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61ST Convention Highlights





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

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info@sclcmagazine.com

FOUNDER & PUBLISHER
Steven Blood Sr., Ph.D.

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER
Monica Blood

MANAGING EDITOR
Maynard Eaton

EXECUTIVE MANAGER
Dawn McKillop

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SCLC NATIONAL HQ
320 Auburn Avenue
Atlanta, GA 30303

www.nationalsclc.org

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The President, Chairman and staff of SCLC extend our sincere condolences to the family of Mrs. Juanita Abernathy. Her contributions to the advancement of civil and human rights began in 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama and will always be etched in history.



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After Horrific Tragedies in El Paso and Dayton, SCLC President Calls for a Movement of Reconciliation

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

“Americans are sad and need immediate healing.”

Saying America is hurting following the massacres in El Paso and Dayton that claimed the lives of nearly 40 people and injured dozens more within a 24-hour span, Dr. Charles Steele, Jr. issued a call for a movement of reconciliation.

“It’s a sad day to be an American,” said Dr. Steele, president of the civil rights organization co-founded and first led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. “Our prayers go out to all the immediate families and to all Americans who have been impacted by this senseless wave of violence. We are threatened with the continuation of racism within this society. It is nothing more than a desire by some people to return to the Jim Crow era, a divisive and violent period we so vigorously felt we had surpassed in terms of the 1965 Voting Rights

Act. This is racism in the highest degree that has been embedded in this country. Until we have the reconciliation and healing between African Americans and Caucasians and Hispanic Immigrants and Americans, the kind of violence we have seen over the past day can be provoked by anyone who calls themselves a leader.”

Dr. Steele said the SCLC plans to host a conference call over the next few days with a multi-racial, multi-religious group of leaders. After engaging with them, he will announce the date for a mass gathering where the leaders and others will launch the national reconciliation movement.

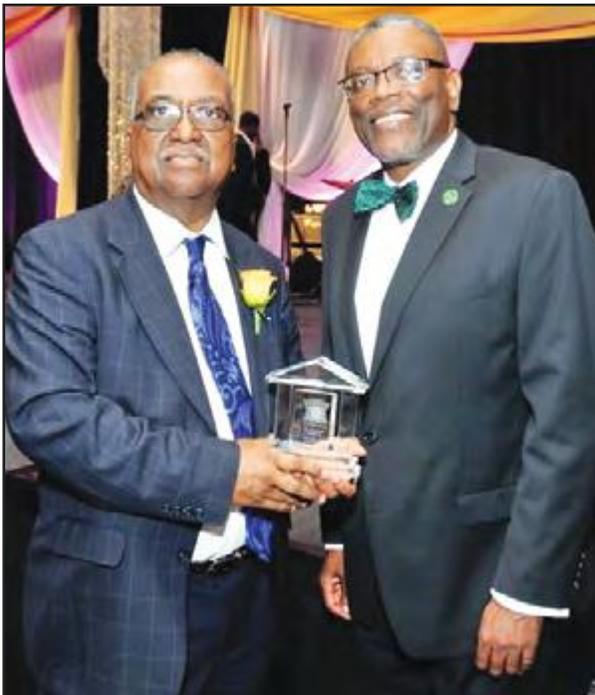
“No one leader, law or policy can change this destructive course in America at this time,” Dr. Steele said. “We as a people—every one of us—have to do this from within our heart and soul. This must come from the spiritual side. There has to be a spiritual change and then you will see a societal change.”

Following the Day of Reconciliation, Dr. Steele says the movement then expands across America to the classrooms, businesses, and finally the street corners.

This movement for reconciling, Dr. Steele said, follows the template created by Dr. King who was assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis during a period he was advocating against racism, poverty and the Vietnam War. Genuine efforts to change America, Dr. Steele said, is dangerous work and that is why many leaders and people of wealth, power and influence are reluctant to speak out against the racism and violence.

“If you truly believe in unity and America, there is no time to be fearful,” Dr. Steele said. “You should only fear God. You deal with what is right, not what’s political. You cannot do this work questioning will I lose a friend, lose a job, or lose a dollar. You go out in a unified, focused manner and attack. This is a very serious issue. We have stood back and remained silent far too long to think a magic wand will fix this problem.”

He added, “We will draw together Americans of all ethnicities, and there is no limit on the numbers. We want to fill an arena with people totally committed. We are not talking about rallying. We are talking about healing and meditation, a spiritual concentration to eradicate what Dr. King called the three ills of society, racism, poverty and militarism.”•



Dr. Charles Steele, Jr. was inducted into the HBCUs Hall of Fame on September 27, 2019 during the 34th Annual Ceremony in Atlanta, Georgia. The presentation was made by Dr. Jerry Briggs, President of Mississippi Valley State University. Photo: Dub Taylor

"SCLC TODAY" Issues & Answers program featuring President & CEO
DR. CHARLES STEELE

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Look for highlights from SCLC's 61st Annual Convention on the SCLC YouTube Channel.

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sclc from the first lady

61ST
Annual National Convention

A Heartfelt Thank You

FROM CATHELEAN STEELE, Founder, Justice for Girls

Within the scope of life there are many people who leave us with an anointing to make a difference in the world. I believe this to be true about our key note speaker and the honorees at the Women's Empowerment Luncheon during SCLC's 61st annual convention in Atlanta, Georgia. The diversity of causes represented ranged from healthcare, gun violence, corporate leadership, governmental responsibility and civil rights.

Our speaker, Mr. Charles Johnson IV, enlightened us of the inequities in our healthcare system. He shared how this inequity led to the death of his beautiful and energetic wife a few hours after giving birth to their son. His nonprofit 4Kira-4Moms is worthy of our attention.

As our honorees spoke during their acceptance speeches I felt the passion for each of their causes. I looked out onto the luncheon attendees and felt that each message was received with an understanding that each of us can make contributions to societal issues that confront us individually and collectively.

For our supporters that were not in attendance at our Women's Empowerment Luncheon, the Southern Christian Leadership (SCLC) is elated to share with you a list of our esteemed honorees (below).•



Cathelean Steele and Hillary Rodham Clinton at the SCLC 61st Annual National Convention in Atlanta. Photo: Faith Swift

~ **SCLC Realizing the Dream Award**

Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton
67th U.S. Secretary of State

~ **President's Award**

Mrs. Rose Flenori
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~ **SCLC Civil Servant Award**

The Honorable Keisha Lance Bottoms
Mayor, City of Atlanta

~ **Evelyn G. Lowery Award**

Mrs. Mary Luizzo Lilleboe
Civil and Human Rights Advocate

~ **Women's Advocacy Award**

Dr. Rogsbert Phillips-Reed
Renowned Breast Surgeon
Founder, Sisters by Choice

~ **Humanitarian Award**

Congresswoman Lucia (Lucy) McBath
U.S. Congress GA 6th District

Special Recognition:

~ **Phenomenal Woman of the Year**

Bishop Dr. Barbara L. Lewis King
Founder, Minister, World Spiritual Leader
Hillside International Truth Center



A Rose of a First Lady – Cathelean C. Steele

A Tribute to 7 Years of Unforgettable Women’s Empowerment Luncheons

BY CARRIE L. WILLIAMS

When asked what her aim was in holding an annual Women’s Empowerment Luncheon at SCLC’s national conventions, First Lady Cathelean Steele’s simple and humble answer was that she wanted to “inspire leaders to ‘be the best they can be’”.

If anyone has ever been to one of the First Lady’s luncheons, you would know that “inspiring” doesn’t even come close to the magnitude of their impact. The word more fitting for Mrs. Steele’s luncheon events is, simply put: unforgettable.

For the past seven years, First Lady Steele has wielded a vast array of connections and resources with her winning leadership approach to orchestrate some of the most moving moments during SCLC’s national conventions.

Whether they were held in Atlanta, or Washington, DC—or Birmingham, Baton Rouge, or even Memphis—her Women’s Empowerment Luncheon seats were always filled. Filled to the brim with a wide array of women and men, including: artists and intellectuals, activists and corporate leaders, entertainers and church members. Including girls, budding female teenagers, and young women college students.

This year was no exception; indeed, the First Lady gathered together some of the most inspiring award recipients and speakers for the Luncheon attendees to experience—and to be inspired by.

In her Luncheon bulletin, she revealed a telling, and wise philosophy she has woven into her life practice—and her Luncheons. She evoked the courage and sacrifice of women who had gone before us. She named a few of her personal heroes. She paused upon the memory of her very close friend Mamie Till Mobley, the mother of Emmett Till. Then, the First Lady shared that Mamie had “taught me the value of turning sorrow into a message for the world”.

It was the undauntable determination of a grieving mother Mamie Till Mobley—to have the public and the media see the tortured body of her 14-year old murdered son by white men who were acquitted—that created an immense fundraising surge nationwide for the Civil Rights Movement.

If one looks closely at the background of each 2019 Luncheon award recipient and speaker, each has endured

some great sorrow—and they became known by turning their sorrow into a message for the world. Including First Lady Steele.

Having held her baby sister in her arms as she died, Cathelean Annette Steele integrated not one but two major high schools in the state of Alabama. She endured the risk of losing her life and her loved ones’ lives through her husband’s dramatic and successful stand for civil rights, through numerous political campaigns, terms in public office, international work—and through shared years of hard physical and mental work involved in building the continuation of the SCLC and the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Her ability to capture the sorrow experienced by many in the Civil Rights Movement—and turn that sorrow into a powerful message for the world, through her impactful Convention/Luncheon themes, settings, and event execution that is what makes SCLC’s annual Women’s Empowerment Luncheons so unforgettable.

We want to take a moment to pay a special tribute to First Lady Mrs. Cathelean Annette Steele and her indomitable spirit of educating, enlightening, and empowering both young and old. Her unstoppable determination to inspire others is making a difference, no matter the sorrow, no matter the challenge.

After the Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton’s standing ovation speech at this year’s Empowerment Luncheon, First Lady Steele offered a bouquet of long-stemmed roses to the United States’ 67th Secretary of State pronouncing, “You are our Rose.”

We now pronounce you, First Lady, our SCLC Rose. We are rising up, to lift you up, as we strive to answer your charge of us: to lift up a new generation.

We thank you. And we honor you.

You are unforgettable. •

CARRIE L. WILLIAMS, *Editor-in-Chief/Founder of S.E. Region News, a news outlet which focuses on issues of public policy, public engagement, and culture. Having served the civil and human rights community for nearly a decade, Ms. Williams produces news communications to impact the civil and human rights community’s visibility and public policy success.*

61ST HIGHLIGHTS

Annual SCLC National Convention



July 18-19, 2019
Atlanta, Georgia

Photos by Faith Swift







Mr. and Mrs. LaFayette, Hillary Clinton, and Mrs. and Dr. Steele at the SCLC 61st Annual National Convention in Atlanta. SCLC awarded former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton with the SCLC Realizing the Dream Award. Photo: Faith Swift

“Gutsy” Hillary Clinton Honored by SCLC

BY MAYNARD EATON, Managing Editor

“The very serious function of racism is distraction. It keeps you from doing your work. It keeps you explaining over and over again your reason for being.”

— Maya Angelou, Novelist

Hillary Rodham Clinton is arguably America’s quintessential gutsy woman. She has had the grit and grace to serve as the nation’s former First Lady, a U.S. senator, President Barack Obama’s Secretary of State and a Democrat presidential candidate, who nearly lost to President Donald Trump. She has also co-authored *The Book of Gutsy Women*, which profiles her courageous political journey, and those of others like her.

Because of her stellar, if not remarkable career achievements, Secretary Clinton, was praised and honored at the 2019 SCLC annual convention by SCLC First Lady, Cathleen Steele. She was presented with the civil rights organization’s top trophy, it’s Realizing The Dream award at its 61st national July convention at Atlanta’s Hyatt hotel entitled: *Maintaining The Global Village...Housing, Health, and Our Common Humanity*.

“I’m so happy to stand here with Secretary Clinton,” said Mrs. Steele during her SCLC Women’s Empowerment Luncheon. “She has realized many, many dreams and that’s

the epitome of an empowered woman. I have been honored to sit in her office when she was Secretary of State, and to be in her presence several times. I don’t care what the Electoral College votes say, she is my President.”

“From your lips to God’s ears,” Clinton quipped in reply to her humble hostess, the founder of SCLC’s Justice For Girls programs. “She and I have been comrades on many issues. I am grateful to you and Dr. Steele and to SCLC for this honor. Cathleen and Charles have been good friends and supporters over the years. It has meant the world to both Bill (Clinton) and me to have your friendship and your advice, as we have all tried to realize the ‘Dream’- a never ending quest.”

Secretary Clinton applauded SCLC and its storied history started by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and had warm words of encouragement for today’s SCLC leadership team, opining that the group remains relevant and required. “It makes my heart swell that you’re still at it; that you have not folded up your tent,” Clinton said. “You know what, we need you now more than ever.”

She says SCLC remains America’s “North Star” in the continuing struggle for freedom, justice and equality. “There is no doubt that the struggles that we face right now at this point in our history are as consequential as those that were faced back in the late 1950’s when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. took the helm of this storied organization,” asserted Secretary Clinton. “It is not a time to look backwards. It is a time to reassert our commitment to the future that will realize the ‘Dream’; but to recognize that the work is never over. We’re a little surprised that we must be having the same conversations; arguing over the same points but that is the hand we have been dealt.”

During Secretary Clinton's riveting and robust speech to Mrs. Steele's standing room only SCLC luncheon audience, she saluted the civil rights career accomplishments of esteemed 98-year-old former SCLC president, Dr. Joseph Lowery, who was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by former President Barack Obama.

"I know that all of our prayers and thoughts are with him," she said. "I remember the last time I saw him three years ago, and he was just as determined then as he was as a young man. If he can stay determined; if all of us who are on the other side of our lives can stay determined, then we must do a better job of persuading young people to join this cause. There are so many noble fights to be waged. The truth is that when our civil and human rights are being trampled on



Dr. Joseph Lowery was awarded the **Presidential Medal of Freedom** by then-**U.S. President Barack Obama** on **July 30, 2009**. Photo: Getty

and marginalized, the need for a just and humane society becomes even stronger."

The battle for human rights and social justice must be won at the ballot box Clinton passionately and persuasively argued to applause. "It's the only place that matters," she said. "People need to get off the benches and come back into the arena. We have to do a much better job convincing everyone of the importance of their vote, and then standing up as Stacey Abrams has done to make sure your vote is cast and counted."

The 2020 Democratic presidential race has the most female candidates in US. history. "When I ran there were more women in space than women running for president," she told TV talk show host Stephen Colbert. "There were two, and now, we've had enough women to field a basketball team. It's really a big step forward."

Both she and her daughter co-author, Chelsea Clinton, pick young climate activist Greta Thunberg as the "gutsy" woman who currently impresses them most. "I was fascinated by this schoolgirl starting this strike for climate change awareness. I thought, wow, that's pretty 'gutsy'. That first day nobody joined her, and it was a pretty lonely enterprise. Then to see her speak truth to power in the United Nations to leaders who should know better and refuse to take action. I loved that."•

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Meet the New Maurice Clarett

BY MAYNARD EATON, Managing Editor

It was yet another eye-opening, enriching and educational experience in Maurice Clarett's metamorphosis. This July speaking appearance was a new wrinkle in Clarett's ongoing comeback tour. It was to the venerable civil rights group co-founded by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference [SCLC] at its 61st annual convention.

"This is like a history course," said the 35-year-old former Ohio State All-American running back, who'd admittedly been largely oblivious of the civil rights movement. "After getting around those guys and listening to their stories, you put your life in context. It's embarrassing, when you see what some people have sacrificed for stuff that you've taken for granted. How does this information get lost among Black people about who sacrificed for us?"

Clarett was in Atlanta, at the request of SCLC board member Marilyn Ford, for a screening of the 2013 documentary about his life, "The Youngstown Boys", which chronicled his rise to college football stardom, and the fall that landed him in prison. Clarett was there to tell civil rights leaders and activists about his rise again.

"Maurice is a former star athlete who is now a star person," according to Professor Ford of Quinnipiac University Law School. "His career was stolen from him because of the unjust manner in which he was treated by the decision makers at Ohio State, who declared him ineligible to play and then by the judicial system when he challenged the NFL rule to go pro."

She adds, "Today, Maurice is an exemplary young man who has taken his talents and his life experiences and using it to help others make the best of their lives."

That's why he has become a sought-after speaker at colleges and corporations across the nation, but Professor Ford was the first to offer Clarett such an opportunity. She was running a symposium at Quinnipiac University called "Disparity in Youth Education" and believed that Clarett would be a perfect fit for her panel, as she told Fox Sports.

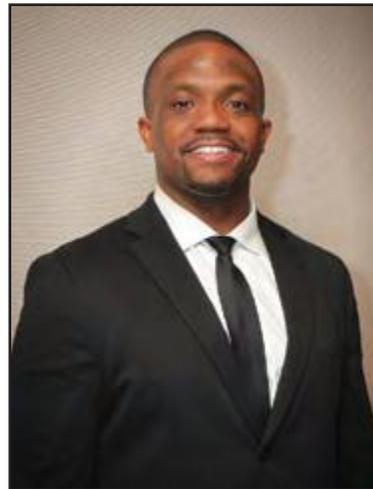


Photo by Faith Swift

Ford thought Clarett's story — not so much his downfall but his efforts to turn his life around — would be a nice contrast to many of the professors and other academic minds.

"I had no idea if he'd be a good speaker," Ford recalled. "But I knew he had a story to tell."

Maurice Clarett has found a second life by sharing his first. "I think the biggest impact I've had is to get people who traditionally were not engaged in mental health assistance engaged," he said. "I'm prouder of that than anything."

Clarett has bounced back remarkably from his legal and personal woes that involved substance abuse and mental illness. He has figuratively gone from the end zone to the red zone. He is now a successful entrepreneur, real estate investor,

"I think the biggest impact I've had is to get people who traditionally were not engaged in mental health assistance engaged. I'm prouder of that than anything."

— MAURICE CLARETT

investor, speaker, and Founder/ CEO of The Red Zone.

"We are a mental health and drug and alcohol agency," he explained. "We work with adolescents and inner-city schools, and adults with those issues. We grew a concept and idea that came from my life."

The Red Zone services 700 outpatient inner-city youth with an assortment of psychological, social and cultural needs. Additionally, The Red Zone treats some 400 adults that have a variety of addiction issues. He employs 130 people including social workers, counselors, mental health specialists, licensed dependency counselors, and peer-to-peer support specialists in four different Ohio cities counting Youngstown and Columbus.

"I'm here to do nothing more than to share my journey," he said of his SCLC speaking engagement. "The things that move you or the things that inspire you are stories. My goal

every time I get in front of a microphone or camera, I'm just telling my truth and what I've been through."

"My story is one of redemption," he added. "I consider myself a leader to young men and women who look towards me. I'm grateful for every platform I have to speak my story, tell my truth and give advice when I can that may inspire somebody else."

Clarett is an eloquent, engaging and captivating personality who mesmerized and motivated his SCLC audience. "He's very much the real deal," opined public relations consultant Vic Bolton. "He's been there, done that; hit the bottom, and bounced high. Now, he's doing some things with his mind. He was throwing out multi-syllabic words today like a Scrabble champion. He did some serious work in prison."

Clarett's four-year incarceration for aggregated robbery in 2006 proved to be the gateway for his rebirth. "I was incarcerated for four years, but before you become incarcerated there are experiences that are happening in your life that actually put you in prison," Clarett told this reporter. "Not having the ability to navigate your depression, your stress and mental health issues is the problem. Prison becomes a consequence of the bad decisions."

Once incarcerated, Clarett used intense therapy and books to uncover issues within that had long been dormant. He now calls himself a source of inspiration.

"He's taking on something that is ultra-important in our community, which is the mental health stigma," said Bolton, an SCLC activist who laments that mental health issues are often taboo subjects in the black community. "We have long put that uncle with the problem over in the corner. It has hurt us for decades. Your candor in all this is going to change lives, and I want to thank you for that," Bolton told Clarett. The audience applauded.

Once known as "Maurice The Beast" because of his strength and athletic prowess, Clarett is now a reserved family man and passionate mental health advocate. "I'm quiet, but I'm inspired," said the father of a 13-year-old daughter, with another child due in December. "The respect is different. I'm looked at more like a coach and a source of inspiration. The respect is more tied to character; almost like 'you've been through something we identify with more.' When you are an athlete, you entertain us. But, when you go through prison, you go through poverty, you go through addiction and then you survive that; and then you come out and build a business and employ people, it's a totally different level of respect. It's more of a humane respect. That's more fulfilling."

The SCLC Convention proved to be yet another opportunity for attendees and others to express appreciation for Clarett's business acumen and the aversity he's triumphed over.

As for this college football season, Clarett predicts Clemson will repeat as the national champion. "If I had to give it to somebody, I'd give it to Clemson," he said. "In college you can get a superstar, and he can tip the scales and make that thing go."

He knows that to be true because that's the life he formally led at Ohio State. •

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Celebrating the Life of Juanita Abernathy



BY ASHLEY SIMMONS

Juanita Odessa Jones Abernathy better known as ‘Juanita Abernathy’ was a preeminent civil rights activist during the civil rights movement; her death marks the end of an era.

Juanita Abernathy was born in Uniontown, Alabama on December 1st, 1931. She studied at Selma University but ended up graduating from Tennessee State University. She was as a teacher and sold Mary Kay Cosmetics.

All while still being passionate about equal rights, as she was one of America’s major civil rights activists and reportedly one of the nation’s fiercest “Foot Soldiers” for human rights. Juanita Abernathy also served on the Board of Trustees for the Morehouse School of Religion and on the board of directors for the Atlanta Fulton County League of Women Voters and the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority. On September 12th, 2019, Mrs. Juanita Abernathy transitioned into her eternal life in the city of Atlanta Georgia.

Mrs. Abernathy married Ralph Abernathy on August 31st, 1952, and together they had 5 children. Their first child, Ralph Abernathy Jr., died suddenly on August 18, 1953, less than 2 days after his birth on August 16, while their other children lived on to adulthood. Her husband Ralph D. Abernathy, the second President and CEO of the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC) died of a heart attack in 1990 at age 64.

Mrs. Abernathy was the last surviving member of the quartet that were early leaders of the “Movement”: Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Coretta Scott King, and her husband. All rose to prominence after they helped orchestrate and lead the Montgomery Bus Boycott from 1955 to 1956. From there, the King’s and Abernathy’s became the first families of the “Movement”, leading a social revolution that changed the nation.



Juanita Abernathy (right), with Coretta Scott King and a fellow civil rights activist, Fred L. Shuttlesworth, in 1963 as they left the Birmingham jail after visiting Dr. King there. Photo: AP



Juanita Abernathy (center), David Abernathy (second to her right), and John Lewis (third to her right) march from Selma, Ala. to the state capitol in Montgomery in 1965 with Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King. Photo: City of Atlanta.

“Every Black in high position, every Black that’s honored, they are doing that at the sacrifice of Juanita Abernathy,” said civil leader and TV personality Rev. Al Sharpton. He opined that Juanita Abernathy helped change the world.

“Juanita, you fought a good fight,” Sharpton said. “You brought us from the back of the bus to the front of the White House.”

“She is the embodiment of a woman,” opined Mayor Bottoms about Abernathy’s considerable civil rights contributions. “She has shown me and so many others that as women, we can do it all. That we can be it all. And that we live a life that shows all that a woman should be. A mayor. A woman in this city can be mayor of this great city. And so, I thank you, because I know a life of public service is often worn most of all by the family. Thank you for the sacrifices

“Death is not the opposite of life, but part of it. That it will never come again is what makes life so sweet.”

– Haruki Nurakam, Japanese Writer

At her homegoing celebration service Juanita Abernathy was eulogized and praised by religious, political and civil rights leaders from across the country. SCLC President/CEO, Dr. Charles Steele, Jr. was there to show his respect and salute her stellar civil rights service.

“Juanita Abernathy was one of a kind,” said Dr. Steele. “People all over the world know her. She has made an indelible imprint and impact. She is one we can emulate, because the story of Juanita Abernathy will forever be told not only in the Black community, but throughout the world.”

Another of the many speakers was the Mayor of Atlanta, Keisha Lance Bottoms, who said how appreciative she is on all the things that Juanita Abernathy endured and fought for to get African Americans where we are today.

that you have allowed your family to make. To make it possible for all of us, especially me, to be here today. May God Bless You All.”•



ASHLEY SIMMONS is a 19-year-old sophomore at Clark Atlanta University in Atlanta, Georgia. Simmons goal is to become a Television Reporter and News Anchor with the Entertainment Industry.



C.T. Vivian, A Young Civil Rights Warrior Turns 95

BY HAROLD MICHAEL HARVEY

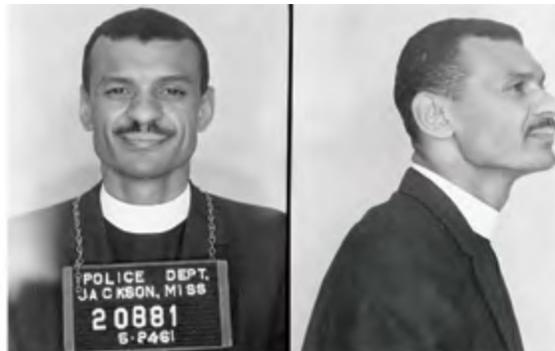
He was born five days before James Baldwin on July 30, 1924. While Baldwin, the heartbeat of civil discourse was born in Harlem, Vivian was born on farmland that had been in the family dating back to the days when Missouri became the first slave state to free its enslaved population. In the ensuing 59 years, successive generations of the family found it more and more challenging to hold onto the family farm.

By the time Cordy Tindell Vivian was eight years old, the family patriarch had packed up and moved the family north to Peoria, Illinois. Little Cordy, was the only Negro boy in his second-grade class, albeit, in his neighborhood. The other boys initially bullied him – all

white – as much for being Black as for the fact he was the new kid on the block.

After a few weeks of bullying, Cordy decided to fight back. He called out the biggest bully on the playground. Following the exchange of a few punches, Cordy placed the white bully in a chokehold until the boy begged Cordy to let him go. Cordy relaxed his grip on the boy's neck, and the bullying stopped. Later, he was picked to play baseball with the boys, a game he loved, and because of his long legs and long arms, he was chosen to play first base.

Like many American boys growing up in the 1930s and '40s, Cordy dreamed of playing baseball forever in the Major Leagues, but when he graduated high school at the top of his class



Paying the price as a young civil rights warrior.

in 1942, professional baseball, as other facets of American society, was segregated by skin color.

By this time, Cordy developed an interest in words, in telling stories with words, and in painting pictures with puns. He went to college, where he discovered he was born black, in a white world, and no degree of physical combat with racial bullies was going to resolve the issue of racism.

stationed in Selma when a crowd arrived at the SCLC office. He was waiting for his relief, Hosea Williams, to arrive and take charge of the office. Williams was running late. The organization's procedure required the office manager to remain on duty until the next assigned person arrived.

"I was not supposed to lead that march," Vivian told this writer several years ago, sitting in the study of his southwest

**“We have to pay homage to Vivian,
to the people who have brought
us to where we are today.”**

— Felicia Moore, Atlanta City Council President

After college, he found work at the Baptist Publishing House in Nashville, Tennessee. While he loved words, it was the business aspect of publishing that galvanized Vivian's attention. In 1947, eight years before the Montgomery Bus Boycott and ten years before the founding of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Vivian was leading a non-violent protest to desegregate lunch counters in Peoria, Illinois. As Vivian worked to beat back the evil of racism, his work came to the attention of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

In 1963, Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth wrote to Dr. King and invited him to come to Birmingham, Alabama to breakdown racial barriers which kept Blacks in Birmingham in a state of poverty and decline.

According to Ambassador Andrew Young, "When Martin told me Fred Shuttlesworth wanted us to come to Birmingham, I told Martin, we did not have enough people to send anybody to Birmingham. At that time, we had a staff of five or six, and Birmingham had 300,000 people. Martin asked C. T. if he would come to Birmingham and help us organize the people there. Birmingham would not have happened if C. T. had said no. After the Birmingham Campaign, Martin asked C. T. to head up our Affiliate Chapters."

In 1965, a week before Bloody Sunday, law enforcement officers in Selma arrested Jimmie Lee Jackson after Jackson and his mother had attempted to register to vote. Mysteriously Jackson was taken out of his jail cell. His bloody body later found in the woods. The people in Selma rose up demanding justice for Jimmie Lee Jackson and the right to vote. Vivian was

Atlanta home, surrounded by books and artifacts from the Civil Rights Movement.

"Hosea was supposed to lead that march, but he was running late. The people were fired up and growing impatient by the second, so I led them to the steps of the courthouse where they were going to go in and register to vote. Sheriff Jim Clark, now, he was a mean man. He came out of the courthouse with his deputies and blocked the entrance to the courthouse."

What followed was a classic confrontation on the Dallas County, Alabama courthouse steps. Looking away from the



April 19, 1960, the day of the Z. Alexander Looby house bombing, thousands of demonstrators marched down Jefferson Street toward City Hall in Nashville. Front, L-R: C.T. Vivian, Diane Nash and Bernard LaFayette Jr. Photo: Jack Corn, The Tennessean

menacing Sheriff Clark on the top levels, Vivian went into a 20th-century hip-hop tirade, rapping eloquently without the curse words, as hip-hop as any 21st-century hip-hop artist.

Vivian told Clark that he thinks of himself as a racist, but he was not as big a racist as Hitler. Clark insulted because he thought he was every bit the racist that Hitler was, threw a punch at Vivian's jaw. This punch caught on film and broadcast across America. Vivian escaped arrest, but the word was out that the cops were looking for him. When Hosea Williams arrived to relieve Vivian, he started his trek out of town. Vivian had a weird feeling in the pit of



Receiving the Medal of Honor from President Barack Obama on August 8, 2013.

his stomach, so Vivian pulled off the roadway into the back of a Black-owned funeral home. There he stayed overnight until others had devised a safe escape route out of Selma.

The rest, as they say, is history. It has been 16 years since Sheriff Clark walked among the living. He died at age 84.

C. T. Vivian, once a young Civil Rights Warrior, turned 95 years old. For the occasion over 700 people turned out at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Atlanta to wish Vivian a happy birthday and to shower him with the love from a grateful community.

Vivian sauntered into the gala at the Hyatt Regency under his own locomotion with the aid of a black cane while stopping to greet his well-wishers. Judge Glenda Hatchett, Congresswoman Lucy McBath, State Representative Calvin Smyre, Democratic U. S. Senate candidate Teresa Tomlinson, former U. S. Attorney Rick Deane, neighbors Joan Ross, Justine Boyd, Zan Spence, and this writer, along with a plethora of who's who in Atlanta. The gathering was a good mix of white and black, young and old, middle age, and middle schoolers.

"The movement today was overtaken by a group of people who were not ready for the movement," Vivian said when asked what he thought about the state of the civil rights movement as he turns 95 years old. The veteran civil rights champion referred to the violent demonstrations that occurred in the wake of the Michael Brown death in his home

state of Missouri and in Baltimore, Maryland following the death of Freddy Gray, both at the hands of police officers.

On President Donald Trump's latest racist twitter rants, Vivian quipped, "One doesn't have to wonder about him, it is understood."

Vivian stated the following when queried about his place in history, "It's worth a lifetime; the whole thing has been a long time. I am just thankful for being one part of the civil rights movement. I was here so long, that I appreciate it."

Ambassador Andrew Young, said, "C. T. Vivian was leading sit-ins in Peoria, Illinois in 1947. He joined the Freedom Riders in the sixties. Vivian trained Diane Nash, James Bevel, and Jim Lawson, the group that started the Nashville Movement. He took over the directorate of all our [SCLC] affiliate chapters; he went all over the country training people. He is one of the best preachers I know, and that includes, Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Abernathy and the rest."

When asked if the coronation of Vivian's 95th year is the culmination of the golden era of the Civil Rights Movement Young stated, "He [C. T. Vivian] is not tired, and I'm sure not."

Atlanta City Council President Felicia Moore said, "We have to pay homage to Vivian, to the people who have brought us to where we are today."

Dr. Bernard LaFayette, Chairman of the SCLC Board offered a reflection of the quiet warrior:

"C. T. Vivian is someone very special to me. His best speech to me was: 'What kind of People Do They Think We Are?' He would preach on this for a while, then would repeat the reframe, 'What kind of people Do They Think We Are?' This question required white people to think about us because they could not decide for us if they did not know what kind of people we are. Once we were in jail together down in Mississippi. He and I were cellmates. This was during the Freedom Rides. Vivian liked to do puns and I liked to do puns, so to pass time, he and I were doing these puns. The jailer came to get us to take us to see the Judge, but Vivian told him he had to wait until we finished our puns, of course, the jailer did not know what a pun was and that created some tension."

"Love through action epitomizes C. T. Vivian," Dr. Gerald Durley said about the man who served with him as an associate pastor for over 30 years. Durley cited Vivian's care for his wife Octavius during her last illness as exemplary of the character of the man.

Vivian, a Warrior King, feeling no ways tired, still on the battlefield fighting for justice, equality, and the American way, as he rolls under divine grace towards the century mark. •

HAROLD MICHAEL HARVEY is the author of *Freaknik Lawyer: A Memoir on the Craft of Resistance*. He is a Past President of the Gate City Bar Association. He is the recipient of Gate City's R. E. Thomas Civil Rights Award, which he received for his pro bono representation of Black college students arrested during Freaknik celebrations in the mid to late 1990s. An avid public speaker, contact him at hmbarvey@haroldmichaelharvey.com.

Bill to Celebrate 400 Years of Black History Passes U.S. House

BY LAUREN VICTORIA BURKE

In a rare display of bipartisanship in Congress, the United States House of Representatives voted to establish a commission to examine 400 years of African American history.

House bill H.R. 1242 is designed “to develop and carry out activities throughout the United States to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the arrival of Africans in the English colonies at Point Comfort, Virginia, in 1619.”

Rep. Bobby Scott (D-Va.) sponsored the bill in the House and Senators Tim Kaine (D-Va.) and Mark Warner (D-Va.) sponsored the bill in the Senate, where it’s waiting to be passed.

According to Washington insiders, the bill will most likely pass by unanimous consent in the Senate.

Once the bill known as the “400 Years of African-American History Commission Act,” or H.R. 1242 in the House, passes Congress, it will land on President Donald Trump’s desk.

If H.R. 1242 becomes law, the resulting commission would consist of 15 members, who would serve without pay. The legislation would authorize the commission to create grants to communities, nonprofits and other groups to hold events that would commemorate the anniversary of slaves arriving in the U.S. The commission could hire staff and also accept volunteers to perform its mission. The commission would be required to submit a report to Congress and terminate in July of 2020.

In a statement about the bill last year, Kaine said that he’s been lucky to be a part of federal commissions that have been formed to study and celebrate English and Hispanic history.

“Well, if English lives matter, if Latino lives matter, then African American lives matter and they’ve mattered every day since the landing of those ‘20 and odd’ African Americans at Point Comfort, Virginia,” said Kaine.

Kaine continued: “The story has a lot of pain to it, but it’s a story that has to be told to commemorate that we as a nation—had it not been for 400 years of African American history—would be absolutely unrecognizable. What we hope to do with this bill is engage in something we should do to tell the story in a different way than it may have been told 50 to 100 years ago.”

In late March, the Congressional Budget Office estimated, “that implementing the bill would cost about \$2 million a year—a total of \$6 million over the 2018-2021 period.”

In a floor statement about the bill last summer, Rep. Bobby Scott said that African Americans have contributed greatly to the United States and their achievements deserve to be celebrated.



“The history of Virginia and our nation cannot be fully understood without recognizing the role played by the slave trade,” said Scott. “Slavery was an abhorrent institution; but for hundreds of years, it was the foundation of the colonial and early American agricultural system and was essential to its economic sustainability.”

Scott continued: “The 400 Years of African-American History Commission Act will be instrumental in recognizing and highlighting the resilience and contributions of African Americans since 1619. From slavery, to fighting in the Civil War, to working against the oppression of Jim Crow segregation, to the civil rights movement, the rich history of African Americans and their contributions to our Nation began hundreds of years ago but obviously does not end there.”

LAUREN VICTORIA BURKE is a speaker, writer and political analyst. She appears on “NewsOne Now” with Roland Martin every Monday. Lauren is also a frequent contributor to the NNPA Newswire and BlackPressUSA.com.

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Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



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Carl Ware, once a senior executive at the Coca-Cola Company, surveys his wine grapes at his property in Newnan, Georgia. Photo: Alyssa Pointer, AJC

Worth knowing. Worth supporting.

Coke's Former Go-to Executive on Race Sees Diversity Gap at Company

BY MATT KEMPNER

Coke says it has made big strides since 2000 class action settlement

He was a sharecropper's son who became Coca-Cola's highest-ranking African American executive.

He ran an entire continent of business and was Coke's go-to leader on race issues. Years before a landmark discrimination lawsuit shook the company, he warned unsuccessfully about bias, pay disparities and a shortage of blacks in top management.

Now, 16 years after retiring, Carl Ware is again cautioning Coke.

Ware, who just wrote a book about his life, said that when he was at Coke he didn't believe Atlanta's most iconic company would even consider naming an African American or woman to be chief executive officer.

Even now, Ware said in an interview with *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the company is behind in guiding blacks and women to senior leadership positions that would put them in line to be Coke's president and CEO.

No woman or African American currently leads one of the four regional operating groups that would be the traditional succession path to Coke's CEO suite, he said. (Coke said two of the four are Hispanic.) Ware held such a post in the 1990s as group president of Africa, the smallest of Coke's regions at the time.

"I do not believe there is enough ownership within the company of diversity from the top," said Ware, adding he remains in touch with African American executives at Coke.

Diversity remains an issue for many U.S. companies. Just three Fortune 500 chief executives are black, while the proportion of blacks in the overall U.S. population is more than 20 times greater. Women represent just over half the nation's

population, but hold only 33 of the 500 CEO posts of the nation's biggest public companies, according to Fortune.

Coke CEO James Quincey has said diversity and inclusion help build social support for the company's growth.

Coke lists 29 senior leaders, vice presidents or presidents of its big regions. Of those, 10 are women. Three are black, two are Asian and five are Hispanic, according to the company.

The company says leadership diversity has increased since 2000, when it agreed to a nearly \$200 million settlement of a class-action discrimination lawsuit. About 2,000 current and former African American employees in the U.S. received payouts.

At the time, about 16% of Coke's elected and appointed officers were women and 8% were what the company described as multicultural. A similar group of executives today is 36% women and 36% multicultural, according to the company.

"At The Coca-Cola Company, we strive to celebrate and embrace diversity," Coke wrote in a statement to the AJC, adding it is "proud of the efforts we have made so far, but we always want to be making greater progress."

Kathy Waller, an African American woman who retired in March as Coke's chief financial officer, said she is convinced Quincey, the CEO, is committed to diversity.

She also said of Coke executives and diversity: "They have got a lot of work to do."

The company made progress, but its diversity initiatives slipped as it cut expenses and jobs in recent years, Waller told the AJC. Some minority and women executives either lost their posts or chose to depart.

"Coke is at the stage of trying to regain the ground we lost," she said. Over time, "the initiative needs to reinvent itself."

Even as Ware calls for greater opportunity in corporate America, he suggests his own life shows how much can still be accomplished despite roadblocks.

His new book, "Portrait of an American Businessman: One Generation from Cotton Field to Boardroom," details moments that touched on monumental shifts underway in Atlanta and the world during his lifetime.

Ware, now 75, grew up in Coweta County south of Atlanta. His parents scratched out a living with 12 kids who helped them work land owned by white farmers.

"I had parents who instilled in all of us that hard work, preparation, being close to God and humility would be strengths that would take you through life," Ware said. "They helped me overcome seemingly impossible odds."

Ware recalled accounts of local lynchings. He also wrote about a white sheriff who escorted his dad to vote at the Coweta County Courthouse in 1949, becoming the first African American to cast a ballot in the congressional district since Reconstruction.

Ware attended what was then Clark College in Atlanta in the early 1960s and took part in civil rights protests. He became a leader at the Atlanta Housing Authority and won a seat on the Atlanta City Council the same year Maynard Jackson became the first African American mayor of Atlanta. They and others pushed for changes, including requiring that city contracts include 25% participation by minority vendors.

He also was recruited by Coke's then-chairman, J. Paul Austin, to work in the company's governmental affairs unit. Ware said he was referred by one of his sisters, who was a maid for Austin.

Ware later led marketing aimed at minorities. He was assigned to deal with a boycott threat by activist Jesse Jackson, who pressed for African Americans to have a bigger presence in Coke operations. Ware recounted having life-size portraits of Confederate generals removed from Coke's North Avenue headquarters just before a Jackson visit in the early 1980s.

Eventually, Ware was dispatched to figure out how to deal with massive pressure Coke faced from doing business in South Africa during apartheid. He crafted a compromise short of a complete pullout that eventually won the approval of anti-apartheid activist Desmond Tutu. (Tutu wrote the foreword to Ware's book.) It took years before the plan was implemented.

Ware later led Coke's operations throughout Africa. He wrote that he tried to bring Africans into leadership roles in the business there.

Coke insiders at the time say Ware was a respected leader, but he rose no further. He retired in 2003 as executive vice president of public affairs and administration.

Years ago, when he was still at Coke, he bought land near Newnan where his parents had once been sharecroppers. He built a handsome house and an infinity pool above a fishing pond once used by one of the plantation owners. He sold part of his 1,000-acre holding for a planned subdivision, Wimberly Estates, that carries his mother's maiden name. •

MATT KEMPNER is a Business Columnist for *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.



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Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ralph Abernathy (hidden behind King) at the Berlin Wall (Bernauer Straße at Schwedter Straße) on September 13, 1964, while Werner Steltzer, the director of the Berlin Information Center, indicates points of interest. Dr. King had been invited to the German capital by Berlin mayor Willy Brandt. He also visited East Berlin during this trip. PHOTO: Landesarchiv Berlin

King's Significant International Influence

Martin Luther King, Jr. Inspires West and East Germans in His 1964 Visit

BY HEATHER GRAY

In September 1964, Martin Luther King, Jr. visited and addressed large anxious crowds in both West and East Berlin. The impact of his visit to Berlin was significant to put it mildly. It is noted, for one, that King's influence likely resulted in the 'non-violent' fall of the Berlin Wall some 25 years later. And with such a prominent person as King visiting, the East Berliners finally felt someone in the world cared about them.

The crucial connection to Germany for the King family, however, is prior to King's visit in 1964. King's father, Martin Luther King, Sr., had visited Berlin 30 years earlier. In 1934 King, Sr. had joined ten other Baptist ministers to attend the Fifth Baptist World Alliance Congress in Berlin, Germany. It was during this visit to Germany that the Reverend King, Sr. learned more about the Lutheran reformist, Martin Luther. As a result, he decided to change his name from 'Michael King, Sr.' to 'Martin Luther King, Sr.' He then also changed his son's name from Michael King, Jr. to 'Martin Luther King, Jr.'

King's visit to Berlin was at the invitation of the West Berlin Mayor, Willy Brandt, who hoped King would participate in the memorial service for President John F. Kennedy. Kennedy had been assassinated in 1963 and this was less than six months after Kennedy had visited West Berlin, that

included his famous statement "Ich Bin ein Berliner" (I am a Berliner).

Dr. King accepted Brandt's invitation and, in 1964, he spoke at the memorial service for Kennedy in West Berlin to an audience of more than 20,000 people at the Waldbühne amphitheater near the Olympic Stadium.

Heirich Gruber, a German pastor, also invited King to speak in East Berlin during his visit to Germany.

Suffice it so say, it appears everyone wanted to both hear and spend time with the Martin Luther King, Jr., except for the American government. The concern by the United States authorities was, apparently, that King would share information about civil rights struggles that could undermine America within the European sphere. Given this concern, the American officials in West Berlin took away Dr. King's passport and visa as they also did not want him going into East Germany. They also took away his interpreter.

Regardless of these intimidating actions, on September 13, 1964 King went across into East Berlin by showing the officials his American Express card and, also, he had replacement interpreters, with one being Peter Zorn, who was an American pastor living in West Berlin.

It is also important to note that there were no printed announcements about King's visit to East Berlin. Everything

*Many Americans tend to think of Martin Luther King Jr. solely as a leader of African Americans – or, even more narrowly, of southern blacks. We overlook his worldwide reach and his global vision.*¹

*“A symbol of the divisions of men on the face of the earth. For here on either side of the wall are God’s children and no man-made barrier can obliterate that fact. Regardless of the barriers of race, creed, ideology, or nationality, there is an inescapable destiny, which binds us together. There is a common humanity which makes us sensitive to the sufferings of one another.”*²

– MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

was word of mouth and thousands showed up at the churches to hear the remarkable American pastor share his wisdom. And because there was such a demand to hear him, he spoke in two churches in East Berlin – the Protestant St. Marienkirche and the nearby Sophienkirche, with more than 2,000 people attending.

Reaction to King in East Berlin

The Berlin Wall was built by the East Germans in 1961 to protect the socialist interests of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), but as a result many in East Berlin felt isolated from the world. Many, however, had listened to Dr. King on the radio and were thrilled that such a prominent person was coming to visit with them. Here’s from the German ‘Deutsche Welle’ (DW) broadcaster about King’s 1964 visit to East Berlin:

To the younger generation in particular, Martin Luther King was a hero. “My friends and I heard that he was going to speak in Mitte and we knew we had to be there,” recalls Hans-Joachim Kolpin, then a 15-year-old schoolboy. “We’d listened to his ‘I have a dream’ speech on the radio the previous year, and we loved everything to do with America, from chewing gum and Elvis Presley to ‘Bonanza’. We couldn’t believe that someone so prominent was actually bothering to come and talk to us! The Wall had been built three years before, leaving us effectively imprisoned. We felt forgotten by the world, insignificant. No one ever showed any interest in us – but the great Martin Luther King was coming to East Berlin! We couldn’t believe it.” (3)

While relative to today’s 2019 dialogue about walls and the immoral attempt to keep migrants out of America, Germany was also suffering at time from deliberate separations of the people as symbolized with the Berlin Wall. In reference to this, King stated the following in his East Berlin sermon:

May I say that it is indeed an honor to be in this city, which stands as a symbol of the divisions of men on the face of the earth. For here on either side of the wall are God’s children and no

man-made barrier can obliterate that fact. Whether it be East or West, men and women search for meaning, hope for fulfillment, yearn for faith in something beyond themselves, and cry desperately for love and community to support them in this pilgrim journey.

Regardless of the barriers of race, creed, ideology, or nationality, there is an inescapable destiny which binds us together. There is a common humanity which makes us sensitive to the sufferings of one another. And for many of us, there is one Lord, one faith and one baptism which binds us in a common history, a common calling, and a common hope for the salvation of the world. (3)

Finally, East Berliner, Hans-Joachim Kolpin, also notes:

King’s visit was powerful evidence that the lines of communication to the West weren’t entirely severed. “It was an uplifting experience,” he says. “That night, the big wide world paid us attention. He (King) made us feel better about ourselves.” (3)•

Footnotes:

(1) Sokol, Jason: ‘Martin Luther King Jr.’s Vision Was More Global Than We Remember. The World Mourned Him Accordingly’ (4/4/2018) Time Magazine

(2) Silverman, Adam L.: ‘The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s 1964 Remarks About the Berlin Wall’ (1/21/2019) Balloon-Juice

(3) Paulick, Jane: ‘Remembering Martin Luther King’s visit to Berlin’ (11/9/2014) DW (Deutsche Welle)

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



Jane LaTour: 50+ Years in the Labor Movement *and still go strong*

BY ANDY PIASCNIK

Jane LaTour has been active in the labor movement since the 1960s. She has worked in factories and on staff for several unions including District 65, one of New York City's best-known left-led unions. LaTour also worked for the Association for Union Democracy and the Wagner Labor Archives at New York University and is the author of *Sisters in the Brotherhoods: Working Women Organizing for Equality in New York City*.

LaTour has written for *Znet*, *Z Magazine*, *CounterPunch*, *The Independent*, *Labor Press*, *The Journal of Labor and Society*, and many other publications and websites. She is a long-time board member of the New York Labor History Association and for many years edited its newsletter *Work History News*. She also edited *Hard Hat News*, a magazine for rank and file workers in the building trades, and is working on a book about rank and file activism.

Piascnik: When and how did you get involved in the labor movement?

LaTour: I left my middle-class home toward the end of my first year of college and began working in factories to support myself. During my years as a factory worker, I got a world-class education about America that changed my life and set me on a different course. I have described those first experiences with myself as a visiting anthropologist trying to understand the strange folkways of the people I encountered.

I quickly became offended by the large and small daily indignities I witnessed all around me: managers addressing women old enough to be their mothers as “girls;” African-American workers sent to the hottest, hardest jobs in the plants; being told by management right before we were due to leave for vacation that payroll wouldn't be ready and we would have to make the long trek back to the plant if we wanted our paychecks; the assumptions of managers of their greater intelligence and ability than us the workers; the extreme ways that the professional men and supervisors spoke to us in really demeaning and disgusting ways about sex.

Then there were various incidents that remain memorable like one with an engineer I encountered for the first time at a Christmas party when I was working at

Hewlett-Packard who told me I wasn't smart enough to go to college. The discrimination, the injustices and all the rest of what I encountered quickly made me a rebel.

Piascnik: What workplace actions were you involved in?

LaTour: I was always a proponent of direct action in the workplace. Observing conditions and getting to know the people who worked alongside me led to strategies of working together for common objectives. I never actually studied my various union contracts (and here I am not recommending that, just describing what occurred), but would think about a plan where we could all work together toward our goal.

Even before I took part in an exhilarating union-sanctioned UPS wildcat strike as a Teamster in Edison, New Jersey, I loved the power of a walkout. I led walk-outs at a factory in Philadelphia where we had no heat! The windows were all broken and that first cold night, people told me: You get used to it. No. That is a great memory: working on the night shift where, without so many supervisors, we were able to forge close bonds. We even had a drive-out and I well remember seeing all of the car lights ahead of me as we left the factory.

At first, the men were being macho, but then solidarity prevailed. We all left together. The next night: voila! They had fixed the windows and we had a warm work site. There were lots of other similar actions. I learned so much from the people I worked with and one in particular I have written about, a woman named Dolly from West Virginia who taught me about class-consciousness, as in: Which side are you on? Dolly taught me that there are two sides.

Piascnik: What were some of the differences between organizing in the workplace and doing so as a union staffer after you went to work for District 65 in New York City?

LaTour: Working for District 65 beginning in 1977 as first a colonizer or SALT, as it's frequently called, and then as a union organizer, taught me a whole other set of lessons. In many ways I was more constricted working for a union than I was for the companies. However, I was sometimes able to use my position to take direct measures. Sad to say,

a lot or most of that came from seeing the glaring inconsistencies and problems within the union. I found that there was a great divide between the union staff and leadership on the one hand, and the members. This manifested itself in so many ways and it brought about a great deal of animosity.

Rather than everyone being on the same team, the members would often be fighting against the union. One of my first experiences of this came when I replaced a business agent who went on medical leave. His shops consisted of some where organizers were trying to sign up the workers and others that had already voted Yes for the union where a business agent would take over for the negotiations. Well, the shops were in an uproar. One had even filed charges against the union at the NLRB. At one point, I went to a shop meeting and the shop steward refused to sit up front with me and the other union representatives. I saw so many other things that taught me important lessons. I got fired from District 65 after three years. I was told it was because I favored the workers over the union. I didn't work for another union until the last job of my career.

Piascik: What experiences did you have in the factory and on the union staff that led you to put women's issues front and center in *Sisters in the Brotherhoods* and in many of your articles?

LaTour: Early on, as both a factory worker and a union staffer, I had so many experiences where the power grid was distinctly divided and men, though not all men, were the beneficiaries. One electronics shop I organized for District 65 was an all-female workforce. When we had our first meeting after the landslide election, the women nominated the sole male (who had NOT taken part in the organizing drive) to be the shop steward. That was an eye-opener.

I worked with women on assembly lines who were so talented and smart, but when it came to putting themselves forward for any position of leadership, they had no confidence in their ability to do the job. There was one experience at District 65 that was quite startling, given my youthful level of ignorance. We organized a women's group for the staff and had our first meeting. It was quite exciting. We invited everybody: the clericals, the switchboard operators, the organizers, and had a great discussion, with plans for the future. However, the director at the time, a woman, put an end to this: No more meetings. I seem to recall that she felt it would undermine the overall mission of the union.

Piascik: Any others?

LaTour: The biggest ah-ha experience I had came after I was fired by District 65. I was invited by one of my labor professors at Rutgers University to speak to his class on the topic of What was it like to be a female organizer for a union? That made me really think about it and I realized I mostly went along with the way things were and didn't question the relationships and arrangements within the union.

One big example was when I worked with the Revlon organizing team in New Jersey. This was the shop with the greatest number of District 65's members and they had a fine and experienced organizing and negotiating team led by a

formidable woman named Marge Orr. It was common when we were in meetings in the office of our organizing director for him to send me out to get pencils, coffee, or whatever else might be needed. However, if I wasn't there, he would send Marge out. Sometimes both of us were sent to get the missing whatever. Fair enough to send me out when I was the least senior person, though I would still be sent out even when I was the lead organizer. But Marge? No way was that not about gender. This, along with other eye-opening experiences at Rutgers and at the Association for Union Democracy's Women's Project, led me to my concentration on working women.

Piascik: Can you talk about some of the efforts to transform unions into organizations of the rank and file that you've written about and that are the subject of the book you're writing?

LaTour: The book I am working on is based on oral histories I did with members of various rank and file groups

over the decades. All along the way, I have encountered these people who have made it their mission to stand up against the injustices they saw within their unions as well as their workplaces. At the White Lung Association, a non-profit group that focused on problems resulting from asbestos exposure in the workplace, it would oftentimes be the rank and file union member or a participant in an organized rank and file group, and not a union staffer or officer,

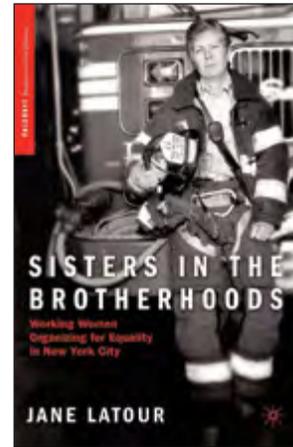
who would bring their problem to us. As I wrote about in *Sisters in the Brotherhoods*, this is how I met Irene Soloway from the Carpenters' union and many others.

Piascik: How did the work you did at the Association for Union Democracy and the Wagner Labor Archives relate?

LaTour: Working for the Women's Project at the AUD was a great opportunity to meet these reformers. As I described in my book, working with the women who were organizing within their unions and doing those nontraditional blue collar jobs led me to the realization that I needed to interview them, not just advocate for them.

Likewise, when I worked at the Wagner Labor Archives at NYU, Debra Bernhardt hired me to process the collection of the late, great Burton H. Hall, who had just passed away. His whole career as a lawyer was spent representing dissidents within their unions in their various fights to improve their organizations. Debra suggested that I interview some of these insurgents and that's how I came to meet so many reformers, to capture their struggles on audiotape, and to collect their records for the labor archives.

Piascik: Are there any tentative lessons you'd like to share from your work with rank and filers?



Jane LaTour's book cover. Get it on Amazon.

LaTour: These struggles have so much to tell us about the state of the labor movement at this critical juncture in our history. Why do so few stand up in opposition when the bulk of the membership goes along with the status quo? What were they fighting for? What issues propelled them to spend their time, money, and work for decades to reform their unions? And quite simply, what was their vision for labor?

One great example is the District Council of Painters in New York. The numerous insurgents had such a broad vision of what they wanted to see in the future for labor. Another great example is one of the first reform groups in the Teamsters who called themselves FORE—Fear of Reprisal Ends. The men in this mob-controlled union did such exciting work to oppose the mobsters running their union. Very few of them are still alive.

One of the summations I always say when asked about this is: They were fighting for the labor movement we need. Not the one we have. One last element of this project is captured in the subtitle of the book I'm working on: "The Limits of Reform in Organized Labor."

Piascik: Why is rank and file unionism so important?

LaTour: Without the participation of rank and file union members, there is no "ownership." There is no

investment, no feeling that your actions and presence make a difference in affecting outcomes. Apathy is a problem that labor unions have long struggled with and it stems from this division between the membership and the leadership.

One experience at District 65 really encapsulates this divide. We were having a staff meeting and the female director I mentioned earlier got a phone call from a plant in reference to the union members refusing to work overtime. The director told the business agent on the phone that he was to make it perfectly clear that they must work the OT. So here we were, sitting in an air-conditioned union office while the men at the plant were doing hot and heavy labor all day. And it was their preference to not do more time, but to leave after they completed their 8-hour shifts. It seems that she had been too long removed from the shop floor and the realities of doing that kind of hard labor. Union members and their voices have to be part of the process.

Piascik: Many union staffers come from activist backgrounds and many would call themselves socialists, communists or radicals, yet many of these people are the most committed to staff and officer-dominated unions. Do you have any insights about why this is so?

LaTour: This answer should be taken in sight of a few facts. I have sympathy for my many friends and colleagues who place their faith in reform from the bottom-up, or in the unions as they are and as they engage in the many battles for survival. My own approach might possibly be informed by my upbringing as a Catholic so, call the psychiatrist or give me a hair shirt, but this is my take, with no aspersions cast: I just do not believe that the current structure and culture of our unions will get us to where we need to go, to have that countervailing force of working people arrayed against the many forces engaged in the war on workers. The salaries of officers and staffers, the ability to give themselves raises, that great divide between union members and union leadership, as well as so many other problems like gross corruption and other forms of smaller-scale institutional corruption, as I see it, present too great an obstacle to get us to where we need to go. The culture of entitlement and other problems create barriers that are insurmountable for labor as presently constituted.

Piascik: Some of the contradictions between rank and filers on the one hand and staffers and officers on the other were on display in some of the recent teachers' strikes. What are some of the things teachers might do to continue their independent initiatives?

LaTour: Keep voting with their feet; keep building support within the community; keep building those natural alliances; keep exposing the contradictions all around them; and keep linking their struggles to those of others; learn from history and keep using their creativity, imagination, and resilience. There is a huge middle that is suffering. These "spontaneous" wildcat strikes give hope and provide inspiration for others. So just keep it going.♦

ANDY PIASCIK is a long-time activist and award-winning author whose most recent book is the novel *In Motion*. He can be reached at andypiascik@aol.com.



1340 Treat Boulevard, Suite 600, Walnut Creek, CA 94597

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Recruiting Temporary Workers for the 2020 Census

The recruiting of hundreds of thousands of temporary workers for the 2020 Census – often described as the nation's largest civilian mobilization – is now underway.

The U.S. Census Bureau has already hired people to work on an important 2020 Census preliminary operation – address canvassing – that began in August. Recruiting continues for applicants for census-taker, clerical and other positions linked to the census.

In the spring of 2020, the Census Bureau will launch the largest 2020 Census field operation, known as Nonresponse Follow-up, Census Takers will knock on doors to follow up with households who have not responded to the census questionnaire online, or by phone or mail.

Hundreds of Thousands of Workers Needed:

Positions will be available both in the field and in area census offices tasked with recruiting, training, managing and paying local staff. The Census Bureau is in the process of opening 248 offices across the county to support the 2020 Census.

Easy to Apply:

Applying for one of these jobs is simple. Just visit 2020census.gov/jobs or call 855-JOB-2020 and select option 3 for more information. You can find out pay rates for census-taker and clerical jobs at 2020census.gov/jobs/pay-and-locations.

Applicants will need to complete paperwork online and make an appointment to get fingerprinted for the background check. Once they are offered the job, there will be a period of time before their start date to allow time for the background clearance process. To search for possible management positions, go to USAjobs.gov.

Most applications will remain active throughout the 2020 Census and may be considered as positions become available.

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