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Southern Christian Leadership Conference  
NATIONAL MAGAZINE

## SELMA 2018

*President Steele Salutes MLK Jr.'s  
Revered SCLC "Ground Crew"*



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**COVER PHOTO:** SCLC Pres. Charles Steele Jr. is flanked by two SCLC veteran "Foot Soldiers" in Selma, AL with the infamous Edmund Pettis Bridge looming in the background. On Steele's left is Tyrone Brooks, a former Ga. State Representative and protégé of the late legendary Rev. Hosea Williams, who now spearheads Georgia's controversial Moore's Ford Bridge Murder mystery. Bobby Adams is on the right. He is a 50-year-long SCLC devotee and proud "Movement Foot Soldier", who is now president of Georgia's Jefferson County SCLC chapter.

**INSET COVER PHOTO:** A farewell salute to the late Ralph Worrell, the last remaining member of MLK's renowned and revered "Ground Crew". Sadly, it would prove to be the beloved Worrell's last walk across the Edmund Pettis Bridge as he is accompanied by friend Robert Fisher.

**COVER PHOTOS:** John Stephens

**COVER DESIGN / LAYOUT:** Monica Blood



## contributor

**MAYNARD EATON**, *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 journalism professor at Clark Atlanta University.



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800.421.0472  
sclcmagazine.com  
info@sclcmagazine.com

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

**ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER**  
Monica Blood

**MANAGING EDITOR**  
Maynard Eaton

**EXECUTIVE MANAGER**  
Dawn McKillop

**CREATIVE DIRECTOR**  
Monica Blood

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**SCLC NATIONAL HQ**  
320 Auburn Avenue  
Atlanta, GA 30303

[www.nationalsclc.org](http://www.nationalsclc.org)

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## 50 Years After the Death Of MLK Jr., the SCLC Remains Relevant and More Needed than Ever

BY JERRY THOMAS



**M**EMPHIS—Standing before a crowd of United Automobile Workers (UAW), gathered inside a large conference inside a luxury downtown hotel, Dr. Charles Steele, Jr., in his trademark dynamic and fiery manner, told the mostly African American audience that in today's climate, the SCLC is not only experienced to handle problems of this day and age, but the organization remains more relevant than ever.

Dr. Steele, who serves as president and CEO of SCLC, was the guest speaker at a special meeting of the UAW's National Advisory Council on Civil and Human Rights, an arm of the labor union which deals specifically with protecting the civil and human rights of members' protected classes.

This event was inside the Memphis Crowne Plaza and was one of many similar events held during this first week in April to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dr. King co-founded the Atlanta-based organization and was the SCLC's first leader. As the leading pioneer of

The Civil Rights Movement, Dr. King helped usher in global respect for the organization.

However, after Dr. King's assassination in this southern city on April 4, 1968, detractors and opposition began to mount.

"They told me, Steele, the SCLC is dead! They don't have any money!" Dr. Steele proclaimed. "The only way to save the SCLC is for God to come down. He can't save it. He's not coming down, but he sent me."

Since taking the helm of the SCLC in 2007, Dr. Steele has raised more than \$20 million for the organization, helped it build a new headquarters and erased the organization's debt.

"The SCLC has problems, but we have no money problems," Dr. Steele told the union leaders.

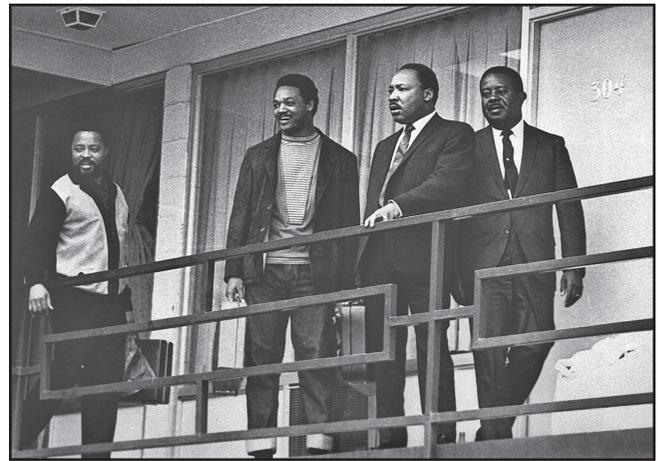
He stressed that Americans are neglecting to see the value of the SCLC, but internationally, the organization's legacy and influence remain strong and has several offices abroad. In 2014, Dr. Steele was even invited to Germany for an event of world leaders, such as Mikhail Gorbachev, former president of the Soviet Union, celebrating the demolition of the Berlin Wall.

However, there is still necessary work to be done in America.

"We're in the worst shape now than we've ever been," Dr. Steele continued, comparing 2018 to 1968. "Dr. King talked about the redistribution of wealth."

According to Dr. Steele, 140 million Americans go to work every day living from paycheck to paycheck. Sixty-seven percent of Americans, he said, do not think they can come up with \$1,000 if faced with an unexpected expense. Forty-Two percent do not have access to \$250. He said there are 21 black-owned banks, down from dozens several decades ago, and experts predict there will be no black-owned banks five years from now.

(Photo, right) Memphis, April 3, 1968: MLK Jr. stands on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel a day before he was assassinated at approximately the same spot. (L-R) Hosea Williams, Jesse Jackson, MLK Jr., and Ralph Abernathy.



“We are going back to the plantation,” Dr. Steele said. The rapt audience fell quiet. “That’s why you can’t get a loan at the bank,” Dr. Steele said. “It just didn’t begin with this man we got in office. This has been happening for years.”

He added, “You don’t bail out banks. You bail out people. Everyone is against the poor.”

And, Dr. Steele said, he believes the wealthiest and most powerful Americans are intentionally selling out the country, because they do not want to lose their status. “When people of color take over, they will not have any resources,” Dr. Steele said.

Dr. Steele noted that civil rights work is for the brave. It is a life of sacrifice, and he highlighted Dr. King as an example. He urged union members who are afraid to fight for justice to leave the room, because those in The Movement who are scared can get you killed.

Melvin C. Coleman, Assistant Director of UAW’s Civil and Human Rights Department., said union members needed to hear a strong message from Dr. Steele.

“We decided to bring the people in our union here, so they can be part of this historical event,” Coleman said. “Our objective is to educate this group, so they can educate our members. Dr. Steele just reinforced what we tell our people.” sclc

*JERRY THOMAS is the founder and president of Jerry Thomas Public Relations. A media and public-relations professional with more than three decades of experience in journalism, civil rights and business. Jerry has served as senior adviser, spokesman and strategist for several Chicago-area public school systems, as well as the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson Sr. and the Rainbow PUSH Coalition and Citizenship Education Fund; the National Black MBA Association, the HistoryMakers; the Community Economic Development Association (CEDA) of Cook County; The National Association of Black Journalists; The National Association of Hispanic Journalists; Tyson Foods, the Black AIDS Institute, and many other nonprofits and corporations.*



**sclc** from the chairman

# Young Leadership and the Role of Music in the Civil Rights Movement

BY BERNARD LAFAYETTE JR.

The Selma youth's enthusiasm, passion, and excitement were spurred on by watching the events in Birmingham unfold in May 1963. They were moved by the four thousand young people who left school to march, in spite of being attacked by ferocious dogs, being sprayed by water hoses, and being locked in jail. In fact, some of those Birmingham adolescents I trained in direct action came as volunteers to work with the youth in Selma. That summer when they got out of school, two dynamic student leaders, Alexander Brown and Ronnie Howard, came to Selma to help me with organizing the youth and conducting workshops.

Deeply affected by the Montgomery Bus Boycott back in 1955, Alex had become wholeheartedly involved in civil rights, and he joined the Birmingham NAACP Youth council at age thirteen. Alex told me that Dr. King's message of love for all of God's children had deeply resonated with him. When the word spread that Dr. King was coming to town to lead the campaign, Alex thought it was the happiest day of his life. Alex had been arrested and was in the Birmingham Jail at the same time Dr. King was imprisoned and wrote his famous "Letter from the Birmingham Jail." Inspired by his time with Dr. King, Alex had emerged from jail a solid student leader.

These young men were in the best position to share not only what they had been taught but also their own personal experiences of demonstrations, arrests, jail, and beatings. The young people in Selma listened to every word, riveted. Youth inspired youth.

Most of these workshops took place at the St. Elizabeth's Mission Catholic Church, led by Father Maurice Ouellet, who made the facility available to the young people. The training focused on understanding the philosophy of nonviolence and why it is much more powerful than violence. We helped the participants grasp the idea that when they are nonviolent, they maintain control over their interactions, as opposed to losing their temper and thus losing the battle. If one loses self-control, one is already defeated.

It was necessary for the youth to comprehend why people were violent toward them. If adversaries were able to provoke a violent reaction, it would result in more violence. If they responded in a nonviolent way, the opponent would be



**Bernard LaFayette Jr.**

defeated, having failed to incite them to violence. The youth learned over time that they held valuable internal resources that were stronger than external physical weapons. Violence perpetrated on them would empower them rather than defeat them.

The trainings focused not only on being able to restrain oneself but on being able to transform natural fear and anger into positive responses. We taught them to look the adversary in the eye and let the offender peer directly into our souls. For example, when someone is attacking them, and shouting at them, could they think, "But I love you" in a humanistic way? It's much more difficult than fighting back physically.

We wanted students to realize that although opponents may be behaving violently at a particular moment, deep within them is the capacity to act more humanely. We want to allow the real essence of who they are as human beings to emerge. The training gave students practical experience of fighting back with love, striking the person's conscience rather than their body. As long as they could control themselves, they had the possibility to control the situation. Unusual but genuine behavior has the potential to arrest the conscience of the assailant.

The advantage of working with youth is that they get excited by new ideas, experiences, drama, playacting, and games. But when they participate in a demonstration, it's real, not a simulation. Then it becomes a test, a reality test. It's not how well they did in their training, but how well they could perform in the real world.

Creativity and the arts were taught in the trainings, for activists often need to think and act creatively in uncertain situations. Because music is a powerful tool, we practiced rewriting lyrics to well-known songs to fit the movement. Growing up singing in the church choir I always loved music, and adding verses to traditional songs, such as "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," was fun and meaningful: *Come on people, don't be slow. Selma Alabama is next to go. Hold on, hold on. Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on.*

The young people bring the future to the movement. We know about the past atrocities and disappointments. We know the tragic acts of violence that have happened. But when I see the spirited young people becoming involved, I envision a bright future, a hope and a promise of better times to come.

One day I sent some high school students over to the courthouse to observe who was there and to record who had or had not been successful in registering, a simple but helpful task for youth. Selma was such a close knit town that the local students knew almost everyone who was there. However, Sheriff Clark came out of his office and chased them off, and he even arrested one of the young men who was just standing in the hallway. Even though the young man wasn't breaking any law, Sheriff Clark said he had no business in the courthouse and arrested him for vagrancy.

Alex Brown burst into our office with Olympic strides, eyes bugged out, terrified. He was running so fast that he

He said, "You've got to go over there yourself." He glanced over at the door toward Alex and said, "Hey who you got over there with you?" I turned around and all I could see was the back of Alex running full speed down the sidewalk.

I said, "I don't see anybody," then walked out.

When the sheriff asked the students to leave the courthouse, Boise evidently didn't get out of there fast enough. He was the first person arrested in the campaign. When I asked at the jail why he had been arrested, nobody would tell me anything. Attorney Chestnut became involved, and Boise was eventually released. My concern was the physical harm that might come to him out of the sight of the public and the media. The jailors could have accused him of resisting arrest, and no telling what could have happened.

The lesson in bravery took a little longer for Alex to learn. The only way he could learn courage was by facing Jim Clark, not avoiding him. It was an important experience for



**October 1963, the Freedom Choir at the Tabernacle Baptist Church in Selma, AL. High school students and children helped start the Selma Civil Rights Movement.**

had to grab hold of the door frame to stop. He shouted, "Sheriff Clark, he's after us! He grabbed Boise Reese and threw him in jail, and he's gonna get the rest of us!"

Calmly, I got up. "Come on. Let's go back to Jim Clark's office." He cried, "We can't go back there, he'll arrest us too!" I didn't want him running from the sheriff. He needed to develop some courage and self-confidence.

I walked back downtown with him to the sheriff's office, a few blocks away. He was walking several paces behind me, so he'd have running room. In fact, he even had one foot turned ready to fly. He must have thought that his freedom was connected to the speed of his feet. We approached the long counter in the sheriff's office with the secretary sitting behind it.

I said, "I'd like to see Sheriff Clark. Tell him Rev. Lafayette is out here to see him." Clark sauntered out with his hat cocked sideways. I was calm but firm, and demanded, "Where's Boise Reese? I understand you have him, and I want him—now!"

Clark said, "He's not here. He's over at the city jail."

I glared at him, not really sure if I believed him. There was a holding cell downstairs where they kept people ready to transfer over to the county jail, and I thought he might be there. "Call over there," I said. "I want to make bond for him."

him to begin to overcome his fear of Sheriff Clark. I knew that if he were ever to become a leader, he had to control his emotions. Eventually, he did.

I reversed the way to think about Jim Clark, emphasizing this point: "The sheriff is not after you; you are after the sheriff." The way Alex was running that day, I don't think he quite believed that statement. In most of the Alabama counties the sheriff was elected by the people, and since we were getting involved with voter registration, the sheriff's position was in jeopardy. The sheriff held the billy club, but the people held the ballot. Alex's fear gave me even more courage, because I saw what being afraid could do, and it was ugly. We had to set the examples, not just talk and lecture, but model expected behavior so the youth could grow into strong individuals. In moments of crisis, significant lessons are learned.

In time, Alex began to set examples for other young people. Fear develops from the unknown. People have knowledge of what has happened to others and they become uncertain about what will happen to them in similar situations. In most cases people tried desperately to avoid danger. By returning to the scene that terrified him, Alex was gradually able to build up the strength to resist trepidation. Each step he took back to the sheriff's office moved him closer to

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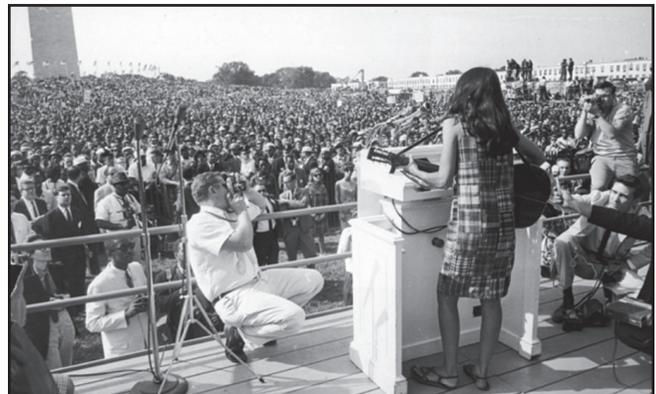
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courage and further from fear. There was always the impulse to flee, to escape negative conditions through flight rather than fight. The emotional force and adrenalin surge that come over people when they're afraid can empower them to override their physical limitations.

One indication that the movement is in the people is when they sing their own protest songs. Three little girls, Germaine Platts, age fourteen, Sharon Platts, age twelve, and Arleen Ezell, age fourteen, wrote and sang the first freedom song of Selma that I know of. This song inspired the entire black community and poured strength into everyone's hearts with the children's deeply felt sincerity.



Joan Baez sings "We Shall Overcome" for the crowd gathered on the Mall during the Civil Rights March on Washington, DC on August 28, 1963.

*Freedom is a comin' and it won't be long  
 Freedom is a comin' and we're marching on  
 And if you want to be free, come and go with me.*

*We are marching on to freedom land  
 So come along and join, hand in hand  
 Striving on and singing a song  
 I hope we're not alone.*

*We are fighting for our equal rights,  
 So come on and join hands and fight  
 Striving on and singing a song  
 I know we're not alone.*

Joan Baez came to Selma for a few days to support the cause. She met the three girls and was impressed with their singing and earnestness in writing a song for the movement. One morning Joan sat on the steps of the Tabernacle Baptist Church with the three girls, strumming her guitar, and sang, "This Little Light of Mine." I was assured that I had come to the right city when those sweet voices carried through the town with strength and honesty. The movement was in these three little girls, and we were ready to put the movement into the rest of Selma. Even though they were young, they were willing and committed. Singing is a form of protest, but more than that, the songs were a healing process for all of us. sclc



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from the first lady



## A Friend and a Guiding Light From Civil and Women’s Rights – *R.I.P. Rita Samuels*

*When I first met Dr. Rita Jackson Samuels I said “Nice meeting you Mrs. Samuels.” Her response, “call me Rita.”*



Cathelean Steele, Photo: John Glenn

*Rita discovered the purpose for her life early. As a young woman from Forsyth, Georgia she found her way to Atlanta and began working as a secretary for the SCLC Operation Breadbasket under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Her steadfast dedication to civil rights and the SCLC continued throughout her life, serving faithfully under six presidents. For many years she also served SCLC as a national board member.*

*Rita’s impact on my life began in 2005 in Birmingham, Alabama. My husband, Charles was in his first term as President of the SCLC. I was sitting in the lobby of the convention hotel when she sat down and began to have a woman to woman talk with me on how to be the wife of a national leader. She never mentioned all of her accomplishments. I listened intently because I knew that his journey was also my journey.*

*She became my mentor, my friend and my biggest supporter. My first check for my Justice for Girls Initiative, came from her. She was elated that I was focusing on sex trafficking prevention and education. She shared with me her love for helping young girls and women reach their highest potential.*

*Rita became a part of our family; she loved our girls, our son-in-law and spoiled our grandchildren.*

*On special occasions, I would invite Rita and Stanley to have lunch with us at the office. I am under the assumption that my homemade banana pudding cemented our friendship. I will miss her and her much needed guidance.*

**— Cathelean Steele, Founder, Justice for Girls**

### ABOUT

Rita Jackson Samuels has been an advocate for civil rights since her youth when she served as a secretary for the SCLC Operation Breadbasket department under the administration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Since that time she has worked with all SCLC presidents: Abernathy, Lowery, King III, Shuttlesworth, and Steele. After dedicating more than three decades to advocacy, Samuels established Women Flying High, LLC a highly successful small business that is instrumental in forming strategic alliances and joint venture opportunities increasing women’s share of government contracts.

Inspired by the Civil Rights Movement, Samuels emerged as one of Georgia’s most prolific women’s rights advocates. She is the founder and former Executive Director of the Georgia Coalition of Black Women, Inc., a women’s advocacy training and development organization established in 1980. As Executive Director of the Georgia Coalition of Black Women, Inc. she created numerous innovative programs advancing Georgia women and girls including the “Just for Girls Computer Camp,” computer training for Foster Children, and one of the first government relations and public policy training initiatives specifically for Black women in Georgia. She is credited with helping to launch the careers of several Black women leaders from rural counties and many “firsts” including mayors, commissioners, and judges. In 1999 she founded the Women In Government Internship Program to assist young women interested in careers in government.

A deep appreciation for the need to preserve women’s history led Samuels to create the First Ladies Archive

project placing the profiles of Georgia First Ladies in the State Archives. She also went on to produce and distribute the Resource Guide to the Social and Economic Contributions of Georgia Women in collaboration with Emory University. She served on the Board of the National Women's History Museum and was selected by Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter as a Rosalynn Carter Fellow at the Institute of Women's Studies at Emory University.

In 1977 and 1998 she was selected by the Atlanta Business League as one of the 100 Most influential Black Women in Atlanta. In 2000 she was selected by the Atlanta Chapter of the National Negro Business and Professional Women as the 2000 Business Women of the Year. Since 1993 she has consistently been selected by the Georgia Informer as one of the 50 Most Influential Women in Georgia.

Rita Jackson Samuels was the first Black female in Georgia's history to serve on the personal staff of a Georgia Governor. In 1971 she was then Governor Jimmy Carter's Coordinator of the Governor's Council on Human Relations. Governor Carter personally selected her to direct and coordinate the hanging of the Martin Luther King, Jr. portrait in the State Capitol, a controversial assignment at that time. She also coordinated the hanging of portraits of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and Mrs. Lucy Craft Laney.

She worked as a consultant with the Carter White House Staff in 1977 as well as with the Community Services Administration. In 1983, Samuels served as Director

of former Mayor Andrew Young's Office of Citizens and Community Affairs. She also served on the national board of a national anti-poverty rural development agency.

She lobbied for and then served as the first Chair of the Georgia Commission on Women. She has been widely recognized for her work on behalf of Georgia women. She has been awarded keys to several small towns, including her hometown of Forsyth, Georgia. Governor Joe Frank Harris appointed her to the State Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission and he appointed her as the very first African American to serve on the Georgia State Election Board. She was re-appointed to the King Commission by Governors Zell Miller and Roy Barnes. A former staff member, she currently serves on the National Board of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. She also serves as a Board Member of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Child Development Center and on the Mission Board for the Joseph E. Lowery Institute for Justice and Human Rights.

Samuels attended Claflin University, Morris Brown College, and Georgia State University. She received Certification for successfully completing the Demery Business College course of Business & Secretarial Science.

She and her husband Stanley, of more than 25 years, are members of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. sclc

*About' source: International Civil Rights Walk of Fame, MLK Jr. National Historic Site, National Park Service, npr.gov.*

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# NYC First Lady Fights for Mental Health

BY MYASIA WILLIAMS



**First Ladies: Cathelean Steele of SCLC and Chirlane McCray of New York City. Photo: SCLC**

**M**ental health is a chronic issue that plagues many families, and many urban areas. Nowhere is that more exacting and problematic than in New York City where there simply are not enough quality programs dedicated to combating and dealing with mental health issues.

That's why the First Lady of New York, Chirlane McCray created Thrive NYC, in November 2015. It's a novel program designed to combat mental health challenges and is available to anyone seeking help with these issues. One in five New Yorkers experience a mental health disorder within a given year and over half of these adults have reported not having access to the treatment they need.

"As most people know, mental health cuts across every area, every field, every industry, everything we do," McCray explains during a meeting in Atlanta with SCLC First Lady Cathelean Steele. "You can't live, learn, work or have a healthy relationship if your mental health is not good. My goal is to raise awareness, to get as many people trained in mental health first aid as possible."

Thrive has now expanded to all five boroughs of NYC and has been integrated into more community centers, churches, schools, shelters and day care centers. Thrive has also influenced as many as 200 other cities across the

country to advocate for a better funded and more integrated mental health system. This program is important because it is arguably the first time mental health is being acknowledged by a major political figure, and something is actually being done to reduce the stress that women, men and children have every day.

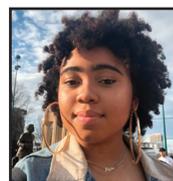
Thrive's main goal is to change the culture. First Lady McCray wants to make it okay for people to discuss both their mental and physical health, without judgement and in a nurturing environment. McCray explains how mental health is important because it is essential to everything we do.

"For too long, mental illness has been relegated to shadows and whispers," McCray laments. "Because of this so many hurt needlessly because they are afraid to reach out for the help that can dramatically improve lives. We must end this silence."

Mental health is more than paying attention to the signs of depression, it's about paying attention and noticing when someone is in an abusive situation with their partner, peers or parents. Feelings of depression or even fearing having people around can hinder growth in so many ways. Thrive has set goals to get anyone who is feeling this way into a safe place where they can express these feelings and get the help they need.

"We can make it as easy to talk about anxiety as allergies, so no one else suffers in silence." McCray opines.

Thrive isn't the only thing First Lady McCray does. In addition to her successful mental health program, McCray is the co-chair of the Commission on Gender Equity, meaning she believes that women and men should have equal pay. She also leads the Domestic Violence task force with New York City's police chief. In 2015, New York City became the first city of all 50 states to join the United Nations Women's safe cities global initiative. First Lady McCray is passionate about the community and has no problem speaking up against what is wrong. She makes improvements and uses her platform to bring awareness to the changes that need to be made. She is an integral part to New York's culture. Her efforts to make change are widely admired and she is considered an amazing role model. sclc



*MYASIA WILLIAMS, 18, is a Harlem, NY native who is currently a journalism student enrolled at Clark Atlanta University. She is also a writer for HerCampusCAU.*



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March 5, 2018, Selma, AL: Ralph Worrell crosses the Edmund Pettus Bridge for his last time during the 53rd Selma Bridge Crossing Jubilee in commemoration of Bloody Sunday. Worrell is accompanied by his friend Robert Fisher.

# A Fond Farewell to a SCLC Foot Soldier!

*Ralph Worrell's "crossing over" marks the end of an era for SCLC.*

1930-2018

BY MAYNARD EATON, Managing Editor

**I**t was a stirring sendoff and salute to a fallen “Movement” warrior. Ralph Worrell is a civil rights legend. He was a revered gladiator. For the past 50 years, Ralph Worrell was always there as a valued SCLC staff member, tactician, and a fearless SCLC Foot Soldier. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called Worrell and his team—his vaunted and valued “Ground Crew”.

“The Ground Crew” as Dr. King said while sitting on the plane talking to his young son Martin Luther King III, who was asking his famous father a question about the people scurrying and working around their plane before takeoff. He said son, that’s The Ground Crew, SCLC President/CEO Charles Steele, Jr. tells this reporter. “He said, if it

was not for the Ground Crew, the plane would not stay up in the air. SCLC could not be here today if it were not for The Ground Crew. One of the most significant members of The Ground Crew was Ralph Worrell.”

The late Rev. Hosea Williams, who was brutalized on Selma’s Edmund Pettis Bridge alongside Rep. John Lewis, and the late Rev. James Orange were the acknowledged captain and co-captain’s respectively of The Ground Crew. Rev. Fred Taylor and J.T. Johnson were also members of that renowned civil rights street team. They’ve been friends and co-workers with Worrell for decades.

“We are the ones that have been in the trenches for The Movement. It was a strong group and it was a bonding that

existed among us as Ground Crew members. That's what made the work so easy," recalls Rev. Taylor.

"We rather be referred to as what Martin Luther King called us, The Ground Crew, not Foot Soldiers," says Johnson. "Dr. King didn't have any problems when we were around. We were always there a week or two before he was. We would mobilize those cities, and make sure Dr. King was alright when he got there. And, Ralph Worrell was one of those people."

The 88-year-old Worrell was an organizer and key strategist who earned his PH'D in public highway demonstrations. He was a major player in leading the Selma to Montgomery March every five years since 1985. Worrell's last walk across the Edmund Pettis Bridge was March 2018. It was the last stop; the final leg of his SCLC journey.

"Ralph was the strategist that resolved some obstacles for us that we had at the bridge," says President Steele. "It



**2013, SCLC HQ, Atlanta, :** The medallion never left Worrell's neck is a symbol to the effort, against the odds, to deliver an honor worthy enough for the price paid by civil rights foot soldiers. Photo: Phil Skinner, AJC

was his last march. Ralph is known for Selma, and he said Mr. President, I will take care of you."

"Every Movement we had Ralph was involved in it in some way. He was a person who was available to do whatever was necessary," says SCLC Chairman Dr. Bernard LaFayette. "He was a humble man who did things with dignity, but if it was necessary for Ralph to be firm he could do that too."

LaFayette called it serendipity and poetic that Worrell's last steps as a civil rights activist was in Selma. "Not only did he cross the bridge for the final time, but he also made sure there was no confusion," says LaFayette. "He played his role as the marshal. He was able to get people in line and in order, and he was able to speak to people in a firm but polite way. He was always respectful toward other people."

Ralph Worrell was an affable, likeable, dutiful and charismatic native of Barbados, who liked to chastise friends by saying when you are on time, you are already late.

"Ralph had respect for this Movement and he loved

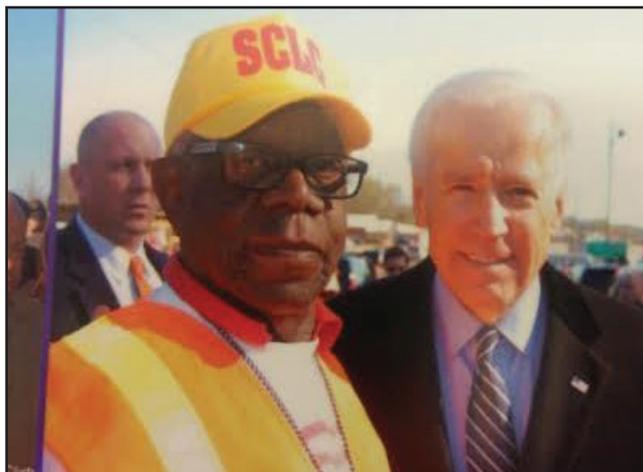


**April 4, 2012, Atlanta:** Civil rights activists and SCLC members (L-R) Ralph Worrell, Bernard LaFayette Jr., C.T. Vivian and Frederick Moore, join hands and sing "We Shall Overcome" at MLK Jr.'s gravesite, marking the 44th anniversary of his assassination. Photo: SCLC

this Movement, and he gave it his whole being," says SCLC veteran Brenda Davenport. "I think people take time for granted and now that we're coming close to the end of time, and of this era, it is important for us to really tell our story, especially looking at what's going in the country. We must make sure we don't end our story at this point."

As the nation honors the 50th Anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination, we may also be witnessing the end of an era because most SCLC veterans are now in their 70's and 80's. "It may be the advancement or a transition from the older to the continuation of the struggle by the young people. Those young people who were in the streets of our cities recently," opines Rev. Taylor.

Former SCLC President and Medal of Freedom Recipient, Dr. Joseph Lowery eulogized Worrell as "my friend and my buddy." There is a difference between the two Dr. Lowery explained, "but Ralph was both." Dr. Lowery is 96 years old. He touched Worrell's casket and told he would see him soon. SCLC



**2010, Ralph Worrell and U.S. Vice Pres. Joe Biden.** Photo: SCLC

Generation Z (born 1995-2012) use their resources and knowledge of the internet to forge togetherness.



## New 'Movement' Emerging or Merely Meaningful Moments

BY MIRANDA PEREZ

It has been fifty years since Martin Luther King Jr's assassination and his impact on society has taken no declivity. King's legacy is greatly attributed to his participation in the Civil Rights Movement through peaceful protesting. His protests and marches set that standard for modern day activism. His nobility, gracefulness, and intelligence made him an inspiration to marginalized groups then and now.

Presently, America is undergoing various political uprisings resulting from an array of disparities across the country. King's push for political protests is a driving force of these movements, even today. However, present day movements are being questioned on their effectiveness and purpose. Are the increasing number of youth led rallies and social media hashtags movements or moments?

The youth of America is growing up in an extremely progressive era. The children of today live in an era in which they have seen gay marriage legalized nationwide, they are simultaneously seeing marijuana become legalized state by state; and have also been able to see a black president in office. Because of all the change they have witnessed at such a youthful age, America's young students are proactive. Generation Z (born 1995-2012) use their resources and knowledge of the internet to forge togetherness. More specifically, social media platforms to start movements for causes they care about. Social media is a quick way for people to get up to date on relevant social issues. Young activists use the internet to create hashtags that connect with others who care about the same causes. Hashtags are used on all social media platforms equally, meaning every post made using that hashtag can be seen by anyone who clicks on it. This intimate form of connection not only enforces movements, but it allows young people to organize events around them.

Unlike the endeavors Dr. King experienced, young people are now provided with easier ways to create plans of action and change unlike any generation before. The internet

not only provides the resource of connection, but education as well. Nothing is black and white. There is no single form of education from school or from a parent. People are now able to self-educate on topics of their choice, they can get up to date on all sides of controversial issues. Their access to knowledge is unlimited!

The most common movements in place that are heavily supported by the youth surround gender and race. The #BlackLivesMatter Movement is the most prominent movement regarding racial issues. The hashtag/movement focuses on police brutality in the black community.

#TheBlackLivesMatter Movement can be interpreted as the root of modern day activism as social media platforms allowed young people to see how much more needs to be done to attempt to achieve true equality. Since their rise and overwhelming show of support it's received, many other movements have ascended such as #TheFutureIsFemale, supporting women empowerment, #RefugeesWelcome, supporting refugee immigration and #EnoughIsEnough regarding control in response to mass shootings across the country. These mass movements are catered toward various marginalized groups across the country, which is what King would have wanted to see from generations who study the history of his progression as an activist.

Although the internet does a wonderful job of connecting the youth and supporting their movements, like any media outlet it can cater toward particular demographics. The most recent #EnoughIsEnough movement is the most criticized "movement" and labeled as a "moment" because it is one sided. #EnoughIsEnough was created in response to the most recent mass school shooting in Parkland, Florida. The movement was created to create a call to action for stricter gun control. Since the shooting and the creation of the movement, there have been various protests calling out gun control issues, both youth led, and nationally supported.

“*This is more than just a school shooting that happened in Florida. This is happening across the street from us. 51st is one of the most deadly blocks in Chicago. So I want them to know that guns are here. We need to talk about it here before we can address the problem somewhere else.*”

— Amaris Buford, Kenwood Academy

The biggest critique of this movement is that it only addresses gun violence in a mass setting, particularly a white mass setting. When black and brown youth in impoverished neighborhoods speak on gun violence in their community it is often undermined and unnoted. This form of gun violence is labeled as crime and left at that. #EnoughIsEnough conversations centered around strict gun control laws and more psychiatric treatment available for students in need to prevent mass shootings. But where are these conversations for the students in the rough and impoverished communities? Where will they get the money for this? Why is this aspect of gun control undermined? Because black and brown movements are the hardest to enforce as our country will silence us and tell us not to pull the race card out, until their children get somewhat close to feeling a fraction of what our children do, then it is a national epidemic.

Being that I am from Chicago, gun violence is an issue close to my heart. In 2012, Chicago was nicknamed “Chi-raq” because the number of deaths attributed to gun violence surpassed the number of U.S. soldier deaths in the war in Iraq. This nickname was glorified by the rappers of our city, claiming the negative association and letting that ideology of the city spread across the country. Now while Chicago is no longer the most dangerous city in the country, gun violence is still a huge issue, despite the city having strict gun control laws. Now some may look at the strict gun control laws and gun violence statistics and wonder how this is happening, how is it possible? This is happening because it is easy to buy guns in one state and sell them in another. This is possible because the black market selling of guns is ignored by Illinois state officials and leadership.

“When you have a city that feels it’s more important to pay for a college’s sport complex, rather than fund schools and impoverished communities, you have gun violence,” opines Trevon Bosley with March For Our Lives. “When poverty ridden communities—with no opportunities to better themselves—are left with no help from their government officials they are bound to fall into gun violence.” sclc



MIRANDA PEREZ, 18, is a student at Clark Atlanta University. She is from Chicago, Illinois. Perez is an aspiring journalist, tastemaker, and current writer for Her Campus CAU.

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of a dream  
and the courage  
of a voice.

*Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.  
1929-1968*



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# 50 Years After Dr. King's Death, New Lessons for Today

BY HOLLAND COTTER

**M**arch for Our Lives, the student-driven protest against gun violence. The Millions March against police violence. The Sacramento protest over the fatal shooting of Stephon Clark. Had he survived, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would have been there, walking, talking, listening, present, as he was for countless body-on-the-line campaigns for social justice in the 1950s and '60s.

He was organizing a march in the final days of his life. On April 3, 1968, he came to Memphis on what was a fast return trip. A peaceful demonstration five days earlier in support of black city sanitation workers had ended in a panicked rout when militant protesters stirred up the crowd, and the police came down hard. Now he was back.

at night, at a local church, he delivered his apocalyptic "Mountaintop" speech. People cheered. His mood brightened. He spent much of the next day, April 4, at the black-owned Lorraine Motel, waiting for the city to approve a permit for the second march. When it finally came through, he relaxed. Everything would be O.K.

Around 6:00, he strolled onto the balcony outside his second-floor room and bantered with friends in the parking

lot below. There was the crack of a gunshot. He staggered and dropped.

Dr. King's death shook the nation, inspired outpourings of grief, rage, and in some quarters, relief. Two months later, Robert F. Kennedy was killed and mourning shifted, the news cycle moved on. In the years that followed, the Lorraine Motel slowly fell into disrepair until, in 1991, it was rescued and reopened as the National Civil Rights Museum. An expansion in 2014 brought in new visitors. And the 50th anniversary of the King assassination, coming now as it does in a politically sundered, racially fraught year, should bring in more, with a special exhibition, starting April 4, comparing contemporary events like the Occupy movement and the Living Wage Campaign with King's Poor People's Campaign and sanitation strike.

What they'll find in its permanent collection is a monument to a movement and, secondarily, to a man, in a display that focuses on difficult, sometimes ambiguous historical data more than on pure celebration. And they'll find, if they are patient, useful information for the 2018 present, and for the future.

The shape of the story told by the museum is chronological, a narrative of African-American life that starts with colonial slavery, moves through the long Jim Crow era, and then lingers over the civil rights events of the 1950s and '60s: the bus boycotts, the Freedom Rides; the Washington march; the Birmingham children's crusade, the Selma-to-Montgomery walk for the vote; the Memphis strike.

It's a story of high contrasts: good versus bad, right versus wrong. And the museum presents it that way. In windowless, black-box galleries, objects are picked out in pin spots; words and images glow on digital screens. They are the visual equivalents of references to light that glint in Dr. King's speeches, to "luminous brotherhood," "the sunlight of opportunity," "the radiant promises of progress." He called the Memphis strike another step on the journey from "the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice."

Such imagery has always been part of popular accounts of the movement. In another Southern museum, the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, which opened in Jackson, Miss., late last year, the galleries are, as in Memphis, somber and shadowy, but they open onto a central hall furnished with benches and holding a big sculpture made of swirling, pulsating light. The message: history is grim, but it's also redemptive. You can break for uplift any time.

The Memphis museum uses light to dramatic effect, but in a very different way. After you've walked through sequential decades of history, you arrive at 1968, instantly recognizable from a mural-size image by the Memphis photographer Ernest C. Withers of sanitation workers carrying protest placards reading "I AM A MAN." You pass through a narrow passageway and suddenly the artificial twilight you've become used to becomes daylight.

You are inside the Lorraine Motel, on the second floor, outside Room 306, Dr. King's room, visible through a cut-away wall: turned-down beds; open suitcases; coffee cups, sunlight seeping through curtains—preserved mostly as it was when he died. And just outside the room is the balcony door. You look through its window and see where Dr. King fell and, some distance away, the back of a building, the former rooming house—now part of the museum—from which his killer took aim. (James Earl Ray died while serving a 99-year sentence.)

Unlike the museum's other displays, this one is minimally theatrical: real-world light falling on plain, real-world things. Also, it's a dead end. Your pilgrim's progress into history is, abruptly, over. If the civil rights movement extended beyond April 4, 1968, you don't learn that here. Your choices are either to return the way you came or head for a closer exit.

The story the museum tells stirs emotions but leaves them unresolved. In many ways the experience, whether intended or not, is in sync with the political atmosphere of the country today. Uplift feels anachronistic; progress is cut off; the future left unimagined.

Dr. King may have shared similar feelings. In our journey through the museum, he has been our Virgil, our calm, sage guide through the hell and heaven of postwar racial history. In Room 306, he becomes our frustrated, anxious contemporary.

When he checked into the Lorraine on April 3, he was in a dark mood, not just from the first, failed march, but from a political environment that had turned unpredictable. His speech that night was a sonorous movement pep talk.



March 28, 1968, sanitation workers get ready to strike in Memphis. Photo: Ernest Withers

But there was regret in it. It was mortality-tinged:

"Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the promised land."

I wonder if, at that point, he really believed we would get to this "promised land" of racial harmony anytime soon. By that point, integration was, technically, reality, with *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kan.*, and the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964. But so was the anger, both black and white, that the fight for equality had generated. By the mid-1960s, Dr. King was sensing that the nonviolent resistance he had built his reputation on was inadequate. He continued to preach an ideal of reform-through-love, but he was starting to think about "a radical revolution of values."

He was thinking global. It had become clear to him that racism was not a stand-alone evil. It was an organic element in a disease complex that included capitalism, colonialism and militarism. In 1965, in a break with his assigned public role fighting racism Dr. King spoke out against the war in Vietnam. It confused supporters and earned him (Cont'd on p.25)

# Martin Luther King Jr.'s Right-Hand Adviser: REV. RALPH D. ABERNATHY

BY LAUREN BOOKER

**T**he Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy, Martin Luther King Jr.'s close adviser and "best friend," was one of the most influential leaders during the civil rights movement.

The pair worked side-by-side for more than a decade organizing the Montgomery bus boycotts, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, the Poor People's Campaign and numerous other civil rights protests throughout the South.

"I tell students all the time ... I say, 'Don't mention Martin Luther King Jr. without mentioning Ralph David Abernathy. Dr. King was our leader, but Ralph David Abernathy was his equal partner,'" Tyrone Brooks, former Georgia House District 55 representative, said. He became involved with the SCLC at 15 years old, and Brooks worked with Abernathy as an SCLC volunteer to a full-time employee.

Abernathy, one of 12 children born in rural Linden, Alabama in 1926, served in World War II, studied at Alabama State College, received his graduate degree at Atlanta University and worked as a Baptist minister before he started pushing for civil rights.

He met King in his 20s after hearing him minister at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta.

"Even then I could tell he was a man with a special gift from God," Abernathy wrote in his 1989 book, "And the Walls Came Tumbling Down: An Autobiography."

From there, the pair's families became close and the leaders realized they shared united civil rights goals.

"As Martin expounded philosophy, I saw its practical applications on the local level ...," Abernathy wrote in his autobiography.

Throughout Abernathy's life, he cared deeply about the Civil Rights Movement. Brooks, who has worked for decades on the Moore's Ford Movement, said Abernathy was prepared to die for the cause. Going to jail and having his house bombed didn't faze him.

"Dr. Abernathy always said, 'We all will die one day. When we die, we should die doing something good,'" Brooks said. "Dr. Abernathy always instilled in us that death was imminent, that you could be shot down or you could be run over. You could be bombed."

After Rosa Parks was arrested by Montgomery, Alabama, for refusing to give up her seat to a white passenger, Abernathy and King teamed up to create the Montgomery Improvement Association that coordinated the bus boycotts resulting in Alabama bus desegregation in 1956.

"I think when God put them together to lead the modern day revolution and Abernathy decided he wanted to take a back seat to his best friend in the world, Martin Luther King Jr., from that moment on ... we saw one of the greatest revolutions to ever hit the world," Brooks said. "Not only did it transform America, but it really changed the world."

A year later, Abernathy co-founded the SCLC with King and other leaders in 1957. The group went on to en-



**June 12, 1962, St. Augustine, FL: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rev. Ralph Abernathy remain in a cell at the St. John's County Jail after being arrested for integration attempts at a local motel restaurant. Photo: Getty**

gage in the March on Washington where King delivered his famous "I Have A Dream Speech" that led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

When King died in 1968, Abernathy carried the torch and continued their initiatives as SCLC's president. He led the Poor People's Campaign march on Washington, D.C. in May 1968 that brought out thousands and the creation of Resurrection City for the end of poverty.

He later settled down in Atlanta, where he ran for office, preached at the West Hunter Street Baptist Church and created the Foundation for Economic Enterprises Development, which helped black people with their finances.

Abernathy fought tirelessly for the civil rights movement up until he died of a heart attack at the age of 64 on April 17, 1990 in Atlanta. sclc

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*LAUREN BOOKER is an Atlanta-based freelance journalist.*

(50 Years After... cont'd from p.23)

vindictive enemies. By the time he checked into Room 306, he was, for good reason, feeling vulnerable and fatalistic. He had been to the mountaintop; but he had hit some valleys too.

My guess is that if Martin Luther King Jr. of 1968 were to return to 2018 America, he would be unsurprised by some of what he'd find: the staggering numbers of black men in jail; the recurrent killings of unarmed black youths by police; the emboldened presence of white supremacism. As a leader, he shaped a great humanitarian movement; as a thinker, he came to understand humanism's deep flaws.

I wonder what he would think about how we engage with the history he helped create. A glance at contemporary art might give him some clues. In 1988, the African-American artist Glenn Ligon took as a subject a foundational civil rights emblem, the "I AM A MAN" strike placard, and did several things to it simultaneously: He replicated it, customized it, and critiqued it.

He turned it into a painting. In doing so, he paid homage to the mass-printed original; he gave its adamant words a new, queer dimension (Mr. Ligon is gay); and he turned an activist artifact, one that functioned as demand for economic equity, into an elite museum object, its text now done in glossy, light-catching enamel. (The painting is currently on view at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, in honor of the King anniversary.)

On multiple levels, Mr. Ligon made a piece of civil rights history his own, though attempts by other artists to do something similar have backfired. A recent example is the painting "Open Casket" by Dana Schutz, in the 2017 Whitney Biennial. The source of the image in this case was also a movement icon: a 1955 post mortem photograph of Emmett Till, a black teenager who, after being accused of whistling at a white woman, was murdered. At his mother's insistence, Till's tortured body was put on public view and photographed. The pictures, printed in *Jet* magazine, are credited with bringing many people into the civil rights movement, among them Dr. King.

At the Whitney, the painting sparked protests by some black artists who demanded its removal. At issue was that Ms. Schutz is white. Dr. King's initial vision for the civil rights movement was one of racial harmony; blacks and whites working together to achieve equal lives for all. Possibly in those early days, Ms. Schutz's painting might have passed as a gesture of solidarity.

But by 1968, it was clear, even to moderate blacks, that sharing power was not likely to happen. For the Whitney protesters, "Open Casket" was an emblem of the continuing exercise of white privilege that, in this case, allowed a white-controlled museum and a white artist to lay claim to a sensational image of black pain.

I suspect that the Dr. King of Room 306 would have understood the protesters' point. In his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, given in 1964, when he was 35, he said that he could not, would not, permit himself to envision a world in which humanity was "so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality." But

over the next four years, as Vietnam ground on, civil rights activists met violent ends, and race wars laid waste to American cities, daybreak must have seemed far-off.

To idealists of the 21st century, it may seem that on many social, economic and ethical fronts the country has come to what seems a futureless halt, just as the museum's civil rights story does. But rather than exit the scene in weariness or frustration, we would do well to go back in time. If we stay alert, we can find instruction there.

The emphasis of the present-day protest movements is on inclusion: equal salaries, equal education, the right to marry. The goal is to get a share in the system. The civil rights movement began with that goal too, then realized that the system was the problem. Dr. King eventually came to this conviction, and in some ways it made the end of his life hard, complicated and unsettled.

Other people, however, held that view all along, and many of them were women. Sexism was rampant within the movement leadership. Women were expected to make coffee, make nice and stay home. Some, like Ella Baker, a tireless civil rights organizer, refused. True monuments have yet to be raised to enough of these women. One, Fannie Lou Hamer (1917-1977), was a monument herself.

A Mississippi Delta field worker, she was jailed and beaten when she tried to register to vote at 46, but went on to run for Congress. Her televised testimony, to determine whether she and her all-black Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party could be seated at the Democratic National Convention, is in the National Civil Rights Museum. Hamer's unscripted account of her jail experience, with its blunt challenge—"I question America"—is overwhelming: dark and incandescent.

In May 1963, in Birmingham, Ala., Dr. King organized the most brilliant civil disobedience campaigns of his career, when he brought more than a thousand black schoolchildren into the streets to demonstrate against segregation. Hundreds were arrested; others were blasted with fire hoses. When people rebuked Dr. King for putting young people at risk, he said: "Don't hold them back if they want to go to jail. For they are doing a job not only for themselves, but for all of America and for all mankind." The world reacted, shamed the city and Birmingham took its first steps toward desegregation.

It occurred to me while I was listening to Hamer that her equivalents today may be Black Lives Matter and #MeToo. And the Children's Campaign lives on in March for Our Lives and #NeverAgain. Dr. King, at the end of his life, set for himself a goal that all worthy leaders might strive for: to live a life of "dangerous unselfishness." In 2018, this could yield an imaginable future.

The sermon Dr. King gave the night before he died was somber and cautionary but also gave reason for hope. "Only when it's dark enough," he said, "can you see the stars." sclc

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*HOLLAND COTTER is co-chief art critic of The New York Times, where he has been on staff since 1998. He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Criticism in 2009.*



# Landmark for Peace

BY A. WALKR SHAW

*President Trump signs Kennedy-King National Commemorative Site Act for Indianapolis' "Landmark for Peace" on 50th Anniversary of MLK's death.*

**F**ifty years have passed...not quite a lifetime, when on April 4th, 1968, a young, potent candidate for the office of the Presidency of these United States, one Robert Francis Kennedy, had history, once again, fall squarely in his lap. The candidate was making a scheduled campaign stop in Indianapolis, Indiana, when news broke that Civil Rights icon, the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., had been killed in Memphis, Tennessee while supporting striking city sanitation workers.

Contrary to the advice from Indianapolis Mayor Richard Lugar and other city officials that the local police could not guarantee the safety of the candidate, Robert F. Kennedy was compelled to address the majority African American crowd of about 2,500 and inform them and the city that Martin Luther King Jr. had fallen from an assassin's bullet.

Amanda Lewis Loudon said her father happened upon the crowd while walking home from work. Another spectator was 13-year-old Rita Drescher, who remembers witnessing the speech donned in white go-go boots and a faux fur coat on that cold, rainy late winter night.

Robert Kennedy arrived at 17th and Broadway about 9:00 PM and, standing on the back of a flatbed truck, delivered the unflinching truth of the matter with empathy and

compassion, quoting the Greek poet Aeschylus "Agamemnon", also speaking upon his own brother's murder.

As the events of the day were unfolded, witnesses heard an audible gasp from the crowd while a desperate pall settled like a thick fog. Kennedy had not spoken publicly about his brother's assassination since November 22nd, 1963.



**Robert F. Kennedy tells a crowd in Indianapolis of the assassination of the Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4, 1968. Photo: Leroy Patton, AP**



**Landmark for Peace Memorial: Robert F. Kennedy and MLK Jr. reach out to clasp hands across the divide.**

The impromptu speech lasted under six minutes, utilizing Aristotelian rhetorical devices and logic to carry Dr. King's message of non-violence, peace, love and unity. A truly gifted orator who used his skills to unite, RFK's speech on this particular night is regarded as one of history's greatest, portions of which were subsequently inscribed on Kennedy's own memorial at Arlington National Cemetery.

This is what leadership looks like.

The Senator from New York, Robert Francis Kennedy, was himself assassinated in Los Angeles, California just two short months later on June 6th, 1968.

In the early 1990's Landmark for Peace was suggested by Larry Conrad to memorialize and commemorate the events of April 4th, 1968, at the corner of 17th and Broadway. Conrad and Steve Mannheimer, a professor at the Herron School of Art and an art critic for The Indianapolis Star solidified the need for the honor. Conrad worked as an executive with Simon Property Group and a friend of Herb Simon and his wife, Diane, who worked with RFK's campaign at the time of the speech.

In 1994, Donnie Walsh, President and CEO of the Indianapolis Pacers, owned by the Simon Brothers, Mel and Herb Simon, decided to launch The Pacers Foundation to support community projects, programs and initiatives. Walsh seized the idea of a memorial as an ideal project to inaugurate The Pacers Foundation and requested Mannheimer work with Kathryn Jordan, the director of Community Relations for the Indianapolis Pacers and the president of their foundation. Together, Jordan and Mannheimer developed the campaign to both convene a juried national competition

to create the memorial to Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, as well as fund the project.

A ceremonial groundbreaking was held on May 14th, 1994 and that event attracted then President Bill Clinton, Senator Ted Kennedy, RFK's widow Ethel Kennedy, two sons of Martin Luther King Jr., Dexter Scott King and Martin Luther King III, along with other dignitaries.

The City of Indianapolis contributed to the project, redesigning the southern portion of King Memorial Park where the sculpture stands, which was overseen by the Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department and its landscaping staff. The Landmark for Peace memorial was unveiled on September 30th, 1995.

President Trump signed into law the Kennedy-King National Commemorative Site Act designating the Landmark for Peace Memorial as the Kennedy-King National Commemorative site on April 4th, 2018. This legislation was led by Senators Todd Young (R-Ind.) and Joe Donnelly (D-Ind.) in the Senate, and Representatives André Carson (D-Ind.-07) and Susan W. Brooks (R-Ind.-05) in the House. This legislation also establishes the site as a part of the African American Civil Rights Network. sclc



*A. WALKR SHAW is a photo-ethnographer, writer, film-maker and educator based in Indianapolis, IN.*

# The Georgia Man Behind Black History for the Rest of the Year

BY KIMATHI T. LEWIS

She was one of the first black teachers to enter the Fulton County school system during desegregation in Georgia. The white teachers treated her like an outcast and the white students called her the n-word. To many her name will never be known, but to one she's an inspiration.

His mother was one of the reasons KuFunya Kail wanted to do a project that changed the way people celebrate Black History Month. The other is his father.

Born to parents who grew up during segregation, Kail understood that the struggle to overcome didn't begin with one man or woman, but with millions; nor, did he come to realize, should the recognition and celebration of black history begin and end with one month.

So, he started "I Am My Own Black History," a project that focuses on black people from all walks of life. Through videotaped interviews he captures their stories, the stories of who inspired them and the path they wish to pave for those behind them.

Kail wanted to recognize not just the heroes of the past, "but anyone who is adding to society," he said.

"I wanted to celebrate us right now and what we're doing to contribute to the future," Kail, 41, said. "I wanted to celebrate janitors, lawyers, street sweepers, whoever you are because to me all of us are making contributions to celebrate each and every one of us as black people." Interestingly, the confederate flag was taken down by Georgia Governor Roy Barnes, who as a young state senator from West Cobb County, in the 1980s had opposed a state holiday for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

On August 22, 2011, the federal government honored Dr. King with "The Stone of Hope" at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr Memorial in the District of Columbia.

Three years later, the state of Georgia began efforts to honor Dr. King on the grounds of its capital.

August 28, 2017 was a grand day, with fine speeches from Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed, State Representative

Calvin Smyre, Rev. Dr. Bernice King and Governor Nathan Deal. On this day, King's supporters were protected by State Troopers who were armed and ready to prevent anyone from disrupting the proceedings.

Finally, an honor fit for a King, whose statue now faces the rising sun on the east side of the state capitol, overlooking the Atlanta streets where he played as a little boy, forging the character that would shape a state, a nation and a world.

Dr. William Boone, a political science professor at Clark Atlanta University, said it's a worthwhile project. It's drawing the "rank and file or ordinary folks into black history," Boone said.

It teaches, "you don't have to be extraordinary to be a part of black history."

He said every Black History Month the standard names are trotted out such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks and Malcolm X. "They are the result of thousands, millions, of black folks. They emerged as leaders, but they are not the ones who made black history," Boone said.

Black history is celebrated across the world wherever you have black people. It ties them all together, giving black people a sense of pride in their entire race rather than just a couple of people, he said.

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Black history is celebrated across the world wherever you have black people. It ties them all together, giving black people a sense of pride in their entire race rather than just a couple of people, he said.

“It will tie people to their own history,” Boone said. “It moves you beyond the idea of thinking you must be a heroic figure to make a difference.”

Kail, a photographer and actor, said he had been thinking about what to do to celebrate Black History Month for a while. In the beginning, he only knew two things: He didn’t want to do something just for February and he wanted to do something uplifting. Then a few weeks before February began, he realized what he wanted to do.

He came up with the idea to do the interviews, which lasted an average of four minutes. In his East Point home, Kail created a studio and there he asked the participants three questions: Who inspired them? What word or phrase do they use the most? And what legacy do they want to leave behind?

“We are here for each other and we can inspire each other,” Kail said.

So far, he has interviewed 12 people including actors and an actress, a politician and professor, journalists and a geneticist. They are people he met on Facebook and on the streets, people he knows personally and professionally. People who saw what he was doing and decided to be a part of it. Their ages range from the mid-30s to upper 60s.

He plans to continue the project, adding at least one interview a week. He would like to interview middle and high schoolers, people in their 20s, black people from other countries. But one of the people he would like to interview the most is his mother.

His parents, who grew up in the 30s and 40s, have seen a lot of changes, Kail said. His father, who became a draftsman after serving in the military, died last year. His mother, who has retired from teaching, is still living. *(Cont’d on p.31, bottom)*



# I Am My Own Black History

BY KIMATHI T. LEWIS

For years, Joseph Harris served his country. A member of the United States Navy, he served as far away as Spain and Pensacola. Then he would return home. “Why you out so late, boy?” a cop asked him one night.

Harris didn’t say anything. It was the 1930s and he knew he was powerless.

“He was helping to fight for the freedom of the country even though he didn’t have the same freedom at home,” his son, Dr. Ken Harris, said.

Still, Joseph Harris hoped his son would have a better future. He told him education was the key.

“Education is one of the things nobody can ever take from you,” Harris told his son.

His son listened and is now a psychology professor at Southern Technical College in Georgia. Harris is one of the participants of “I Am My Own Black History.” He liked the twist that KuFunya Kail brought to Black History Month, which for him is a celebration of those who have paved the way.

“It’s recognition of the fact that I’m a product of so many prayers, tears and sit-ins; so many trials and tribulations,” Harris said. “It’s a celebration of not only where we are, but where we can ultimately end up.”

Those who paved the way, he said, fought for black people’s rights not because they wanted to be famous but because they were committed to the cause.

“We just need to pay it forward,” Harris said.

And so, Harris wants to see Kail’s project go viral. He wants children who think they are not brave enough, strong enough or smart enough to see someone who looks just like them telling them that’s not the case.

“It will serve as a platform, a springboard for those coming behind us,” Harris said. “So much of what we do and experience is not for us. It’s to help someone else out.”

And, often the best teachers are the ones people take for granted.

Richard Jones saw the “Dear Abby” column posted on the mirror of his dresser and exploded. Jones was trying to hold on to his son, to protect him the only way he knew how—through self-discipline.

Each Saturday morning, he would have his children make their beds until they got it right, even if it took hours. The edges and folds had to be even and all the creases gone from their sheets.

He wanted them to do their best and to understand that’s how they would succeed. But, he saw the column about a white woman advising a child to tell his parents to relax on discipline and realized he had failed.

Then a teenager, Tom Jones only thought of what he had to endure because of his ex-military father. He made straight As and Bs, never got into trouble nor skipped school. But no matter what he did his father never loosened up. He thought the column would help his father see, but he didn’t understand the ramifications.

“No white woman is going to tell me how to run my house,” the elder Jones said.

The child hated his father, but the man he became realized just how much his father loved him. Richard Jones would drink like a sailor, but always got up at 4:30 a.m. to go to work at the engineering firm where he was the plant manager. He took care of his family. And he became his son’s inspiration.

Jones was the first person to be interviewed by KuFunya Kail for "I Am My Own Black History." The husband and father of three liked Kail's new bent on Black History Month.

"We often think of it as something that happened a long time ago and neglect to realize history happens every day as we live and breathe," Jones said.

Jones, who is now a general assignment reporter for WSB-TV, hear people tell him he treats each story as if it's his first one.

"It goes back to my father," Jones said. "He told me to fix up my bed like it was new. I'm exactly like that with my job. Everything had to be right."

Still, the ones who inspire are sometimes those who accomplish the seemingly impossible.

When H. Rap Brown asked him to step into his stadium, Maynard Eaton was surprised to see the black activist pull up a bench that he kept in front of his little store in the West End community in Atlanta.

From there, Brown who had changed his name to Jamil Abdullah al-Amin during a stint in prison, taught and preached and ruled. "He spoke very quietly, but you can tell he was dead serious," Eaton, 68, said.

Al-Amin, the former chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, was a prominent figure in the Black Panther Party. Still, there was nothing seemingly impressive about the tall, thin bearded philosopher who

dressed like a Muslim Imam, yet he was a leader who was able to change the West End community.

"I've never seen a community like that," said Eaton, a multi-award-winning broadcast journalist who worked as a reporter for the NBC affiliate in Atlanta and later BET. "It was crime free."

Al-Amin is in prison for shooting two police officers, one of them fatally. Though he was a threat to authorities, he was an inspiration to Eaton who said as much when he was interviewed by KuFunya Kail for the "I Am My Black History" project.

When Eaton saw the interview Kail did of WSB-TV reporter Tom Jones, he was impressed with the project's concept.

He said Kail has taken Black History Month and re-defined it.

"He has given it a new voice and a new vision," Eaton said, adding that he's linking the voices of today with the voices of his generation. Impressed, he decided to be a participant, to tell his story for his grandchildren and those coming behind him.

"Our story is the most powerful, provocative, pulsating and purest story of America," Eaton said. "We have stellar stories that make you laugh and cry."

Stories that are the symbol of tragedy and triumph, he said. But, he said, only a little of it has been told. And he believes Kail's vision can help capture what has been lost. sclc

*(Georgia Man Behind Black History... cont'd from p.29)*

"They didn't accept things the way they were," Kail said. "They made things the way they wanted it to be."

When his mother entered the school, most of the black people there were cafeteria workers. When the white teachers attempted to get her to take their orders, she bristled. When they joined the students in calling her the n-word, she didn't back down.

"I'm just here to do my job and to do it well," she told them. And when the principal tried to fire her, she went above his head to ensure the security of her job.

In that environment, the sharecropper from Tifton, Ga. persevered and raised her children.

"She made me know anything was possible," Kail said as did his father.

Charles Berkeley grew up in an abusive home, struggled in the New York foster care system and as a teenager spent days on the park bench not knowing where he would get his next meal. But, he held on to his character and taught Kail to do the same. He warned the younger Kail that he will face difficult times, but not to let the world change him.

But sometimes, it's not easy to know what to do during a difficult situation as Kail recalled.

He was on the phone at the LaGrange Mall when someone screamed behind him, spitting on his neck. It was the night after Trayvon Martin's murder in 2012 and tensions were high. Still, Kail thought it was a joke.

But that changed when he turned around to see a fuming security guard.

"We don't allow people to come in with gang colors," the man told him. Kail told him he wasn't wearing gang colors. Still the guard insisted he leave the mall.

Kail refused. When the man appeared to reach for his gun, Kail reached for his phone and started recording.

"When he saw himself on camera, he turned blood red," Kail said. The man backed off, but when Kail moved to another store he followed. Kail thought of making a stand.

"If I needed to do something to make sure my younger brothers are protected, I wanted to do so." But from among the many onlookers, came the voice of a mother.

"Baby, please leave the mall. This isn't worth it." Kail left. He tried to tell his story to the media, to the mall management. But no one would listen.

For those who have a story to share, he's found a way to help through "I Am My Own Black History."

And like him, he discovered that for many of the participants, their "heroes are close to home." sclc



*KIMATHI T. LEWIS is an award winning journalist with more than 18 years experience reporting crime, writing features and covering general assignments for local and national publications.*



Dr. Ohrberg with Bungoma police and village elders in Western Kenya.

# The Language of Humanity is the Foundation for Progress and Change

BY JONAS OHRBERG

**I**n the East, the sun was climbing the horizon over the remote town of Bungoma in Western Kenya, just North of Lake Victoria. The morning rains gave birth to a new day and the Mugumo trees emerged as ghosts through the dense fog embracing the landscape. The humidity was intense and I could feel my white dress shirt clinging tightly to my damp skin. Nervously, I adjusted my tie and sport coat as I stood before a group of county officials, villagers and village elders. Many had arrived hours before I was scheduled to speak and the crowd looked at me with anticipation. As I spoke of peace and unity in Western Kenya, a region of Kenya that has a history of tribal strife and tribalism, the Swahili translator, a very tall young man with a radiant white smile, faithfully translated every word I spoke. Even though I was a stranger

to them and they were strangers to me, the language of humanity penetrated the language and cultural differences, and for a brief moment in time, we were one. This very humbling and touching experience not long ago reminded me of Mr. Nelson Mandela, and his profound words, “If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.”

When considering my experiences in Bungoma, Kenya, and this specific time in American history, Mr. Mandela’s insightful words have never been as relevant or as accurate as they relate to race and race relations in America. In a sense, we seem to have lost the language of humanity. Our differences seem to have fostered a language that we do not understand or perhaps refuse to understand, which has severely divided us as a nation. Based on one’s heritage,

race, experiences, and perceptions, one may consider that in the United States, “one nation, under God” of the Pledge of Allegiance, and the American flag represent freedom, independence, and patriotism. However, from a different perspective one may perceive that these national symbols as representing white supremacy, inequality, and injustice.

While contemplating the African American community’s experience in the United States there is a strong and transcending cognitive, emotional, and psychological link between the first days of slavery, Jim Crow laws, segregation, the civil rights movement, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the present time. During the civil rights era the African American community’s experiences were defined using terms such as white supremacy, inequality, equal rights, civil rights, injustice, desegregation, and the Civil Rights Act. These terms defined the African American community’s

experiences in the Caucasian community. Likewise, there is a distinct and vast gap in understanding and accepting the terms and language of the African American community in present-day efforts related to achieving genuine equality and justice. Furthermore, the perception exists with some of the members of the Caucasian community that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 addresses and ended all elements of white supremacy, injustice and inequality, which has regretfully and tragically fostered a degree of opposition and refusal to consider any present-day claims of police brutality, white supremacy, and inequality.

How can the language and perception barriers be overcome to initiate real and lasting change? First, as a nation we must hold a frank and structured national dialogue to address the challenges related to our past, present and future as to race.

*“Mr. Mandela’s insightful words have never been as relevant or as accurate as they relate to race and race relations in America.”*

experience in the United States, and were not only relevant during the civil rights movement, but have origins from the first days of slavery. These experiences and terms are real and relevant today in the African American community due to past and present-day experiences, and the transference of the experiences and perceptions passed down from one generation to the next.

From a different perspective, the heritage of and the present-day generation of European settlers of America or the existing Caucasian majority have had significantly different experiences, perceptions and language to define the American experience. The language that identifies the experiences of the past and the present generation of the Caucasian community are defined by terms such as freedom, independence, Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights, “one nation, under God” of the Pledge of Allegiance, the Stars and Stripes, and Fourth of July that celebrates the freedom of all Americans. As with the African community, these experiences, perceptions and language are transferred from one generation to the next and are reinforced by society overall, which influence the experiences and perceptions of the present-day generation of the Caucasian community.

In a general sense, many members of the present-day generation of the Caucasian community seem to not fully understand nor recognize the meaning of the terms white supremacy, inequality, and injustice because neither they nor their ancestors ever experienced or were impacted by these tragic and inhumane influences. Historically there is no emotional, cognitive or psychological link to these

Secondly, the attempt to remove these barriers must be rooted within the “American Dream.” Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. skillfully crafted a message of unity that emphasized how the African American community is an integral part of the American culture and nation. Finally, pursuing genuine equality must emphasize the human experience. Dr. King promoted the idea that the challenges related to race were not a question of “White Power” or “Black Power,” but rather “Human Power.” The focus of transforming society must be born out of human power, rather than the power of one race versus another. The result will be one language, a language of humanity, with a common future and shared destiny. sclc



*DR. JONAS OHRBERG is a Professor with Forbes School of Business and technology at Ashford University. Dr. Ohrberg is the founder of the Forbes School of Business Center for Diversity and Multicultural Research.*

# BEADS, BEATS and CULTURAL RESISTANCE

*New Book Offers Truths About Black Masking Indians in New Orleans*

BY DAMON WARING

**R**hythm, Ritual, and Resistance: Africa is Alive on the Black Indians of New Orleans is both an academic investigation and celebration of the struggles and triumphs of the Black Indians of New Orleans, a cross-cultural and historical art-form borne of the mutual struggle and resistance of Africans and Native Americans in Post-Colonial Louisiana, since the early 1700's.

Author and ethnomusicologist Robin-Ligon Williams sheds light on her 20 year-long phenomenological journey as an archeologist, artist, advocate, champion and spiritualist in this segment of American history. Rhythm, Ritual and Resistance tells the story of a people that has been largely misunderstood by Westerners yet shielded and protected by the Black Masking Indians themselves. Through her dictation and life experience, the reader is introduced to the secretive beliefs, devotion, dances, rituals and culture that been retained for centuries. While Blacks have been historically shunned and cast aside at Mardi Gras celebrations, that very denial, coupled with ignorance and determination to separate and obliterate the footprints of the "Mardi Gras" Indians, has only strengthened the fortitude and the will to survive under difficult cultural circumstances.

"Blacks were not allowed to participate in Mardi Gras, so they created their own community 'tribes' to parade in tribute to the Native Americans who took them in during slavery, the people whose very own culture closely resonated with that of their African ancestors." Williams expressed. "The language of the drum, dance, spiritual and ancestral veneration, and herbal medicine were keys that bonded Native Americans and Africans as they forged strong relationships to inevitably resist against the oppressor."

Three hundred years later, for them the spirit is that will, the phoenix continually rising; it is what is most audacious of their characteristics. Then there's the ceremonial dress that has a history of its own, echoing African and Native beading and masquerade styles.

The Black Masking Indians weave their love of Spirit, tribal references, spiritual motifs, earth and animal deities with dedicated and time-consuming hand stitching of,



(Above) Big Chief Bo Dollis Jr., of the Wild Magnolias carrying on the legacy of his father on Mardi Gras morning in his NOLA 2018 Tri-Centennial Suit.



beads and gems and feathers to make dazzling garb associated with history, their own personal calling, religion or hierarchy. The work is tedious and revered by those outside of the culture, yet for those inside the process, the regalia is often hidden until the time that it and the wearer are to be presented. It is intrinsically part of the Black Indian culture, much deeper in meaning that what is depicted in television and movies by non-Indian artists.

Williams succeeds in her charge to reveal the real story of the Black Indians with decades of global research, tribal associations, art gallery showings and performances and now a literal documentation of African and Native cross-cultural expression. Williams' book eloquently demonstrates that the Black Masking Indian, in the ever-resilient cultural cradle of New Orleans, represents the soul and spirit of America's true Americans. sclc



DAMON WARING is an author, playwright and actor in Atlanta, Georgia.



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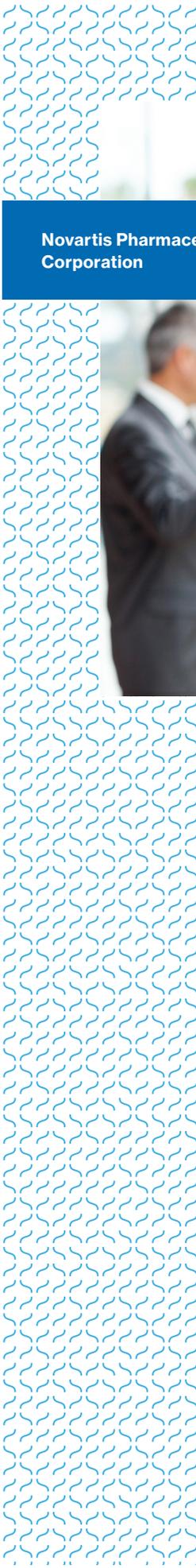
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Wishing continued growth & progress to all our black  
& minority community members, friends, & employees  
during the anniversary celebration of the SCLC.  
To our youth, stay in school today for a better  
opportunity tomorrow.*

**Packaging Corporation of America**  
1955 West Field Court  
Lake Forest, IL 60045



Novartis Pharmaceuticals  
Corporation

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# “Your crusading spirit broke through the double-walled citadels of race prejudice.”

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

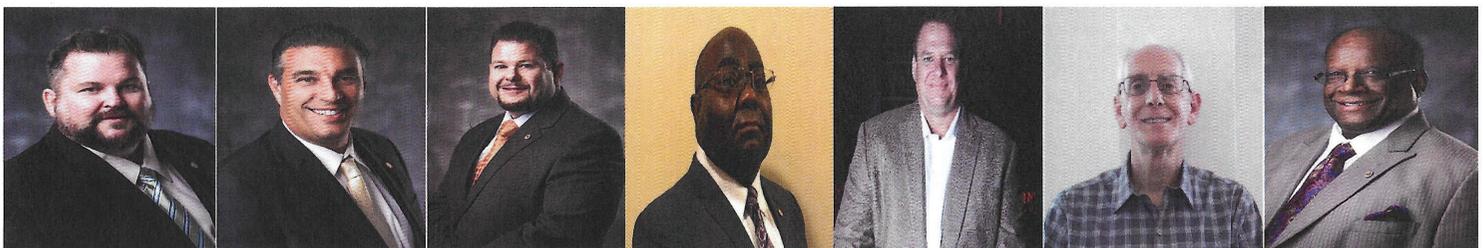
In October of 1961, Dr. King addressed the 11th Constitutional Convention of the Transport Workers Union of America. He brought greetings to us on behalf of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, of which he was President. In his historic speech, he congratulated our then-President, Mike Quill, and the TWU, “for the support that you have given us in our struggles in the South.”

He also said, “You have supported the Freedom Rides in a most positive and concrete way.” And he spoke of the TWU’s history in making sure Black workers had equality in the workplace when he said, “Your crusading spirit broke through the double-walled citadels of race prejudice. It is pathetic that our nation did not begin decades ago, as did you, to deal with the evil of discrimination.”



The TWU of America is proud of our history of standing strong for civil rights and we are proud to continue our long-standing support for the SCLC.

## Transport Workers International Leadership Team



**John Samuelsen**  
International President

**Alex Garcia**  
Int’l Executive VP

**Jerome Lafragola**  
International  
Secretary-Treasurer

**Curtis Tate**  
Int’l Administrative VP  
Transit Director

**Mike Mayes**  
Int’l Administrative VP  
Airline Director

**John Feltz**  
Railroad Director

**John W. Bland**  
Director, Civil &  
Human Rights