



# SCOPE50 News

The Struggle Continues!  
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## Remembering Our Leaders

At this time, when conflict seems to be the rule of the day, we need to remember our leaders from SCLC and SCOPE - the men and women who sacrificed for the common good. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his life for the cause on April 4, 1968. His successor, Dr. Ralph David Abernathy, gave voice to the poor and led the Poor People's Campaign in Washington, DC. Hosea Williams, our leader of the SCOPE Project, worked to give voice to the most voiceless. Rosa Parks, a woman who demonstrated that women could be leaders and have the courage to stand up (or sit down!) for what they believed. Dr. King's father, "Daddy" King who lost a son and his wife, Alberta Williams King, who was shot and killed in 1974 as she played the organ during Sunday services at Ebenezer Baptist Church. These are just a few examples of the leaders in the 50's and 60's that moved us beyond ourselves.



Dr. King, Dr. Abernathy, Rosa Parks, Fred Gray



Dr. Abernathy, James Forman (SNCC)  
Dr. King, (unknown), John Lewis



Hosea Williams, Dr. King,  
Bernard Lafayette



Dr. Abernathy, "Daddy" King



Andrew Young, "Daddy" and Mrs. King

*Photos taken at Dr. Martin Luther King's funeral and posted by Ron Barrett*

## Selma Jubilee

In our last issue we reported that the annual Selma Jubilee would be held this year on March 1-3. Richard Smiley, a member of SCOPE50's Board of Directors, attended the Jubilee. Smiley was present on Bloody Sunday, and he was one of the few who marched all the way from Selma to Montgomery when Dr. King led demonstrators on the 5-day, 54-mile march to the steps of the capitol in Montgomery. During last year's Selma Jubilee, Smiley was honored at the Foot Soldiers Breakfast in recognition of his Civil Rights activities.

Following are some photos from this year's Jubilee:

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Foot soldier Richard Smiley arrives at the foot of the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala., on Sunday March 3, 2024 during the 59th anniversary celebration of the Bloody Sunday March.



*Vice President Kamala Harris*



*Attendees at Selma Jubilee events*



*Rep. James Clyburn*

## In Memorium

Naomi Ruth Barber King, the widow of the Rev. Alfred Daniel (A.D.), died on March 7 at the age of 92. Naomi King married Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s younger brother in 1950. Since A.D.'s passing in 1969, his wife has kept his legacy alive with a foundation in his name. The A.D. King Foundation's work is dedicated to empowering youth and women in nonviolent social change.

Naomi King's passing marks the close of a generational chapter for the King family. Each of Dr. King's siblings, and their spouses, have died. Naomi King's passing comes shortly after the family loss of Dexter Scott King, the son of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Dr. Christine King Farris, Dr. King's sister. A private family memorial service was held on March 15.

### *The Reconstruction Era National Historic Network*

Chuck Sams, Director of the National Park Service, recently visited the Penn Center on St. Helena Island, SC, to commemorate Black History Month and announce the addition of five new locations to the Reconstruction Era National Historic Network. The Penn Center was added to the Reconstruction Era National Historic Network in 2021. A collection of 107 sites spread across the country, the network tells the broad story of Reconstruction, illustrating that Reconstruction wasn't limited to just a Southern experience. With a variety of widely dispersed and locally managed sites, the park service is able to integrate local insight into a larger story. The additions to the network are:

- (1) The Black Metropolis in Pennsylvania – a digital project which examines the lives of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Black Philadelphians who built infrastructure for sanctuary for thousands of freedom seekers before, during and after the Civil War.
- (2) The Buffalo Soldiers Museum at Fort Lawton in Washington. Built in 1898, this site was the base for multiple African American Army units known as Buffalo Soldiers. The museum will work to educate, preserve and present the local and national contributions of America's Buffalo Soldiers from 1866 through Reconstruction and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- (3) The Dark Branch Descendants Association in North Carolina – an independent, descendant-led organization devoted to centering the narratives and lived experiences of African American communities along the Lower Cape Fear River in North Carolina during the periods of enslavement and Reconstruction.
- (4) Fort Stanton Historic Site in New Mexico. From 1866 to the 1880s, this was the home to a unit of the United States Colored Troops, and later the Buffalo Soldiers of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiments.
- (5) Fort Union National Monument in New Mexico. This site operated throughout Reconstruction as a base for the Buffalo Soldiers of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiments.

### *The Progressive Club (excerpted from the Charleston Post & Courier, Feb. 5, 2024)*

The remains of an old building on a rural road on Johns Island, South Carolina, has a remarkable story to tell. It was the location of the Progressive Club, an initiative that impacted the Civil Rights movement, not only locally in the Charleston area, but also throughout the South as other centers like it were created. The club was established by Esau Jenkins and about 40 of his neighbors in an abandoned schoolhouse as a co-op grocery and dry goods store in 1948, a time when segregation was the status quo. Here, poor, rural black Johns Islanders could buy everything from produce to gas to farm supplies. More importantly, club members could trade goods or services with each other when they had little or no cash. It also functioned as a credit union for small loans.

Having left school in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade to support his family, Jenkins understood the importance of education in furthering racial justice and improving one's lot in life. Thanks to the support from Charleston educator Septima P. Clark, Jenkins completed his education as an adult at the Highlander Folk Center in Tennessee, a school that focused on civil rights leadership.

Returning home, Jenkins was unwilling to accept the poverty and despair that defined the lives of black children on Johns Island. He ensured their education by driving them downtown in his Volkswagen bus to attend Charleston's only black public high school.

He also drove adults to and from jobs in the city that gave them the chance to earn more and improve their lot in life. During these commutes, Jenkins would teach his riders about the importance of voting to ensure their civil rights. He gave them copies of the state's voting laws, explaining their rights and what the laws meant.



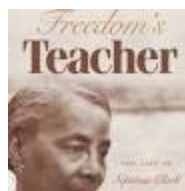
Esau Jenkins (center)

Still, according to the state's 1895 constitution, one had to be able to read and write to vote. Thus, beginning in 1957, Septima Clark and other educators created within the Progressive Club a Citizenship School, modeled after and sponsored by the Highlander Folk Center, to teach adults and children how to read and write, and how to exercise their voting rights. News of its success spread, and more Citizenship Schools opened around the South.

The Progressive Club continued to operate until 1975, by which time schools were integrated. In 2007, the site was added to the National Register of Historic Places. David Thompson, author of *The Role of Cooperatives in the Civil Rights Movement*, writes, "The accomplishments of that simple Citizenship School, humbly created in a co-op shop, became one of the greatest stories of the civil rights movement."

### *The Sisters of Septima by John Reynolds*

I first became involved in the Civil Rights Movement when the SCOPE Project came to my hometown of Troy, Alabama, in 1965. After that summer I was sent to the Penn Center in South Carolina for a training workshop conducted by Septima Clark. The intention was to take what I learned and put it to work back in Troy. Mrs. Clark, however, felt that I would be more useful to the Movement as a staff member with SCLC. She called Dr. King and told him she would like to bring me to Atlanta so that he could interview me for a position, and he agreed. What she did changed my life. I stayed in touch with her over the years and have been so pleased that she has been recognized as the remarkable woman she was. Dr. King called her "The Mother of the Movement."



The Sisters of Septima is a new initiative in the School of Education at the College of Charleston, named after her. It is a teacher leadership development program designed to support the growth and advancement of women of color majoring in Teacher Education. For more information, go to: <https://charleston.edu/school-education/student-opportunities/sisters-of-septima.php>