

SUMMER 2016 / July / Aug. / Sept.
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Southern Christian Leadership Conference
NATIONAL MAGAZINE

WELCOME TO OUR 58TH
NATIONAL CONVENTION in Atlanta
HQ Named After Its President
Remembering Muhammad Ali



SCLC International H.Q.
Charles Steele, Jr. Bldg.

A young boy with dark skin and short hair is saluting with his right hand. He is wearing a blue and purple plaid shirt. In the background, an American flag is visible on the left side, and a wooden stick is held in his left hand. The background is a white wall with vertical panels.

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COVER: “In this captivating moment, we have history-makers and millennials standing together and declaring the global future of SCLC,” says SCLC Chairman Bernard LaFayette of this photo.

Cover photo and inset by John Stephens; and design and layout by Monica Fett

MAYNARD EATON: *SCLC Magazine* Managing Editor, is an 8-time Emmy Award-winning news reporter; President of Eaton Media Group; Executive Editor of *myAfricaGlobal Networks* and *Newsmakers Live*; and a columnist for *The SaportaReport*.



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BY CHARLES STEELE JR., President & CEO



Charles Steele Jr. in front of the new SCLC headquarters' sign.
Photo/John Stephens

Dr. King founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1957 in very different times than the ones we live in today. Today's SCLC has the challenge of remaining authentic in its mission of the achievement of social, economic, and political justice; yet, being relevant in a now global society.

The ceremony renaming the SCLC national headquarters building to *SCLC International Headquarters: Charles Steele Jr. Building* was held on June 21st, 2016 and is a representation of SCLC's renewed commitment and global vision. The international headquarters of the SCLC is located

on historic Auburn Avenue in Atlanta and has been visited by many international dignitaries and world leaders. The building was built in 2007 providing a physical edifice and historical bridge connecting the Civil Rights Movement for all generations: past, present, and future.

The building is about so much more than being a physical presence and symbolism. It is about the future as well. The building dedication comes along with our recent relaunch of the Poor People's Campaign. Continuing the work that Dr. King gave to our Chairman of the Board, Dr. Bernard LaFayette, we are proud to continue the Poor People's Campaign and its three pillars: Reach the Poor, the Feed the Poor and Teach the Poor. With the recent events happening around the world this campaign is as relevant today as it was in 1968.

That is also why this year's convention, the 58th National Convention of the SCLC, has the theme, *Stand Up to Poverty, the Poor People's Campaign, the Dream Unfulfilled*.

Reaching the Poor can mean many things, but one of the more tangible things we are doing is happening right at our international headquarters. We are currently working with a group of doctors to place a medical clinic right in the heart of Auburn Avenue in our building. This exciting venture will serve as a model not just for Georgia but throughout the country to show how we can help serve our communities directly by ensuring they have access to affordable and professional health care.

Feed the Poor touches the crisis too many of our neighborhoods have with being able to have access and afford healthy food options. Additionally, so many of our children have to rely on the public school system for the majority (if not all) of their food. So many of us are considered food at risk and it is time to speak out loud on this issue. We will be working with community gardens, corporate partners and others to bring attention and solutions to this problem.

Teaching the Poor, more than ever, is centered around teaching the Kingian Non-Violent philosophy worldwide. Under the direction of Dr. LaFayette, we will be teaching Dr. King's nonviolent theories in school's, municipalities and in communities across the country. As undeniable as the progress SCLC has made, the Orlando nightclub shooting that killed 49 people and other recent tragedies clearly underscore the necessity of a continued commitment to Dr. King's non-violence conflict resolution principles and teachings. Today's SCLC is strategically positioned to positively impact hate crimes and acts of terrorism in the United States and abroad. We are training leaders and nations providing them with skills to address conflicts in a peaceful and nonviolent way.

I am proud the board of directors resolved to name our headquarters; however, what makes me more proud than anything is working tirelessly to continue the work for social, economic, and political justice and continue the efforts of Dr. King today and beyond! sclc



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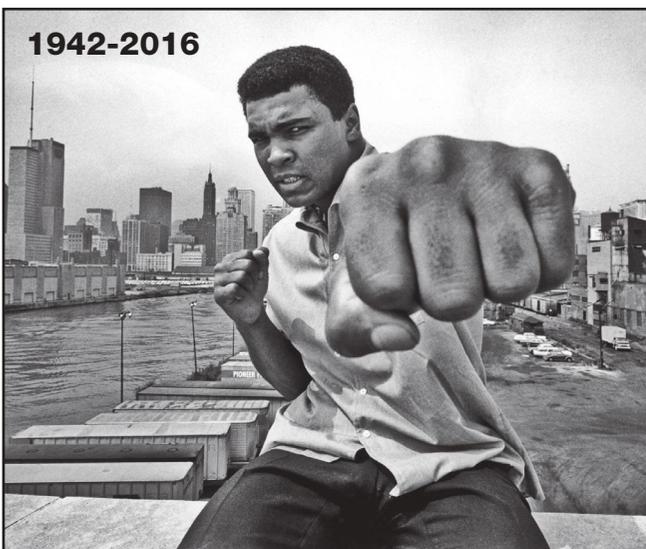


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/ from the chairman

My EXPERIENCE with Muhammad Ali

BY BERNARD LAFAYETTE JR., Chairman



It is a day we may never forget; the day that Muhammad Ali passed. He will always be a champion not only in the boxing ring, but in the global community. His notoriety was not only as an athlete, but as a spokesman for social change. He took a stand based on his personal values and convictions.

Ali was a person who was outgoing and friendly with others. One could feel his genuine spirit of kindness and affection. I shall never forget the personal experiences I had with Muhammad Ali. I lived on Woodlawn Street in the Southside of Chicago. Paul Brooks, a fellow school mate at the American Baptist College in Nashville and a Freedom Rider suggested that we should go and try to pay a visit to Muhammad Ali who lived down the street from where we lived. We went and rang the bell at the gate at his house. The security guard came and we said that we wanted to visit with The Champion. The guard went and checked with Ali, returned and let us in. He took us in the house and to Ali's bedroom where he was taking a shave while he was talking to us. This was in 1966.

There was another occasion in 1967 when I was flying from Chicago to Atlanta. I arrived at the departing gate only to find that Ali and I both were flying on the same flight to Atlanta. We started talking and he asked me where I was sitting on the plane. I told him I was in coach. He asked me

to give him my boarding pass. I gave it to him and he went to the counter and paid for a first class seat for me. We sat together in first class. He then opened the briefcase he had with him and he had a mobile telephone in it. He dialed his wife who was in New Jersey and began talking to her.

This is what he was like as an individual. When we arrived at the Atlanta Airport, people recognized him and began to surround him. As we walked through the airport, he decided to stop and get a shoeshine. I pretended I was his escort and tried to keep people from trying to get too close to him. He had traveled to Atlanta to give a speech at one of the universities in Atlanta. When we got to the baggage claim, his ride was there to pick him up and I waved goodbye to him. My experiences showed me his love and compassion for individuals as well as human beings all over the world.

“What should always be remembered is that Ali had equal respect for all people, although he had self-respect and appreciation for his own ethnic identity.

He of different ethnic groups.”

— Bernard LaFayette Jr.

The stand he took against the Vietnam War gave courage to others to take a public position against the war including Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. He became a symbol not only for those in our country, but people all over the globe. What should always be remembered is that Ali had equal respect for all people, although he had self-respect and appreciation for his own ethnic identity. He was able to earn the respect of others of different ethnic groups. We are blessed to have had the experience of witnessing the life and legacy of such a great individual. His love and his life served to bring many people together who otherwise would have seen themselves separate and apart from each other. SCLC



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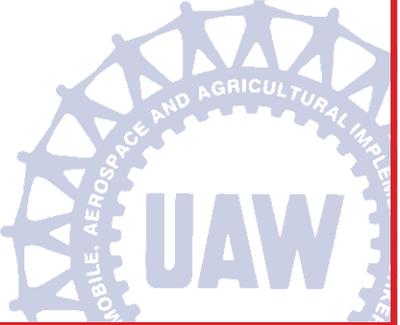


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An EMPOWERED Community of Honorees

Women: Speaking Truth, Making History, & Leading a New Generation

BY CATHELEAN C. STEELE, Special Programs Director

Just imagine how many lives would be changed if more of us focused at some point each day on changing the lives of individuals caught in the web of sex trafficking, domestic violence, child abuse, poverty or some other unfortunate circumstance. The audacity to open their eyes and their minds to see the needs of women, girls, and boys in their surroundings and create action plans to change lives is what this year's honorees have done.

Love, courage, endurance and passion are only a few of the many adjectives to describe the women and youth that SCLC have/has chosen to recognize at our Annual Women's Empowerment Luncheon. I am proud to say that I know such caring individuals who are working to make a difference in society:



PHOTO/JOHN GLENN



Lisa Williams, the founder of Circle of Friends, a non-profit organization of women helping women. Out of Circle of Friends, Lisa launched Living Water for Girls, "a residential, educational and therapeutic safe refuge for young American girls who have been brutalized by street life, prostitution, human trafficking and exploitation." Lisa is also the author of *Beautiful Layers: Stories of those who survived the life of prostitution and child exploitation*.



Rev. Judge Penny Brown Reynolds is a nationally respected leader and public servant. She is the founder of the Judge Penny Brown Reynolds Foundation as well as the president and CEO of Devine Destiny Productions, LLC. She is also the founder of Sister talk a 6,000 plus women's empowerment conference. Other accomplishments include author of *Wisdom and Truth for Today's Women and Teens* and *7 Steps To Peace of Mind*. She was nominated for an Emmy award for her national television show and also has received numerous awards for her national and international works.



Dr. Maya Taylor, is a transformational leader who is committed to serving mankind. Maya has founded several programs and outreach services that transforms lives. She is a chancellor, philanthropist and 2013 Woman of Fire Award recipient. In addition to being co-pastor at Open Word Christian Ministries, Dr. Maya has over 20 years of experience working with youth and empowering them to excel. She is founder and executive director of the Eagles Economic Community Development Program (EECDC), founder of She Wears Hope, a non-profit humanitarian initiative whose mission is to offer hope to disenfranchised women and children globally by providing programs and services that empower them to thrive physically, mentally and educationally, She is also the author of *Help, I'm Trapped in an Unhealthy Relationship*.



Angela Carswell is one of the brains behind the Positive Arts Movement. She has committed her life's work to making a difference in lives of young people. The mission of the Positive Arts Movement is to work strengthen, educate, and reintroduce the value of the performing arts to empower underserved communities. In fulfilling the mission of Positive Arts Movement Mrs. Carswell and her partner has developed "Good Good Radio", and the following plays: *Rimshot*, which the raises awareness of sex trafficking; *Minnie and Pearl, the 11th Hour*, which demonstrates the relationship between police and the black community; *Matrimony*; and *These Walls*, which deals with the blended family.

South Fulton Arrow Youth Council was named the 2016 Non-profit of the Year by the South Fulton Chamber of Commerce. Their mission is Vision + Hard Work + Student Success. Arrow is a rigorous leadership training program for students, ages 13-22, that inspires, empowers, and educates our students. Their core leadership values are excellence, commitment, innovation and resiliency. **sclc**



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Charles Steele Jr. and Maynard Eaton

ONE with ON SCLC Pres. & CEO ONE Charles Steele Jr.

INTERVIEW BY MAYNARD EATON, Managing Editor
Originally published in the SCLC Magazine Winter 2014 Issue

It's round two for Charles Steele, Jr. at the urging of its Chairman Dr. Bernard LaFayette, the SCLC Board has voted to reboot and reload the supercomputer-like presidency of Charles Steele, Jr., an astute Alabama businessman and iconic politician who built SCLC's National Headquarters building during his past stint as SCLC President from 2004 to 2009.

"Dr. Steele has returned as President because of a very important need at this point which is fundraising and fund development. That's a primary responsibility of the President, and he has excellent skills and contacts in that arena to help us maintain our financial stability," says Dr. LaFayette.

Dr. C.T. Vivian, a recent U.S. Presidential Medal of Honor recipient, will now be a roving Ambassador and Vice President of SCLC.

"When Dr. Vivian became President we needed that kind of historical leadership and the respect that he demanded, but also the integrity that he represents as a proponent of nonviolence," adds LaFayette. "We applaud his stellar service."

In the following interview President Steele talks with SCLC Communications Director Maynard Eaton about his penchant for international travel and his passion for the poor.

MAYNARD EATON: In 2004 you were brought here to save SCLC as President and CEO. Most recently, during the past year as CEO, you have been raising money to help stabilize SCLC. Why are you coming back?

CHARLES STEELE: To stabilize it again! SCLC is something that is very difficult to bring about the continuation of what the very intent was from the beginning with Dr. King and his co-founders. It's about stabilizing, and moving us forward. There are many people that didn't understand and don't understand the flexibility SCLC has in terms of mobilization. SCLC is more than marching and giving great speeches. It's a collaborative effort with the programmatic intent to take care of those less fortunate than we are. Our mission from the start was to make sure that poor people and po' folks were being recognized.

EATON: So, basically now you are back to do what Dr. King told our Chairman Dr. Bernard LaFayette to institutionalize and internationalize SCLC? The Chairman is institutionalizing SCLC, and your role as president again is to...?

STEELE: Internationalize it. We have a one, two punch! He and I have been around the world together. When I was President and CEO in '05, on the airplane going to Israel, he mentioned to me that Dr. King wanted to internationalize and institutionalize SCLC. So what I do globally is to

bring about the formulation of internationalizing SCLC. I told [Dr. LaFayette] what God had told me about taking the SCLC infrastructure around the world to educate and to promote what we as African-Americans and Negroes and black folks implemented and were successful in doing. That brought about the attention of people all over the world, including Nelson Mandela, who said, 'I'm so proud and motivated by Negroes in America and what they have accomplished and what they have supremely sacrificed.'

EATON: In January you traveled to Germany, last year you were in Russia and other foreign countries. In this issue of 'SCLC Magazine' we are discussing racial problems in Brazil. Do you see SCLC as an international brand; an international symbol of justice and opportunity?

STEELE: Yes, I do. SCLC is more prevalent now than ever before around the world. People of color in America feel that we have maxed out, but when I went to Moscow and spoke to the former president Mikhail Gorbachev, the first question he asked me was, 'Steele have we fulfilled "The Dream"?' I very swiftly responded, 'Mr. President, no. We are just getting started.' That's when we were able to talk with Gorbachev for three hours about our goals. We agreed that we were going to work together on human rights, civil rights, the environment and economic development.

EATON: You traveled to Germany as well. Are these alliances symbolic or substantive?

STEELE: They're substantive. They are not just a photo opportunity, I have it in writing. President Gorbachev has pledged and committed to be the Chairman of SCLC's International Corporate Roundtable Board.

EATON: You have been commissioned, again, as President of the SCLC; the chair and title once held by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. How does that make you feel?

STEELE: Yes, it's my second time around. I am the first President to actually go a second term. I feel elated. I feel blessed. I feel anointed by God and the SCLC Board starting with our Chairman who said, 'Now is the time for you to come back again.'

EATON: Joining you is your wife, Cathelean, who has been SCLC's only First Lady for a decade. So this is truly a family affair is it not?

STEELE: Yes it is, and I couldn't do it without my wife. C.T. Vivian always reminds me, 'Don't forget your wife because she has been there with you.' She's a working First Lady. She has a program called 'Justice for Girls' that has excited and motivated many, many other people.

EATON: Where do we go from here? After years of conflict, consternation and controversy—where SCLC almost imploded—you are back, but is SCLC back from the brink?

STEELE: SCLC will survive. This is the organization that freed the world.

EATON: Your mission, as I understand it, is to once again give hope to poor people?

STEELE: It's a Poor People's Campaign that Dr. King started in 1968. In fact, he died doing it. Now there is such a disparity in incomes and economic opportunity we need to do it again. Our mission from the start was to 'redeem the soul of America through nonviolence' and to represent those who are less fortunate. It takes courage to step out and talk about helping poor folks. People with money and power have a tendency to be fearful of organizations like SCLC—But we are not scared Negroes!

EATON: So the mission started by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is now being continued and enhanced by Charles Steele, Jr.?

STEELE: As President and CEO I would like to say yes, but it's not about Charles Steele. It is about the brand! It is the brand of SCLC with Dr. Martin Luther King and others. SCLC



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(Left) Charles Steele Jr. and SCLC attorney Charles Brooks unveil the new SCLC HQ sign. Photo/John Stephens

SCLC HEADQUARTERS NAMED AFTER ITS PRESIDENT

BY HAROLD MICHAEL HARVEY, Cascade Press

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference has named its headquarters, the Charles Steele, Jr. International Headquarters Building. The building is located at 320 Auburn Avenue, Atlanta. It is in the heart of the old “Sweet Auburn” financial district.

The new name of the building honors the dedication that Steele has given to SCLC. He is serving his second tour of duty. The civil rights organization was founded by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights leaders in 1957.

The new international headquarters of the SCLC is about thirty yards from the site of the historic office where

Dr. King conducted among others, the Birmingham Movement and the Selma to Montgomery March.

Steele became President of SCLC in 2004. The office looked much like it did when King led the group from 1957-1968.

He realized that SCLC did not own the building that it called home. The group rented this space from a local Masonic organization. This reality check led him to organize a capital campaign. He envisioned a permanent home for SCLC.

Additionally, the name reflects Steele’s mission to expand the work of SCLC to the global community. He has been on this mission since 2005. It began after a conversation he had with Dr. Bernard LaFayette, the organization’s chairman. They were on a trip to Israel.

Dr. LaFayette told him about a conversation he had with Dr. King five hours before King was assassinated. In this conversation with King, LaFayette was instructed to prepare a program that would bring people from across the globe into the orbit of the civil rights movement for justice and equality.

This revelation gave clarity to a vision Steele had before he became President of SCLC. He envisioned God telling him to take the Kingian Theory of non-violent direct action over the world; to engage other cultures to benefit from the struggle for civil rights in America.

“From that day, I knew that my job was to internationalize the civil rights movement,” Steele said.

By 2009, Steele had raised \$3.5 million and constructed the new headquarters for SCLC. When the building was dedicated, it opened its doors free and clear of any debt. That year he left his post as president and formed an international consulting company.

In 2011, SCLC was in search of a leader to give it new direction and stability. The board was able to pull Steele from his consulting business to lead the organization again.

In a magazine interview that year, Steele said that he saw SCLC “as an international brand—an international symbol of justice and opportunity.”

Since his return as president, Steele has traveled to Germany, Russia and Israel to discuss peaceful means to resolve contentious political disputes.

In August, Steele plans to release a book titled, “Easier to Obtain than to Maintain: The Globalization of Civil Rights” (Cascade Publishing House, 2016). In his book Steele explains that for American Blacks to maintain the rights they obtained through the civil rights movement, they must expand their movement to the global community.

Steele has proven to be a “Drum Major” for spreading economic prosperity and justice around the world. SCLC

HAROLD MICHAEL HARVEY is an American novelist and essayist, the author of *Paper Puzzle* and *Justice in the Round*. He can be contacted at haroldmichaelharvey.com.

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June 21, 2016, Charles Steele Jr. being interviewed by Maynard Eaton and other Atlanta media members following his building dedication ceremony. Photo/John Stephens

THE CHARLES STEELE JR. BUILDING DEDICATION

BY MAYNARD EATON, Managing Editor

It was a signature and singularly significant event for Charles Steele, Jr.; the SCLC President and CEO who has not only built and paid for the national headquarters building twice, but has also literally saved and revived the revered civil rights organization.

With the naming ceremony of the Atlanta based, Auburn Avenue Southern Christian Leadership Conference command center in his honor, the effusive and effective 69-year old Steele now joins the roll call of past renowned SCLC presidents such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rev. Ralph David Abernathy, Dr. Joseph E. Lowery and Rev. C.T. Vivian. Dr. Charles Steele is now internationally acknowledged as the face and focal point of SCLC.

“Dr. Steele is what you call the comeback man,” said SCLC Board Chairman Dr. Bernard LaFayette Jr. “The purpose for coming back is to repave the road. So naming this building here for him is a symbol. But we are not talking about the building; we talking about The Movement. When we talk about The Movement we’re talking about some things

cannot be moved. And this building is one that we want to preserve and keep so that it will not be moved. And, if the building can stay here it means The Movement can move.

“So we are here to let you know that there is a new Movement afoot,” Dr. LaFayette continued. “We are going now on the global level. So we are talking about a new SCLC in a broader direction because now we are going to renew our spirits. The theme of SCLC from its founding was to save the soul of America. Now, we are talking about saving the people of the world. Martin Luther King always had in mind when he referenced his beloved community—it was not a location in a neighborhood—but it was a global community. And now we have an international and global president who is going to take this Movement to the limit.”

Some supporters argue that Dr. Steele is carving such a distinguished career as a modern day civil rights leader that it could earn him a Presidential Medal of Freedom honor like most of his predecessors have been awarded for their activist achievements.

“Many people thought that we would not be here today but because of the great support of the board and the leadership of our chairman and the people who contribute to us SCLC is thriving.”

—CHARLES STEELE JR.

The Tuscaloosa, Alabama native and former Alabama state representative has carved a niche and is making a name for himself as a formidable fundraiser and fierce human/civil rights activist. His voice and vision resonate and are respected in the same breath as Rev. Al Sharpton, Rev. Jesse Jackson and Urban League President Marc Morial as prominent and progressive Black civil rights leaders.

“We are so elated to be in Atlanta. We are so elated to have SCLC alive and well,” said Dr. Steele. “Many people thought that we would not be here today but because of the great support of the board and the leadership of our chairman and the people who contribute to us SCLC is thriving.”

He continued: “We are all over the world; we are international. That’s what Dr. Martin Luther King told our chairman of the board five hours before he was assassinated. ‘He said Bernard now is the time to institutionalize and internationalize SCLC and go all over the world. The people in Paris, France—we told them what’s going on in Europe now was going to happen. In Europe, it’s racism and classism. But guess what they told us throughout the world: ‘We’ll never be free without SCLC.’ sclc



Circa 1960s, MLK Jr. stands outside SCLC’s historic headquarters originally located at 334 Auburn Avenue.

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Atlanta City Council President Caesar Mitchell salutes SCLC President and Charles Steele Jr. during SCLC building dedication ceremonies on historic Auburn Avenue. "This is a great moment in time for our city," Mitchell opined. "This is a great street with great promise and great history. This is not about the past; this is about the future. Count me in." Photo/John Stephens

AT THE DEDICATION CEREMONY

BY Brelan Douglas, *The Atlanta Voice*

Dozens gathered outside of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's international headquarters on historic Auburn Avenue in Atlanta, Tuesday, June 21, for a dedication program renaming its building for current president and CEO Dr. Charles Steele Jr.

The SCLC said in a statement that the headquarters was built in 2004 and cost \$3.5 million, most of which was raised by Steele.

In April, the SCLC board unanimously voted to name the building in honor of Steele in recognition for his efforts in securing sufficient funds for the structure and ensuring it remained debt-free. The organization now owns the building.

"When he took over as president, SCLC was almost dead," said communications director Maynard Eaton. "His first day, the lights were out. The phones were off. He's brought it back. When I first started working here on the second term we weren't getting paid at all. So he's kind of rebuilt and revived and revitalized its mission and its purpose

and brought it back to life if you will. He's the one who raised the money and when it went into debt he got it out of debt again so in fact he's built this place twice."

For Eaton, the naming of the building was also a chance to revamp the SCLC. "The organization needs a face and he's become the face of SCLC," Eaton said. "It was associated with Dr. King for a while, it was associated with Dr. Joseph Lowery for a while and now it's Dr. Charles Steele."

But the day was about more than just the naming ceremony, it was also about celebrating the progress the organization has made, will make and what still needs to be done in the global community to keep the philosophy of its first president.

The SCLC was established in 1957 with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as its first president. It focused on peace and non-violent protests as the strategy to bringing about civil rights for all despite race, religion or background and is now an international organization. Steele first became president of the organization in 2004, exiting the position in 2009 only to return again in 2012.



Charles Steele Jr. surrounded by SCLC members, elected officials, friends, well-wishers and Detroit students studying the philosophy of nonviolence. Photo/John Stephens

“ When he took over as president, SCLC was almost dead.”

—MAYNARD EATON, Managing Editor

During the ceremony, Steele announced that a new medical clinic would be added to the building to help out those in the community who couldn't get access to proper medical care.

“Free medical care on Auburn Avenue,” he announced. “We're getting ready to put a medical clinic right down stairs, a SCLC poor people medical clinic. Anybody with medical problems will get a credit card and go to several pharmaceutical drug stores to get their prescriptions without any charge.”

Even with the impact that they have and continue to make in the local community, Steele said it was not enough. “I've been telling people all along that SCLC has to be

international,” he said. “What you saw in Orlando is a good example of that. We must understand that we are in a global village and what goes on in Europe and South America is going to affect us, not in 24 or 48 hours, but instantaneously because of technology. That's why we have to go to the world to bring about peace and non violence in the philosophy of Dr. King and others in the civil rights movement.”

“Without the SCLC there would have been no LGBT movement. There would have been no women's movement,” Eaton said.

“Movements were started by SCLC and still do thrive. Peace and non-violence still works. That's what we're crying for now in the wake of Orlando. Is it still relevant? Sure, because civil rights for all human beings are still an issue. Disparities are still an issue. Racial injustice is still an issue. Although things have changed many issues still remain much the same.” SCLC

BRELAUN DOUGLAS, a California native, is a Howard University alumna with a B.A. in journalism, with an emphasis on print/online media and a minor in photography. Her reporting has appeared in the *District Chronicles*, *The Afro-American*, *DC Spotlight News*, *YHM Magazine*, and *The Trice Edney Newswire*.

Ali's Stance on the Vietnam War Emboldened MLK to Oppose Conflict

BY GEORGE E. CURRY, EmergeNewsOnline.com

Muhammad Ali's decision to risk going to jail by opposing the Vietnam War provided Dr. Martin Luther King with the strength to come out against the war publicly for the first time, according to the board chairman of King's old organization.

Bernard Lafayette, a longtime Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) field organizer and current board chairman, said in an interview with EmergeNewsOnline.com: "He was the reason Martin Luther King had the courage to come out and take a stand against the war, even though Martin Luther King's own board was not in favor of it."

He added, "I don't remember any exact quotes, but Muhammad Ali is the one that pushed Martin Luther King to take a stand."

Ali, who was a global icon in and out of the boxing ring, died June 3 in a hospital in Scottsdale, Ariz., where he had been admitted with respiratory problems. He was 74 years old. A private funeral service was held Thursday, June 9, in his hometown of Louisville, Ky. followed by a public memorial on Friday.

On April 28, 1967, at the height of the Vietnam War, Muhammad Ali refused to be drafted into the U.S. Army, citing religious reasons. He said, "I ain't got no quarrel with those Vietcong." Ali, who had converted to Islam three years earlier and changed his name from Cassius Marcellus Clay, Jr. to Muhammad Ali, was immediately stripped of his heavyweight championship title.

He was convicted of draft evasion on June 20, 1967, sentenced to five years in prison, fined \$10,000 and banned from boxing for three years. He remained free while his case worked its way through the appeals process. On June 28, 1971, a unanimous Supreme Court overturned his conviction, granting him conscientious objector status.

Ali's standoff with the federal government captured the attention of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the preeminent civil rights leader of that period.

Like Ali, he took a stand against the Vietnam War, a position that was opposed by many of his fellow civil

rights warriors, including NAACP Executive Director Roy Wilkins and National Urban League President Whitney Young, Jr.

On April 30, 1967—just two days after Ali refused to take a step forward to be inducted into the Army—King gave a major address against the war at Riverside Church in New York City.

"I speak out against this war, not in anger, but with anxiety and sorrow in my heart, and, above all, with a passionate desire to see our beloved country stand as the moral example of the world," King said. "I speak out against this war because I am disappointed with America. And there can be no great disappointment where there is not great love. I am disappointed with our failure to deal positively and forthrightly with the triple evils of racism, economic exploitation, and militarism. We are presently moving down a dead-end road that can lead to national disaster. America has strayed to the far country of racism and militarism."

While then-president Lyndon B. Johnson objected to King's opposition to the war, the nation's first African American president praised Ali for his unpopular stand.

In a statement, President and Mrs. Obama said, "Muhammad Ali shook up the world. And the

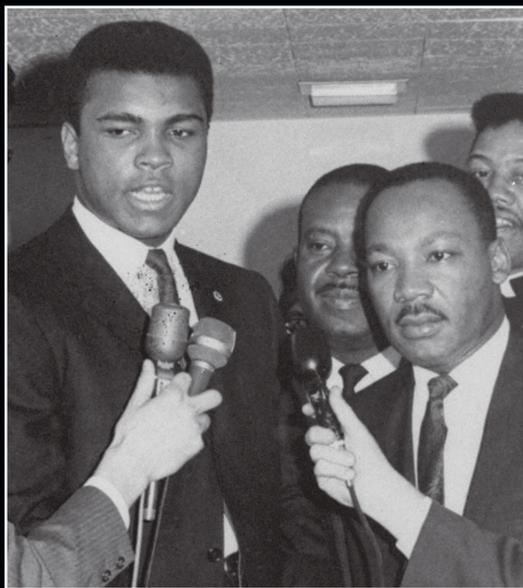
world is better for it. We are all better for it."

They explained, "He stood with King and Mandela; stood up when it was hard; spoke out when others wouldn't. His fight outside the ring would cost him his title and his public standing. It would earn him enemies on the left and the right, make him reviled, and nearly send him to jail. But Ali stood his ground. And his victory helped us get used to the America we recognize today."

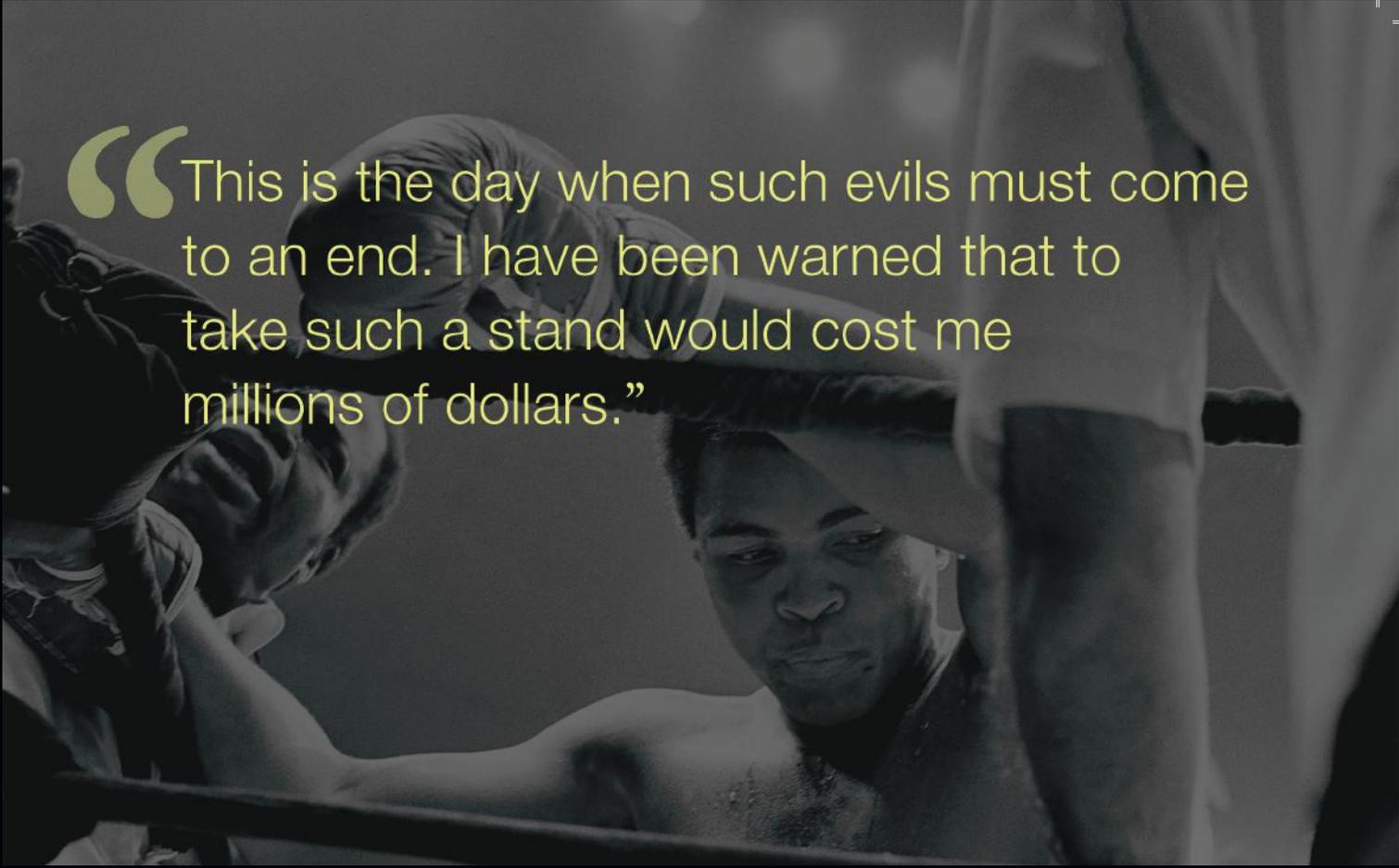
LeBron James, the Cleveland Cavaliers great, said Black professional athletes owe Ali a special debt of gratitude.

"The reason why he's the GOAT is not because of what he did in the ring, which was unbelievable," James said, referring to the acronym that stands for greatest of all time.

"It's what he did outside of the ring, what he believed in, what he stood for, along with Jim Brown and Oscar



Muhammad Ali, Ralph D. Abernathy and MLK Jr.



“This is the day when such evils must come to an end. I have been warned that to take such a stand would cost me millions of dollars.”

Robertson, Lew Alcindor—obviously, who became Kareem [Abdul-Jabbar]—Bill Russell, Jackie Robinson. Those guys stood for something. He’s part of the reason why African-Americans today can do what we do in the sports world. We’re free. They allow us to have access to anything we want. It’s because of what they stood for, and Muhammad Ali was definitely the pioneer for that.”

The former heavyweight champion occupied a special place in Black America. Like Joe Lewis had instilled mass pride in an earlier generation, he did the same for the succeeding generation.

The Louisville, Ky. native won a gold medal at the 1960 Olympics in Rome and turned pro later that year. On Feb. 25, 1964, Ali scored an upset knockout over Sonny Liston in the sixth round, becoming heavyweight champion. In addition to predicting the round his opponent would fall, Ali provided the most colorful quotes of any boxer before or afterward.

“The Louisville Lip,” as he was sometimes known, was famous for saying, “Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee—his hands can’t hit what his eyes can’t see.”

In case you didn’t get the point, he said, “I done something new for this fight. I wrestled with an alligator. I tussled with a whale. I handcuffed lightening. I thrown thunder in jail. Only last week I murdered a rock, injured a stone, hospitalized a brick. I’m, so mean I make medicine sick.”

He also said, “I’m not the greatest. I’m the double greatest. Not only do I knock ‘em out, I pick the round. I’m the boldest, the most superior, most scientific, most skillfullest fighter in the ring today.”

And there was this: “It’s hard to be humble when you’re as great as I am.”

Not all of his lines were original, but that did not seem to matter. For example, he often said, “I’m so fast that last night I turned off the light switch in my hotel room and got into bed before the room was dark.”

A variation of that quote is widely attributed to Negro League baseball great Josh Gibson describing Cool Papa Bell. But Ali could get away with claiming it.

He would also get away with some politically incorrect jokes.

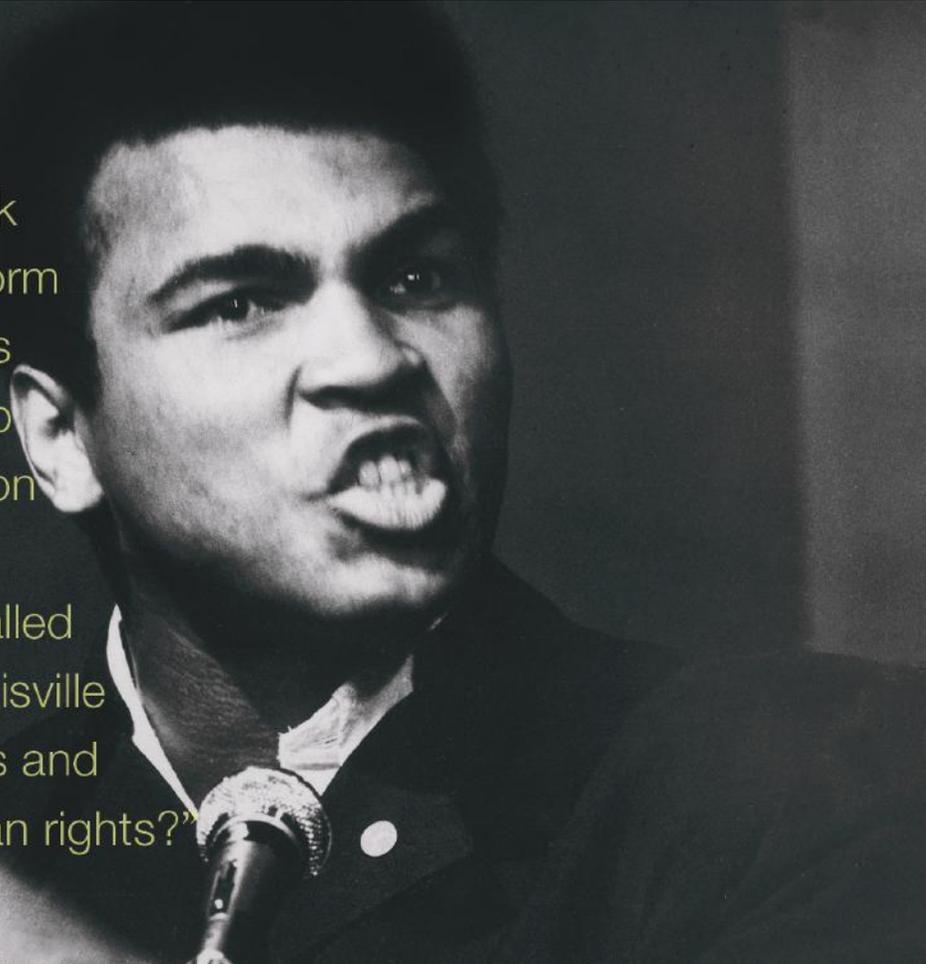
“If a Black man, a Mexican and a Puerto Rican are sitting in the back of a car, who’s driving?” he asked. “Give up? The po-lice.”

After being banned from boxing, Ali returned to the ring against Jerry Quarry in Atlanta on Oct. 26, 1970. Ali knocked him out in the third round.

Many of Ali’s fights had catchy titles, most of them supplied by him. His 1971 fight against Joe Frazier was billed as the “Fight of the Century.” He defeated George Foreman in the “Rumble in the Jungle” in Kinshasa, Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo), knocking out Foreman in the eighth round. After splitting two bouts with Joe Frazier, Ali defeated him in 14 rounds in the “Thrilla in Manila.”

Ali retired in 1981 with a 56-5 record and the only person to hold the heavyweight championship three times. In 1984, he was diagnosed with Parkinson disease.

“Later, as his physical powers ebbed, he became an even more powerful force for peace and reconciliation around the world,” Obama said of Ali. “We saw a man who said he was so mean he’d make medicine sick reveal a soft spot, visiting children with illness and disability around the world, telling them they, too, could become the greatest. We watched a hero light a torch, and fight his greatest fight of all on the



“Why should they ask me to put on a uniform and go 10,000 miles from home and drop bombs and bullets on brown people in Vietnam while so-called negro people in Louisville are treated like dogs and denied simple human rights?”

world stage once again; a battle against the disease that ravaged his body, but couldn't take the spark from his eyes.”

Jesse L. Jackson, founder and president of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, said of Ali, “He sacrificed the heart of his career and money and glory for his religious beliefs about a war he thought unnecessary and unjust...He was a champion in the ring, but, more than that, a hero beyond the ring. When champions win, people carry them off the field on their shoulders. When heroes win, people ride on their shoulders. We rode on Muhammad Ali's shoulders.”

Another civil rights leader, Marc H. Morial, president and CEO of the National Urban League, said: “I believe Muhammad Ali was the greatest athlete of the 20th century. Whether he was the greatest boxer in history may be debated for generations. But none has had a greater impact on American culture and social justice.”

On Twitter, Rev. Al Sharpton, president and founder of the National Action Network, said Ali “was and always will be the greatest.” Sharpton said, “We should all strive to embody the virtues he possessed.”

Even Ali's former opponents had nothing but praise for him.

“It's like a part of me just passed w/him,” George Foreman Tweeted. “It's hard for me to think about being n a world without Muhammad Ali being alive.”

Bernard Lafayette, the SCLC board chairman, gave two personal examples of Ali's typical interaction with people he did not know.

In 1966, Lafayette had been organizing the Chicago Freedom Movement, which marked the expansion of

SCLC's activities from the South to northern cities. He was preparing to board a flight to Atlanta when he spotted Ali.

“I was a complete stranger,” Lafayette recalled. “I recognized him and started talking to him. He said, ‘Where are you sitting?’ I told him coach. He said, ‘Give me your boarding pass.’ He took my boarding pass and got me a first-class seat next to him.”

Lafayette said Ali spent most of the flight talking to his wife on the telephone.

“When we got off, everybody went wild when they saw him. I just pretended to be his bodyguard so people wouldn't bother him.”

The following year, Lafayette and a friend decided to drop by Ali's residence in Chicago unannounced.

“Paul Brooks and I just rang the door bell,” Lafayette recounted. “A guy came out and we said, ‘We're here to see the champion.’ He went back and told him we were there to see him. He told us to come on in. We went into his bedroom and Ali was shaving. He finished shaving and talked to us about an hour and a half. Ali loved to talk.” SCLC

GEORGE E. CURRY is editor-in-chief of the National Newspaper Publishers Association News Service. Curry, former editor-in-chief of *Emerge Magazine*, also writes a weekly syndicated column for NNPA, a federation of more than 200 African-American newspapers. Curry, who served as editor-in-chief of the NNPA News Service from 2001 until 2007, returned to lead the news service for a second time on April 2, 2012. www.georgcurry.com

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The late, great Muhammad Ali greets Emmy Award winning newsman and Maynard Eaton at a fundraising event in 1981 during Atlanta's Missing and Murdered Children's crises. At the time Eaton was a popular news reporter for an Atlanta TV station.

Muhammad Ali: "I shook up the world."

BY MAYNARD EATON, Managing Editor

As we grieve the passing of Muhammad Ali, we also fondly recall how he not only shook up the world – and uttered that famous phrase—with his shocking knockout of Sonny Liston on February 25, 1964, but also in how he became a towering and transformative figure for Blacks and enlightened Whites who grew up in the Baby Boom generation.

"He shook up the world and the world is better for it. Muhammad Ali was The Greatest Period. If you just asked him, he'd tell you." President Barack Obama eulogized.

As a Newark, New Jersey native and Hampton [Institute] University college student, Ali was the voice of my generation. He was a premier, prime-time influencer. He was pro-Black and unapologetically Black. He was a pompous pretty boy, who could "float like a butterfly and sting like a bee". Ooh-wee! He dazzled and delighted and delivered.

Ali inspired and uplifted people of color and conscience around the world. He was an icon unlike any other we have ever seen. The self-proclaimed "Greatest of All Time" was great in every way, both in and out of the boxing ring—and would tell you so, and then back it up—with defiant and

irreverent style and grace. His outsized personality made him arguably the most revered and widely known human being on the earth.

"Ali influenced the civil rights movement. He was not a perfect man, just perfect for his time," said actor and activist Harry Belafonte.

Muhammad Ali was the most fascinating, fixating, charismatic and compelling figure of my life. He was America's first Muslim hero, surpassing even the late great Malcolm X. He was a role model who righteously stood up for his beliefs with dignity and risk of his own personal peril and profit. Ali was a baaad Brother, as we used to say and earnestly believe!

As many of us recall, the future three time heavyweight champion brazenly refused induction into the U.S. Army in April 28, 1967 and was immediately stripped of his title. Ali cited religious reasons for his reason to forego military service as a conscientious objector to the Viet Nam war. That dicey decision resonated with me and many of my high school classmates at the time, because we all knew friends who had been drafted to fight in Viet Nam only to return home in a flag draped coffin.

"I ain't got no quarrel with those Vietcong," Ali said at the time. "The enemies of my people are right here."

"Like Muhammad Ali puts it," Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "We are all—black and brown and poor—victims of the same system of oppression. Every young man in this country who finds this war objectionable and abominable and unjust will file as a conscientious objector," King said. "And no matter what you think of Mr. Muhammad Ali's religion, you certainly have to admire his courage."

On June 20, 1967, Ali was convicted of draft evasion, sentenced to five years in prison, fined \$10,000 and banned from boxing for three years. He stayed out of prison as his case was appealed. Thanks to the political inventiveness of Georgia State Senator Leroy Johnson, an Atlanta Black power broker, Ali returned to the ring on October 26, 1970, knocking out Jerry Quarry in the third round.

I'm told that was one of the biggest and best nights ever for Black folks in Atlanta who styled and partied profusely with their friends from throughout the nation to celebrate Ali the activist and the athlete.

"That return bout in Atlanta epitomized his status as the 'People's Champ'. It was truly unforgettable as is he," said SCLC President Dr. Charles Steele, Jr. "Ali gave up a heck of a lot for his principles and his politics. He had been truly reviled by his detractors. He went from poetry to poetry in motion—what a joyous journey."

Ali also transcended sports when he came back to Atlanta in 1980 to donate \$400,000 to help find the serial killer that had traumatized Atlanta by abducting or killing two dozen African American teens between 1979 and 1981. As my photos show, I was honored to host this event while working as the Emmy Award winning Atlanta City

Hall reporter. It was a powerful, poignant and memorable event—one I will treasure forever.

As Ernie Suggs and Aaron Gould Shenin reported in the Atlanta Journal Constitution on June 4th, "Like Sherman, with a flaming torch in his hand, as Atlanta made its formal introduction on the global stage, he returned to light the Olympic caldron.

"He is part of the civil and human rights trajectory in this city," Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed said of Ali.

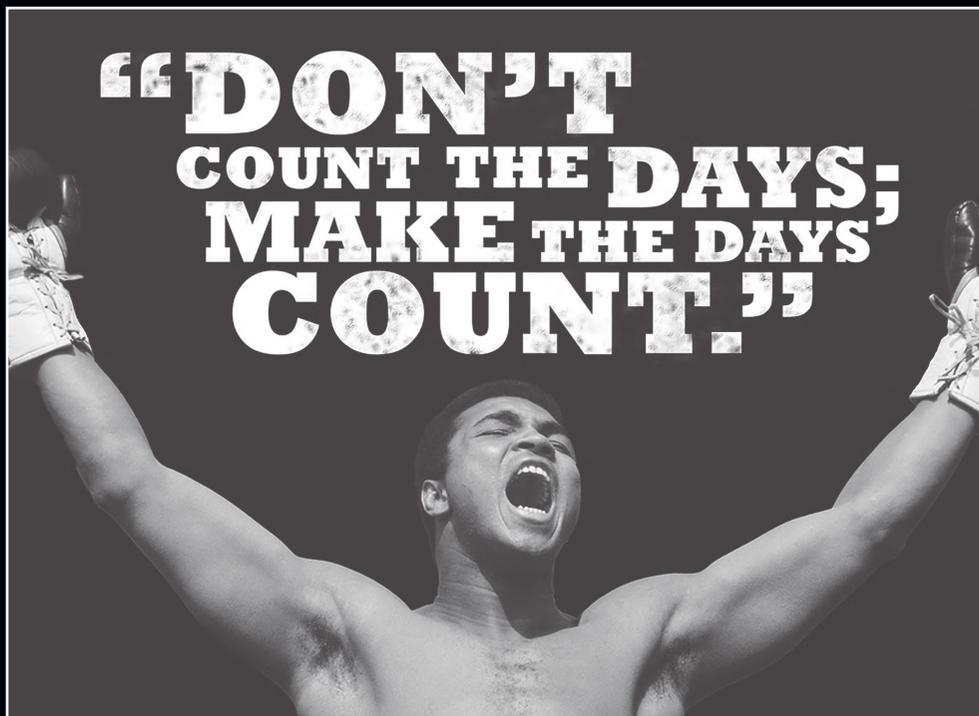
Suggs and Shenin write glowingly, "He was Nelson Mandela before Mandela. Jordan and Tiger before Jordan and Tiger."

The legendary Muhammad Ali was also a humorist, practical joker and trickster. I fondly recall being the victim of one of his stunts. It was 1973, and I was ecstatic to have secured a one-on-one interview with The Champ at the Fontainebleau Hotel on Miami Beach. I was working as a news and sports reporter at WPLG-TV in Miami.

At the appointed hour, Ali emerged from the hotel elevator with his then wife Belinda Ali on his right, and the woman who would later become his wife, Veronica Porche on his left. It was such a magical and meaningful moment for me that I had invited a beautiful date from out of town to join me to witness The Greatest. Ali sat down, said hello to me and then immediately diverted his attention and conversation to the pretty young lady sitting to my left.

Ali charmed and captivated her, before the interview could begin. He then abruptly stood up, grabbed my lady friend's hand, and said "let me show you Miami Beach." And off they went together to tour Miami Beach in his convertible, while leaving me, his wife and future wife aghast! Suffice it to say, I never got that interview! SCLC

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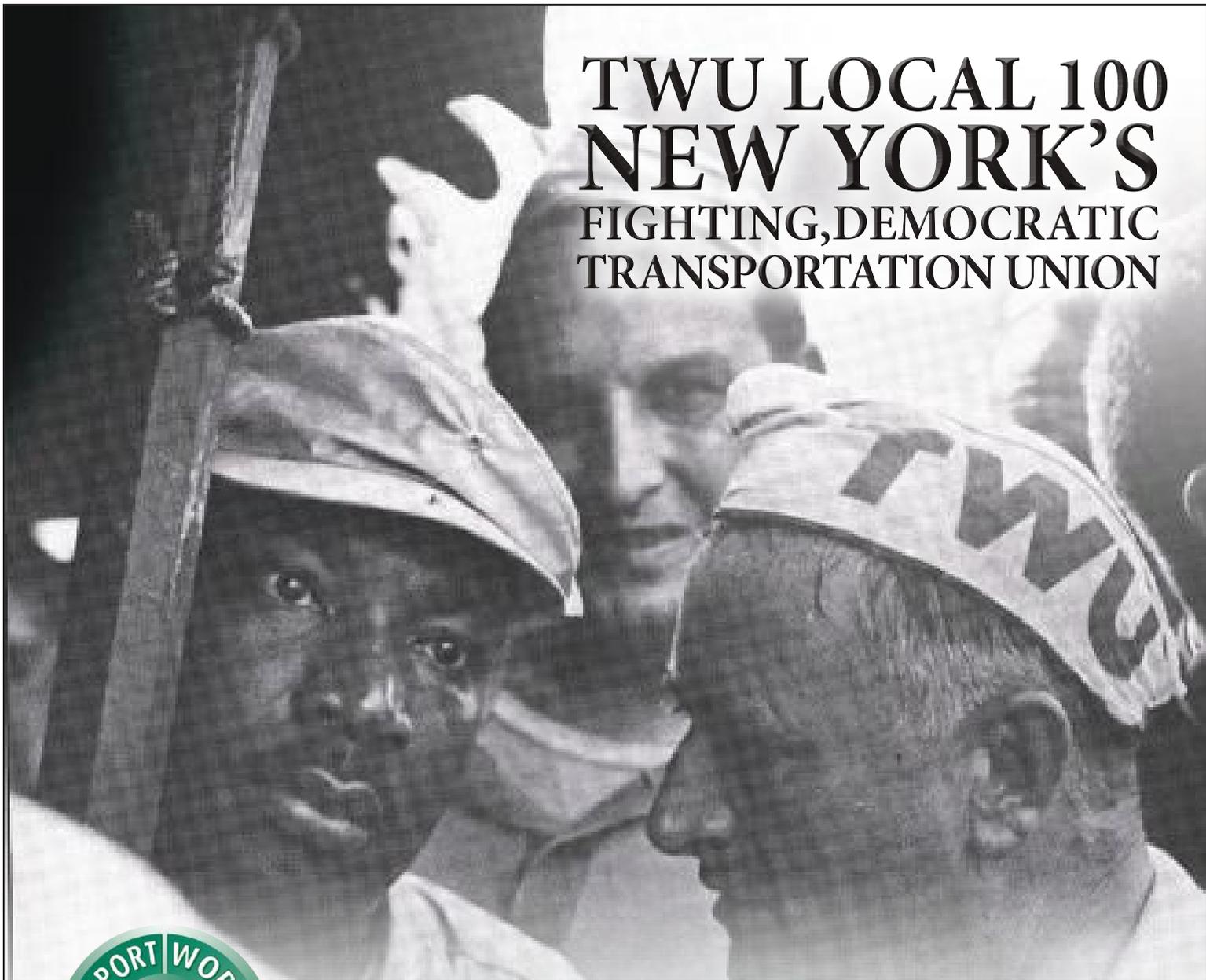
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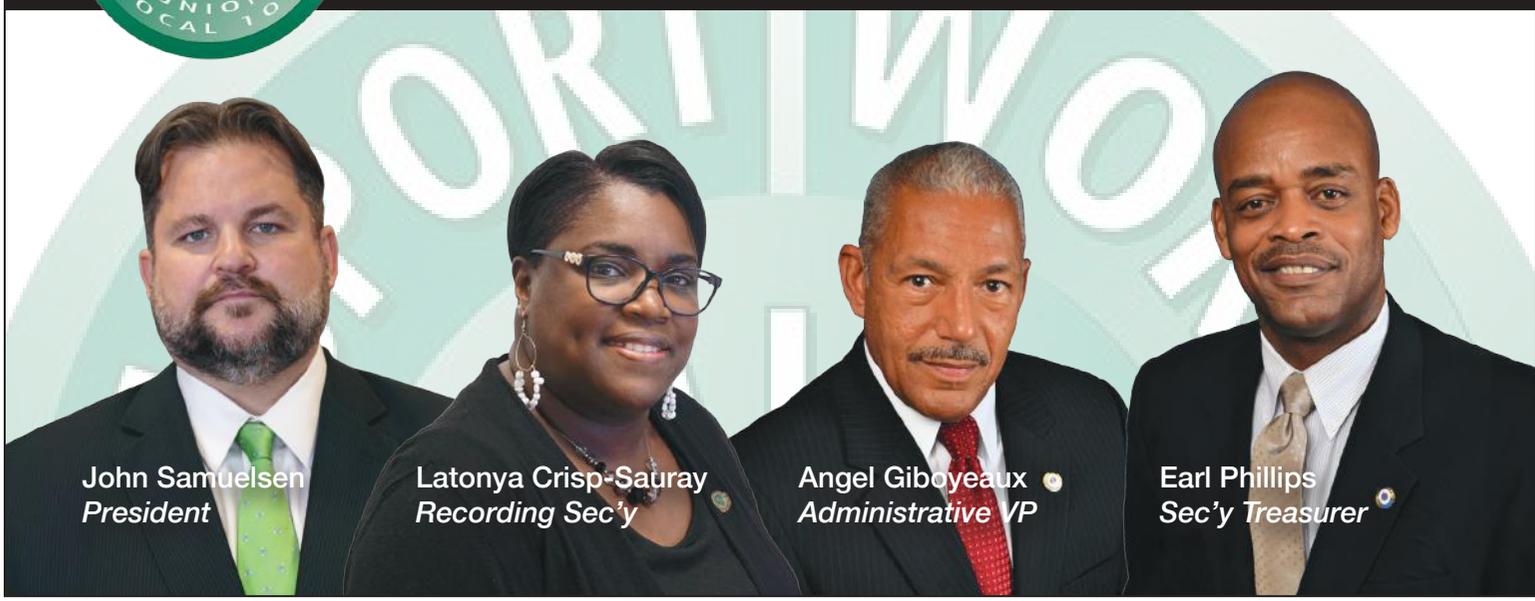
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