REMENBERING UNSUNG HEROES AND SHEROES OF THE
CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN NEW ORLEANS

WBOK Black History Month Interview February 28, 2022
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NAACP leader and Civil Activist since the 1960s

During the 1960s as New Orleans NAACP Youth Council President, I worked on voter registration drives and picketed for better jobs for African Americans,—but I did not work alone! Many unsung heroes and sheroes worked with me. Yet, no monuments memorialize these pre-teen, high school, and college students:

I remember Charles Bickham, Tyrone Bordenave, Ferdinand Caliste, Andrea & Noel Casanave, Ethel & Joyce Coston, Brenda Dyer; Gail & Leslie Duralde, Alton, Claude, and Felix Gasper, and Alphonse & Henry Gunn. Despite marching in the scorching heat and bitter cold, No historic markers celebrate these stalwart souls:

Very often you would see Albert Hadley and the Hales:- Inez & her brother, Roosevelt; I later married Inez. We've been married for 52 years.

Many siblings were present: Gordon & Henry Cagnolatti, Dianne, Eileen & Tessie Jackson; Feltus & Joe Nathan Kennedy; Carol & Elaine Lazard; Byron & Vernon Marquez; Hiram, Willie, Yvette, & Yvonne Mason; as well as Beverly, Carolyn, & Celine Mitchell, along with Barbara Moseley; the Mobleys, & Moutons. I also remember Lana & Rena Price.

These were supported by Cathleen & Cornelius Saul; Marva & Jimmy Smith, Frank, Paul & Stephanie Stewart; the Thompson sisters: Alice, Jean, & Shirley, and their brother, Pierce; along with Barbara & Joan Truehill. Wendel Valteau & Louise Williams often accompanied us. But no streets or buildings proclaim the sterling services of any of these brave warriors:

We were aided by a number of dedicated NAACP adult members. I salute these dedicated mothers: Margaret Cloud, Lorraine Poindexter & Madalyn Williams-Cochrane. They paid babysitters so they could walk the picket lines.
Perhaps no one deserved more recognition than Horace C. Bynum, Sr. who served the NAACP in many different official capacities for more than six decades. He would leave his drug store to walk the picket line or work voter registration classes. *It has not yet happened, but a prominent Bynum street or avenue would not only be appropriate, but long overdue.*

Sometimes, Arthur J. Chapital, Sr., the long-time Adult President/Executive Secretary would march with a sign that carried the slogan of the 1963 March on Washington, "for Jobs and Freedom." Chapital was the quintessential life-long 7th Warder. There must be some public space or building between Esplanade and Elysians Field Avenues that would be better adorned if Chapital's name was attached to it. I later christened his youngest grandson, my namesake, Raphael J. Chapital.

Our NAACP Youth Council Senior Advisor, Llewelyn J. Soniat, was an indefatigable champion. He, along, with his wife, Novyse, & their Children, Donald & Cynthia, were mainstays of the movement for years. A number of Soniat's nieces and nephews were also there. Soniat would leave the picket line and report to his job at the post office.

Similarly, other postal workers: Edwin J. Barthé, Joseph Jacques, Sr., and Anderson V. Washington were there. Other parents walked the line with their children. Archie Bertrand and his son were there, along with Vallery Ferdinand, Jr. who walked with sons, Vallery, III and Kenneth. Irvin Daniel walked his daughter, Ida.

At times, James C. Lawrence, Sr. walked with his son, James Jr.; Zach Ramsey was there with his daughter, Merle, and also Anderson V. Washington walked his son, Maurice.

Drs. Wellington Arnaud and Walter Young, Jr. scheduled dental appointments around their picket duties. Roy Rome, Sr., not only provided transportation, but joined his sons, Roy, Jr., Ronald, Joseph, and Norbert, and three year old daughter, Belinda, on the picket line.
Rev. Warren Ray, Sr. painted our picket signs; some which were carried by his own sons: Warren, Jr. and Ronnie; and daughters, Beverly and Gwendolyn. We cannot forget the unselfish works of Mrs. Annie W. Ramie, Secretary of the adult branch. She not only walked the picket line, but supplied us with a grocery basket to transport our signs.

Mrs. Ramie also attended youth council meetings and offered encouragement when we needed it most. None of these adults sought or worked for fame or recognition, but all of them are worthy of more than a token of public acclaim.

Steadfast and immovable, we were: black, white, Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish. Maxine Alfred, Diana Batiste, Maurice and Patricia Boissiere, Buddy Bougere, William Castle, Pamela Dunn, Larry Ellow, Jeanne McGlory, Lloyd Ruffin, Lee Madere, Gwendolyn Perkins, Beverly Toney.

Some of you may remember: Jackie Ezidore, Louis Gerdes, Charles Cotton, Yvonne Goff, Donna LaCroix & Charles Swanson; Michael Starks, Leo Laventhal, Lynn Toliver, Jean Howard, Roger Mill, Marian Parmele, Walter Winston, Cecilia Taplett who sometimes marched along side of Elmore R. Johnson, and Yvonne Goff,

Raymond DuVernay was there with his future wife, Adeline Thompson, along with Peter Carriere, Bertrand Sudduth and Henry Gaspard. Marie Bijou Wong spent long hours joined by sisters, Agatha, Alfreda, and Ursula Bijou. Their younger sister, Elaine, babysat Marie's young daughter. Bet you won't see any of their names inscribed upon a school.

We were never paid;--- only received bus fare, a coke, and a sandwich-- but only if we picketed 4 hours.----Our real pay was completing a job well done! And we did!

This list is incomplete, and there are many more un-named soldiers. Many, have already left us. We pray, however, we will meet them again and share in a joyous reunion in eternity in that new land where "the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest."