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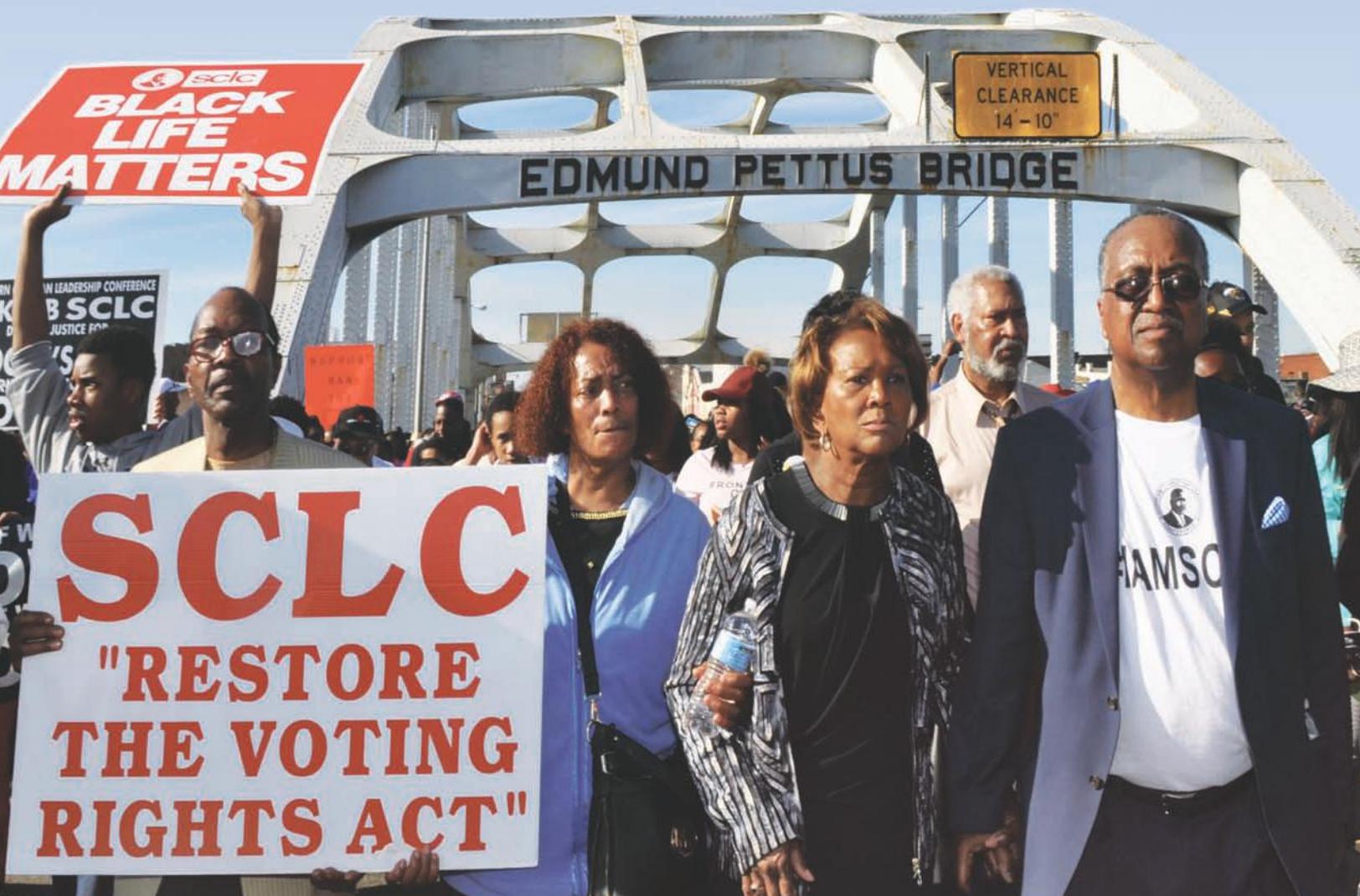
Southern Christian Leadership Conference
NATIONAL MAGAZINE

BLOODY SUNDAY BLUES

MARCH 6, 2016

“Civil rights; easier to obtain than it is to maintain.”

— DR. CHARLES STEELE, JR.
SCLC President & CEO



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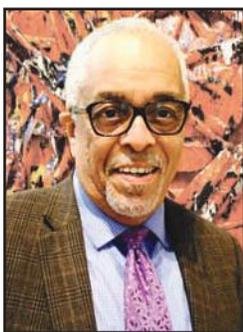
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COVER: March 6, 2016, SCLC Pres. Charles Steele and Cathelean Steele commemorating "Bloody Sunday" on Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala. Photo Credit: Stephonia Taylor McLinn; Design and Layout: Monica Fett

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/ NATIONAL EXECUTIVE OFFICERS



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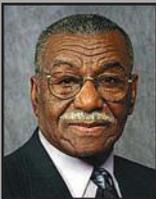
Ralph D. Abernathy
PRESIDENT EMERITUS
1968-1977



Joseph E. Lowery
PRESIDENT EMERITUS
1977-1997



Martin Luther King, III
PAST PRESIDENT
1998-2003



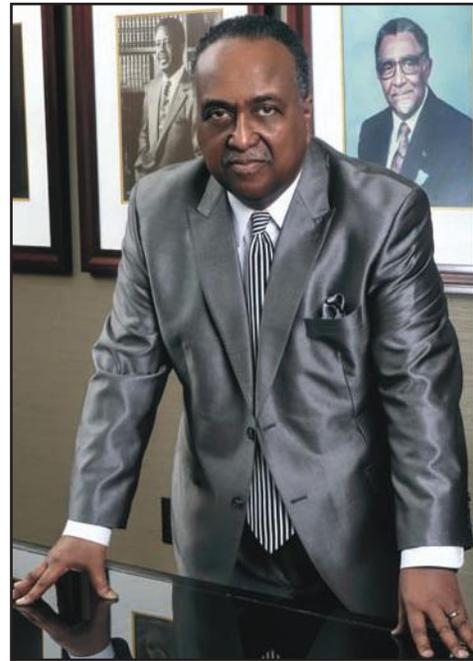
Fred L. Shuttlesworth
PAST PRESIDENT
2004
R.I.P. 1922-2011



Charles Steele, Jr.
PAST PRESIDENT
2005-2008



Howard Creecy, Jr.
PAST PRESIDENT
2011
R.I.P. 1954-2011



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THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

Bloody Sunday (the 1965 Selma to Montgomery march) was as a historical and impactful movement and re-created moment in history each and every year.

BY CHARLES STEELE JR.

The 1965 Selma to Montgomery march known as “Bloody Sunday” reminds us of our responsibility to ensure the sacrifices of people like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Jimmie Lee Jackson, Amelia Boynton, James Bevel, Hosea Williams, James Orange and many others are not in vain. It was another historical moment in the imprint of this country as we celebrated the miles stones in which we have come and how far we need to go. The 51st Anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery march marks the end of the presidential term of the first African-American president of the United States of America. His presence in the white house represents the progression of the civil rights movement, but we are also constantly reminded of the racist mentality of people through their commentary and reactions to our President.

Yes, we have come a long way, but we still have a very long way to go. One thing that I hope that we as African-Americans as well as all Americans have learned is that we cannot depend on state governments nor the federal



PHOTO: JOHN GLENN

government to do the right thing in terms of our basic rights. No matter whether the President is Black, White, Asian, Hispanic or any other nationality, we must hold whoever the President of the United States is accountable for the American people and especially the poor Americans who are suffering every day from insufficiency. As Americans, human beings and Christians we cannot afford to sit back while our brothers and sisters suffer in this country and around the world.

As President Obama prepares to leave office, I am proud of the work he has accomplished in such a short period of time. No one President can change America. The people must demand change in America by consistently electing Presidents that care about the well-being of all Americans and not just a select few. We must hold our government accountable! Selma reminds us of

our past struggles and encourages us to not go backwards, but to always keep our eyes on the prize.

There is another historical anniversary coming up in 2018. The anniversary of the Poor People’s Campaign of 1968. As Mahatma Gandhi said, “Poverty is the worst form of violence”. On January 18, 1964, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and President Lyndon B. Johnson agreed to join forces to launch a “War on Poverty.” The Poor People’s Campaign was organized in 1968 by Dr. King and the SCLC. This campaign was organized as a civil and human rights agenda to ensure that poor people of all backgrounds would have a right to economic justice. It is time to revitalize a movement. Prior to 2018, the SCLC will be announcing the re-creation of the poor people’s march initiated by Dr.

“Poverty is the worst form of violence.”

—MAHATMA GANDHI

King and SCLC in the spring of 1968 as a part of the 50th Anniversary of the SCLC Poor People's Campaign. Poverty in this country and abroad is a crisis.

This campaign is needed all across this planet because there are so many people across the world suffering from poverty. The SCLC intends to make sure that all aspects of poverty have a plan of eradication. We can begin the process of economic success by the uplifting of all people through education and financial training. We know that education is key to our children's future. Whether it is traditional education, vocational education or non-traditional education and training, education is key.

SCLC believes that "education is the new civil rights". As SCLC stated in 1968, "We, the poor people of America demand: decent jobs and income as well as the right to a decent life." We are committed to reaching the poor, teaching the poor and feeding the poor.

As the 50th Anniversary of the Poor People's Campaign approaches, SCLC is preparing to provide an innovative and people centered solution to the growing gap between those who want to obtain college degrees and their ability to afford it. SCLC and partners will be working with accredited colleges and universities to bring education to our communities through technology such as group virtual classrooms. By eliminating the brick and mortar model of education, SCLC is using technology to better serve the people in the communities in which we operate. The key to poverty eradication is education. SCLC hopes to begin the process of economic success by the uplifting of all people through education and financial training.

As we prepare for another historical anniversary, we must remember that this is a celebration of accomplishments and not a commemoration, for there is still much more work to be done. SCLC was there in 1965 and 1968 and SCLC will continue to be there standing strong and fighting for justice. Join us in our fight for JUSTICE and EQUALITY for all. SCLC

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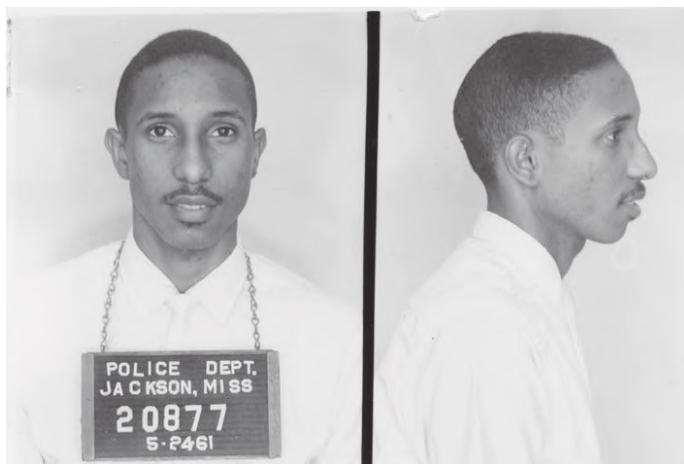
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Bernard LaFayette Jr. with other Freedom Riders was arrested in Jackson, Miss. and jailed at Parchman State Prison Farm during June 1961. During his participation in civil rights activities, he was beaten and arrested 27 times.

Civil Rights Pioneer Survived Violent Times, Preaches Peace

BY ALVIN BENN

Whenever Bernard LaFayette Jr. visits Montgomery, Ala., he tries to drop by the Southern Poverty Law Center to visit a memorial that honors the memory of those who died during the civil rights era.

His name could easily have been added to the list of 40 on the memorial because his fearless fight for human rights earned him his share of critics, some with deadly intentions.

No one has to remind him how lucky he is to have survived several close calls as he tempted fate during protests that led to “greetings” from those with clubs, fists, chains, kicks and taunts.

“I knew several of the names on that memorial,” said LaFayette. “I was one of the last to speak to Dr. King on the day he was murdered. I also got to know Viola Liuzzo and Medgar Evers over in Mississippi.”

The ambush slaying of Evers occurred on June 12, 1963, in Jackson, Miss.—the same night LaFayette nearly died after being jumped on and pistol whipped by a big thug in the darkness. It happened in Selma where he had been leading a one-man voter registration effort.



Bernard LaFayette Jr.

He got to know Evers after “Freedom Riders” were jailed for weeks in Mississippi when they were kept from completing their trip that initially ended in violence at a bus station in Montgomery in 1961. He was one of the riders.

LaFayette and Stokely Carmichael, another voter registration activist, were at a church gathering in Lowndes County when they learned of Liuzzo’s murder on U.S. 80 not far from them. She was shot to death by Ku Klux Klan night riders.

Liuzzo came to LaFayette’s attention during her tragically brief stay in Selma to help ferry marchers who took part in the epic march to Montgomery. Her passenger the night she was murdered was a black man.

None of what happened to LaFayette during those difficult days in Alabama could compare to the sniper slaying of King a few hours after the two chatted for the last time.

They met on the morning of April 4, 1968, in Memphis where King’s parting words have remained with him to this day.

“Dr. King told me it was crucial that I help to institutionalize and internationalize nonviolence,” said LaFayette. “I’ve spent my life since that time doing exactly what he wanted.”

Violence against peaceful protesters appear to be over in today’s America, but LaFayette isn’t taking anything for granted and spends his waking moments making sure that peace prevails.

He'll be 76 this summer, but isn't ready just yet to retire. He's too busy teaching non-violence in a state that once was known for violence.

Back in Alabama this weekend to take part in ceremonies associated with the annual Bridge Crossing Jubilee in Selma, LaFayette is focusing his attention once more on "nonviolence and reconciliation."

"I've seen some phenomenal things happen as a result of nonviolence training and that's why I've devoted my life to it," he said, during an interview after he had visited the SPLC memorial. "Violence begets violence and only stimulates more of the same."

He demonstrated how to produce a peaceful solution to a potential problem last year in Selma as he and his wife sat quietly at the base of the Edmund Pettus Bridge. They were waiting to hear President Obama speak at the 50th anniversary of "Bloody Sunday" and the subsequent march from Selma to Montgomery.

All of a sudden, there was a loud pounding on a drum a few feet away. Shouts of "We want change" threatened to disrupt the president's speech. LaFayette didn't let that happen.

Rising from his seat, he walked quietly to the sound of the commotion and found angry young men and women who were making all the noise. They were from Ferguson, Mo., where a white police officer fatally shot a black teenager in 2014, sparking rioting throughout the little town.

"When I asked one of them who was in charge he said 'We're all in charge' and then he told me they had First Amendment rights to speak."

What happened next stunned the young man. LaFayette didn't raise his voice, threaten or call police. All he did was agree with him, but point out that the president of the

"Bernard has never received the recognition he deserves, but that's not his style."

—CHARLES STEELE JR.

United States also had a right to speak, but was competing with the pounding of a drum and shouts.

LaFayette left the drum sticks alone, but took the drum with him, at least for safe keeping until the presidential speech was over.

"I resolved the problem by simply saying 'Let's hear the President first and then we'll hear you when this is all over,' said LaFayette. "They all agreed. I've been back to Ferguson several times since then and we've become friends."

For a man who's been through the civil rights ringer several times since his teen years, he prefers peaceful solutions to violent problems these days. That's understandable, but what happened on Mother's Day in 1961 at Montgomery's Greyhound Bus Station left him with three cracked ribs if not a slightly shaken resolve.

"John Lewis was hit over the head with a Coca-Cola crate and was knocked unconscious," he recalled. "When I went down they kicked me in the chest and tried to hit a certain part of my body. I suffered a lot of pain."

LaFayette has accumulated a lot of admirers through the years, but he's never sought the spotlight. That's not the way he operates, but others who have watched him press



Bernard LaFayette Jr. (Right) with Martin Luther King Jr. at a news conference in Atlanta on Jan. 16, 1968. (Photo Charles Kelly/AP)

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The Wall of Tolerance is located in the Civil Rights Memorial across the street from the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Ala. The wall digitally displays the names of more than half a million people who have pledged to take a stand against hate and work for justice and tolerance in their daily lives. Their names flow continuously down the 20-by-40 foot wall.

forward on his latest peace project feel he's been overlooked when it comes to praise.

"Bernard's never gotten the recognition he deserves, but that's not his style," says Charles Steele, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and one of LaFayette's closest friends. "He has God-given leadership skills and isn't worried about recognition."

LaFayette currently is chairman of the SCLC's board of directors—one of several important positions he holds. He's also a talented writer and his most recent literary effort is "In Peace and Freedom...My Journey in Selma."

John Lewis' efforts on behalf of human rights are well known, but he's also one of LaFayette's biggest fans and was happy to be the first to endorse his book.

"No one, but no one, who lived through the creation of the movement for voting rights in Selma is better prepared to tell this story than Bernard LaFayette himself," said Lewis, Pike County native who has lived in Georgia for many years and is a member of Congress.

Andrew Young, former U.S. Ambassador to the United States, points out that LaFayette "has braved threats and intimidation to serve as a witness to the power of nonviolent action."

Young urges LaFayette to keep writing because "there are so few of us left who have lived to tell the story of how we've overcome."

Bernard LaFayette is well aware that Father Time keeps ticking and when he's asked about his future plans, smiles and offers a four word prediction.

"Tomorrow is not promised," he'll say and then move on to his next project to help those in need. SCLC

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A MOMENT to Acknowledge & Empower

Convention Luncheon to Highlight Women's Achievements and Challenges in Civil Rights

BY CATHELEAN C. STEELE, Director, SCLC Justice for Girls

As we prepare for SCLC's 58th National Convention, I wanted to share with our readers the incredible strength and wisdom I have encountered over this year among women of faith—particularly in the generation of women coming into their leadership.

As women, we comprehend the depths to which the civil rights dream Dr. King spoke about is not yet fulfilled. When sex trafficking is reported as one of the fastest growing billion dollar industries across America and the world—a business profiting from the sale of sex with enslaved children and women—we truly know to what degree the civil rights dream of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. has not yet been fulfilled.

Partnerships and alliances become critical in taking on the civil rights dreams unfulfilled. Recently, I have had the honor and privilege of forming an alliance with the Interfaith Children's Movement, through the key leadership of former Georgia State Rep. Henrietta Turnquest, ICM Board Chair and Founder Attorney Bettianne Hart, and ICM Coordinator Pamela Perkins Carn.



PHOTO: JOHN GLENN

Their commitment, we have collectively agreed, is like that of a fellow foot soldier and kindred spirit. As we have seen throughout our history, there is nothing we can't achieve when we come together in unity. The Interfaith Children's Movement has been successful in getting critical legislation passed, and has several powerful initiatives that are getting to the root of the sex-trafficking issue.

Yet perhaps the most critical component of our alliance, besides supporting each other's work, is in the combining of our voices, so that more and more faith leaders and congregations get to hear about this tragic and growing issue. So many just don't know how close at hand this issue is—or how young an age this issue starts. Many don't know that some sex traffickers even kidnap infants for illicit sex.

To confront the magnitude of the operation and the mentality of those engaged in this illegal business, we must empower ourselves beyond what we know ourselves to be.

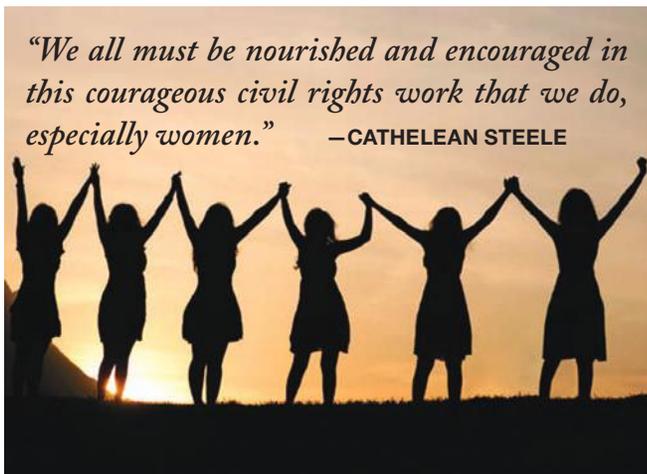
During our annual national convention, to be held here in Atlanta at the Hilton Atlanta Airport Hotel July 21st -24, 2016, we will be hosting a Women's Empowerment Luncheon to pay tribute to such civil rights and sex trafficking heroes as Diane Nash, Lisa Williams, and Angela Carswell. We will also bring women speaker leaders, such as Pamela Perkins Carn, our new partner with the Interfaith Children's Movement, who can express the depth of the challenge, and empower us to come together in reaching forward to a civil rights dream fulfilled—in our lifetime.

We all must be nourished and encouraged in this courageous civil rights work that we do. Especially women.

Come join us! Be refreshed, acknowledged, and empowered! The best days and times for us still lie ahead. How long? Not long! SCLC

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"We all must be nourished and encouraged in this courageous civil rights work that we do, especially women." —CATHELEAN STEELE



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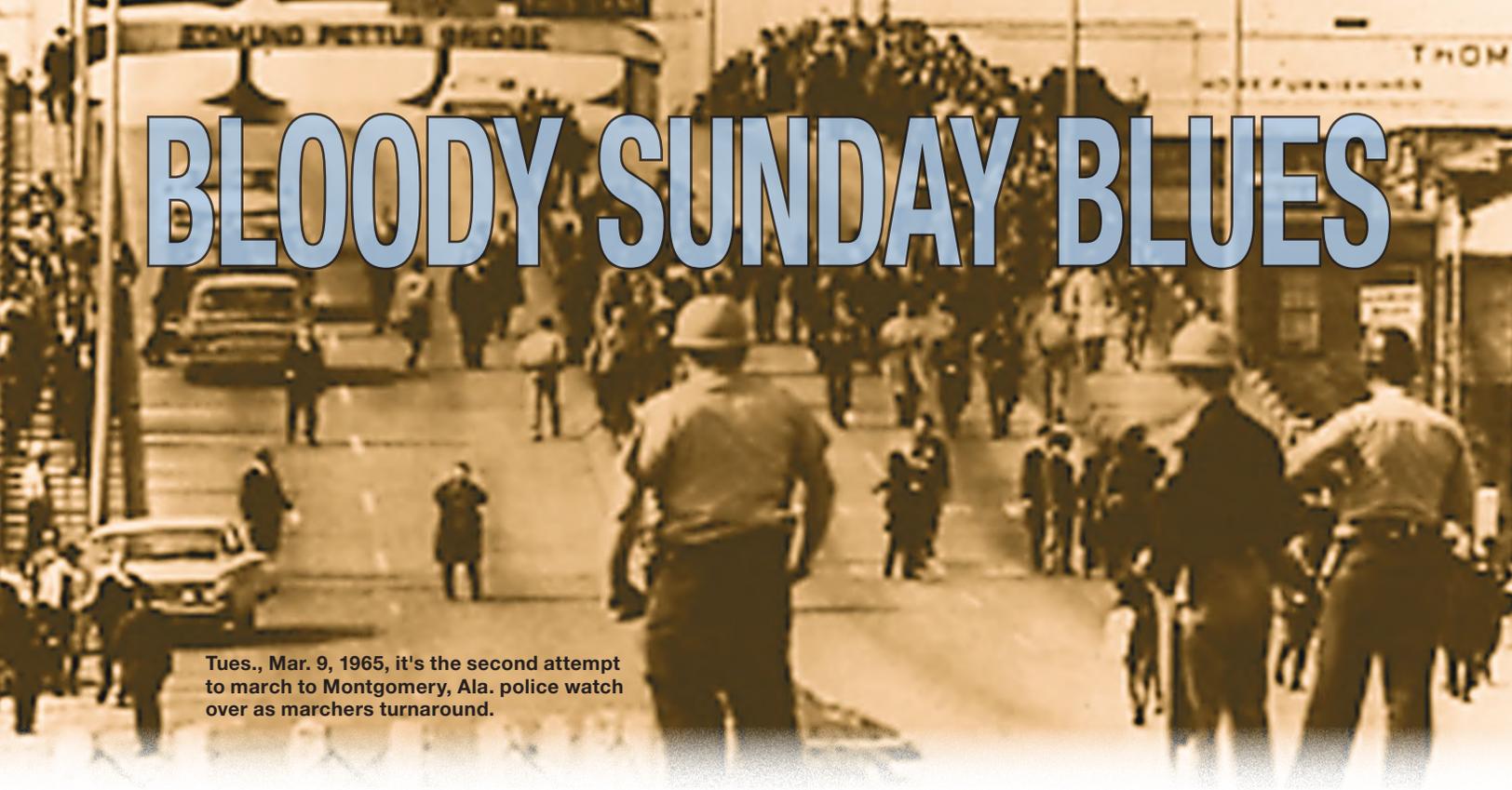
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BLOODY SUNDAY BLUES

Tues., Mar. 9, 1965, it's the second attempt to march to Montgomery, Ala. police watch over as marchers turnaround.

BY MAYNARD EATON, Managing Editor

Bloody Sunday is surreal. It was an uncanny experience even for this seasoned journalist to encounter civil rights icon, Atlanta Congressman John Lewis, holding court and counseling youngsters at the apex of the Edmund Pettus Bridge on Sunday March 6th about the significance and substance of this memorable day in Black history.

“This is a critical year in our history, particularly given this is combative presidential election year,” says Selma mayor George Patrick Evans. “Voting rights is what this day is all about and already there are some trying to demoralize and derail that sacred right.”

It was the 51st anniversary of the day that Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee [SNCC] leader John Lewis and others like the late SCLC icon Rev. Hosea Williams were savagely beaten by law enforcement officers because they were demonstrating for the right for Black people to vote.

Lewis urged the crowd to keep fighting for justice and not to be afraid to stir up “good trouble” in the sake of justice.

“They came toward us, beating us with nightsticks, trampling us with horses and releasing their tear gas. I was hit in the head with a trooper with a nightstick. My legs went from under me. I thought I was going to die I thought I saw death,” Lewis told the crowd. It is a mantra he has repeated for decades and a message that has branded him a national hero.

That somber day gave rise to the Voting Rights Act, and catapulted Congressman Lewis to international prominence and political clout. The annual Bridge Crossing Jubilee

culminates each year with a walk across the bridge that has become a national landmark. But sadly that revered march for justice has now become a poorly produced and politically problematic parade.

“Bloody Sunday still has significance if you are in position to know the history but for our younger generation if they are not being taught about it in their schools and if they are not being taught in their homes it is just a day to see the crowds to enjoy the festivities,” says Cathelean Steele, a former Alabama educator and wife of SCLC President Charles Steele, Jr. “But for me it is the celebration of those that were beaten and those that died in that struggle. My husband always says civil rights and voting rights are harder now to maintain and sustain than they were to obtain.”

While Lewis generally rules and dominates the day because of his prestige, a multiplicity of civil rights leaders, civic groups, fraternities, sororities, religious groups and organizations of all sorts, such as the irascible Black Lives Matter Movement and the venerable Southern Christian Leadership Conference [where I also work as its national magazine editor], compete for media attention and a prominent position in the line to cross the bridge.

Selma’s finest day routinely puts Mayor Evans, a former Alabama School Superintendent and basketball official in a dicey political dilemma.

“I am really concerned about how that works as far as who’s up front and who is behind,” he laments. “I wish there was a way they could resolve that. I know the foot soldiers are significant. They made it happen, they risked their lives. They should have notoriety, they should be recognized. I will also say that many of those who say they were foot soldiers

(Picture) U.S. Representative John Lewis (GA-D) pauses to dance with children during re-enactment of “Bloody Sunday” March in Selma, Ala. (Photo by Mike Welsh)



may not have been foot soldiers. How do you tell somebody they were not here?”

Bragging rights and photo ops often define the day. This commemoration has now become a fierce and seemingly petty competition that borders on chaos and belies the poignant pressing problems that persist in Selma and throughout Black America.

“I don’t think it’s politics in this march and in this event,” Mayor Evans opines. “Some people might want to make it that. In my opinion it doesn’t have the same meaning and value to some people with regard to the significance of what happened in ’65. It is not taken as seriously as it should be. We should humble ourselves because so many people shed their blood and lost their lives for a cause that won us our freedom as well as the right to vote.

“We’ve become complacent to some extent,” he continues. “I think if Martin Luther King Jr. were to come back today and evaluate where we are compared to when he left, I think he would be very unhappy because we have failed a lot of people.”

Lory Parks eloquently echoes that sentiment. The dynamic 56-year old Democrat is a vivacious and passionate politico, voting rights activist and organizer for the Service Employees International Union [SEIU] in Detroit. Parks proudly participates in the Selma Jubilee festivities annually.

“It is so hard for me to hear young people who say they don’t vote. It puts a stake in my heart when I hear that because there were so many people that were murdered for just little old Lory Parks to have the right to vote,” that’s why she says she has religiously voted in every election for the past 38 years and comes back home to Alabama every year

“They came toward us, beating us with nightsticks, trampling us with horses and releasing their tear gas. I was hit in the head with a trooper with a nightstick. My legs went from under me. I thought I was going to die I thought I saw death.”

— John Lewis told the crowd.

for ‘Bloody Sunday’. “This means everything to me. Bloody Sunday is the quintessential symbol of our struggle as African Americans. This presidential election is so bizarre and so important. Voting is so crucial to our survival as a people. This is the most important election I have ever faced, and it all started here in Selma. **sclc**

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Proud of Obama's Presidency, Blacks Are Sad to See Him Go

BY YAMICHE ALCINDOR



President Obama awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Rev. C.T. Vivian at a White House ceremony in 2013. (Gabriella Demczuk/The New York Times)

CHICAGO—In his 30s and 40s, the Rev. C.T. Vivian rode with the Freedom Riders, organized sit-ins in Nashville and worked closely with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Many years later, before the 2008 election, he traveled the country along with other civil rights leaders exclaiming to voters that a Barack Obama presidency was exactly the kind of prize that they had been fighting for all their lives.

All of that came back to him during a meeting at the White House three weeks ago between President Obama and several of those leaders. Mr. Vivian told the president how proud he was of him, and how sad he was to see him go. And then he began to cry.

“If there was a way I could keep him there I would keep him there for another term,” Mr. Vivian, 91, said later from his home in Atlanta. “It is difficult for people who are not African-American to understand what it has been to have someone in the White House that you know understands you.”

The 2016 presidential campaign has been mesmerizing the country with its party-crashing personalities, what’s-next intrigue and promise of a tantalizing November.

But a large segment of the country has also been busy gazing upon the presidency that is ending. In interviews, African-Americans around the country said they were counting down the last 10 months of Mr. Obama’s term with pride, with sadness and also with a looming despair.

At dinner tables, Bible studies and classrooms throughout black America, elders, their children and their children’s children have been asking whether the breakthrough they thought they would never see will turn out to be an anomaly that they never see repeated.

“I come from an area where we never thought it was going to be possible,” said Russell Singleton, 64, who grew up on the South Side of Chicago and now tends a shoe shine station in the president’s old barbershop. He recalled as a child seeing a racial slur stenciled onto a sidewalk in bright yellow paint, and as a teenager hurling bricks the night Dr. King was assassinated.

He added, shaking his head, “I don’t think I’ll see another black president in my lifetime and I’ll say in the younger generation’s lifetime.”

“They won’t allow us to have the reins again,” he continued. “It’s a big prize and they hold onto it dearly.”

On the West Side of Chicago, Jakyia Hobbs, 13, said matter-of-factly that Mr. Obama’s election was a “miracle,” and not in a good way. “Our system isn’t built for a black person to become president,” she said.

Perhaps no one expressed the feeling more viscerally than the young black girl who was captured by her grandmother on video wailing hysterically when she learned that Mr. Obama was soon leaving the White House. The video went viral on Facebook, and after Valerie Jarrett, a senior adviser to the president, showed it to him, he told the girl’s grandmother in a Facebook post to “dry her tears, because I’m not going anywhere.”

“I’ll still be a citizen just like her,” he added in a response that might not have pacified the girl.

Ms. Jarrett said Mr. Obama “is aware of the fact that it is natural for people to have this feeling of sadness.”

“What he has been trying to do is to reassure people that although he won’t be the president, he is still absolutely committed to moving that arc of the moral universe as a citizen.”

(Right) Rev. C.T. Vivian, a civil rights leader, said he wished President Obama could stay in the White House. "If there was a way I could keep him there I would keep him there for another term," he said. (Photo by Kevin D. Iles; The New York Times)



But the feeling of loss was not just attached to Mr. Obama himself. What had given them hope, many said in interviews, was an achievement that could never be erased even as it slips into history: that a black person can become president.

Mr. Vivian said that after Mr. Obama's election, a woman who had been teaching for more than two decades in Atlanta told him that her black students had started saying, for the first time, that they wanted to be president.

"That was the first time that any class had been able to think about that, that they could be president of the United States," Mr. Vivian said.

What's more, said Lawrence Ware, a lecturer and the diversity coordinator of the philosophy department at Oklahoma State University, is that "black families are losing a first family that is a model of a working relationship."

"These are things that combat the vicious legacy of white supremacy that communicates to African-Americans that you are not beautiful, that you are not intelligent, that you cannot achieve, that your relationships are pathologically doomed for failure," Mr. Ware, 34, said. "That symbolism is absolutely powerful and needed."

But if seven years under President Obama has opened possibilities for black Americans, many of those interviewed

On the other hand, they said they did not believe a white president would have heard "You lie!" shouted at him from the floor of Congress; or would have had his birth certificate challenged and then seen a man who challenged it become the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination.

Through this filter, many ascribed Washington partisanship to darker motives. Republicans' repeated attempts to repeal the Affordable Care Act and refusal to entertain a Supreme Court nominee were, many of those interviewed had no doubt, a result of the president's ethnicity.

"They don't want a black president," said Willie Mae Burrell, 90, who attended segregated schools as a child and once worked as a cook on the same Havana, Ala., farm where her mother picked cotton. "That's the reason

“It is difficult for people who are not African-American to understand what it has been to have someone in the White House that you know understands you.”

—REV. C.T. VIVIAN

were torn about his lasting impact on race relations.

They were, on one hand, hard-pressed to imagine a white president saying "Trayvon Martin could have been me 35 years ago," inviting the Harvard scholar Henry Louis Gates Jr. and the white police officer who had confronted him to a White House "beer summit," or singing "Amazing Grace" at the funeral of the pastor who was one of the nine black churchgoers gunned down in Charleston, S.C., last year.

"We are losing a soldier who has actually been through the things that individuals are going through," said Jaky'a's father, Jevon Hobbs, 42. "None of the current candidates," he said, "know what it's like to be accosted by the police for no reason."

he couldn't get things done."

There was some disappointment with President Obama, too, that he had not done enough to relieve the burdens of life in black America, like poverty and high incarceration rates. Ms. Jarrett, his adviser, said the uninsured rate of African-Americans had dropped 50 percent under the new health care law, that incarceration rates had fallen and graduation rates had risen.

"By objective metrics, the African-American community has made progress during the president's time in office," Ms. Jarrett said. "Now, is there still work left to do? Absolutely. And, the president would be the first to say that he didn't expect to be able to accomplish everything he wanted to accomplish in just eight years."



(Left) Willie Mae Burrell in her home in Evanston, Ill. She said opposition to having a black president had hindered Mr. Obama's efforts in Washington. (Photo by Taylor Glascock/The New York Times)

Mostly, though, there were questions about whether another black person could be elected president anytime soon.

Asked who could be the next, a few mentioned Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey and Kamala D. Harris, California's attorney general, who is running for a seat in the Senate, but most had no ready answer.

There are signs, though, that the odds of another black president are not insurmountable. A Gallup poll last year found that more than nine in 10 Americans said they would have no problem voting for a black president, about the same as could see themselves voting for a Catholic, woman, Hispanic or Jewish candidate.

Ben Carson, the retired neurosurgeon, was briefly a leading contender for the Republican nomination, though

many blacks shrugged at his candidacy because of his conservative stances and criticism of Mr. Obama.

And the president himself has shown that a black candidate has access to the key to modern campaigning, big money. Mr. Obama and the Democratic National Committee together raised about a billion dollars in 2012.

"Nobody can predict the future," said Antonio Coye, 44, the manager of the Hyde Park Hair Salon, the president's old barbershop. "We can definitely get in there again."

What is certain, in any event, is that next Jan. 20, the book will close on a significant chapter in American history.

"I had a vision the other night," said Mary Hooks, the co-director of Southerners On New Ground, a gay and transgender rights group in Atlanta. "What if a bunch of black people mobilized to D.C. on his last day and just stood out there and gave him a standing ovation and clapped?"

"We don't want to give the impression that he's been so excellent and amazing," she said, "but we also want to honor what this has meant for all our people and what it has meant for our ancestors." **sclc**

Reprint courtesy of "The New York Times".

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Ralph Abernathy III's Last Interview

His curse of cancer and civil rights celebrity.

BY MAYNARD EATON, Managing Editor

Ralph David Abernathy III had been suffering severely for more than year, battling stage 4 colon cancer while also valiantly fighting to honor and refresh his late father's legacy. Yesterday, the son of civil rights icon and Martin King Jr's best friend, Ralph Abernathy Jr., was eulogized and buried. Abernathy III died two days short of his 57th birthday.

"I have good days and bad days but I won't complain," he told this reporter on February 18, 2016, in what tragically proved to be his final media interview. "I'm standing on His promises. I have two tumors still left in my body: one in my liver and the other in my rectum."

It was a bad day the morning he told me: "I had to go to MD Anderson in Houston, Texas a year ago and as it turned out everything that could happen to me did happen to me. I ended up staying in the hospital for three long arduous weeks—the same bed, the same position. I contracted E.coli. My heart rate went over 170. I got out after they had killed a tumor the size of a small melon but it almost killed me. The chemo and radiation was so hard on my body, when I got out of the hospital, I was 120 pounds."

The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center is one of the original three comprehensive cancer centers in the United States established by the National Cancer Act of 1971.

"Ralph was fearless to the end," says Abernathy's good friend and fellow civil rights activist Rev. Anthony Motley, pastor of Atlanta's Lindsey Street Baptist Church. "I kept looking and kept expecting the fear of death to show up but

it never did. There was never any difference in Abernathy's spunk or spirit."

Following his release from the Houston hospital, Ralph III traveled to Washington D.C. where the Congressional Black Caucus was honoring his esteemed mother, Juanita Abernathy. He recalls an airport skycap looking at his identification and asking, "Are you related to Dr. Abernathy?" The wheelchair-bound Abernathy affirmatively and appreciatively acknowledged the name recognition and said, "I told my wife to tip him good." Later he said, a Puerto Rican ticket agent asked, "Are you related to the famous Abernathy family in Atlanta?"

But seemingly for most of his life, Abernathy III struggled with the pressures and expectations of his name, including an unwavering defense of his father's tattered image.

"Being under the hot light and intense public glare because of his name was problematic," opines Rev. Motley. The Abernathy and Motley families have been close for several generations. "It is a special burden to bear; one that most of us cannot even imagine. Being a child of one of the front line civil rights legends like the King's, the Abernathy's, the Jackson's, the Young's, the Vivian's and the Lowery's. It's the spotlight, the scrutiny, the pressure—and plus they were spoiled."

"I was arrested at the age of 9 years old and spent the night in jail marching on a mule train during the Poor People's campaign from Marks, Mississippi to Washington DC after the assassination of Martin Luther King," Abernathy III said during our hour long interview. "Governor Lester Maddox put me, Hosea Williams and others in jail in

Douglasville. He locked us up, the mules, the wagons and everything. That was my baptism into the civil rights movement. Then they bombed our house before I was born with my mother pregnant and my sister two years old in the crib. So, as I was growing up, I always had a fear that they were going to bomb my house again and hit my room. So every night I had to negotiate with my mother to leave a light on in the hall and a crack in the bedroom door for security as I slept at night. And, if you know my mother, there were many nights I lost those pleas. I thank her for her strength and determination. It's no wonder my father could change the course of history in America."

Although severely ill, Abernathy III was trying to raise \$3.5 million this year to build a "freedom plaza" outside the old West Hunter Street Baptist Church, an iconic landmark from the Civil Rights era when his father was pastor. Honoring his father's deeds and historic achievements was his passion.

The plaza RDA III wanted to fund raise for, manifested his quixotic quest to get everyone acknowledged, all those who may have "dropped through the cracks" — particularly the numerous foot soldiers or those close to the Movement.

"Ralph felt his father's role was not properly appreciated in terms of what he meant to the Civil Rights Movement," says Rev. Motley. "He was determined to set the record straight."

"I've tried to educate people about my father," Abernathy III told me. "My father was not one of Martin Luther King's lieutenants. The only two people who never received a paycheck from SCLC were Martin Luther King Jr. and Ralph David Abernathy. People have said Martin Luther King, Jr. was the intellectual and Ralph David Abernathy was not. That is as far away from the truth as Jesus is from sin. My father graduated from Alabama State University with a degree in Mathematics. Even today, you can hardly find someone graduating from college with a degree in Mathematics. He graduated at the head of his class. He was an analytical thinker."

Abernathy Jr. wrote in his 1989 autobiography that King had once spent the night with another woman or two just before his assassination and was immediately attacked for being a "sellout" and a "traitor."

"My father was Martin's mentor, he was his partner," Ralph III said. "They were the true dream team. Two Black men that came together and changed the world. They were inseparable in life. Yet, they give the credit to one man. You don't have to be kind— just tell the truth. To separate them in death when they were inseparable in life, there is something sinister about that."

Recently, Abernathy III launched a new movement on the steps of city hall in New York City, born out his dire

health issues, called The Civil Right To Know Movement. Had he survived, Abernathy III was intent on taking it across the country and eventually influencing Congress to pass a labeling law. The former Georgia state senator and bon vivant said that when he was convicted and sent to prison in 1998 on 35 felony charges related to false reimbursement requests to the Legislature, he went from a "middle class diet to a low class diet."

"I used to want to be the President of SCLC, and if my brother Rev. Howard Creecy Jr. had lived, I believed I would have been," he said. "But I no longer want that. I am not even trying to be on the national SCLC board of directors. God has given me a new vision, The Civil Right



May 21-22, 1961: Ralph Abernathy and Martin Luther King, Jr. during stand-off with white mob outside Abernathy's Baptist Church in Montgomery, Ala. King had been on the phone with Attorney General Robert Kennedy seeking help. (Photo by Paul Schutzer/Time Life)

To Know Movement, because you have a civil right to know what is in the food you eat. Our nation has altered our food supply without our consent or our knowledge. They have genetically altered our foods with what they call GMO's, genetically modified organisms.

Abernathy continued with fervor: "When you look on the back of packages at the grocery store, and you see names that you can't pronounce, those are genetically modified organisms. We don't eat the same food that your grandmother and my grandfather ate. Our nation's food supply is fraught with killer chemicals. All the countries in the European Union have bans and restrictions on GMO's except for here in America. They have connected these GMO's to health issues such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and cancer. So, we feel like it violates our civil right to know when we have not been informed about what's going on with our nation's food supply. This movement touches every American because everybody in this country has an intimate relationship with food. It is environmental injustice." SCLC

Courtesy of the SaportaReport.com.

How the ‘Green Book’ Helped African-American Tourists Navigate a Segregated Nation

Listed hotels, restaurants and other businesses open to African-Americans, the guide was invaluable for Jim-Crow era travelers.

BY JACINDA TOWNSEND

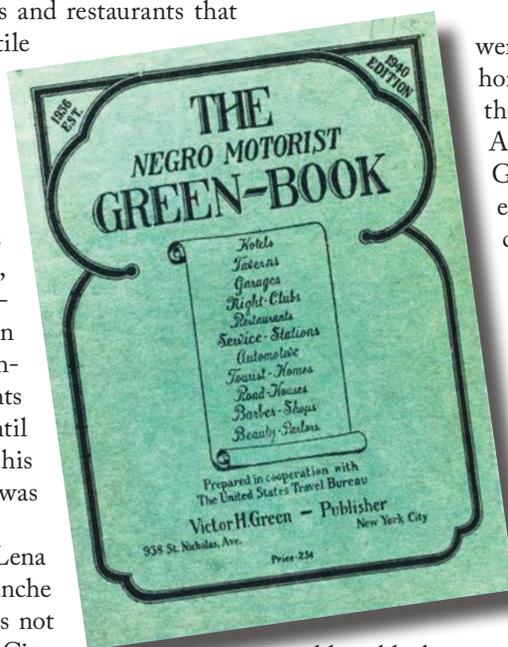
For black Americans traveling by car in the era of segregation, the open road presented serious dangers. Driving interstate distances to unfamiliar locales, black motorists ran into institutionalized racism in a number of pernicious forms, from hotels and restaurants that refused to accommodate them to hostile “sundown towns,” where posted signs might warn people of color that they were banned after nightfall.

Paula Wynter, a Manhattan-based artist, recalls a frightening road trip when she was a young girl during the 1950s. In North Carolina, her family hid in their Buick after a local sheriff passed them, made a U-turn and gave chase. Wynter’s father, Richard Irby, switched off his headlights and parked under a tree. “We sat until the sun came up,” she says. “We saw his lights pass back and forth. My sister was crying; my mother was hysterical.”

“It didn’t matter if you were Lena Horne or Duke Ellington or Ralph Bunche traveling state to state, if the road was not friendly or obliging,” says New York City-based filmmaker and playwright Calvin Alexander Ramsey. With director and co-producer Becky Wible Searles, he interviewed Wynter for their forthcoming documentary about the visionary entrepreneur who set out to make travel easier and safer for African-Americans. Victor H. Green, a 44-year-old black postal carrier in Harlem, relied on his own experiences and on recommendations from black members of his postal service union for the inaugural guide bearing his name, *The Negro Motorist Green-Book*, in 1937. The 15-page directory covered Green’s home turf, the New York metropolitan area, listing establishments that welcomed blacks. The power of the guide, says Ramsey, also the author of a children’s book and a play focused on Green-Book history, was that it “created a safety net. If a person could travel by car—and those who could, did—they would feel more in control of their destiny. The Green-Book was what they needed.”

The Green-Book final edition, in 1966-67, filled 99 pages and embraced the entire nation and even some

international cities. The guide pointed black travelers to places including hotels, restaurants, beauty parlors, nightclubs, golf courses and state parks. (The 1941 edition above resides in the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.)



Mail carriers, Ramsey explains, were uniquely situated to know which homes would accommodate travelers; they mailed reams of listings to Green. And black travelers were soon assisting Green—submitting suggestions, in an early example of what today would be called user-generated content. Another of Green’s innovations prefigured today’s residential lodging networks; like Airbnb, his guide listed private residences where black travelers could stay safely. Indeed, it was an honor to have one’s home listed as a rooming house in the Green-Book, though the listings themselves were minimal: “ANDALUSIA (Alabama) TOURIST HOMES: Mrs. Ed. Andrews, 69 N. Cotton Street.”

The Green-Book was indispensable to black-owned businesses. For historians, says Smithsonian curator Joanne Hyppolite, the listings offer a record of the “rise of the black middle class, and in particular, of the entrepreneurship of black women.”

In 1952, Green retired from the postal service to become a full-time publisher. He charged enough to make a modest profit—25 cents for the first edition, \$1 for the last—but he never became rich. “It was really all about helping,” says Ramsey. At the height of its circulation, Green printed 20,000 books annually, which were sold at black churches, the Negro Urban League and Esso gas stations.

Writing in the 1948 edition, Green predicted, “There will be a day in the near future when this guide will not have to be published. That is when we as a race will have equal opportunities and privileges in the United States.” He died in 1960, four years before Congress passed the Civil Rights Act.

Green’s lasting influence, says Ramsey, “was showing the way for the next generation of black entrepreneurs.”



Beyond that, he adds, “Think about asking people to open their homes to people traveling—just the beauty of that alone. Some folks charged a little, but many didn’t charge anything.”

Today, filmmaker Ric Burns is working on his own Green-Book documentary. “This project began with historian Gretchen Sorin, who knows more than anyone about the Green-Book,” says Burns. The film, he says, shows the

“*This story is personal and powerful and palpable to me. It reflects my family’s civil rights struggle and horror. I know the author, Calvin Ramsey who wrote this new Green Book book saga in Atlanta, and I know the fear of driving South to Wadesboro, North Carolina from New Jersey every summer from 1950 to 1970 to work/visit my grandparents farm. This is a Black American story of coming back home to our Southern roots.*”

—MAYNARD EATON

open road as a place of “shadows, conflicts and excruciating circumstances.”

Washington, D.C.-based architectural historian Jennifer Reut, who created the blog “Mapping the Green Book” in 2011, travels the country to document surviving Green-Book sites, such as Las Vegas, Nevada’s Moulin Rouge casino and hotel, and the La Dale Motel in Los Angeles. Much of her focus, she says, is to look at places “in the middle of nowhere. That is where it was much more dangerous for people to go.” **sclc**

Reprint courtesy of Smithsonian Magazine, April 2016

America's First Black-Owned Radio Station Let the Words of Dr. King and Others Ring

BY YASMIN AMER

ATLANTA—Two blocks away from the famous King Center in downtown Atlanta is a small brick building that tourists typically overlook. But in the 1950s, that little brick building reverberated with the messages of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights leaders.

The building was home to the first black-owned radio station in the United States—W.E.R.D.—and it was the

medium that King used to broadcast his Sunday sermons then, later, announcements of his civil rights marches. The station was a fixture of Atlanta's African-American community. It offered a rare public venue for black jazz and blues performers during the Jim Crow era, and amplified the voices of King and other African-American leaders as they encouraged black citizens to vote.

In the decades that followed the tumultuous 1950s and '60, the building that had been WERD went through the incarnations of any professional building in a changing city, finally serving its community as a hair salon during the 1980s and '90s. That—a hair salon—was what hairdresser Ricci de Forest thought he was getting when he signed a lease in 2004.

Life returns—slowly—to MLK's old neighborhood

What he knew, though, was that it was not just any hair salon; it was one of only two “Madam C.J. Walker” hair salons left in the country. Named for an African-American beauty pioneer who made a fortune from licensing her salon chain and selling beauty products in the early 20th century, the salon and the building housing it had the appeal of that historical niche.

“I wanted to attach her legacy to my business,” says history buff de Forest.

It wasn't until about two years later that he discovered his new salon had a much broader and deeper place in African-American history, as the birthplace of WERD and as the amplifier of King's words to a community and to a nation.

The discovery was met with a sense of jubilation mixed with disappointment. De Forest didn't understand why the space hadn't been preserved in the years before he came to Atlanta from Cleveland.

“The burden of the responsibility hit me like a sucker punch. This is a heavy responsibility,” he says.



W.E.R.D., which became America's first black-owned radio station in 1949, is now used as a space for Atlanta artists to perform on Wednesday nights. Dr. King used to broadcast his Sunday sermons on the station. (Photo by Yasmin Amer/CNN)

In 1949, Atlanta University Professor Jesse B. Blayton Sr. bought WERD for \$50,000. Although it was only allowed to operate from sunrise to sunset and was allocated limited frequency power, it quickly became a staple to Atlanta's black community.

Young reader builds list of #1000BlackGirlBooks

King's office at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference is on the other side of the wall. It was said that King would tap the ceiling of his office with a broomstick to get the attention of the WERD DJ upstairs when he needed to make an announcement.

Today, you can still hear broadcasts from WERD online, where de Forest plays his record collection under the motto "All vintage. All vinyl. All the time" on Wednesdays from 3 p.m.-5 p.m. ET.

De Forest wanted to preserve the legacy of both Madam C.J. Walker and WERD by gradually turning his salon into a makeshift museum. Thousands of donated vinyl records—including albums by Billie Holiday, Miles Davis and Count

larger mission to preserve the district's history and contributions to the civil rights movement.

He gained nonprofit status in fall 2015 and keeps a small donation jar at the entrance of the building. De Forest says he's received a few donations over the years but also has to frequently dig into his own pockets to keep the doors opened.

"I've been keeping it open for years and it hasn't been easy... it hasn't been a financial gain. It's been a financial drain."

Despite this, he says he loves going in to work, where he is part-time hairstylist, DJ and tour guide.

"It's like a 5-year-old going to ride his tricycle. It's unbelievable. I feel that good."

Nowadays, de Forest frequently thinks about retiring and moving abroad to train other hairstylists, but also worries about what this would mean for the future of the museum. He invites young local artists to use the museum for performances as a way to reach out to younger generations, with the hope that they, too, can share his enthusiasm and love for the space.



Basie—decorate the walls, along with segregation-era signs de Forest has collected over the years. His desk displays a rusty "we serve colored carry out only" sign.

The hair salon portion of the building looks like an early 20th century time capsule and still operates as a functional hair salon. While some of de Forest's regular customers get their hair done, visitors stop by to look at the old curling irons and hair straighteners on display. One visitor named Selena says she's lived in Atlanta for 18 years but didn't know about the legacy of this place.

"It's embarrassing—I've never stopped but there's so much history in this one little space that I never knew about."

It's not just this building that doesn't get much foot traffic along Auburn Avenue. In fact, many of the historic buildings in this district are not frequented by many visitors.

A once bustling district built by black entrepreneurs in the early 20th century, Auburn Avenue later suffered from a lack of investment after the city integrated. The National Trust for Historic Preservation declared the area "endangered" twice.

De Forest says he sees his efforts to preserve the Madam C.J. Walker Museum and WERD radio station as part of a

His outreach seems to be working. There are a handful of young volunteers, including a bubbly 24-year-old named Chiane Matthews, who by chance stopped by the building last spring and had been returning almost every day since.

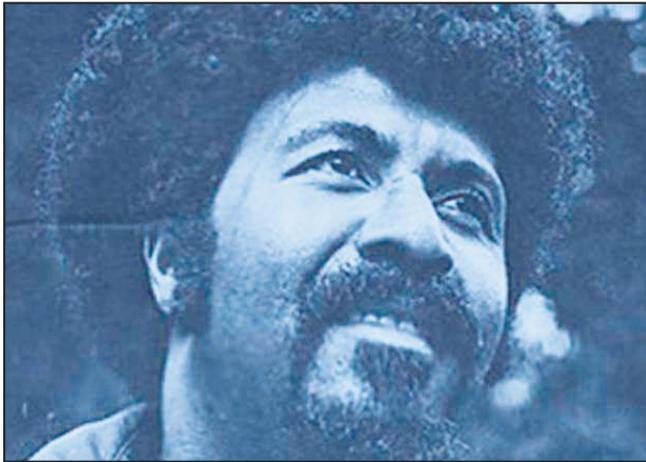
"I fell in love with this place and so I wanted to do something to help preserve it," said Matthews.

She started volunteering as a social media director and show producer and eventually brought her best friend, 23-year-old Amani Hassan, on board. In the short time before our interview, they had both been able to persuade another one of their friends to volunteer as "brand manager" for the museum.

On Wednesday nights, young men and women fill the makeshift museum. Matthews and Hassan take turns announcing the performers of the night, which include two R&B singers and two local rappers accompanied by a small band. During the performances, de Forest quietly sits in the corner and listens as he plays black and white video of a jazz duo on the back wall projector. "I want them to know this is where it started," he says. **sclc**

Reprint courtesy of CNN.

JAZZ PHOENIX RISES TO THE ANCESTORS



A Personal Tribute to DAVID BAKER

{ 1931-2016 }

*National Endowment Arts Jazz
Master and Education Pioneer*

BY ROBIN LIGON-WILLIAMS

David Baker, renowned jazz cellist, composer and educator, joined the ancestors on Saturday, March 26th, 2016 at the age of 84. Baker was not only a revolutionary force in the world of jazz, he was a powerful force in my life.

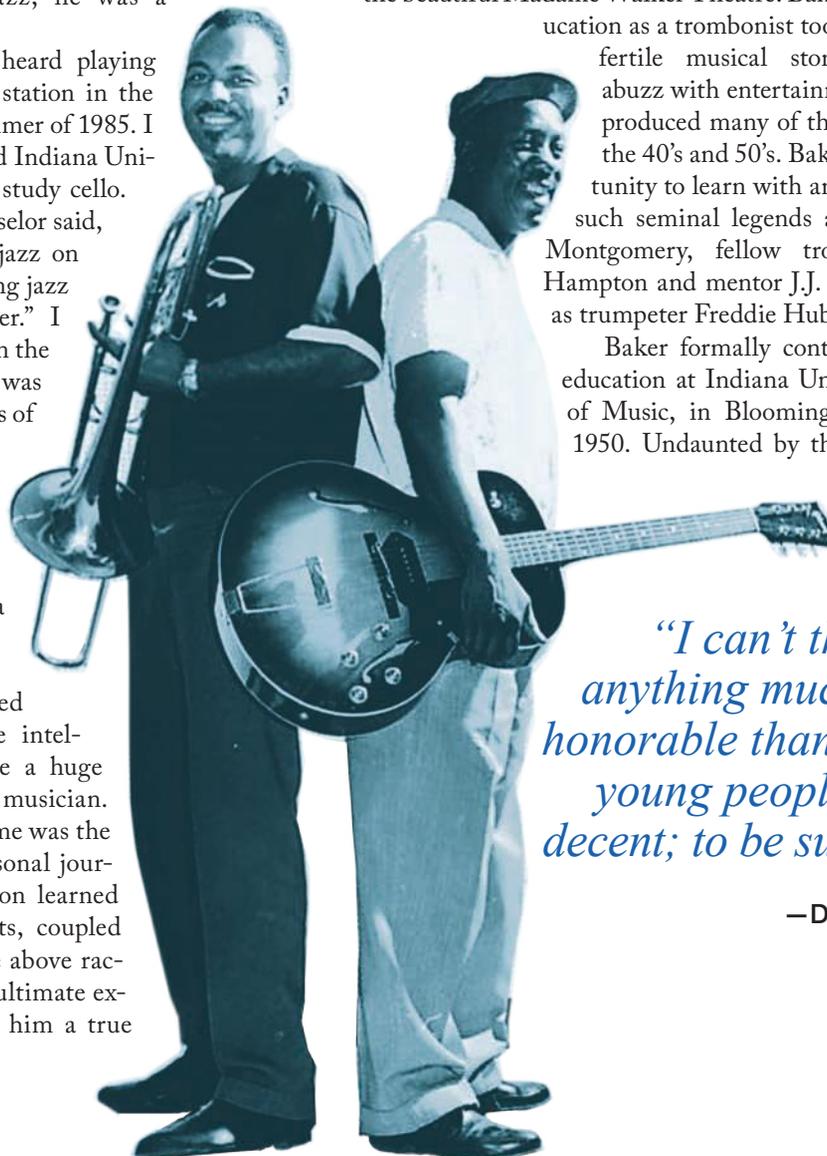
Baker was the cellist I heard playing avant-garde jazz on an NPR station in the Catskill Mountains in the summer of 1985. I was just getting ready to attend Indiana University-Bloomington (I.U.) to study cello. When I arrived there my counselor said, "Hey, do you want to study jazz on the cello? We have this amazing jazz professor named David Baker." I told her that I just heard him on the radio a few weeks earlier and was entranced by the unique sounds of his 21st century be-bop band.

When I showed up to my first Jazz Appreciation class at I.U. and this oh-so-hip cat with an afro, leather pants and the confidence of a lion walked into the room, I knew we were getting ready to learn jazz from a seasoned veteran. Baker's consummate intellect, style and swagger made a huge impression on me as a young musician. What I didn't realize at the time was the depth and breadth of his personal journey—how he got there. I soon learned that Baker's inimitable talents, coupled with his strong resolve to rise above racism, would fuel him to reach ultimate excellence in his field, making him a true pioneer in the history of jazz.

Baker was born in Indianapolis, Indiana on December 21, 1931. During a pre-Civil Rights era of forced segregation in the schools, Baker attended the all African-American Crispus Attucks High School, located just steps away from renowned Indiana Avenue, home to nearly 30 Jazz clubs and the beautiful Madame Walker Theatre. Baker's early jazz education as a trombonist took place on those

fertile musical stomping grounds, abuzz with entertainment venues that produced many of the great artists of the 40's and 50's. Baker had an opportunity to learn with and play alongside such seminal legends as guitarist Wes Montgomery, fellow trombonists Slide Hampton and mentor J.J. Johnson, as well as trumpeter Freddie Hubbard.

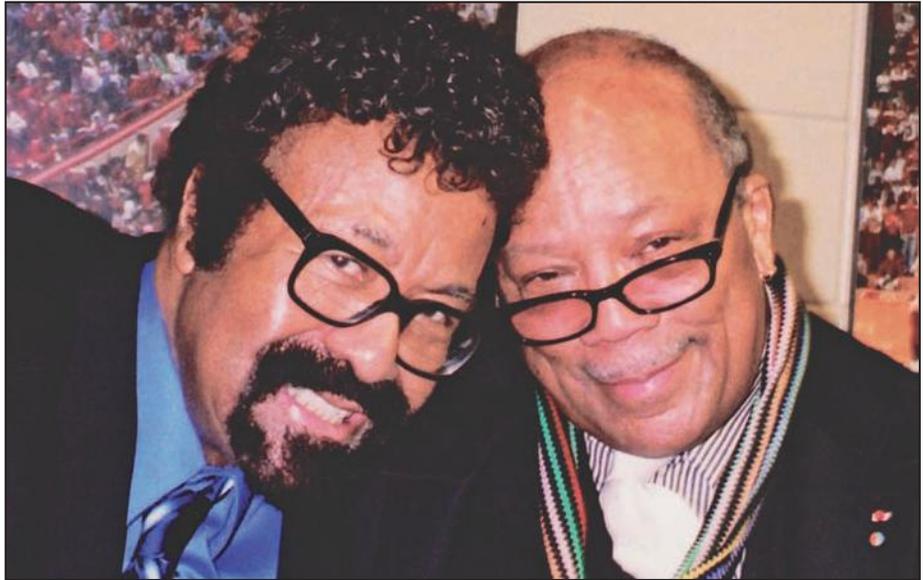
Baker formally continued his music education at Indiana University's School of Music, in Bloomington, Indiana in 1950. Undaunted by the reverberations of racism on



*"I can't think of
anything much more
honorable than teaching
young people to be
decent; to be successful"*

—DAVID BAKER

(Right) David Baker and Quincy Jones in 2010



campus and being denied access to many basic services and rights enjoyed by the white students, Baker remained strong in his pursuit to advance his education, earning his Bachelor of Music degree in 1953 and Master of Music in 1954.

After his stint in academia, Baker's career as a musician flourished, hitting the road with Quincy Jones and his big band in 1960, and later performing with Stan Kenton. Baker learned to expand the boundaries of jazz early on in tour-de-force tonal jazz experimentations. His dynamic collaboration with pianist George Russell resulted in six seminal albums (1960-62). On the heels of his success as a trombonist, Baker was in a car accident, which created nerve damage to his jaw, curtailing his career as a trombonist. Ever the rising phoenix, Baker took up the cello, an unlikely choice. As a result, in true Baker fashion, the artist spearheaded a whole new world for strings in the jazz idiom.

With a kaleidoscope of early influences and solid training in music, Baker notably became a pioneer in Jazz composition. He was a master at building musical bridges, creating impressive Third-stream compositions merging Jazz and Classical idioms, and writing some of the first arrangements and guidebooks for musicians studying jazz and improvisation. During his prolific career as a composer, Baker penned over 70 books and over 2,000 compositions, a body of work which eventually led to nominations for a Grammy Award in 1979 and a Pulitzer Prize in 1973.

I realize how incredibly lucky I was to have crossed paths with such a Giant. David Baker became my icon, my mentor, my father in the Arts. He opened many doors for me as an artist and journalist, even arranging for me to interview Dizzy Gillespie in the late 80's. He set a precedent for almost everything I have accomplished on my path in this life, from my career as a musician in New Orleans, to my role as an arts producer and my development as an educator.

When I returned from New Orleans to direct the Indianapolis Philharmonic in 1998, David was the first person I called. He said, "Robin, they are getting ready to start a new jazz festival in Indy." I sprang into action. In 1999, on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of Duke Ellington's birth, we opened up the inaugural Indy Jazz Fest with David Baker's "Ellingtones", featuring a 100 piece orchestra and the incomparable sax legend James Moody.

In 2000, I was honored to travel to New Orleans for the International Association of Jazz Educators convention as chosen reporter to cover Baker's honor as a National Endowment of the Arts Jazz Master for the Indianapolis Star. His induction that year was particularly significant for him

as an educator, as most inductees up to that point had strictly been performers.

"I think this is a singular break-through in the sense that I am an educator," said Baker. "In honoring me, what they are really doing, for the first time, is honoring the IAJE and the profession of jazz education."

Baker's unwavering commitment to diversity, education and artistic excellence were pervasive features of his role in the jazz continuum. He continued to serve as an inspiration to me throughout my career, particularly when I returned back New Orleans to become the inaugural director of the New Orleans Jazz Institute at University of New Orleans in 2008.

As NEA Jazz Master, International Association of Jazz Educators president, Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra director and Distinguished Professor of Jazz Studies at I.U. Bloomington, until his death, David left a huge footprint in Jazz around the world.

He most definitely left an indelible imprint on me and so many of us who looked to his unique style, artistry, leadership and most of all, his unyielding sense of humanity, as a rubric for our own careers. I will always hold him in my heart as my biggest inspiration, and will continue to live my life in the arts in tribute to his incredible legacy. SCLC



ROBIN LIGON-WILLIAMS is an award-winning cultural producer, curator and musician based in Atlanta. Williams has served at the helm of several arts organizations, including the Indianapolis Philharmonic Orchestra, Garfield Park Arts Center, New Orleans Jazz Institute, and most

recently was responsible for spearheading the Aviation Community Cultural Center for Fulton County. She still plays cello and sings jazz.



The Memory of Madam C.J. Walker Lives on in an Atlanta Museum and New Hair Product Line

BY MAYNARD EATON, Managing Editor

Ricci de Forest is a Madam C. J. Walker devotee and curator of a small Atlanta museum that honors her legacy. That's why he is so pleased that the name and history of the woman who "is credited with being the grand dame of the Black beauty industry" is being revived with the launch of a new line of hair products in her honor.

"I'm more of a preservationist," says de Forest, a popular hair stylist whose Hilliard Street salon also houses a vintage collection of jazz music from the nation's first Black owned radio station W.E.R.D.-AM. "I co-exist with this period of time and it's always been that way. I have a social, cultural and moral obligation to keep this little cultural canoe going until it becomes an ocean going museum."

Sundial Brands, a leading skincare and hair care manufacturer recently announced the company's first prestige hair care launch—Madam C. J. Walker Beauty Culture. Building on the life, legacy and impact of the ground-breaking Madam C. J. Walker—visionary entrepreneur, philanthropist and America's first female self-made millionaire—the four-collection line launched exclusively in Sephora stores

on March 4, 2016, their media release says.

"I am delighted," says de Forest, who opened his museum and salon 12 years ago. "Just to have her name out there is a good thing. I am hoping they are true to the legacy because this space is a living manifestation of the Walker legacy. And because it is still functioning as a Madam C.J. Walker beauty shop, it still has her heartbeat. We bring some spiritual weight and integrity to what they are doing."

"It's great," adds A 'Leila Bundles, a journalist, author and great, great, granddaughter of Madam C.J. Walker. "I have been writing about her for 40 years now so if Sundial is successful this will elevate the brand of Madam C.J. Walker. With the range of products they are offering there seems to be something for everyone's texture of hair so I couldn't be happier."

Ricci de Forest has been one of Atlanta's most trendy Black hair care artists 30 years, having previously owned a salon on North Highland Avenue over near Blind Willies in the Virginia Highland area.

"I was over there a long time before it became really popular with the yuppies and buppies," he says. "It was upscale at the time. I was considered a high end stylist because

"I have been writing about her for 40 years now so if Sundial Brands is successful this will elevate the brand of Madam C.J. Walker. With the range of products they are offering there seems to be something for everyone's texture of hair so I couldn't be happier."

—LEILA BUNDLES

Journalist, Author and Great, Great, Granddaughter of Madam C.J. Walker

I was global. I was traveling for various cosmetic companies, teaching training techniques and working all the international trade shows. I guess Atlanta's African American female elite migrated to my high profile salon and we delivered. We had a skill set with cut, color and chemicals."

When his lease expired, he decided to move to the corner of Auburn Avenue and Hilliard Street in the Prince Hall Masonic Lodge building that had originally housed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, WERD radio and a Madam C. J. Walker beauty shop.

"I got this space based on knowing the legacy of Madam C.J. Walker and knowing that script on the window when I saw it 30 years ago was correct to the period of the '50's," says the 63 year-old de Forest. "You could see the ink and the style of it. That's the original logo on the glass. When I got the lease, that's when I stumbled on the vintage artifacts that were left in here. And, I knew that the artifacts in here were original to the space which meant that the Walker agents that used to work here probably used those tools."

He continues, "I met the last living agent that used to work in this place. She told me that these were the tools they used when she started doing hair here in the '50's, and a shampoo and press was 25 cents. You would learn the Walker system, and then you would go out and open a salon as a Walker agent, buying the products and using the Walker system of doing hair."

Madam C.J. Walker handbook Madam C. J. Walker is credited with being the top earner and leader of the Black beauty industry during that era but there were multiple Black women beauty pioneers in competition with one another.

"But the absolute beginning starts with Annie Turnbo Malone who had the first school of cosmetology for the study of Black hair in North America," says de Forest. "She had a global brand. Walker was a student at her beauty college in St. Louis. What Walker did was take the existing system after graduation and take it to another level. She had a better marketing strategy."

Madam Walker and others of her ilk shortly after the turn of the century were often referred to as "race women." They pre-dated the civil rights era of activism. They financed a range of racially sensitive causes. This cadre of Black hair care entrepreneurs owned virtually 100 percent of the industry in those early days. This new product line, as de Forest sees it, continues Madam C. J. Walker's legacy of women's and economic empowerment



Ricci de Forest has been one of Atlanta's most trendy black hair care artists for 30 years. He is the owner of the Madam C.J. Walker Museum and salon in the Old Fourth Ward. The salon also houses a vintage collection of jazz music from the nation's first black-owned radio station W.E.R.D. (see p.24).

"The most important aspect of this whole scenario is that these beauty pioneers were providing Madam C.J. Walker products employment for women during a period in which Black families could not penetrate the economic stratosphere of mainstream society because of racism," de Forest opines. "These women were able to provide employment which provided the next generation the opportunity to go schools of higher learning. Any doctor or lawyer or any kind of Black professional, if you go back two or three generations someone was doing some hair. And, that hair provided a financial avenue for the next generation to move on. It goes back to even Madam C.J. Walker. The money she made allowed her to have her daughter become educated. Their whole system was set up to bring up a generation of African Americans. And part of their system was to divide the business in thirds—one-third for myself, one-third for the company and one-third for the cause."

Madam C. J. Walker represents all that is possible, according to her biographical sketch. Sarah Breedlove—who later would come to be known as Madam C. J. Walker—was born on December 23, 1867 on the same Delta, Louisiana plantation where her parents, Owen and Minerva Anderson Breedlove, had been enslaved before the end of the Civil War. This child of sharecroppers transformed herself from an uneducated farm laborer and laundress into one of the twentieth century's most successful, self-made women entrepreneurs.

"Now I realize that in the so-called higher walks of life many were prone to look down on hair dressers," she has been quoted as saying. "They didn't have a very high opinion of our calling, so I had to go down and dignify this work."

"That woman was out there," says de Forest with a proud smile. "She had some swag and a tongue!" SCLC

Courtesy of the SaportaReport.com.





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