

**STATEMENT OF COURTLAND COX, CHAIR  
OF THE SNCC LEGACY PROJECT  
AT THE  
HOMEGOING FOR LILLIAN MCGILL  
SATURDAY, MARCH 11, 1023**

GOOD AFTERNOON. TO THE FAMILY OF LILLIAN MCGILL, I OFFER MY DEEPEST CONDOLENCES.

I LAST SAW LILLIAN MCGILL ON APRIL 2018 WHEN I TRAVELED TO MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA TO TALK TO HER ABOUT HER ROLE IN THE STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS. THE STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE WAS DOCUMENTING ITS WORK OVER THE LAST 50 YEARS. THAT WORK INCLUDED ITS INVOLVEMENT IN THE SIT-INS AND FREEDOM RIDES, VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVES IN MISSISSIPPI, SOUTHWEST GEORGIA AND ARKANSAS, AND BOTH VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVES AND ORGANIZING FOR POLITICAL POWER IN ALABAMA.

LILLIAN MCGILL WAS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVES AND ORGANIZING FOR POLITICAL POWER IN ALABAMA.

WHEN WE MET IN 2018, SHE DISCUSSED FOR THE HISTORICAL RECORD HOW SHE BECAME SECRETARY OF THE LOWNDES COUNTY CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. HER ROLE AS AN OFFICER OF THE LOWNDES COUNTY CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS INVOLVED HER TAKING CARE OF THE FINANCES OF THE ORGANIZATION, TRAVELING TO RAISE FUNDS FOR THE ORGANIZATION, SHAPING DECISIONS ON THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, AND CANVASSING EVERY DAY IN LOWNDES COUNTY TO GET PEOPLE REGISTERED TO VOTE.

LILLIAN MCGILL ALSO TALKED ABOUT THE ORGANIZING OF THE LOWNDES COUNTY FREEDOM PARTY. SHE TALKED ABOUT HER WORK IN HELPING PEOPLE TO DEAL WITH THEIR WATER PROBLEMS AND THEIR TELEPHONE SERVICE ISSUES. IN THE WIDE-RANGING DISCUSSION, SHE TALKED ABOUT SENDING ONE OF HER CHILDREN TO THE ALL-WHITE HAYNESVILLE HIGH SCHOOL. AND FINALLY, SHE DISCUSSED HOW SHE GOT THE NICKNAME "TWEETIE BIRD."

WHEN THE HISTORY OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IS DISCUSSED, THERE ARE FEW NAMES SUCH AS MARTIN LUTHER KING, JOHN LEWIS, STOKELY CARMICHAEL OR JULIAN BOND USUALLY MENTIONED. IN ADDITION, WE TALK ABOUT EVENTS SUCH AS THE 1963 MARCH ON WASHINGTON OR THE 1965 ASSAULT BY ALABAMA POLICE ON THE EDMUND PETTIS BRIDGE. HOWEVER, THE TRUE HISTORY OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT MUST BE MEASURED BY THE DETERMINATION OF PEOPLE LIKE LILLIAN MCGILL, WHO DAY IN AND DAY OUT, TOOK SOME TYPE OF ACTION TO RESIST THE EVILS OF SEGREGATION IMPOSED ON THE BLACK COMMUNITY.

LILLIAN MCGILL, AFTER GRADUATING ALABAMA STATE UNIVERSITY, HAD TO TAKE A JOB AS A DOMESTIC WORKER. IN THE 1950'S, COLLEGE GRADUATES COULD NOT BE EMPLOYED TO TAKE FULL VALUE OF THEIR EDUCATION, THEREFORE, AFRICAN AMERICANS WHO RECEIVED PHD'S COULD ONLY TEACH IN HIGH SCHOOLS. THOSE WHO RECEIVED LAW DEGREES HAD TO WORK IN THE POST OFFICE, SO THEREFORE, THERE WAS NO SURPRISE THAT LILLIAN MCGILL COULD NOT FULFILL HER POTENTIAL AFTER GRADUATING FROM COLLEGE.

WHEN SHE WAS 22 YEARS OLD, LILLIAN MCGILL JOINED OTHER BLACK WOMEN WHO WERE DOMESTIC WORKERS IN THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT. SHE ALONG WITH HUNDREDS OF BLACK WOMEN, DAY IN AND DAY OUT, FOR ONE YEAR, BRAVED THE HARDSHIPS OF THE BUS BOYCOTT UNTIL SEGREGATION ENDED IN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA.

IT SHOULD BE NO SURPRISE THAT LILLIAN MCGILL BROUGHT THAT SAME DETERMINATION TO RESIST THE EVILS OF SEGREGATION WHEN SHE CAME TO LIVE IN LOWNDES COUNTY IN 1964. THE LOWNDES COUNTY FREEDOM PARTY HAD A TREMENDOUS IMPACT ON AMERICAN LIFE. FIRST, THE PEOPLE OF LOWNDES COUNTY WERE NOT JUST TRYING TO REGISTER TO VOTE, BUT HAD DECIDED THAT THEY WOULD RUN FOR ALL POLITICAL OFFICES SO THAT THEY COULD EXERCISE POWER OVER THEIR LIVES. THE CONCEPT OF BLACK PEOPLE SEEKING AND HOLDING POWER INSPIRED THE IMAGINATIONS OF BLACK PEOPLE ACROSS THE COUNTRY. YOUNG PEOPLE IN CALIFORNIA ADOPTED THE LOWNDES COUNTY FREEDOM PARTY SYMBOL OF THE BLACK PANTHER. STOKELY CARMICHAEL, WHO WAS THE SNCC PROJECT DIRECTOR FOR LOWNDES COUNTY, ISSUED THE CALL FOR BLACK POWER IN MISSISSIPPI IN JUNE 1966. IN FACT, THERE IS A MOVIE ENTITLED, "LOWNDES COUNTY: THE ROAD TO BLACK POWER" STREAMING ON THE PEACOCK NETWORK TODAY.

THE PEOPLE OF LOWNDES COUNTY HAVE MADE AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION IN THE STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS. LILLIAN MCGILL WAS AN ESSENTIAL PERSON IN THE LOWNDES COUNTY CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE LOWNDES COUNTY FREEDOM PARTY. JOHN HULETT, WHO WAS THE PRESIDENT OF THE LOWNDES COUNTY CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT, "LILLIAN MCGILL WAS THE BRAINS OF THE MOVEMENT."

LILLIAN MCGILL'S NAME IS NOW LISTED WITH SUCH NAMES AS MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. FANNIE LOU HAMER, AND JOHN LEWIS ON THE SNCC DIGITAL GATEWAY AS A PERSON WHO MADE A HISTORIC DIFFERENCE IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE EVILS OF SEGREGATION. YEARS FROM NOW, LILLIAN MCGILL'S CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, AND GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN CAN GO TO THE "PEOPLE" SECTION OF SNCCDIGITALGATEWAY.ORG AND READ ABOUT LILLIAN MCGILL. IF THEY WANT TO HEAR LILLIAN MCGILL SPEAK, THEY CAN GO TO THE "OUR VOICES" SECTION OF THE SNCC DIGITAL GATEWAY AND HEAR HER TALK ABOUT HER TIME IN THE MOVEMENT. LILLIAN MCGILL LED A CONSEQUENTIAL LIFE, AND ALL AMERICA IS BETTER FOR HER CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS.

ON BEHALF OF THE SNCC LEGACY PROJECT, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE TAKE THE TIME TO RECOGNIZE THOSE WHO MADE A VITAL CONTRIBUTION TO AMERICAN HISTORY AND TO ENCOURAGE FUTURE GENERATIONS TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF LILLIAN MCGILL IN MAKING LIFE BETTER FOR ALL.