

Please Join Us...Virtually!

On Friday, February 12, 2021, join Tennessee State University's College of Liberal Arts and the Metropolitan Historical Commission for the 40th Annual Nashville Conference on African American History and Culture (NCAAHC), a dynamic celebration of the contributions of African Americans to Nashville and Tennessee history. For forty years, this award-winning conference has brought together historians, students, educators, community leaders and others interested in African American history and culture.

This year's conference will be the first-ever virtual NCAAHC and is packed with many new presenters, engaging sessions and talented musical guests. Our theme this year is "40 Years of Science, Sites and Sounds."

Along with a stellar line-up of presentations and musical performances, attendees will be treated to a thoughtful panel discussion with some of Nashville's foremost historians. Participants will also experience a virtual tour of the Jefferson Street Sound (JSS) Museum, hosted by JSS Records CEO Lorenzo Washington. The \$20 registration fee includes access to the half-day online event, a commemorative NCAAHC lapel pin and both a print and digital copy of the newly-revised *Profiles of African Americans in Tennessee* book showcasing all 40 years of illuminating conference profiles. We hope you will join us in celebrating the 40th annual NCAAHC!

TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY  
AND THE  
METROPOLITAN NASHVILLE  
HISTORICAL COMMISSION

40th Annual



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“40 Years of  
Science,  
Sites  
and Sounds”

Friday, February 12, 2021  
9:00 am – 1:15 pm

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Presented Virtually



Metropolitan Historical Commission

Sunnyside in Sevier Park

3000 Granny White Pike

Nashville, Tennessee 37204-2901

# Conference Registration



Friday, February 12, 2021

Registration: \$20

includes conference access, commemorative NCAAHC lapel pin, and a digital and print copy of *Profiles of African Americans in Tennessee*

Register online! <https://events.eventzilla.net/e/2021-nashville-conference-on-african-american-history-and-culture-virtual-2138785589>

Make checks payable to:

**TSU Foundation: TSU/MHC Conference**

Mail by February 10\* to:

**Metro Historical Commission  
3000 Granny White Pike  
Nashville, Tennessee 37204**

**\*\*\*note: the MHC cannot accept walk-in registrations due to COVID restrictions\*\*\***

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address (REQUIRED) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Questions? Call us at 615-862-7970

\*Checks MUST be received by February 10.

Early/online registration recommended, please allow time for mailing delays.

Registration cannot be taken over the phone.



# Preliminary Program

9:00 am

## Opening Remarks

Tim Walker, Metro Historical Commission  
Mayor John Cooper  
Linda T. Wynn, Conference Chair

9:25 am

## Fisk University Scientists – Past and Present

Dr. Bryan Kent Wallace, Fisk University

9:45 am

## Atomic Hope: Our Words and Our Spaces, Oak Ridge, TN

Katatra Vasquez, U.S. Dept. of Energy

10:05 am

## BREAK– music by Don Adams Band

10:10 am

## Rectifying an Inequitable History: The Nashville Environmental Justice Initiative

Patrick King, Urban Green Lab

10:30 am

## Nashville Sites: Walking and Virtual Tours of Nashville's History and Culture

Dr. Mary Ellen Pethel, Belmont University

10:55 am

## Musical Performance:

Andriana Haygood, Belmont University

11:15 am

## BREAK– music by Andriana Haygood

11:20 am

## Uncovering the Forgotten: Documenting the African American Presence at Cheekwood and Discussing the African American Community in Nashville, 1880-1940

Keneisha Mosley,  
Cheekwood Estate and Gardens

11:40 pm

## No Sell-Out, No Compromise: Past and Present Leadership Lessons from The Tennessee State University Sit-In of 1990

Rev. jeff carr, The Infinity Fellowship  
Faith Gathering

12:05 pm

## Virtual Tour of Jefferson Street Sound Museum

Lorenzo Washington, JSS Museum

12:20 pm

## BREAK– music by Marion James

12:25 pm

## Musical Performance: Don Adams Band

12:45 pm

## Panel Discussion: Reflections and Affirmations: A 40-Year Retrospective of the Nashville Conference on African American History and Culture

1:05 pm

## Closing Remarks

Dr. Learotha Williams, Jr.,  
Tennessee State University

# Planning Committee

## Conference Chair

Linda T. Wynn

*Tennessee Historical Commission/Fisk University*

## Committee Members

Pamela Bobo

*Tennessee State University*

Dr. Joel Dark

*Tennessee State University*

Dr. K.T. Ewing

*Tennessee State University*

Glenda Alvin

*Tennessee State University*

Gloria McKissack

*Tennessee State University*

Caroline Eller

*Metropolitan Historical Commission*

Jamaal B. Sheats

*Fisk University*

Sharon Hull Smith

*Tennessee State University*

Tim Walker

*Metropolitan Historical Commission*

Dr. Learotha Williams, Jr.

*Tennessee State University*

# Financial Supporters

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Jefferson Street Baptist Church

Tennessee Historical Society

Spruce Street Baptist Church

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**Metropolitan Nashville and  
Davidson County, TN  
Legislation**

**Resolution: RS2021-778**

A resolution recognizing and honoring the Nashville Conference on African American History and Culture for forty years of research, publishing and educational outreach.

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Historical Commission and Tennessee State University organized the first Local Conference on Afro-American Culture and History in 1981; and

WHEREAS, the conference has educated Nashvillians of all ages about the diverse and significant contributions of African Americans to our state and local history; and

WHEREAS, over 290 performances and papers have been presented, and over 130 *Profiles of African Americans in Nashville and Tennessee* have been published since the conference's inception; and

WHEREAS, Fisk University, the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Middle Tennessee State University, the Tennessee Historical Commission, Tennessee State University, and private supporters have contributed resources ensuring the success of the conference; and

WHEREAS, the Conference on African American History and Culture celebrated its fortieth anniversary on February 12, 2021; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper that the Metropolitan Council recognize the Conference on African American History and Culture for forty years of outstanding work in educating the public about the considerable contributions African Americans have made to Nashville and Davidson County.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY:

Section 1: That the Metropolitan County Council hereby recognizes and honors the Conference on African American History and Culture for forty years of research, publishing, and educational outreach.

Section 2: The Metropolitan Council Office is directed to prepare a copy of this resolution to be presented to the Metropolitan Historical Commission and Tennessee State University for inclusion in the 2021 commemorative program.

Section 3: This Resolution shall take effect from and after its adoption, the welfare of The Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.

Mayor

  
John Cooper

Date

FEB 17 2021



# Tennessee Senate

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CLERK

## SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 5

By Gilmore, Campbell, Yarbrow

### A RESOLUTION

to honor the Nashville Conference on African American History and Culture for forty years of research, publishing, and educational outreach.

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Historical Commission and Tennessee State University organized the first Local Conference on Afro-American Culture and History in 1981; and

WHEREAS, the conference has educated Nashvillians of all ages about the diverse and significant contributions of African Americans to our State and local history; and

WHEREAS, more than 290 performances and papers have been presented, and more than 130 *Profiles of African Americans in Nashville and Tennessee* have been published since the conference's inception; and

WHEREAS, Fisk University, the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Middle Tennessee State University, the Tennessee Historical Commission, Tennessee State University, and private supporters have contributed resources that ensure the success of the conference; and

WHEREAS, the Conference on African American History and Culture celebrates its fortieth anniversary on February 12, 2021; and

WHEREAS, it is most appropriate that we recognize the Conference on African American History and Culture for forty years of outstanding work in educating the public about the considerable contributions African Americans have made to Nashville and Davidson County; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we hereby honor and commend the Conference on African American History and Culture for forty years of research, publishing, and educational outreach and extend our best wishes for much continued success in its future endeavors.

Adopted: February 25, 2021

  
Senator Brenda Gilmore

  
Speaker of the Senate





**“40 YEARS OF SCIENCE, SITES AND SOUNDS”**

(Virtual) Friday, February 12, 2021 • Dedicated to the memory of Dr. Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.

9:00 am	Opening Remarks Mr. Tim Walker, Executive Director, Metropolitan Historical Commission Mayor John Cooper, Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County Prof. Linda Wynn, Conference Chair
9:25 am	“90 Years of Physics at Fisk University” Dr. Bryan Kent Wallace, Fisk University
9:50 am	“Atomic Hope: Our Words and Our Spaces, Oak Ridge, TN” Katatra Vasquez, U.S. Department of Energy
10:10 am	BREAK (music provided by Don Adams Band)
10:15 am	“Rectifying an Inequitable History: The Nashville Environmental Justice Initiative” Patrick King, Urban Green Lab
10:35 am	“Nashville Sites: Walking and Virtual Tours of Nashville’s History and Culture” Dr. Mary Ellen Pethel, Belmont University
11:00 am	Musical Performance by Andriana Haygood Andriana Haygood, Belmont University
11:20 am	BREAK (music provided by Andriana Haygood)
11:25 am	“Uncovering the Forgotten: Documenting the African American Presence at Cheekwood and Discussing the African American Community in Nashville, 1880-1940” Keneisha Mosley, Cheekwood Estate and Gardens
11:45 am	“No Sell-Out, No Compromise: Past and Present Leadership Lessons from The Tennessee State University Student Sit-In of 1990” Rev. jeff carr, The Infinity Fellowship Interfaith Gathering
12:10 pm	Virtual Tour of Jefferson Street Sound Museum, Lorenzo Washington, Jefferson Street Sound Museum
12:25 pm	BREAK (music provided by Marion James, courtesy of JSS Museum)
12:30 pm	Musical Performance by Don Adams Band
12:50 pm	Panel Discussion: Reflections and Affirmations: A 40-Year Retrospective of the Nashville Conference on African American History and Culture”
1:10 pm	Closing Remarks Dr. Learotha Williams, Jr., Tennessee State University

## **FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS**

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METRO HISTORICAL COMMISSION FOUNDATION

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SPRUCE STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

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## **PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Chair Linda T. Wynn, *Tennessee Historical Commission/Fisk University*

Glenda Alvin, *Tennessee State University*

Pamela Bobo, *Tennessee State University*

Dr. Joel Dark, *Tennessee State University*

Caroline Eller, *Metropolitan Historical Commission*

Dr. K.T. Ewing, *Tennessee State University*

Gloria McKissack, *Tennessee State University (ret.)*

Jamaal B. Sheats, *Fisk University*

Sharon Hull Smith, *Tennessee State University*

Tim Walker, *Executive Director, Metropolitan Historical Commission*

Dr. Learotha Williams, Jr., *Tennessee State University*

# Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee



**John Robert Bradley (1919-2007)**

John Robert Lee Bradley was born in Memphis, Tennessee to John and Lela Ellis Bradley on October 5, 1919. Reared by his mother, Bradley and his brother grew up poverty-stricken. His mother worked in a laundry but experienced difficulty making ends meet. In *A Wealth of Wisdom*, Bradley stated "I know what it is to be hungry. I know what it is to need shoes. I know what it is to not have a house to live in, because they had set our little furniture out on the street because my mother couldn't pay the rent." He withdrew from school around the third grade lacking the rudimentary reading and writing skills. Yet, he was gifted with a classical baritone voice.

Around age twelve, Bradley joined other children outside Ellis Auditorium in Memphis, at a National Baptist Convention Christmas Eve program where low-wealth children singing in a church choir were gifted clothes and Christmas stockings. Bradley "sang his way" into the convention hall, where he met Lucie Campbell, the convention's music director and a pioneering gospel songwriter. In her role, Campbell introduced young promising talent and auditioned musicians to the convention's audiences such as Marian Anderson, Thomas A. Dorsey, and Mahalia Jackson. Impressed by Bradley, Campbell became his mentor, introduced him to the National Baptist Convention and made him the lead singer in her newly-organized Good Will Singers Quartet that toured nationally. Campbell chose Bradley to introduce her newest compositions and he became the best-known interpreter of her songs.

Known for his rich baritone voice, Bradley received voice lessons from Charles Faulkner

Bryan, head of Tennessee Polytechnic Institute's (TPI, now Tennessee Technological University) music division. In 1938, during the era of Jim Crow segregation, Bradley met Charles and Edith Bryan at a revival in McMinnville, Tennessee, where they were the only whites in the audience. Bradley had appeared before live audiences for years and developed a classical style. Surprised by the quality of his voice, the Bryans introduced themselves to the young baritone after the show. Charles Bryan feared that Bradley would damage his voice if he did not learn the proper technique and he offered to give Bradley lessons. The two began a week of lessons the next day, after which Bryan asked Bradley to stay in touch. As noted in Laura Clemons' article "The Missionaries of TPI," Bryan risked his own career to assist Bradley in establishing his.

In the fall of 1938, Bradley left the revival singers and moved to Cookeville, Tennessee, where the Bryans arranged for him to live with an African American pastor. Once Bradley became established in Cookeville, Bryan began teaching him on the campus of Tennessee Polytechnic Institute (TPI). However, because the campus was racially segregated, voice lessons were given covertly at night. By day, Edith Bryan taught Bradley to read and write. Ultimately, the school's president, Q. M. Smith, discovered that Bryan was giving Bradley voice lessons. Smith went against the racial mores of the day and allowed Bryan to continue working with Bradley. After a year of working with Bryan, the baritone singer left Cookeville and moved to Nashville.

In the early 1940s, Bradley decided to study

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classical music. With help from Lucie Campbell and Dr. A. M. Townsend of the Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention, U. S. A., he studied voice with Wagnerian singer Edythe Walker in New York, where he made his Carnegie Hall debut. Later, he studied classical music in London and performed for the king and queen of England in 1955 where he made his Royal Albert Hall debut. He studied at London's Trinity College and sang for BBC radio. He also performed at the World Baptist Alliance (WBA) in London, where Campbell introduced him to global Baptist congregations throughout Europe and Scandinavia. Bradley sang her version of *The Lord Is My Shepherd*. Due to his success and numerous repeat performances at the WBA, Bradley became known as "Mister Baptist" and became one of the most visible faces of African American Baptists.

During the course of his concert career, John Robert Bradley performed at concerts across Europe and the Americas, where he sang arias, lieder and spirituals. Notwithstanding his success as a concert performer, "Mr. Baptist" continued singing in churches and gospel concerts. He always made sure to include such songs as *Amazing Grace*, *Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child*, and *You've Got to Love Everybody*. During the era of the Modern Civil Rights Movement, Bradley used his singing as a means of breaking down racial barriers. While whites would not listen to African American preachers, he noted, they would listen to him sing. Consequently, he was able to break down some racial impediments across the South.

The renowned singer recorded his first gospel single for the Apollo label in 1950 and went on to record for Decca. Apollo 211's sides were *Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel*, and *If Jesus Had to Pray*. At the same session for Apollo, Bradley recorded the unreleased *Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone*, *Poor Pilgrim of Sorrow*, *Lord Hear my Plea*, and a magisterial reading of *He's Got the Whole World in His Hands*. Twelve years

later, Bradley recorded LP's for Battle Records (1962), Decca Records (1965), Nashboro Records (*I'll Fly Away*, 1974) and Spirit Feel/Shanachie, among others. In 1997, he recorded several cuts for Tony Heilbut's collection *All God's Sons & Daughters: Chicago Gospel Legends*, which Heilbut's Spirit Feel label released in 1999.

After the 1963 demise of Lucie Campbell, Bradley succeeded her as director of music for the National Baptist Convention, U. S. A., Inc. On February 2, 1972, Bradley, the National Baptist Convention's most popular singer, paid homage to the renowned gospel vocalist Mahalia Jackson, when he rendered a song at her funeral. In 1993, with assistance from the Rev. Amos Jones, Bradley's memoir, *In the Hands of God: The Life Story of J. Robert Bradley, an Autobiography*, was published by Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention, U. S. A. Inc. John Robert Bradley made his last performance at the National Baptist Convention in 2005.

A favorite singer of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he was knighted in Liberia by President William Tolbert in 1975. Mahalia Jackson once noted, "Nobody need mess with 'Amazing Grace' after Bradley. . ." A member of Spruce Street Baptist Church, Sir J. Robert Bradley died on May 3, 2007. He was funeralized at Spruce Street and interred next to his mother in Greenwood Cemetery on May 7, 2007.

-Linda T. Wynn

# Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee



## **Dr. Charles Odom Hadley (1876-1948)**

Dr. Charles Odom Hadley was a prominent African American within Nashville and Tennessee medical and military history. His former home, a circa 1914 exuberant Craftsman, still stands at 1601 Phillips Street on the Fisk University campus. This architectural gem serves as a physical reminder of his legacy. In addition to his noteworthy medical career, this Nashville physician achieved great success as a celebrated military leader and respected university instructor.

Hadley was born in Nashville on March 10, 1876 to Jennie Martin and Dr. William A. Hadley, one of the first and most highly reputed African American physicians in Nashville. Dr. W.A. Hadley also founded the Nashville branch of the Independent Order of the Immaculates (IOI, established 1871), a national African American fraternal organization based in Nashville. Once considered the strongest order in Tennessee and one of the strongest in the nation, the IOI admitted members of both sexes. W.A. Hadley's leadership and service-driven roles undoubtedly shaped the aspirations of his son.

The younger Hadley earned a Bachelor of Arts from Fisk University in 1896 and graduated from Meharry Medical College in 1899. That winter he joined the newly-formed Nashville Society of Medicine, a cadre of African American physicians and dentists headed by R.F. Boyd. An early instance within Charles' lifelong pattern of community service, he represented the Third Ward in the 1896, 1898 and 1902 Republican primary elections.

Dr. C.O. Hadley began his Nashville medical practice in 1900, boarding and practicing at 1512 Phillips Street with his father. Upon the elder Hadley's death in 1901, Charles took over his medical practice at 1103 Cedar Avenue. He joined the Medical Alumni Endowment Association of Walden University, elected Vice President of the association in 1903. He also served as President of the Nashville Medico-Chirurgical Society, a group responsible for the formation of an all-Black state medical society of which he was elected Vice President upon its establishment in August 1903. In 1905, Charles married Fisk University graduate Mabel Grant of Nashville and they made their home at 1506 Phillips Street.

In 1906, Dr. C.O. Hadley served on the Advisory Committee of the local branch of the Negro Development and Exhibition Company, a national group which advocated for an African American museum at the Jamestown, Virginia Ter-Centennial Exposition of 1907. Largely comprised of elite African American members who wanted to earn respect from Whites and inspire less-educated Blacks, the group felt that "the Negro Building could ease a path for political and civil rights," and the museum was ultimately realized. Around this time, Dr. Hadley joined the faculty of Nashville's Wilson Infirmary (incorporated 1907), located at the intersection of South First Street and South Hill (now Hart) Street. Following in his father's footsteps and in keeping with his own custom of community betterment, in 1908 Dr. Hadley became an advisory board member for the Colored Knights of Pythias

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benevolent order at Stonewall Lodge No. 103. The following year, he and several other doctors jointly opened new offices at 1211 Cedar Street near Twelfth Avenue North, the collocation of their services considered a neoteric model. Members of the state medical association elected him as their new president in June of 1909. Just prior to World War I, the dwelling at 1601 Phillips Street was constructed (c. 1913-1914) for a sum of \$2,500 and the Hadleys took up residence there by 1915.

In addition to his medical, educational and community endeavors, Charles O. Hadley served over twelve consecutive years under the Tennessee National Guard (TNG)'s all-Black Company G of Nashville, later Company K, 372d Infantry and part of the third Battalion. He enlisted in January 1905 (aged 28 years) and was commissioned First Lieutenant of Company G in 1910. Continuing his service with that company, he rose to the appointed rank of captain, revered as the first African American in the south to attain this title despite a lack of military training. Hadley served nearly three years as Captain of Infantry with the TNG, after which the Army drafted him into federal service on August 5, 1917.

As a member of the American Expeditionary Forces, he was part of the United States armed services sent to Europe during World War I. Appointed as Company G's commanding officer by Governor Thomas Clark Rye (in office from 1915-1919), Capt. Hadley joined the Medical Corps in France during the war. Throughout his years of military duty, he was primarily stationed in Nashville and Memphis, Tennessee; Camp Sevier, South Carolina; and Camps Stuart and Lee, Virginia. As Captain Hadley led this local segregated unit of 'doughboys,' some Whites had concerns about the prospect of armed African Americans in uniform. In response to those people, Capt. Hadley departed for Europe with a simple, yet

dignified statement, "Nashville's Negro company will bring credit to those who have shown trust in it." While abroad, he continued his studies of medicine with European universities, but was wounded during service and honorably discharged on July 29, 1919.

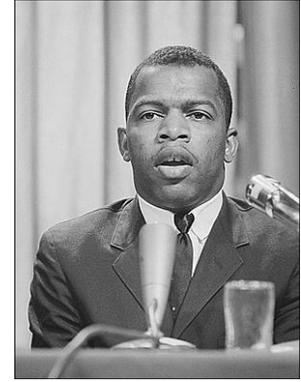
Along with his successful military career, Dr. Hadley also led a lengthy and highly-regarded career as a university instructor and physician. He continued his father's medical practice for forty-eight years and spent the last thirty years of his life teaching medicine at Meharry Medical College as a demonstrator of anatomy. Dr. Hadley's medical offices were located at 1211 Cedar Street and later at 1120 Charlotte Avenue, though he also performed operations at Hubbard Hospital. He built a large medical profession as a physician and was praised in the media for his career, "There is not a man of the race who stands higher than Dr. Hadley in the profession, and he has received numerous honors at the hands of his professional brethren, having served as president of the Volunteer State Medical association, one of the highest places to which he could be elevated in the profession in Tennessee."

The Hadleys were very active in numerous other community-oriented endeavors and the couple was affiliated with Howard Congregational Church. In 1913, Dr. Hadley was appointed to the board of directors for the Star Realty & Investment Company, an entity formed in 1912 to build and sell affordable housing. Mabel Hadley, who sang at various functions around town and traveled with the Jubilee singers, passed away in 1943. After a long hospitalization, Dr. C.O. Hadley succumbed to his illness at Veteran's Hospital on December 14, 1948. At the time of his death, Dr. Hadley had lived at 1601 Phillips Street for 33 years.

-Caroline Eller

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# Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee



## **John Lewis (1940-2020)**

Born near Troy, Alabama on February 21, 1940, the venerable John Robert Lewis came into this world as the son of sharecroppers Willie Mae and Eddie Lewis. Nicknamed "Preacher" as a child, he was the third born of their ten children and attended segregated public schools in Pike County, Alabama. The teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had a profound influence on the young Lewis, and he came to Nashville at the age of seventeen to attend American Baptist Theological Seminary. There he met other like-minded civil rights activists including fellow American Baptist student Bernard Lafayette and Fisk University student Diane Nash. During his freshman year at the seminary, Lewis tried to establish a campus chapter of the NAACP but the college blocked his efforts. Throughout the fall semester of 1959, he attended student-oriented civil disobedience workshops led by Reverend James M. Lawson, Jr. at Clark Memorial United Methodist Church. In October 1959, Lewis and students from several local colleges formed the Nashville Student Movement responsible for initiating the downtown lunch counter sit-ins.

Pre-1960 lunch counter sit-ins did not garner much press, though they occurred in many cities including Nashville. In November and December 1959, Lewis and other students conducted two "test sit-ins" at the segregated lunch counters of Harvey's and Cain-Sloan Department Stores in downtown Nashville. Lewis led the December sit-

in at Cain-Sloan, where they endured significantly more hostility than at Harvey's the month prior. On February 13, 1960, emerging leaders Lewis and Nash joined by other students including James Bevel, Bernard Lafayette, Marion Berry and The Reverends Kelly Miller Smith and James Lawson staged the first full-fledged Nashville sit-ins at three more downtown establishments-Kress, Woolworth, and McClellan's. In total, 124 students participated in that day's protests which concluded without incident. During a subsequent sit-in on February 27, 1960 involving 400 students, a violent event which Lawson termed "Big Saturday," Lewis was incarcerated- the first of his fifty arrests during the Civil Rights Movement. He and more than 2,500 other demonstrators conducted a silent march through Nashville on April 19 after the bombing of attorney and civil rights activist Z. Alexander Looby's home. Local sit-ins lasted three months and ultimately made Nashville the first Southern city to begin desegregating public facilities. The tireless work of Lewis and other unflappable civil rights activists made this hard-won success possible.

The year 1961 was pivotal for John Lewis. That spring, he was part of the original group of Freedom Riders, a group of Black and White pro-desegregation activists who boarded a Greyhound bus in Washington, D.C. headed for New Orleans. This group included several students and leaders

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from Nashville, including Rev. C.T. Vivian, James Bevel, and James Lawson. Led by Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) national director James Farmer, the ride encountered peril in Anniston, Alabama where Klansmen ambushed and firebombed the bus. Lewis and the other Freedom Riders thankfully managed to escape the dire situation.

Upon his graduation from American Baptist, Lewis enrolled at Fisk University in 1961 with a focus on religion and philosophy. However, he paused his studies in order to lead the student movement as a co-founder and National Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), serving in that position from 1963 to 1965. During that time, a young Lewis represented SNCC in the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom where he spoke to a crowd of hundreds of thousands of people about the need to disrupt an unjust political and judicial system that included the Kennedy administration. His powerful speech necessarily highlighted how radical the civil rights movement needed to be in order to effect meaningful change. In 1965, he went on to actively participate in the Selma voting rights campaign which SNCC initiated two years prior. On March 7 that year, he led a protest across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama on what became known as "Bloody Sunday." Lewis and others were viciously attacked by state troopers but their nationally-publicized efforts directly led to passage of the Voting Rights Act that August.

John Lewis returned to Fisk and earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1967. For the next eleven years, he continued to fight for social justice and equality by working for the Field

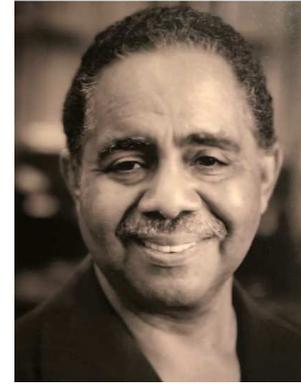
Foundation of New York City, the Southern Regional Council's Community Organization Project in Atlanta, and the Voter Education Project. He served a two-and-one-half year term under the Carter administration as an associate director of ACTION, self-dubbed "the federal domestic volunteer agency." From 1981 to 1986, he served on the Atlanta City Council and in January 1987, he began a 33-year term representing Georgia's 5th Congressional District, a post he held until his death in July 2020. Lewis' life ended the same day as his friend and fellow civil rights activist the Rev. C. T. Vivian.

An inspiration to us all, Rep. John Lewis fought for what was right and just. He boldly faced tumultuous and dangerous encounters time and time again to stand up for what he a millions of Americans wanted to see change for the future of America. Lewis' work was perhaps best summarized by his own 2012 quote during a visit to Nashville when he stated, "I was inspired to get in the way. For more than 50 years, I've been getting in the way. I've been getting in trouble – good trouble, necessary, trouble."

-Caroline Eller

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# Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee



**Reavis L. Mitchell (1947-2020)**

Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr. began his life's journey in Nashville, Tennessee, on July 12, 1947. The oldest of four children born to Reavis L. and Thelma Wilkes Mitchell, Sr., he attended St. Vincent DePaul Catholic School, Wharton Jr. High School, and was graduated from Pearl Senior High School in 1965. He continued his post-secondary education at Fisk University, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in history; Tennessee State University where he received the Master of Science degree; and a Doctor of Arts from Middle Tennessee State University. He also completed postdoctoral studies at Harvard University.

From 1980 to June 2020, Professor Mitchell served on the Fisk University faculty in the Department of History and Political Science. During his tenure, he held several administrative positions, including Director of Institutional Advancement, Executive Assistant to President Henry Ponder, Dean of Academic Affairs, Dean of the School of Humanities and Behavioral Sciences, Professor Emeritus, and University Historian Emeritus. He held adjunct professorships at the College of St. Francis and Vanderbilt University. He treasured the pursuit of knowledge and the opportunities it afforded to teach about the history, contributions, and impact of African Americans on American history.

As an academician, he and his colleagues in the Department of History produced over 50 students who went on to earn their Doctor of Philosophy degrees in history. Dr. Mitchell was often sought out as a consultant on various projects relating to African American heritage, which he viewed as useable teaching moments that could be beneficial

in advancing conversations about race and inclusivity in American society and beyond. As an administrator, colleague, collaborator, faculty member, scholar, and public servant, Dr. Mitchell was valued for his ability to build consensus across the spectrum. As an administrator and faculty member, he inspired his students, colleagues, and fellow administrators to engage in activities that were relevant beyond academia, by encouraging them to participate in activities that would transform the world in which they and their children lived. As a scholar and public intellectual, Dr. Mitchell promoted a deeper understanding of and appreciation for African American history in Nashville, the United States, and in all areas of the African Diaspora. A consummate public servant, Dr. Mitchell was a lifelong member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated, where he served two terms as the organization's national historian, and a member of Sigma Pi Phi's Chi Boulé. He served as vice-chair of Citizens Bank Board of Directors, the country's oldest continuous operating African American bank. A life-long parishioner of St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, he was also a member of the Knights of St. Peter Claver.

Professor Mitchell served as a consultant for the PBS film titled *The American Experience* that highlighted the Fisk Jubilee Singers. He also served as a consultant to Spark Media in Washington, D. C. for the documentary film, *Partners of the Heart*, which chronicles the life of Vivian T. Thomas, a pioneering surgical technician. He also served as on-air consultant to WTVF Channel Five in Nashville. It was not unusual to find his comments in such publications

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This publication is a project of the 2021 Nashville Conference on African American History and Culture. The author compiled the information. The Metropolitan Historical Commission edited and designed the materials.

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as *Time*, *Ebony*, *Black Enterprise*, *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* and *The Journal of Ethnic Studies*. A contributor to the *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, his *Thy Loyal Children Make Their Way: Fisk University Since 1866* was published in 1995, as well as hundreds of historical monographs in journals, magazines, and newspapers. In 2003 he wrote an illustrative chapter, "Alexandria, Tennessee in the Shadow of Progress" that appeared in *Critical Essays on W. E. B. DuBois' Souls of Black Folk*, *An Anthology* from the University of Missouri Press.

He gave generously of his time and talent to serve the State of Tennessee and Metropolitan Nashville as the Chairman of the Tennessee Historical Commission (THC), Chairman of the Tennessee State Review Board and the Metropolitan Historical Commission (MHC), and board member and Secretary of the Tennessee Historical Society challenging them to become more diverse in their identification, analysis, interpretation, and celebration of Tennessee History and its public spaces. A member of the THC for twenty-one years, Dr. Mitchell was the second longest serving current member. Elected as chair of the commission in 2015, at the time of his demise, he was serving his third consecutive term as chair. As chair of the THC, he also served as a member of the Tennessee Capitol Commission. Since 1993, he was also a member of the Tennessee State Review Board of which he also served as chair. A member and former chair of the MHC, he was also Executive Vice President of the Tennessee Historical Society. Members of the THC remember Chair Mitchell's balanced leadership of the commission as "a gentleman and scholar." The vineyard he most enjoyed was that of the academy and his interactions with faculty and students, many of whom he considered not only as colleagues but friends, a term he did not use loosely. One of those whom he considered as a friend was Dr. William D. Piersen.

Mitchell relished honoring the late Dr. William D. Piersen, who hired Dr. Mitchell into Fisk's History Department in 1980. The two colleagues-turned-friends respected each other's accomplishments and contributions to the discipline and Piersen felt Mitchell added a new dimension and visibility to the department. Dr. Mitchell and his colleagues instituted the Pierson Lecture Series (focused on primary research about Fisk) and personally funded a scholarship for Fisk's Currier Scholars program to help recipients purchase books. Soon after his death, colleagues and friends in the Department of History and Political Science renamed the Pierson Lecture Series to the Pierson/Mitchell Lecture Series. The School of Humanities and Behavioral Sciences, of which he served as dean, established the Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr. Scholars Award for Excellence in Teaching in his memory. Through the benevolence of the Peyton Manning Foundation, Fisk established an endowed scholarship in his name.

Dr. Mitchell broadened his brand into the public history arena as a Planning Committee member and co-chair of the Nashville Conference on African American History and Culture (NCAAHC). During his tenure, Dr. Mitchell provided leadership, energy, passion, humor, instruction, and a spirit of discernment regarding the conference's direction and activities. He also contributed approximately twenty profiles to the conference's series *Leaders of African American Nashville*. In June 2020 the NCAAHC adopted a resolution recognizing Dr. Mitchell's achievements and contributions to the study of history and education in Tennessee.

Dr. Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.'s life journey ended on June 16, 2020. After the funeral service at Fisk University, his body was interred in the historic Greenwood Cemetery.

-Linda T. Wynn

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# Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee



## Jackie Shane (1940-2019)

Jackie Shane, pioneering Black transgender musician, was born in Nashville in 1940 to Jack Crawford and Jessie Shane. As a child growing up in North Nashville, Jackie knew that she was a female trapped in a male's body. Her grandmother exposed her to music at an early age, singing beautiful melodies around the house. By four years old, Jackie relished wearing makeup and women's clothing and took posture cues from iconic actress Mae West.

Barely a teenager, Jackie joined a musical trio by happenstance after hearing young pianist Louis Lavelle playing blues in the back room of a neighborhood store. She tapped beats on chairs as Lavelle played, and he noticed her innate rhythm. They swiftly formed a band with guitarist Les Monday and got regular bookings with radio station WVOL and the Nashville Fairgrounds. At age fifteen, Jackie met Little Richard and influenced the drum stylings of Charles "Chuck" Connors from Richard's band The Upsetters. For the 1957 Excello Records hit "I Miss You So," penned by Reverend Morgan Babbs, Jackie created a simple, yet infectious beat; the song reached #8 on the R&B charts and #66 on the Pop charts.

After a summer in L.A., Jackie returned to Nashville and became a regular member of the Excello/Nashboro studio band with guitarist Johnny Jones. The New Era, Nashville's preeminent Black nightclub on Charlotte Avenue, brought Jackie on as their house band drummer. She formed a new ensemble with Lavelle and Monday, adding guitarist Bobby Hebb and bassist Deford Bailey, Jr., whose

legendary father often sat in on sessions. Between 1957 and 1960, Jackie often recorded at Excello and the New Era, once cutting a complete album with gospel singer Edna Gallmon Cooke and backing up three live performances all in one day. As Jackie's predilection for music and performance deepened, Nashville's thriving African American music scene sought after and fostered her distinctive talent.

While playing Club Cherry in Lexington, Kentucky in 1958, Jackie assembled a superior ensemble who were quickly signed by a New York agent. During a show in Florida, Jackie upstaged Jackie Wilson and was asked to leave the tour. A prime example of Jackie Shane's on-stage intensity, it signaled that she was destined to be the star of the show. After being propositioned by one of her band mates, Jackie left the group and returned to Nashville, where musicians Joe Tex and Little Willie John advised her to leave the Jim Crow South in order to succeed. As an openly gay Black performer during this era, Jackie acquiesced to this inequitable truth. After witnessing racial violence in downtown Nashville in late 1958, she decided to pursue a new direction.

A brief tenure with carnival troupe Jerry Jackson's Hep Cats further shaped Jackie's on-stage persona. In mid-1959, she relocated to Ontario, Canada with Johnny Jones and fellow band members. They played a weeklong carnival at Cornwall, hired immediately thereafter by a Montreal club. Only nineteen, Jackie had near-death encounters with the local mob and a gang who kidnapped her band mates, forcing them to return to the States without

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their frontman. In spite of these traumas, Jackie opted to stick with her craft. She soon joined Frank "Duel Trumpet" Motley and his Motley Crew, playing Ray Charles and Bobby "Blue" Bland covers. That fall, the group and "Little Jackie Shane" played sold-out shows in Boston's Roxbury district alongside The Temptations, Marvin Gaye, The Drifters and Etta James.

Upon moving to Toronto in 1959-1960, Jackie was already performing in androgynous attire that became more effeminate as she rose to stardom . She spent the early 1960s gigging a regular circuit through Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Boston, Montreal and Toronto with the Motley Crew, cutting at least five tracks, including her two Little Richard-esque originals "Chickadee" and "Slave for You." Her chart-topping cover, "Any Other Way" (1962), received critical acclaim from *Billboard* and the *Chicago Defender*. The hit reached #2 on Toronto's CHUM Chart and sold over 10,000 copies locally, eclipsing Stax recording artist William Bell's original. Her follow-up 45, "In My Tenement" (Sue Records, 1963), received praise from *Billboard* and *Cashbox*, spurring appearance requests from Dick Clark's *American Bandstand* and *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Jackie declined both shows, citing discriminatory practices.

Jackie left Sue Records in spring 1963 and turned down subsequent offers from Motown and Atlantic Records. After a few years in L.A., Jackie came back to Nashville in 1965 for her only known American television performance on WLAC's R&B music program *Night Train*, where she sang a riveting version of "Walking the Dog." That summer, she toured California with Etta James and the O'Jays. Her life quieted down until August 1966, when she cut the single "Stand Up Straight and Tall"/"You Are My Sunshine" under L.A. label Modern Records. The single flopped, but a 1967

release of "Money" (1960) generated new buzz, ushering in her triumphant re-entry to Toronto's music scene. By this time, her audiences were more mainstream with roughly equal Black and White patronage, some of whom regularly traveled from as far away as Detroit and Buffalo.

"The Fabulous Jackie Shane" morphed into a bona fide star with an image of controlled flamboyance that attracted diverse audiences, including a legion of late-1960s cross-dressing fans. Using sharp wit and mid-set monologues, she chronicled her challenges within the music industry during shows. After the release of *Jackie Shane Live* (1967), she took over Frank Motley's group The Hitchhikers and cut a final, original single "New Way of Lovin' (1969)." Jackie continued touring in Toronto and L.A., but went into seclusion in December 1971, disillusioned by the industry and fed up with transgender discrimination. Ultimately, she left the music industry and returned to Nashville to care for her beloved mother Jessie, who passed away in 1997. Jackie's masterful performances, underscored by gender-bending charisma, laid the groundwork for ensuing Glam Rock trends adopted by musicians like Lou Reed, David Bowie and Michael Jackson. Jackie departed in February 2019, mere weeks after being nominated for a Best Historic Album Grammy. Celebrated for her reserved mystique and unapologetic presence, Jackie broke myriad barriers for gay and transgendered people in the music industry, and far beyond.

*\*This profile uses the terms "she/her" to refer to Jackie, as was done for the 2017 "Any Other Way" liner notes, a publication to which she directly contributed.*

-Caroline Eller

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# Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee



## The Reverend C.T. Vivian (1924-2020)

Cordy Tindell (C. T.) Vivian, the only child of Robert and Euzetta Tindell Vivian, was born on July 28, 1924 in Boonville, Illinois. At the height of the severe global economic depression that began in the late 1920s, his mother and maternal grandmother lost everything, including their marriages, agricultural holdings, and their house in the city. Wanting Vivian to have the best education possible, they moved to McComb, the county seat of McDonough County, which had a desegregated educational system. Young Vivian received his primary education at Lincoln Grade School. While there, he refused to let school bullies beat up weaker students and recalled to the *Peoria Journal Star*, "Those incidents meant nobody was going to mess with me and I could be free, in fact, [I] ... could use [my] ... position to free other people." His actions on behalf of others opened his eyes to the power of nonviolence. Vivian continued his education at Edison Junior High School and McComb High School. An active youth member of Allen Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, he taught in the Sunday school and served as the youth group president.

After graduating from high school in 1942, Vivian entered Western Illinois University (WIU) as a social science major, where he clashed intellectually with the department head. White male students tried to protect white females from black men on campus. These covert racial issues proved difficult for Vivian. Thinking that the behavior of the social science department's head was the exception rather than the rule, Vivian changed his major to English, only to find the same issues. Vivian was refused entrance to the English Club and students who were his friends received threats. Vivian realized how deeply racism permeated the culture. Just as he had become aware of the power of nonviolence, he now recognized that the beliefs entrenched in the upper echelons of the social order were not the same as those held by the people at the opposite end of the social strata. In the mid-1940s, Vivian left WIU and moved to Peoria, Illinois, where he worked for the Carver Community Center.

Two years after arriving in Peoria, Vivian participated in his first sit-in demonstrations, which ushered in a lifetime of activism for equality and justice. Unlike the South's *de jure* segregation, the country's northern region practiced *de facto* segregation, an approach that Vivian found little better than the South's. Although the region's businesses posted no racially-specific signs, its customs and traditions were well known by residents. Vivian set out for change and became an active participant in an integrated group working to open restaurants and lunch counters to all races. While working in Peoria, Vivian met Octavia Geans (1928–2011) of Pontiac, Michigan, and they married on February 23, 1953. That same year, the Peoria National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter elected Vivian as vice president. A year later, he accepted his call to the ministry and made plans to attend Nashville's American Baptist Theological Seminary. Unknown to him, Vivian was about to embark upon one of the most important social movements of the twentieth century. Vivian came to Nashville the same year (1955) that the actions of Rosa Parks sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which catapulted the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King into the national spotlight. In addition to attending the seminary, he pastored the congregants of the First Community Church and worked as an editor at the National Baptist Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention.

In late 1956, Vivian boarded a Nashville Transit Authority bus and seated himself near the front of the half-filled vehicle. The driver of the bus, adhering to the city's customs, ordered him to the rear. A heated debate ensued and Vivian refused to acquiesce to the driver's orders. The driver ordered other passengers to vacate the bus and drove Vivian downtown to police headquarters. The U.S. Supreme Court's earlier decision in the *Browder v. Gayle* (1956) case ruled in favor of the Montgomery plaintiffs with regard to the desegregation of intrastate transportation. After making phone calls to city hall, Nashville's law enforcement

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learned that the city was in the process of desegregating seating on public conveyances.

Four years after arriving in Nashville, Vivian joined other ministers under the leadership of Kelly Miller Smith, Sr. and established the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference (NCLC), a local affiliate of King's SCLC. During NCLC's organizational meeting, Vivian was elected vice president. He met the Reverend James Lawson and others who ultimately brought about the end of Nashville's racial segregation. Vivian also affiliated with Diane Nash, John Lewis, Bernard Lafayette, Marion Berry, and James Bevel, who became the student marshals of the Nashville movement. As vice president, Vivian managed the NCLC's direct-action component. Lawson joined and served as chair of NCLC's Action Committee. After formulating a plan to conduct workshops on Gandhi's method of protest, NCLC leaders and students tested Nashville's segregation policies in November and December of 1959. Due to a lack of media coverage, Nashville's 1959 sit-in movement was eclipsed by the Greensboro, North Carolina sit-in on February 1, 1960. Within twelve days of the Greensboro sit-in, Nashville students moved into full action. Two months later, NCLC and the Student Committee, with the assistance of Fisk University economics professor Vivian Henderson, launched an economic boycott of Nashville's retail district.

On April 19, 1960 the home of civil rights attorney Z. Alexander Looby was dynamited. Leaders in Nashville's black community called for a mass protest march to the office of mayor Ben West. Familiar with New York's silent march against lynching in the early 1900s, Vivian insisted that the silent strategy be utilized. Over 3,000 persons from both races marched. When West came out to meet with them, Vivian read a prepared speech denouncing the mayor's leadership. This angered West, and the two men in caustic fashion verbally retaliated against each other. According to the *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, when Vivian asked West "if he thought segregation was moral," the mayor answered, "No." Nash continued the questioning and asked the mayor to use the standing of his office to end racial segregation. Immediately, he appealed to all citizens to end discrimination, to have no bigotry, no bias, and no hatred. Taking his answer to the next level, Nash probed, "Mayor, do you recommend that lunch counters be desegregated?" The mayor answered in the affirmative. Vivian's razor-sharp questioning paved the way for Nash's questions, and Nashville lunch counters began the desegregation process on May 10, 1960, two months before Greensboro, which captured national attention.

After the first wave of the Nashville sit-ins, Vivian and his family moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee, where he pastored Cosmopolitan Community Church. His wife gave birth to their youngest son in a segregated hospital. Vivian used this occasion to end segregation in that city's healthcare facilities. A proselytizer of nonviolent resistance, he participated in the Freedom Rides of 1961, where he experienced his first beating en route to Mississippi. "Going to Mississippi in 1961 was a whole different world," said Vivian. "You knew you could easily be killed there." He participated in major campaigns at Albany, GA (1961); Birmingham, AL (1962); St. Augustine, FL (1964); and Selma, AL (1965). In *Confronting the Color Line: The Broken Promise of the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago* by Alan Anderson and George W. Pickering, Vivian argued that "Nonviolence is the only honorable way of dealing with social change. . . if we are wrong, nobody gets hurt but us. And if we are right, more people will participate in determining their own destinies than ever before."

Vivian helped organize Tennessee's contingent for the 1963 March on Washington, and Dr. King appointed him to SCLC's executive staff as national director of affiliates. Vivian later directed Vision (Upward Bound), a program that put over 700 Alabama students in college with scholarships, and established the Anti-Klan Network (Center for Democratic Renewal). In recognition of his fervent commitment to the civil rights movement, he has been placed in the Civil Rights Institute (Birmingham, AL); the National Civil Rights Museum (Memphis, TN); the National Voting Rights Museum (Selma, AL); and the Portrait Hall of Fame, M. L. King Chapel, Morehouse College (Atlanta, GA). Several documentaries highlighting the civil rights era spotlighted Vivian, including *Eyes on the Prize* and *The Healing Ministry of Dr. C. T. Vivian*. He served as director of the Urban Training Center for Christian Missions in Chicago (1966), dean of the Shaw University Divinity School in Raleigh, NC (1972), and deputy director for clergy during the presidential campaign of the Rev. Jesse Jackson (1984).

The Rev. C. T. Vivian lived in Atlanta, where he remained active with numerous civic groups and organizations. He received the Trumpet Award (2006) and the Presidential Medal of Freedom (2013). The life of the paladin of direct nonviolent protest came to an end on July 17, 2020. He was buried in Atlanta's West View Cemetery. Vivian died the same day as his friend and fellow comrade U. S. Rep. John Robert Lewis.

-Linda T. Wynn

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