me. It was in his hotel room 306 at the Loraine Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee. Dr. King was scheduled to have a press conference in Washington, D.C. to announce the headquarters of the Poor Peoples Campaign at 14th and U but since the Sanitation Workers March in Memphis was broken up in violence, Dr. King decided to stay in Memphis and do the march over again. He did not want to leave a blight on the Sanitation Workers strike.

His entire staff and directors of programs had flown to Memphis to continue to work on the Poor Peoples Campaign and prepare for the next march. Dr. King wanted to stay on schedule, so he asked me to go to D.C. and hold the press conference for him since he had appointed me the National Coordinator of the Poor Peoples Campaign.

The morning of April 4, I was finishing the press statement that he and I had been working on the night of the 3rd of April. We were interrupted the night before, when Dr. King got a phone call from Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy who called Dr. King from Mason Temple Church to explain to him that the audience was calling for Dr. King to come and speak to them. They were insisting that Dr. King should come.

Dr. King said, "Are you telling me that you want me to get out of my bed, put on my clothes and come out in the pouring down rain, and it's raining 'cats and dogs.'" Abernathy said, "This is your crowd, they want to hear you." Dr. King said "Okay, if you say so." He got dressed and left. This was the occasion when he made that famous speech,



“I’ve been to the Mountain Top and I have seen the Promised Land.”

I stayed at the hotel and continued to write the press statement. When Dr. King returned, he was so excited, he said “Let’s continue in the morning.”

The next morning was April 4th. We finished the press statement at Dr. King’s bedside. He told me to go on to D.C. and hold the press conference and he would be along later. As I stood up ready to leave his room, he stopped me and said, “LaFayette, the next movement we are going to have is to institutionalize and internationalize nonviolence. I responded by saying “Yes, sir.” These were my last words with Dr. King.

I took my flight out of Memphis to National Airport in D.C. When I arrived at the airport, my ride was not there. Rev. Walter Fauntroy was scheduled to meet me at the terminal. He was not there. I called the office at 14th and U and the secretary told me that Dr. King had been shot in Memphis and there was rioting in the streets. Rev. Fauntroy and Stokely Carmichael were out in the streets attempting to stop the riots.

I called back to Memphis and could not get through. I then called the news services, U.P.I. and A.P. There was a battery of telephones in the airport, so I made the calls with a phone in both ears listening to the reporters read the tickertapes from Memphis. The U.P.I. reporter broke down and started crying, that’s how I knew that Dr. King had died.

I took a cab to 14th and U. I was able to reach the staff in Memphis and they told me that they would meet me in Atlanta.

We had to do a funeral, a successful labor movement in Memphis, and the Poor Peoples Campaign without Dr. King. Dr. King’s last words to me became my life commitment. “Institutionalize and internationalize nonviolence.” They killed Dr. King, but I was, and am, determined that they would not silence him nor his message and dream.

Nonviolence based on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s teachings is being taught in institutions and curricula all over the world, in schools, universities, community centers, institutes, prisons, and churches. They continue to expand, sponsored by private industry, non-profits, and government agencies.

I am convinced that the change will come. The young people are coming forth as they learn more about the principles and steps of nonviolence and the strategy that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. used to transform our community.

THE DNA OF A BLACK WOMAN

By Chuck Richardson

(TriceEdneyWire.com) - There is something magical about a fearless, intelligent, incorruptible black woman. A woman willing to sacrifice and face any obstacle she must for a greater cause than herself. Black women have been, and continue to be, the crucible of fortitude. Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells, Mary McLeod Bethune, Fannie Lou Hamer and thousands beside them have been the bedrock of African-American progress.

I realized in my late twenties that if you want to get it done – you better have black women involved. That was when I, in 1977, ran for and won a seat on the first majority Black city council in Richmond, Va. It was the determination of Black women, some more than twice my age, that made the history possible.

When those Black women spoke, weathered by storms of racism, deprivation and personal abuses, it changed the atmosphere.

A crowd of timid, doubtful or unfocused lambs became ferocious lions. People today might speak of my legacy of achievements in Richmond, but they don't know the source of my confidence. I can't recall the number of times strong black women lifted me and forged new inspiration.

From the late seventies to the early nineties, I won nine consecutive re-elections. Any success reached by fighting the good fight, including my relentless efforts over two decades to remove the Confederate monuments on Monument Ave, were only possible because of the victories won for me by these women. Black men in my campaigns were strong and forceful, the physical image the organization needed, I don't deny that. But diligence was more often worn by the women.

I remember one election when I needed 20 new people registered as voters in each precinct. The young volunteers would bring back three or four and a handful of excuses. But there were elder women, some who did not walk easily, who would return with the full number. One of them said to a young person, "You don't win elections with good excuses – you need voters!"

Women like Bessie Jones, Elaine Dunn or Luetta B. Wooldridge, who were managers and coordinators for my campaigns. And they stood with me in difficult times when very few had the will.

Rev. Sarah Goshen, an older Black wom-



an with a calm but convincing demeanor, stood up in a storm of attacks on my character during a controversial and profound personal battle. She admonished the men who chose to disregard my history of service to my country, and more directly, to the African-Americans in Richmond. Rev. Goshen stood with the same solidarity and courage that defined her fore mothers, “Don’t abandon the bridge that brung you ‘cross!” she demanded. My spirit rose to the ceiling.

“Don’t abandon the bridge that brung you ‘cross.” It has indeed been a bridge, one more river to cross for Black Americans. Two-hundred fifty years of slavery and Jim Crow seems to have developed a certain ‘DNA’ in Black women.

Because, to watch as your child is torn away, or your man absolutely emasculated and denied any dignity, to have your body raped and to endure a brutalized life of labor, something had to evolve in the ‘DNA’ of Black women.

A new measure of courage, strength, dignity and faith saved them; the crucible of fortitude. They marched on and we march on today. America is more divided perhaps since slavery itself. But Black women have our backs, still enduring, fighting the good fight.

Women like my own sister, Valerie Richardson Jackson, the former first lady of Atlanta, who persevered with myself as one of the first students integrating our high school. Becoming one of the first black women to attend the Wharton School of Business (now led by a black woman), working and paying her way through, earning her M.B.A.

She went on to market General Foods products and gained a regional role at Trans World Airlines corporate headquarters in New York. Because a strong, smart black woman is not to be passed over, she won the heart of and married a man who was certainly the most consequential politician in the history of Atlanta: Mayor Maynard Jackson. Maynard always said of Valerie, “She enables me.”

The nation has recently come to know two more amazing Black women: Democratic activist, Stacey Abrams, and Sen. Kamala Harris; now Vice President-elect. Stacey Abrams showed her ability early, in front of the very Atlanta City Hall that Maynard occupied.

She led a large group of university students calling on the mayor to address student issues. Maynard was impressed and invited her to meet with him. Afterward, he gave Ms. Abrams her first job in politics. The rest is history: a heroic race for governor of Georgia, and a voter registration movement that is unprecedented, and driving the numbers to heights heretofore unseen - a democratic movement that has already become a model for the nation.

Valerie has always been a strong supporter of both Stacey Abrams and Kamala Harris. Three friends, three Black women, three lessons we should take from them - and history. With a Black woman becoming vice-president, we should keep in mind what it took, because we will need it going forward: patience with diligence, courage with wisdom, boldness with conviction. In other words, Black women.

Chuck Richardson, a former 18-year veteran of the Richmond City Council, is founder of the National Organization of Rehabilitated Offenders (NORO).



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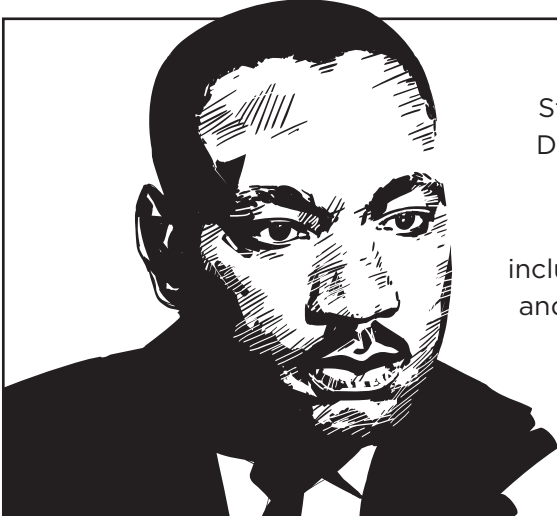
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sclc FROM THE FIRST LADY

THE EMBODIMENT OF A LEADER

By Cathelean Steele, *Founder, Justice for Girls*



I met Mrs. Coretta Scott King for the first time at Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, Alabama on August 16, 2000. She awarded Charles Steele, Jr, my husband, with a picture of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The inscription reads “with the warmest appreciation and personal regards. Your commitment to improving the quality of life for all people has moved us closer to the realization of Dr. King’s dream.” I was in awe to meet the widow of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and a “symbol of

an international struggle for human liberation from racism, colonialism, and all forms of oppression and discrimination.”

During her fifteen years of marriage to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, Coretta was the quiet storm that kept him moving forward. She worked side by side with her husband while also raising a family. She supported the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955. In 1957 she traveled to Ghana with Dr. King to mark that nation’s independence, and in 1959 journeyed with him to a pilgrimage to India. Coretta also worked tirelessly with Dr. King in pushing for the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

To ensure that finances would not derail the movement, Coretta conceived the idea of Freedom Concerts. These concerts combined poetry and music to tell the story of the movement. She also encouraged Dr. King in international affairs such as the opposition to the Vietnam war.

Dr. King was invited by the Harvard Class of 1968 to address them on Class Day. After his assassination on April 4, Coretta agreed to speak in his stead. She became the first woman to deliver the Class Day address at Harvard and doing her message she told the class that they “must hold high the banner of freedom.” This was only one of many first for Coretta. She became a spokesperson for international peace and economic justice. She was the first woman to preach at a statutory service at St. Paul’s Cathedral in London. She served as Women’s Strike for Peace delegate to the 17-National Disarmament in Geneva, Switzerland in 1962.

In 1974, she formed the Full Employment Action Council, a coalition of over one hundred religious, labor, business, civic and women's organizations dedicated to a national policy of full employment and equal economic opportunity; Mrs. King served as co-chair of the council.

In 1983, she marked the 20th Anniversary of the historic March on Washington by leading a gathering of more than 800 human rights organizations, the Coalition of Conscience, in the largest demonstrations the capital had seen at that time.

Mrs. King is sometimes viewed as only the widow of Dr. King. She was much more, she was the embodiment of a leader. She was a wife, a mother, an activist and she remained as activist until this life no longer provided her with time. I was reading a quote from Mrs. King that was written in The Atlantic and I would like to leave this quote with you. "I am an activist, I didn't just emerge after Martin died-I was always there and involved."

When we celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr on his birthday, let us remember there was a queen beside the king that also made a difference.

To learn more about the life and legacy of Mrs. Coretta Scott King you can visit the Martin Luther King, Jr Center for Nonviolent Social Change established by Mrs. Coretta Scott King in 1968 after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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WORKING TOGETHER TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

Dr. Nancy Reid


The COVID-19 virus has swept across the United States with 13.7 million cases reported and approximately 267,000 deaths recorded through November 2020. This number is expected to continue to rise due to the number of gatherings taking place over the holiday season. In addition, people in their 20s and 30s are more likely to go out socializing and concern is growing that asymptomatic young people are helping to spread the virus to more vulnerable people.

We must all work together to help keep each other healthy and safe from this virus. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention strongly advocates for the wear of face masks with two or more layers. It should be noted that gaiters are considered an acceptable face covering but should be folded so that a two-layer barrier is present. In addition, the efficacy of face shields alone is still being studied and should not be used in lieu of a facemask but in addition to facemasks.

Correct and consistent usage of a facemask is imperative to preventing the transmission of the COVID-19 virus. The mask should cover your nose and mouth and be secured under your chin. It should fit snugly against the sides of your face. Non-disposable masks should be washed regularly using laundry detergent and the warmest appropriate water setting for the cloth used to make the mask. Dry using the highest heat setting. Care should be used when handling facemasks making sure to not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth when removing. Handle only the loops of the mask and fold the outside corners together.

Symptoms of COVID-19 often mimic the common cold and the flu. Table 1 compares the symptoms of COVID-19, the common cold, and the flu. If you feel ill and have not been tested, it is important to quarantine away from others until you have been tested and receive results. If you test positive, whether you have symptoms or not, you should isolate from others even those who live with you. Isolation includes all of the following precautions: staying in a separate room from other household members; using a separate bathroom if possible; avoiding contact with household members and pets; avoiding sharing items like cups, towels and utensils; wearing a mask when around other people. Isolation should continue for 10 days from the appearance of the first symptoms, 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication, AND other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving (loss of taste or smell may persist for week to months). If a person tests positive for COVID-19 and is asymptomatic, he or she should isolate for 10 days from the date of the test. If you have recovered from symptoms after testing positive, you may continue to test positive for COVID-19 even if you previously tested negative. In one study from Italy, approximately 18% of patients who recovered from COVID-19 and tested negative for the virus later tested positive.¹ Therefore, to avoid unnecessary quarantines, patients who have recovered from COVID-19 should not undergo repeat PCR testing for 90 days after infection.²

COLD VS. FLU VS. CORONAVIRUS

SYMPTOMS	COLD	FLU	CORONAVIRUS** <small>(can range from mild to serious)</small>
 Fever	Rare	High (100-102 F) Can last 3-4 days	Common
 Headache	Rare	Intense	Can be present
 General Aches, Pains	Slight	Usual, often severe	Can be present
 Fatigue, Weakness	Mild	Intense, Can last up to 2-3 weeks	Can be present
 Extreme Exhaustion	Never	Usual (starts early)	Can be present
 Stuffy Nose	Common	Sometimes	Has been reported
 Sneezing	Usual	Sometimes	Has been reported
 Sore Throat	Common	Common	Has been reported
 Cough	Mild to moderate	Common, Can become severe	Common
 Shortness of Breath	Rare	Rare	In more serious infections

Sources: National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, CDC, WHO. **Information is still evolving

One of the most severe presentations of the COVID-19 virus is acute respiratory distress syndrome which can lead to severe complications and death. Co-morbid conditions such as diabetes and obesity put those diagnosed with COVID-19 at greater risk of developing more severe symptoms. Older age, male sex and certain race/ethnicities such as African American and Latino individuals bear a disproportionate burden of poor COVID-19 related outcomes. Webb et al notes that “the underlying causes of health disparities are complex and include social and structural determinants of health, racism and discrimination, economic and educational disadvantages, health care access and quality, individual behavior, and biology.”³

There are two common theories that address why the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting racial/ethnic minority populations at higher rates. First, comorbid conditions such as diabetes, asthma, HIV, cardiovascular disease, obesity, liver disease and kidney disease disproportionately affect racial and ethnic minorities. Second, racial

and ethnic minorities are more likely to be employed in service occupations which are less likely to be able to social distance. Social distancing is the most effective strategy to prevent transmission of COVID-19. Yancey notes that “being able to maintain social distancing while working from home, telecommuting, and accepting a furlough from work but indulging in the plethora of virtual social events are issues of privilege. In certain communities these privileges are simply not accessible.”⁴ Finally, researchers continue to investigate the possibility that genetic or other biological factors predisposes racial and ethnic minorities to more severe symptoms and higher mortality rates.

If you or a family member has tested positive for COVID-19, consider donating convalescent plasma to help treat those who are battling the disease. Once a person who has contracted COVID-19, they produce antibodies against the virus that circulate within their blood plasma. These antibodies can be removed from the blood of patients who have recovered and given to those who are critically ill. Convalescent plasma is an investigational treatment for COVID-19. To learn more about donating convalescent plasma, go to www.RedCrossBlood.org/Plasma4COVID.

During this trying time, it is important to address mental health issues that arise as people are trying to cope with the stresses the COVID pandemic has introduced. The psychological impacts of the pandemic are increasingly becoming noted in medical literature. People around the country are struggling with concerns for their personal safety, lack of availability of an extensively tested vaccine, and the socioeconomic impact of unemployment and lack of basic necessities. There has been an increase in mental health issues such as depression, anxiety disorders, substance abuse, increased suicidal tendencies, and PTSD in times of major economic crises or natural disaster. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has compiled a list of mental health resources noted in Table 2. Continue to take care of friends and family and practice self-care. Frequent phone calls and video chats with loved ones can help reduce the stress caused by social distancing. Finally, don't hesitate to ask for help. We have to work together to stop the spread of the Covid-19 virus. We are in this together.

Resources	Telephone Number	Text
Emergency	911	
Disaster Distress Helpline	1-800-985-5990	
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	1-800-273-TALK (8255)	
National Domestic Violence Hotline	1-800-799-7233	LOVEIS to 22522
National Child Abuse Hotline	1-800-422-4453	1-800-422-4453
National Sexual Assault Hotline	1-800-656-HOPE (4673)	
The Eldercare Locator	1-800-677-1116	
Veteran's Crisis Line	1-800-273-TALK (8255)	8388255

Table 2. Mental Health Resources

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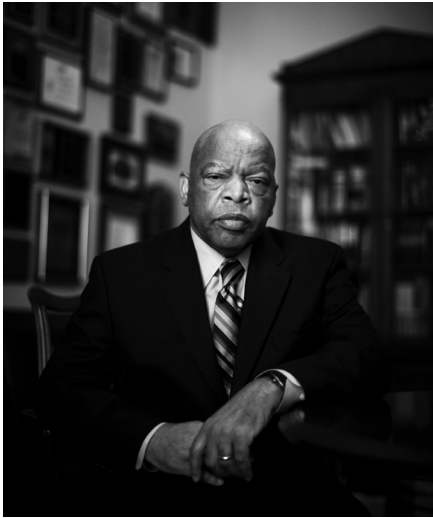
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Dr. Nancy Reid is an Associate Professor in the Doctor of Medical Science Program at the University of Lynchburg, Lynchburg, VA. She has been a practicing physician assistant for 20 years and works in the field of occupational medicine.





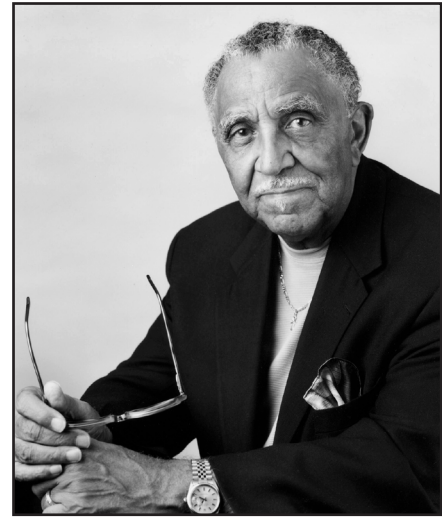
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John Lewis
July 17, 2020



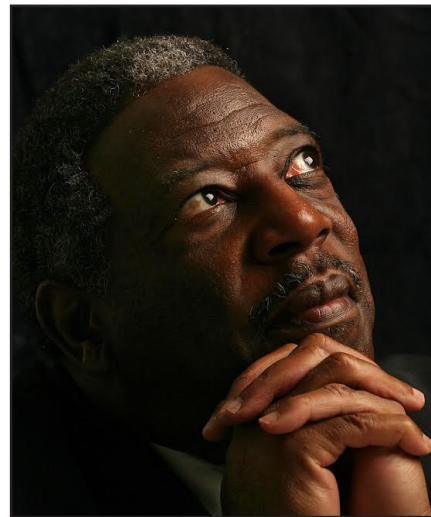
CT Vivian
July 17, 2020



Joseph E. Lowery
March 27, 2020



Barbara King
October 11, 2020



Dr. Albert Love
December 23, 2019



DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

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Dr. King spent many hours along the roads and bayous of every corner of Louisiana, collaborating, and paving the road to history; and the road led through New Orleans!

From 1953-1957, prior to the organization of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in New Orleans (SCLC), the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. made numerous visits to Louisiana for meetings, rallies, and other activities, especially to the three largest cities of New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Shreveport. In 1953, there was a bus boycott in the City of Baton Rouge, Louisiana lead by Rev. Theodore Judson Jemison, Pastor of Mount Zion First Baptist Church and President of the National Baptist Convention. Almost two years later, his colleague and friend, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. contacted Rev. Jemison to get information on conducting a non-violent direct action in the form of a bus boycott. This provided the impetus for Montgomery Bus Boycott. In 1955, the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) of clergy and civic leaders was formed with Dr. King as its President. Other leaders in the formation of the MIA were Rev. Ralph David Abernathy, JoAnn Robinson, and Edgar Daniel Nixon. As faith would have it, the NAACP Montgomery (AL) Branch Secretary Rosa Louise McCauley Parks refused to move to the back of the bus after paying the required fare and taking a seat. Her actions lead to a boycott of city buses which lasted 381 days. The success of the nonviolent direct action launched a national spotlight on Dr. King and had an impact on his decision to develop strategic collaborations throughout the South. In addition to the MIA, Dr. King served as a member of the Executive Committee of the local NAACP – a post he held until his death in 1968.

On Thursday morning, January 10, 1957, Dr. King, Rev. Abernathy, Rev. Fredrick Lee “Fred” Shuttlesworth, Bayard Rustin and Rev.

THE “SCLC - NEW ORLEANS” CONNECTION

By Dr. Levon A. LeBan,
President, SCLC New Orleans (LA) Chapter





Charles K. Steele were advised of six pre-dawn explosions of four churches and two homes in Montgomery, Alabama. The explosions hit Bell Street Baptist, Hutchinson Street Baptist, First Street Baptist, and Mount Olive Baptist Church; and the homes of pastors, Rev. Abernathy, and Rev. Robert Graetz, two leaders in the long-fought movement against segregation. The damaged churches were used for community gatherings and meetings of the local civil rights activist. One of the homes bombed belonged to Ralph and Juanita Abernathy. Dr. King and Rev. Abernathy rushed from Atlanta to Montgomery. The leaders gathered in Atlanta vowed to carry on their struggle for civil rights even in the face of death. Dr. King, whose home was later bombed, asserted that “there can be no social gain without individual pain.” It was also decided that an organizing meeting would be held in New Orleans, Louisiana the following month.

Close Relationships

Dr. King had close relationships with numerous New Orleanians such as Dr. Leonard Burns and Joseph Verret, (President and Vice President of United Clubs, Inc., respectively), Constant Charles Dejoie, Sr. (Publisher, The Louisiana Weekly), Rev. Abraham Lincoln Davis, Jr. (Pastor, New Zion Baptist Church), and Marcus Neustadter (Public Relations Specialist). They were all a part of the organizing committee for the rally at the Coliseum Arena. Despite inclement weather, more than two thousand residents gathered to hear Dr. King speak – demonstrating the commitment to the movement. One New Orleans newspaper published an article on January 19, 1957 that announced: “Bus Boycott Leader: Rev. M.L. King To Speak Here Feb. 1” According to the article, “The Presentation of Dr. King to the citizenry of New Orleans, Louisiana by the United Clubs, Incorporated on Friday, February 1, 1957 will mark the climax of a spirited drive by this young group’s ‘black-out’ of Carnival activities and entertainment this year. Rev. King, dynam-

ic leader of the very successful bus protest in Montgomery, Alabama and one of the most admired religious leaders in the world, will speak at the Coliseum Arena, 401 North Roman Street in New Orleans at 6:00 PM.”

According to locally renown photographer Rev. Dr. Samson “Skip” Alexander, “When Dr. King first scheduled the organizational meeting in New Orleans, he selected the Municipal Auditorium but there was a lot of push back by city officials. Rev. Abraham Lincoln Davis, Sr. was the Pastor of New Zion Baptist Church contacted Dr. King and invited him to New Zion Baptist Church in Central City (New Orleans). Pleased by invitation, nearly one-hundred clergy and community leaders gathered to organize the Southern Leadership Conference on February 14, 1957. Rev. Davis was the first African American member of the New Orleans City Council. An early organizer of sit-ins and other nonviolent protests, SCLC Co-founder Rev. Davis was elected 2nd Vice President and served as a National Executive Committee Member. Other Officers and Executive Board Members from Louisiana included: Dr. Cuthbert Ormond Simpkins, Sr.; Israel Meyer Augustine, Esq.; Clarence Henry; Rev. Theodore Judson Jemison; and Rev. Harry Blake.

Kathleen E. Wickham

Later that year, in August of 1957, Kathleen E. “Katie” Wickham, President of the National Beauty Culturalist League, Inc., located at 2100 Dryades Street in New Orleans, invited Dr. King to speak at the League’s 38th Annual Convention. The Convention was held at Booker T. Washington Senior High School (Dr. King was a 1944 graduate of Booker T. Washington High School in Atlanta, Georgia at age 15) at 1201 South Roman Street. Washington

High was the public-school system’s pre-eminent vocational technical training outlet. The school graduated cosmetologists, carpenters, auto repair experts, welders, horticulturalist, and other vocational and technical specialists. Dr. King spoke on “The Role of Beauticians in the Struggle for Freedom.” King said: “I am not too optimistic to believe that integration is ‘just around the corner.’ We have come a long, long way and we still have a long way to go, but we must keep moving in spite of the delay tactics used by segregationists.” King received the organization’s Civil Rights Award at the event.

In a letter to New Orleans native Wickham, Dr. King wrote: “As you probably know, we have a new organization in the south known as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference of which I am serving as president. This organization has tremendous possibilities. We have already received enthusiastic support from leaders across the south. Our basic aim is to implement the desegregation decision of the Supreme Court on the local level through nonviolent means. At present, we are in the midst of intensifying our drive to get folk out to vote. It is our hope that through our efforts and those of other organizations, we will be able to double the number of Negro registered voters by 1960. Wickham joined the National SCLC Executive Committee in October 1958 and was elected as the Assistant Secretary in 1959 in Tallahassee, Florida, following the resignation of Medgar Riley Evers of Jackson, Mississippi. About four-years later, Medgar Evers was killed in his driveway returning home from work. In addition, Katie Wickham was a member of the NAACP and the first chair of the New Orleans Metropolitan Women’s Voters League. She led numerous voter registration campaigns throughout the region.

Dr. King was a frequent visitor to the renowned Dooky Chase's Restaurant in New Orleans. The late Edgar Lawrence "Dooky" and wife Leyah "Leah" Lange Chase, whose family restaurant was a safe harbor during the modern civil rights movement and host to local and national civil rights leaders and nationally renowned entertainers. Dr. King often came to Dooky Chase's for meetings, to organize and get a good meal. A New Orleans icon, Dooky Chase Restaurant has hosted a wide range of patrons to include the 44th U.S. President, Barak H. Obama. Other locations in New Orleans where Dr. King spoke included: The Chapel at Dillard University; Union Bethel A.M.E. Church at 2321 Thalia Street; and the International Longshoreman's Association (ILA) at 2700 South Claiborne Avenue.

Mahalia Jackson

The undisputed "Queen of Gospel," Mahalia "Halie" Jackson was born in New Orleans, Louisiana on October 26, 1911. Jackson grew up in the Carrolton-Hollygrove section of the City in a neighborhood appropriately called the "Black Pearl." The classic Uptown New Orleans style "shotgun" home housed over a dozen people and a pet. Her mother died when she was about five years old and in the tradition of many African American homes, Jackson went to live with her aunt, Mahala Clark-Paul. At a National Baptist Convention in August of 1956, Jackson met Rev. Abernathy who introduced her to Dr. King, Jr. Months later, they asked her to assist them in a fun-raiser by singing at a rally in Montgomery, Alabama for the bus boycott. Jackson lived with the Abernathy's while in Alabama. The concert was on December 6, 1956 and raised a significant amount of money to support the cause. In a landmark case, the United States Supreme Court ruled that bus segregation was unconstitutional. However, the ruling was not implemented with all deliberate speed. When Jackson returned to the Abernathy's home, it had been bombed.

The Detroit Council on Human Rights sponsored an event on June 23, 1963, where over 125, 000 people gathered at Cabo Arena to hear Dr. King speak. In addition to Officers of the SCLC, Jackson was also there as a supporter. It was the culmination of the Detroit Walk to Freedom which was a precursor to the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. It was there that Dr. King first spoke about the "Dream." Two month later, as Dr. King spoke to the largest crowd of Civil Rights Activist in the history of the United States. At one point near his close, New Orleans native Mahalia Jackson shouted, "tell them about the Dream Martin, tell them about the Dream!" Dr. King heard the melodious voice of his friend and began what became known as the "I Have a Dream" speech.

Rev. Abraham Lincoln Davis, Jr

Initially, the group was called the Southern Negro Leaders Conference. The meeting was called to order with worship on Thursday, January 10, 1957 at 2:00 PM by Rev. S.S. Seay, Sr. "On January 10, 1957, about 50 Southern leaders gathered in Atlanta, Georgia to share and discuss their mutual problems of the Southern struggle." The primary focus was the idea of a regional organization to fight injustices in segregated transportation. The name was changed from Southern Negroes Leaders Conference to the Southern Leadership Conference on Transportation and Nonviolent Integration. It was decided

that a permanent group should be organized. According to Garrow (1986), “Two months later, close on the heels of the successful Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott (which ended in December 1956), SCLC came into being, in New Orleans, Louisiana.” The organization meeting was held in the City of New Orleans at New Zion Baptist Church, led by Rev. Abraham Lincoln Davis, Jr., the Southern Leadership Conference on Transportation and Nonviolent Integration was ultimately organized into the Southern Leadership Conference, soon afterwards expanded to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Israel Meyer Augustine, Jr.

Dr. King recognized the importance of legal assistance and counsel and tapped Attorney Israel Meyer Augustine, Jr. as the first Legal Counsel and Co-founder of SCLC. Atty. Augustine was born in New Orleans on November 16, 1924. He received a B.A. degree from Southern University and A&M College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and obtained his juris doctorate degree from Lincoln University in St. Louis, Missouri. Atty. Augustine was admitted to the Louisiana Bar in 1951 and in 1962, he could practice before the United States Supreme Court. Augustine became the first African American in Louisiana elected as a Criminal District Court Judge. A year later, he presided over the Black Panther Trial in New Orleans, a case that brought national attention to both New Orleans and Judge Augustine. He established several community programs such as the First Offender; Angola Awareness; and the “Roots” Homecoming Program. Judge Augustine was considered a champion of the people.

Clarence Henry

On an early visit to Louisiana, Dr. King visited his friend Clarence “Chink” Henry, President of the Local 3000 Unit, International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) in New Orleans. In September 1959, Dr. King spoke at a mass meeting at the ILA Union Hall Auditorium, sponsored by the SCLC New Orleans Chapter. The newly constructed art-deco ILA building was located at 2700 South Claiborne Avenue at the corner of Washington Avenue. The ILA building had a construction costs of \$500,000. The design was like no other in the New Orleans area. It was topped with an elaborate exterior truss system (which somewhat resembled the super-structure on a cargo ship) and its sides were sheathed in Vermont Verde, an exotic deep-green serpentine marble with white markings. President Henry invited the SCLC New Orleans Chapter to meet at the ILA and the Civil Rights movement found a home there. The area from South Claiborne Avenue and Washington Avenue to Washington and LaSalle Street was the epicenter of direct-action and the struggle for Civil Rights in the metropolitan area.

Andrew Jackson Young, Jr.

Next, there is “Andy” Young. A “Son of New Orleans,” Andrew Jackson Young, Jr. is one of the remaining living leaders who was at the site when Dr. King was assassinated. A Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient, Young served as the first African American Ambassador to the United Nations, a Member of Congress and Mayor of the City of Atlanta. But before the national and international accolades; before his political career; and before his involvement in the modern-day Civil Rights Movement was New Orleans. The son of a dentist, Andrew Jackson Young and teacher, Daisy Fuller Young, he was born on March 12, 1932, in New Orleans. Because of segregation practices and racial

policies, he had to travel from his neighborhood to attend all-black schools. Young entered the Gilbert Academy, a preparatory school for Dillard University located in Uptown New Orleans. He graduated at age 15 and attended Dillard for one year before transferring to Howard University. After graduating from Howard, he studied at the Hartford Theological Seminary in Connecticut. In 1955, Young became an ordained minister. In 1961, Andrew Young, Jr. works as a trainer with the SCLC Citizenship School and in 1964, he became the SCLC Executive Director. While in this position, he helped draft the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Moving Forward

As New Orleans celebrates over 300 years as a city, the SCLC New Orleans Chapter continue to hold true to the motto: “Redeeming the Soul of America.” The Chapter sponsored a Louisiana Historical Marker in the name of Coretta Scott King and the SCLC, honoring the formation of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration – to be erected in the Spring of 2021. In the spirit of the “Beloved Community” and in response to COVID-19, the Chapter distributed more than 2,000 pairs of protective face mask and bars of soap to homeless and indigent citizens in the metro area. Requested by the Chapter, the City erected a “new” Martin Luther King, Jr. street sign marking the beginning of MLK Boulevard. The SCLC New Orleans has developed a plethora of collaborative relationships emphasizing voter registration and programs that uplift the community. Over the past several years, the Chapter has collaborated to award nearly \$5,000.00 to SCLC Black History Essay Contest winners. Members continue to serve in Louisiana with the American Red Cross in response to Hurricanes Marco, Laura, and Delta. The SCLC – New Orleans Connection continue to grow and develop as we strive to “Redeem the Soul of America.”

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STAY WOKE!

By Cicone Prince

Childish Gambino's landmark song "Redbone" has in some ways become the unofficial anthem of Black America. The stylish ballet that was featured on the soundtrack of the groundbreaking movie "Get Out" softly sounded the alarm for anyone so adrift in the luxuries of life. It also quietly tip-toed its way into our conscience to alert those who have blinded themselves to our dire situation. As a part of the Get Out soundtrack, the relationship-based song took on a different meaning to issues facing Black America. Jordan Peele, writer, and director of "Get Out," said that he wanted to use the song because it encouraged people, especially Black People, to Stay Woke and Be Smart.

In my 51 years of living, I can honestly say that I have not witnessed a greater example of this than the recent 2020 Presidential Election. The record-breaking turnout was monumental on every level. Even given the Global Pandemic, inner cities which are known for having huge populations of African Americans turned out in record numbers, so much so that they shifted the tide in the election. I believe for the first time African Americans saw that their vote mattered and that they could enact change.

This awakening, in my opinion, has sparked a voting revolution that can change the course of politics for our country. Seeing how our collective voices cannot be silenced when we unify around a common cause has been amazing to behold.

Our youngest daughter was an hour and a half away at college on Election Day but still wanted to vote. With COVID-19 restrictions in place, it made it difficult for her to vote absentee. Since this was the first time she could vote after turning 18 and with the stakes being so high I made arrangements to leave home at 4:00 AM to get to her so that I could bring her home to cast her vote. And like the trooper that she is, she was WOKE and ready to make that hour and a half drive home to have her voice heard. Once she cast her vote we then had to turn around and take her back to college for her 2:00 PM class.

I know some may say that it is just one vote, but it was more than just one vote. In me sacrificing sleep, gas, wear, and tear on our vehicle and time, I proved to my daughter that her vote and her voice mattered. I didn't downplay that impact of her one vote, instead, I made it a priority for her to exercise her constitutional right as a citizen to vote. In doing so I know that the importance of participating in the democratic process has forever been etched in her mind and I'm sure that no other circumstances will keep her from doing the same in years to come.

In an interview with MSNBC Detroit Pastor, Dr. Steve Bland (Liberty Baptist Church) made one of the most profound political statements in recent history when he said;

"We're not deterred ... The Black vote in Detroit is higher than it's ever been and we will determine the outcome — because we've gone from picking cotton to picking presidents."

That statement should send shockwaves through our collective ranks and help shore up our resolve to become more active in the policies that shape our homes, our community, our city, our state, our country, and our world. We should never downplay our ability to enact change in the world around us. This should be an ongoing mission of every conscience African American breathing. Not only for ourselves but for our children and our children's children. We must drive home that **Our Lives, Our Voices, and Our Vote Matters** not just to the rest of the world but equally, if not more, also to ourselves.

Now that a lot of us are **WOKE** to the power that we have; our next mission is to **STAY WOKE** and not close our eyes. We can continue to move our country forward to the day that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke of in his speech during the 1963 march on Washington. In the climax of his speech he said,

And when this happens, and when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual:

Free at last! Free at last!

Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!

We are **FREE** to choose our course as long as we **STAY WOKE**.

Cicone Prince is an International Motivational Speaker, Amazon Best Selling Author, Leadership Development Coach, Conference Pioneer, and Personal Development Stagiest. His latest book, Leadership That Last: Passing On 10 Solid Principles To Ensure An Enduring Legacy is available on Amazon as of December of 2020.

Wake
Up!

"We should never downplay our ability to enact change in the world around us. This should be an ongoing mission of every conscience African American breathing."

AMERICANS WITH CRIMINAL RECORDS WILL BE LEFT OUT OF THE RECOVERY IF WE DON'T FIX THESE POLICIES

By Sheena Meade and Jabari Paul

This year has forced a long overdue examination of this country's excessive use of force against Black people that stretches back to the days of slavery. As social justice activists who work with underrepresented communities, we believe a critical step is recognizing that people with a criminal record are not disposable.

It is important to remember that a racially biased system of over-policing and over-enforcement has created a population where about one in three adults in America have a criminal record. The failures of our policing policies are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the failures in our criminal legal system.

Look no further than how we handle record clearing. Clearing a criminal record, through remedies like expungement or sealing, is one of the most powerful tools used to enable people with records to move on with their lives. It allows people to provide for their families and build a stable economic foundation by removing barriers to employment, housing, education, health insurance and more.

Many Americans with criminal records don't have a fair shot at new employment opportunities, for example, as companies turn a blind eye to applicants who are forced to check the box indicating they have a criminal record. They continue to be burdened by the estimated 45,000 collateral consequences of a criminal record.

As communities begin to rebuild from the economic devastation caused by the pandemic — one that is taking a disproportionate toll on Black and Brown Americans — State and local governments must address the millions of Americans looking for a fair shot at a second chance. They can do that through clean slate policies like automatic record-clearing for certain cases, which would give people with a criminal record a reasonable chance for





economic recovery.

Some states already have this system in place. While each state law differs, under the clean slate model, criminal records that may be eligible for automatic clearing range from misdemeanors to non-violent felonies, and can also apply to those who have remained crime-free for a certain number of years. Manually clearing a criminal record is a cumbersome, costly process that often requires the need to hire an attorney. While states generally allow people to petition the court to have certain records cleared, the vast majority of people who are eligible don't obtain this relief because of cost, complexity of the process, lack of legal representation or because they don't even know they have the option. If someone is unable to pay for and navigate the process, the record will remain for life.

If we fail to enact policies that enable workers with criminal records to get back on their feet during the eventual recovery, we'll be leaving behind tens of millions of vulnerable families — signaling that we are ok with the fact that a criminal record means a life sentence to poverty. Meanwhile, nearly half of US children now have at least one parent with a record. The barriers associated with a parent's record will continue to devastate families if states fail to act, resulting in long-lasting family economic instability. This can also severely limit a child's life chances, hampering children's development, educational attainment and even their employment and earnings potential as

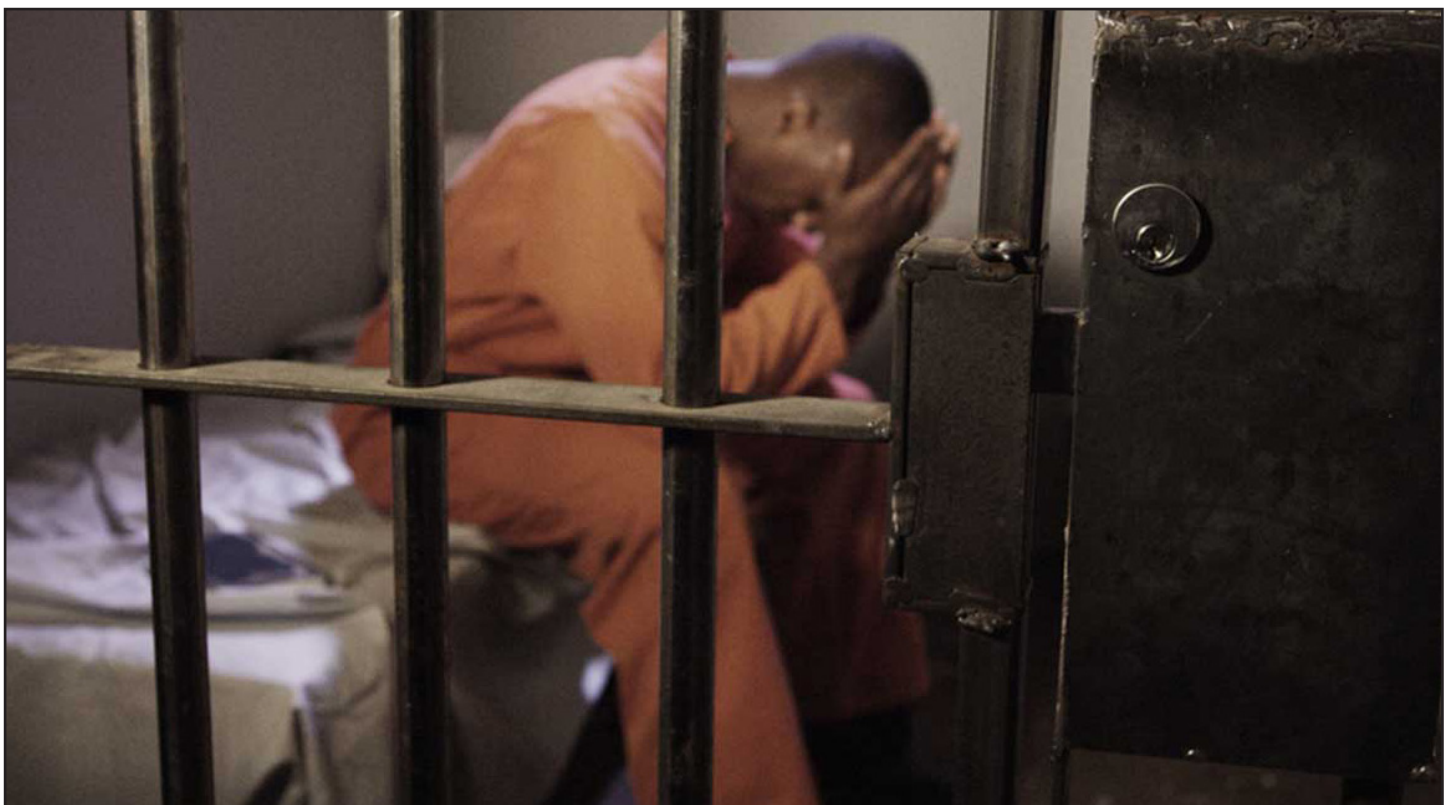
an adult. At a time of historical economic uncertainty, many families are struggling to make ends meet. Those who have a criminal record are that much more disadvantaged in finding meaningful work and housing, magnifying the impact on their children.

Automating the clearance of certain criminal records via clean slate laws, like Pennsylvania and Utah have done, provides the opportunity to clear records at scale and bring relief to everyone who is eligible, without the burden of filing and processing individual petitions.

Automation also presents significant advantages in the current moment, when people seeking to have their records cleared are not only facing even greater financial challenges, but are unable to hand-deliver petitions to the court. The automated model also promises to be a boon to cash-strapped states by reducing burdensome agency workloads.

As the nation considers long-term recovery efforts, we must demand more from our governors and state legislators regarding the failures of our criminal legal system, starting with automating the expungement process and helping to put millions of Americans back to work.

Sheena Meade is the Managing Director for Clean Slate Initiative, a national bipartisan coalition advancing policies to automatically clear all eligible criminal records across the United States. Jabari Paul is the U.S. Activism Manager at Ben & Jerry's Homemade, Inc.



A portrait of Senator Kamala Harris, smiling and wearing a dark blue blazer and a pearl necklace. She is positioned on the right side of the page, with her arms crossed. The background is a dark, solid color.

HOW I FEEL ABOUT SENATOR KAMALA HARRIS AS VICE PRESIDENT-ELECT

By Reagan Robinson

On November 7th, 2020 Senator Kamala Harris made history as the first black Vice President-Elect of the United States of America. This is a huge leap in history and many Americans including myself feel empowered and inspired. I have always looked up to the black leaders in my community, and when I heard the news about Senator Harris, I felt so enthralled to learn more about her career in politics. I am so excited to share with you on how I feel about Senator Harris and her achievements.

On November 7th 2020, Senator Harris was voted as the Vice-President of the United States. This is a huge leap in history because she is the first black Vice President of the United States of America. She has influenced many young people since she made the accomplishment, especially black girls like myself. Senator Harris has not only influenced me, but she also made me feel proud and inspired.

On November 7th, when Senator Harris was voted as the Vice president-elect of the United States, she made history as the first black Vice President- Elect in this country. Because she set that barrier, I feel so proud, and inspired. I feel really proud, not only to see a woman



in office, but to also see a black woman make history as the first Vice President of the United States. I also feel really inspired. I feel inspired because Senator Harris has made me feel even more interested in voting awareness and politics. Another reason why Senator Harris has inspired me is because she is involved in such a high level in government. It is great to see another black person, let alone a black woman in politics, but I have never seen a black woman work in the Ceremonial Office. I also feel impressed because of the history Senator Harris has accomplished in her career in politics.

Kamala Harris did not get her start as the Vice President of the U.S. First, she became a Senator out of California and when she became a senator, she made history already. On January 3, 2017, Kamala Harris was the second black woman as a senator and the fifth black person to be in the Senate. That alone made me feel very impressed with Senator Harris's career, and when

she became Vice-President, she amazed me even more, and I hope her career in politics continues to grow further and further!

I feel so euphoric about Kamala Harris's career in politics and her position as Vice President of this country. She has inspired me in so many ways and continues to amaze me with the legacy she leaves behind. It feels so enchanting to see the first black woman work in the Ceremonial Office! I truly believe Kamala Harris will be perfect as the new Vice President of the United States of America.

Reagan Robinson is a 7th grader attending The Children's School in Atlanta, GA. She is an active Cadette Girl Scouts and is reigning Rookie of the Year for A+ Squash.



SIXTY-FIVE YEARS LATER: IS THERE ANYTHING NEW UNDER THE CIVIL RIGHTS SUN OF JUSTICE?

A LOOK INTO JUSTICE SOMETIMES REVEALS THAT IT'S JUST US

By Taryn Branson

Murder in Money: A Tale of Two Teens, Two Towns and Two Law Enforcement Agencies

The murder of Emmett Till made national news in the small town of Money, Mississippi some 65 years ago on August 28, 1955. Alleged to have whistled at a white woman, an account of which we now know to be false, Till was taken from his uncle's home by two white men. Till's body was found three days later in the Tallahatchie River. Roughly three generations have since passed after the murder of Till and the persistent question remaining is whether Black children across the South and elsewhere are any safer than the previous generations when it comes to locating missing and exploited Black children. In the neighboring state of Louisiana, the family of Quawan Charles is left to answer that same question.

Quawan "Bobby" Charles was a thriving yet shy 15-year old kid who enjoyed spending time with his beloved dog whom he affectionately named "My Baby." October 30, 2020, appeared to be another normal evening. Quawan was at his father Kenneth Jacko's home in Baldwin, Louisiana. Sometime during the evening of October 30th, Quawan was picked up by Janet Irvin and Gavin Irvin, a white mother and son, and taken from his home without permission. That was the last time Quawan would be seen alive. Quawan's body was found four days later in a shallow ditch near a sugar cane field just outside the Irvin's rented trailer.

Though much of what is known about Till's and Quawan's stories give an account of events transpiring around their deaths, little attention has been given to the story behind the length of time between both Till and Quawan's disappearance, rather kidnapping, and the lack of involvement of law enforcement. So much has changed by way of advancements in civil rights, technology, and even social media when it comes to missing persons, but still so much has remains the same especially if the missing person is Black.

It is often said there is nothing new under the sun. When it comes to justice and the advancement of civil rights and missing and exploited children, the prospect of Black people's ability to rest peacefully in their home free from

the threat of danger, torture, harm, and murder, rests largely on the actions of law enforcement in the moments immediately following their disappearance.

Quawan Charles's family reported him missing the night of October 30, 2020. However, Iberia Parish Sheriff's Office never issued an Amber Alert for the missing teen. In fact, local law enforcement never alerted the media of his disappearance despite Quawan's mother and father pleas to law enforcement that their son did not have permission to leave the home with the Irvins. Further, police never used current technology such as pinging Quawan's cell phone the day he disappeared. The Quawan family attorney, Chase Trichell, noted that other children have gone missing in the same parish and police took much swifter action but failed to do so in this case because Quawan was Black. Authorities instead waited four days to ping Quawan's phone upon which time his body was found near a sugar cane field near the Irvin's home.

So why is there such a lack of care and concern for the safety and well-being of Black children?

Unaware of the lack of advancement by way of racial equality and equity of the South, Till could not have seen what was coming to him by such a seemingly innocuous action entering the hardware store. By all accounts, many know the story of Till as the young boy who whistled at a white woman. That whistle sent shock waves through the small town of Money, Mississippi. Only later did the rest of the world learn that Carolyn Bryant Dunham lied. Till never whistled. That one lie changed an entire family, but it altered an entire



country and sparked a movement, the Civil Rights movement.

Though Till's story and Quawan's story give an account of events that happened before, during, and after their murders, little attention has been given to the story behind the length of time between both Till and Quawan's disappearance, rather kidnapping. Could law enforcement have acted more prudently, expeditiously, enthusiastically in the search for This year we commemorated the 65th anniversary of Till's death. Now in the year 2020, we continue to see this story play out all too often even today: when it comes to missing Black children and efforts to locate them, their screams are often the most silent in law enforcements' ears.

Three Days

In Atlanta in the 1980s widespread news hit of several Black boys and girls who were missing.

Notes:

- Mention effum and social media being used to find Black people are who are missing
- Till was taken from his home
- Charles was taken from his home
- Till and Charles reportedly drowned
- Milk carton in 1980s
- National child safety council
- 1996 Amber Alert

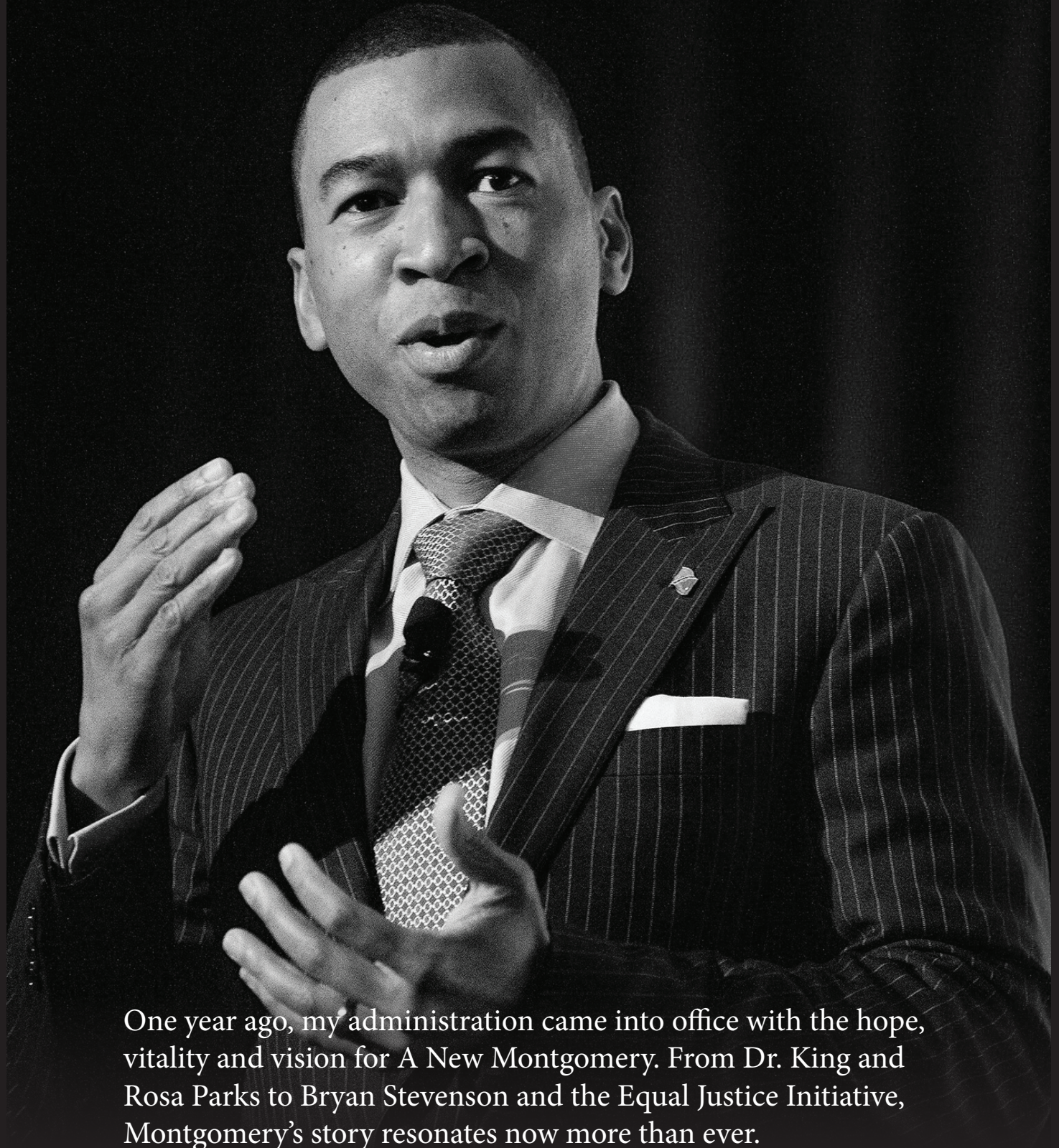
Till's body was missing and little to no effort was made in locating the young teen from Chicago. While there have been some advancements in locating exploited, missing, and murdered Black children across the country, much of law enforcements efforts in finding Black children remains the same. When we spoke most of Till, we speak of the condition of the teen mutilated body after having been murdered by a mob of white men who stormed the family's home in the wee hours of the morning on August 28, 1955.



Attorney Branson is admitted to practice before all Louisiana courts. She is a member of the Louisiana State Bar Association, Baton Rouge Association of Women Attorneys, the Louis A. Martinet Legal Society, the NAACP, and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated

**Dr. King's Dream lives on in Montgomery, Alabama,
the Birthplace of the American Civil Rights Movement:**

A legacy of leadership now extends to Mayor Steven L. Reed.



One year ago, my administration came into office with the hope, vitality and vision for A New Montgomery. From Dr. King and Rosa Parks to Bryan Stevenson and the Equal Justice Initiative, Montgomery's story resonates now more than ever.

Steven L. Reed



City of **Montgomery**, *Alabama*

American icon. Morehouse Man. Shepard to the lost. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was much more than his dream; he was many things to many people.

In Montgomery, Dr. King was the young, pioneering minister who would rise to become the conscience of our entire community. He was our national redeemer during a time of oppression, pain and sadness. Besieged by the systemic injustice and claws of Jim Crow ripping through cities and towns far and wide, Montgomery became the first battleground in the Civil Rights Movement.

It was here that Rev. Dr. Ralph Abernathy, E.D. Nixon and others ordained Dr. King to lead the movement for change. Fully embracing his role as leader, Dr. King risked much, but his sacrifice ensured America would climb closer to mountain top. As we commemorate his 92nd birthday, we reflect on his impact on our community, brace for the challenges still to come and rededicate ourselves to building bridges to a better future.

Dr. King often prophesized about the “Beloved Community.” This vision left our city the blueprint to become a place where all have access to a better tomorrow. Today, our city is steeped in revitalization and reconciliation. Our tourism industry – attributed to Civil Rights touchstones at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, the King Parsonage and EJI’s National Memorial for Peace and Justice and Legacy Museum – continues transforming Montgomery. And even as we embrace the tenets of the knowledge-based economy, evolving into a high-tech hub for innovation and job creation, the solid foundation set by leaders like Dr. King will continue to guide our path in the present and the future.

We thank Dr. King, Mrs. Coretta Scott King and their entire family for making Montgomery a beacon of hope and change, and we look forward to welcoming each of you on your next pilgrimage to Montgomery – the Birthplace of the American Civil Rights Movement.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steven L. Reed', written in a cursive style.

Steven L. Reed
Mayor

NELSON MANDELA & MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. *OUR PROFOUND WORLD LEADERS*

By Heather Gray

As one who has been involved in both the civil rights movement in the United States and the South African anti-apartheid movement, I am invariably intrigued by the remarkable leadership of both Martin Luther King, Jr. and Nelson Mandela. The challenge for both these renowned leaders was to seek the end of white supremacy and discriminatory, racist and often violent policies and actions by those in power. I might add importantly that in his biography Mandela notes that he was inspired by great Americans such as W.E.B. DuBois and Martin Luther King, Jr. with the inference that there was a kinship in the missions of South African and United States activists.

1994 - Election of Nelson Mandela as President of South Africa



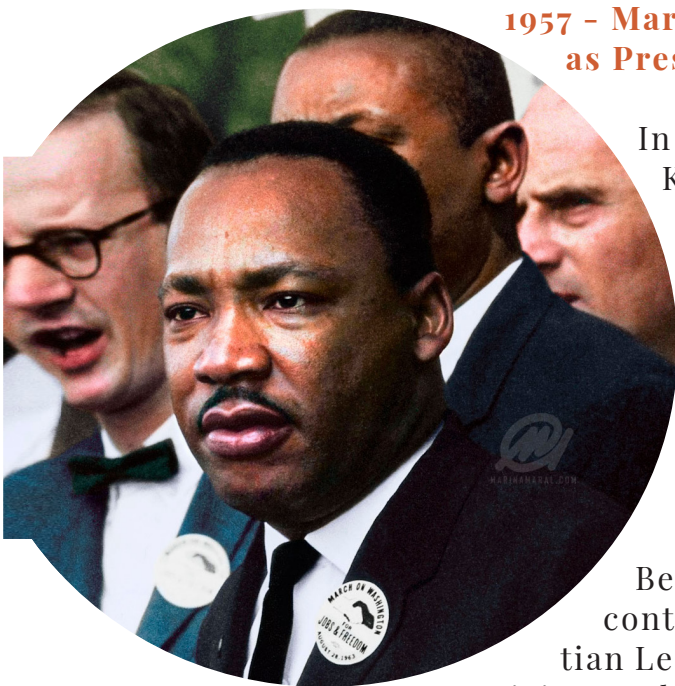
In 1994, I was fortunate to be an observer for the election of Nelson Mandela as president of South Africa. Given this experience and my involvement in the anti-apartheid movement since the 1980s, and given the US elections in 2020, I thought how wonderful it would be to have someone like Nelson Mandela as president of the United States. I recently shared this thought with Prexy Nesbitt, one of the leading anti-apartheid activists in the United States who was also very close to Mandela.

While Mandela was, indeed, the president of South Af-

rica, Nesbitt noted that Mandela’s leadership style was not one of a singular leader or spokesperson per se, but of a group mentality. In other words, whatever Mandela accomplished in his efforts to end apartheid was based on the group decision and directive. In fact, the South African leader Desmond Tutu noted Mandela taught that ‘change is almost always possible...when gutsy leaders stand together, question the unquestionable and challenge the status quo’. (Epic Work/Epic Life)

This model of ‘group mentality’ is often considered very much an indigenous African conceptual framework. Mandela was, of course, from South Africa and a member of the African National Congress (ANC), that had been in existence for 82 years by the time he became the South African president in 1994. Without doubt, it was the ANC organizing efforts that played a leading role in ending apartheid and it was ‘African’ in spirit which was that of a ‘group mentality’ that made the difference.

1957 - Martin Luther King Selected as President of SCLC



In comparison to the South Africa organizing efforts, King was in the southern part of the United States and was one of the many activists involved in the creation of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1957. SCLC has, since its creation, played an on-going role in challenging racial oppression in the United States. It was, therefore, a new organization in the southern US in 1957 and by the time Dr. King was assassinated in 1968 it had only been in existence for a little over a decade.

Being in the United States, and not within the African continental ‘collective’ culture, still the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was created with civil rights activists and renowned civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther

King, Bayard Rustin, Ella Baker, Fred Shuttlesworth, C.K. Steel, Joseph Lowery and Ralph Abernathy who themselves who has already made names for themselves in the movement for justice. Regardless of the leadership roles all of them had in their own communities, both local and nationally, they all recognized the importance of having a regional/national civil rights organization based in the South. They asked King, who was a Baptist preacher, to serve as the president.

In this United States setting, Dr. King did become the significant SCLC spokesperson and it was also his church background that played an important role in his leadership. In addition to Dr. King being a Baptist preacher, both his father and grandfather had been pastors as well, so his personal religious influence was profound. It is likely because of his religious and theological scholarship and experiences that most of

King's speeches have become legendary and helpful in further organizing, while offering a philosophical grounding for organizing initiatives in the south and throughout the country. As noted from the King Institute at Stanford University:

Martin Luther King, Jr., made history, but he was also transformed by his deep family roots in the African-American Baptist church, his formative experiences in his hometown of Atlanta, his theological studies, his varied models of religious and political leadership, and his extensive network of contacts in the peace and social justice movements of his time. Although King was only 39 at the time of his death, his life was remarkable for the ways it reflected and inspired so many of the twentieth century's major intellectual, cultural, and political developments. (King Institute)

But it's also important to mention that King's mentor, Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, stated, regarding King's organizing philosophy: 'Coupled with moral courage was Martin Luther King Jr.'s capacity to love people. Though deeply committed to a program of freedom for Negroes, he had love and concern for all kinds of peoples. He drew no distinction between the high and the low; none between the rich and the poor.' (The Atlantic)

In many ways, the organizing work by King somewhat echoes the collective work of the ANC in terms of encouraging others to join in their activism, such as the 'March on Washington' in 1963 and the 1965 'Selma to Montgomery March'. Nevertheless, the likely greatest influence of King's leadership mode was that of his church background and philosophy that encouraged the organizing efforts of other leaders in the civil rights movement. So rather than always working together, as in the South African context, King, through his philosophy, encouraged others to work against the oppressive policies in their own communities.

King and Mandela as Nobel Peace Prize Winners

Both Martin Luther King, Jr. and Nelson Mandela were Nobel Peace Prize winners: King in 1964 and Mandela in 1993.

In his Nobel speech, King referred to the freedom struggles in Africa, and Mandela made reference to King and others in his speech.

Here is a sample of King's Nobel comments about the African struggles:

Fortunately, some significant strides have been made in the struggle to end the long night of racial injustice. We have seen the magnificent drama of independence unfold in Asia and Africa. Just thirty years ago there were only three independent nations in the whole of Africa. But today thirty-five African nations have risen from colonial bondage.

And here is from Mandela's Nobel speech:

It will not be presumptuous of us if we also add, among our predecessors, the name of another outstanding Nobel Peace Prize winner, the late Rev Martin Luther King Jr.

He, too, grappled with and died in the effort to make a contribution to the just solution of the same great issues of the day which we have had to face as South Africans....


Let the strivings of us all, prove Martin Luther King Jr. to have been correct, when he said that humanity can no longer be tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war. (The Nobel Prize 1993)

Summary

We have been blessed to have had, in the 20th and into the 21st centuries, profound and inspirational leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King, Jr. We can still learn much from their philosophical and leadership models for our on-going work for justice in the African continent and in the United States. As they say in Southern Africa "A luta continua" (The struggle continues)!

References:

- '5 Lessons Mandela Taught the World About Change' (Epic Work/Epic Life 2020)
- 'Introduction' (The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, Stanford University)
- 'Martin Luther King Jr.'s Unfinished Work on Earth Must Truly Be Our Own' (The Atlantic/2018)
- Martin Luther King, Jr. - Acceptance Speech (The Nobel Prize 1964)
- 'Nelson Mandela - Nobel Lecture' (The Nobel Prize 1993)



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