

From Hawai'i to Selma

By MarshaRose Joyner

Many years ago a dear friend of mine gave me her entire collection of "Lp's" from the Civil Rights Movement. Among them was "The Freedom Movement as told by CORETTA SCOTT KING" (spoken word vinyl LP)



On the cover was the picture of the March in Selma with a banner from Hawaii. I did everything to decipher the wording on the banner. Once we entered the digital age, a graphic artist discovered that it said "Hawaii Integrates". I was delighted. And never gave it another thought.

When I began the research on Selma and Hawaii's participation,

all of the pictures showing the marchers crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge with lei. So that had to be Hawaii participation.

With the help of Google I found an article on "The Human Flower Project" webpage that answered all of my questions.

"The Human Flower Project is an international newsgroup, photo album and discussion of humankind's relationship with the floral world. We report on art,



medicine, society, history, politics, religion, and commerce.”

The article in the Human Flower began, “Many thanks to Nona Ferdon for filling in some of the gaps in our story of flowers in the history-making March from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in March 1965. We noted that several of the Civil Rights marchers, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., wore leis.”

“You wondered how they got there,” Nona writes of the floral garlands. “We took them. There were five of us representing Hawaii on the march.



“In our earlier story we had credited the pastor of Honolulu’s Kawaiha’o Church, Rev. Abraham Akaka, who had befriended Dr. King the previous year, with sending the leis. He, in fact, may have been behind this effort in some way, but Nona, who delivered the flowers, doesn’t recall ever meeting Rev. Akaka or hearing of his involvement in this gesture. “I don’t know who organized on the leis,” she writes. “It was all on short notice and we showed up at the airport around 5 in the afternoon. There was no publicity or anything like that, we just said goodbye to some friends and left. Taking leis was just something that anyone from Hawaii would do

almost automatically.” Only after the march, when the leis had made their glorious statement, did the flowers inspire curiosity. Floral garlands around the neck weren’t, and still aren’t, a common sight in the Deep South.”

Deep in the article was the picture of the banner in the photo on the album cover of Coretta Scott King, “Hawaii Knows Integration Works” with the caption of the people from Hawaii who had participated in the March in Selma.



Welcomed back in Hawaii, after the Alabama march were (l-r) Glenn Izutsu, Robert Browne, Nona (Springel) Ferdon, Charles Campbell, and Linus Pauling, Jr. Photo: AP

Nona writes in The Human Flower Project article “that members of the Hawaiian delegation were “Glenn Izutsu, head of the student union at the University of Hawaii at that time (I understand that he is dead now); Dr. Robert Browne (a psychiatrist who is also dead): me, who was a research fellow at the UH at that time (and who is still very much alive and a Dr. of clinical psychology here in London - now carrying my original birth-name i.e. Nona M. Ferdon); Charles Campbell (who was a high school teacher

and I don't know his current status of health)- (he passed in 1986); and Dr. Linus Pauling, Jr. (son of Linus the two time Nobel prize winning scientist and who, I believe, is still alive now.)"



Docked with lei given him by Hawaiian delegation, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is hailed by demonstrators at start of the historic Selma-to-Montgomery march.

Presenting the leis in Selma

Photo: Ebony magazine/May 1965, p. 46

The Human Flower Project wrote "We have not been able to locate a large format version of the photo Ebony magazine first published, of Nona and the rest presenting the leis to the March leaders, including King.

"Nona modestly neglected to tell us that in addition to being a strong civil rights advocate, she was a force in the feminist movement. She was an early member of N.O.W., and in the 1970s founded and co-directed The Boston Psychological Center for Women. More power to you, Nona!

Peter T Young, Shared publicly - Aug 6, 2013- wrote about the March from Selma

"They came from everywhere. Charles Campbell, a Negro high-school teacher, came from Hawai'i where, he said, there is proof that the races can live together. (Saturday Evening Post)

Campbell and other Hawai'i marchers were not this event's only ties to Hawai'i. Lead marcher in the third march was Dr. Martin Luther King. A photo and caption of the event noted, "During part of the famous Selma to Montgomery Freedom March in 1965, Martin Luther King and fellow civil

rights leaders wore the Hawaiian necklace of flowers - the lei - to symbolize their peaceful intentions." (Akaka Foundation)

The lei were gifts from Rev Abraham Akaka as noted in this excerpt from Jet Magazine, "... Pastor emeritus of a Honolulu Church (Kawaiha'o,) Rev Abraham Akaka, 74, gained worldwide attention when he sent flower leis used by Dr. Martin Luther King in the Selma march ..." (Jet, June 3, 1991)



Pastors, priests and rabbis joined Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., (center) in the 1965 march on Selma. Now, clergy are joining protesters demanding justice in Ferguson, MO. Religion News Service file photo by Robie Ray



Martin Luther King, Jr. listening to a transistor radio in the front line of the third march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, to campaign for proper registration of black voters, on March 23, 1965. Among the other marchers are: Ralph Abernathy (1926 - 1990,

second from left), Ralph Bunche (1903 - 1971, third from right) and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907 - 1972, far right). The first march ended in

violence when marchers were attacked by police. The second was aborted after a legal injunction was issued.



The 3rd Selma Civil Rights March frontline

From far left: John Lewis, an unidentified nun; Ralph Abernathy; Martin Luther King, Jr.; Ralph Bunche; Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel; Frederick Douglas Reese. Second row: Between Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ralph Bunche is Rabbi Maurice Davis. Heschel later wrote, "When I marched in Selma, my feet were praying."



Charles Campbell among 100 people honored for making long-lasting contributions to The City & County of Honolulu.



October 2005, Charles Campbell was among 100 people honored for making long-lasting contributions to The City & County of Honolulu.

Mayor Mufi Hannemann oversaw the 100th anniversary of the incorporation of Honolulu County (originally O'ahu County) in July and October 29, 2005 helped unveil the list of notables, who range from surfers to sumo wrestlers. Hannemann characterized the names as a "microcosm of the greatness of this city." The list, he said, offers "a great opportunity to reflect on our past." "There was no lack of suggestions for who should be on such a list", said Linda Wong, vice-chairwoman of the Honolulu Centennial Celebration Commission.

"The city's Office of Culture and Arts received 400 to 500 nominations", Wong said. And the 16 members of the centennial celebration commission each came up with their own 50 names. From July through August, the members of the committee winnowed the list by considering the range of people and the eras they represent.

"Our mission was to find people from 1905 to 2005 that come from different walks of life — arts, sports, politics," Wong said. "We really wanted to get a cross-section of the community."

A formal celebration honoring the men and women on the list was held Nov. 17, 2005 at the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel & Resort.

Highlights of Charles Campbell's illustrious career

- School teacher
 - Invented the electioneering campaign sign holding tradition
- An activist from Hawaii in the 1960's
 - Chaired the Civil Rights Conference of Hawaii
 - Chairman of the Hawaii Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.
 - In 1964 he organized a statewide effort to send 90,000 post cards from Hawaii citizens to the U.S. Congress urging support of the Civil Rights bill which was being debated.
- Friends with the Rev. Abraham Akaka-
 - Traveled to Washington D.C. together to lobby for passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Bill
 - Rev. Akaka donated the Lei that Campbell and delegation took to Selma 1965
- Elected as chair of Oahu County Democratic Committee - 1968
- Elected to Honolulu City Council - 3rd Council 1969-1971
- Only African-American to be elected to the Honolulu City Council
- Elected to the Hawaii State Legislature 1976
- Elected to the Hawaii State Senate 1979

Charles M. Campbell was born in North Carolina in 1918. He grew up there and received an A.D. degree from North Carolina College in Durham. He also received an M.A. degree from Howard University and a second M.A. from Columbia University.

Campbell began his career by becoming the first black newscaster to do "straight broadcasting" in Philadelphia. He was the first black member of the Radio Television News Directors Association and became Vice President of Radio News Reel Television Working Press Association.



High school teacher Charles Campbell relaxes in his Honolulu apartment with wife, Naomi, and daughter, Lori Margaret. Campbell holds two master's degrees, and wife has Ph.D. in law. He was recently elected Oahu County Democratic Chairman.

Picture - Ebony Sep 1968

In the early 1950s Campbell met and married Naomi (Charner) Campbell, a Chicago, Illinois attorney. They moved to Honolulu, Hawaii around 1955 where Naomi Campbell practiced law and became a Family Court Judge.

Meanwhile Charles Campbell by 1962 was a newscaster for KGMB in Honolulu. Campbell was also active in the Honolulu community. He served as advisor to Leilehua High School debate team and taught American history part-time at Farrington High School and Kaimuki High School in Honolulu. Campbell also created the popular Junior-Senior Citizens Dialogue Living History where senior citizens were invited to high schools to talk about their lives with young students.

Charles Campbell continued to be active in civil rights and politics after he arrived in Hawaii. In 1964 he organized a statewide effort to send 90,000 post cards from Hawaii citizens to the U.S. Congress urging support of the Civil Rights bill then being debated. He and Rev. Abraham Akaka also went to Washington, D.C. to personally lobby for the bill. In 1965 Campbell went to Selma, Alabama to March with Dr. Martin Luther King and thousands of others over the Edmund Pettus Bridge which had been the scene of an attack by Alabama State Troopers on an earlier march led by now Congressman John Lewis. The lei worn by Dr. King were from Senator Campbell.

In the late 1960s Campbell chaired the Civil Rights Conference of Hawaii and was Chairman of the Hawaii Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. In 1968 he became Chairman of the Democratic Party of Hawaii, the first and only African American to hold that post in the state's history. Also in 1968 Campbell was elected to the Honolulu City Council where he served until 1971. He was the first politician to use sign waving on street corners to gather votes in Hawaii.

While on the Council he helped establish the medical school at the University of Hawaii, Manoa campus. His daughter Laurie Campbell was in the first graduating class of the UH Medical School.

In 1976 he won the 17th District seat in the Hawaii House of Representatives. While in the legislature he fought for open government and sponsored Hawaii's first "sunshine law" which required that all government records be open to the public. Two years later Campbell was elected to the Hawaii State Senate where he served a four year term.

Charles Campbell died in Honolulu, Hawaii in 1986. He was survived by his wife, attorney Naomi Campbell, and his daughter, Dr. Laurie Campbell.

Sources:

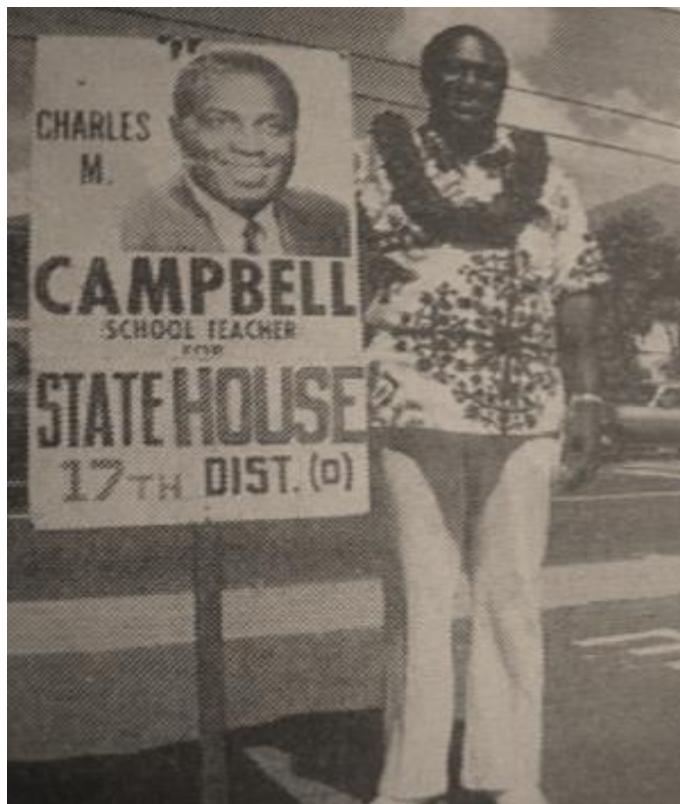
Naomi Campbell, Interview with Daphne Barbee-Wooten, June 1999; "Spreading Aloha through Civil Rights," by Daphne Barbee-Wooten, Hawaii Bar Journal, October 1999; Miles M. Jackson, *And They Came* (Honolulu: Four Publishers Inc., 2001). - <http://www.blackpast.org/aaw/campbell-charles-m-1918-1986#sthash.PXSNqp2R.dpuf>

["The HONOLULU 100 - John Bellinger to Anna Rice Cooke"](#)

[Honolulu Magazine November, 2005](#)

[Charles Campbell \(1918-1986\)](#)

[Sign waving](#) has become such a ubiquitous part of election season in Hawai'i; you could be forgiven for assuming that it's been around forever.



But this uniquely local tradition was actually the invention of one man, Charles Campbell, in 1968. Campbell, then a social studies teacher at Farrington High School, was running for City Council, and decided to enlist his own students in the campaign. "He started sign waving to get students involved in the political process," council member Ann Kobayashi says.

Sign waving didn't get Campbell elected that year, but Campbell would go on to become O'ahu's first black senator in 1976. "He was always supporting the little guy, the working, the poor, students and minorities," Kobayashi says. As head of the Hawai'i State Teachers Association, Campbell led the union in the nation's first statewide teachers strike in the early '70s.