



January 17, 2020

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Courtland Cox
Chair

To Cabral, Jean's devoted son, grandchildren and her great-grandchildren:

Robert "Bob" Moses
Vice Chair

The SNCC family, to which Jean also belonged, offers its sincerest condolences. The courage, grace and intelligence of Jean Wiley are sharply etched in our thinking as we remember her today. To say she is greatly missed is to state the obvious. Her very full life incorporated freedom movement activism, especially with SNCC, and faculty positions at the University of California at Berkeley, Columbia University, and Tuskegee Institute.

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Journalism was also an important part of her life. She was one of only three Black women who covered the Angela Davis trial. She was a reporter for the Howard University-based WHUR in Washington, D.C., during its first year of operation, contributed to Essence magazine in its earliest days, and consulted with the Institute for the Black World in Atlanta, Georgia.

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She always saw herself as a race woman, committed to the "redemption and vindication of the race", a concept that emerged within the Marcus Garvey Movement. As her good friend, documentarian Daphne Muse, who was a SNCC volunteer during her student years at Fisk University puts it: "She navigated the curves and right turns of oppression and transformed the racists' screams of 'You can't' into the hallelujahs and Black Power of 'We can. We will.'"

But Jean Wiley cannot be defined or appreciated solely in terms of the struggles against oppression that she was involved with, or the many works she initiated. Her homes in Tuskegee, Alabama, New York City and Oakland, California, were places of comfort for many in the Movement—a glass of wine, music, and wide-ranging conversations that covered the world as it was and as we wanted it to be, often mixed with laughter as well as commitment. In the letter to her son, Cabral, Jean concludes: "...dedication to the struggle takes you to places, causes, and people you'd never have dreamed of. I hope you find your rightful place within our struggle and among the kinds of dedicated activists I found – people with vision, courage, and respect for one another.

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Jean Wiley will be forever part of the SNCC band of brothers and sisters and circle of trust.

The struggle continues,

EMERITUS MEMBERS

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Courtland Cox, Chair
SNCC Legacy Project