

Outstanding Black Women of Yalobusha County: The Project Continues

# 23 Strong Chartering the NAACP – Courtesy Titles Please

Recently a colleague provided archival documents about the NAACP in Water Valley. The earliest record for a local chapter is from 1970. Perhaps it is no surprise that Yalobusha county women - including my mother, Lula Helen Chapman, made up almost half of the membership in the founding branch. Those who know Ethel Hudson Morgan, who was featured in the March 14 column, are likewise not surprised that she was the chapter's founding secretary. "She is the absolute best...at almost everything," one reader noted in a comment on the article.

Water Valley's first branch president was Percy Haywood, Jr. William Holmes was the first vice president, the second, James Morgan, Ethel's husband. Virginia Mae Campbell aided Ethel as the assistant secretary, James Haywood served as treasurer, and Charlie Rogers served as the chaplain.

While I would love to include more of the original members, here are the women listed on the membership roll Ethel submitted on November 2, 1970., in addition to her, my mother and Virginia: Gertie Buford, Margaret Campbell, Essie Carothers, Ruby Fox, Catherine Freeman, Ruby Hall, Luvean Haywood, Annie B. Hervey, Florine Hervey, Louise McFarland, Clotie Love, Bernice Minor, Ella Mae Nicholson, Vira Mae Phillips, Jeannette Rogers, Nettie Rowsey, Janice H. Scott, Leana Mae Toliver, Mary Louise Toliver and Nina White.

I am proud to admit I recognize all but four or five of the founding 50 members. In fact, Mr. Haywood was my high school social studies teacher. It is rather eerie for me to see my mother's name listed. "You never told me your mom was an activist," a friend said.

I had never considered her to be and vaguely recall discussions and meetings around our house. I am also inclined to believe an organized group may have existed before 1971. However, to date no other documentation has surfaced. A January 15, 1971 letter to Water Valley president Haywood provided the Executive Authorization for the branch charter from the NAACP's national board, which had approved it January 11, 1971.

Ethel submitted a subsequent list showing approximately 76 active members as of June 13, 1971. Lest we not forget the FEAR aspect of organizing and becoming a member of the NAACP. Doing so even in the 1970's called for bravery and courage. Many Mississippians in other parts of the state had exhibited the same two decades earlier in a far more dangerous time.

By 1952 they had organized into 19 branches – several in the Delta and western Mississippi. In November of that year members of 16 chapters gathered in Yazoo City for the 7th annual session of the Mississippi State Conference of NAACP Branches. A press release noted resolutions the group approved on many significant subjects: voting, education, police brutality, housing and courtesy titles. They declared that "mob violence, cowardly bombing, intimidations, whether by hooded or unhooded groups, will not deter us. We will not turn back."

We were so poorly thought of that we had to ask for respect through courtesy titles. You may recall Betty White Milledge, who was profiled in the January 10 column, mentioning that as a child in Water Valley, she could not understand why whites were addressed as Mr. or Mrs. and yet those same whites called her parents by their first names. When Ethel sent in that membership list for the Water Valley Branch she was careful to list them as Mr. or Mrs.

The 1952 conference addressed the issue this way: Whereas, we have for too long a time referred to ourselves as Joe Doe and Sally Roe, and allowed others to refer to us by any other title other than Mr. or Mrs.;

"Be it resolved, that this conference go on record as asking that local branches launch upon a program asking that Negroes, first of all, refer to themselves and to one another as Mr. and Mrs. and insist upon others to do likewise, especially the stores wherein we have accounts and are likely to receive bills."

The perils of organizing were made abundantly clear in Belzoni – where black residents outnumbered whites 2-1 – 18 months after the state conference session. The Reverend George Lee and Gus Courts had formed a chapter and convinced 92 black residents to pay the poll tax, so they simply could register to vote. They both received death threats and tried to take precautions. A letter Courts wrote to the NAACP national office in New York underlined the palpable fear. He explained that he had been forced to resign as president and that other members had been pressured to leave the branch. He hoped for advice and made a chilling request: "any mail sent to me please send in a plain envelope and leave NAACP of [sic]. I have reason for this."

The white resistance turned deadly. While driving home on Mother's Day 1955, Reverend Lee was shot from a passing car. With his face almost gone he made his way to a cab stand. Two black drivers took him to the hospital, where he died. No charges were ever filed. Lee is considered by many as the first martyr of the civil rights movement.



By Dottie Chapman Reed

Reed is a native of Water Valley and graduated from Davidson High School in 1970. She has launched a project to compile and share info about women in the county who have made an impact on the African American community. Her column appears bi-monthly, with occasional exceptions. She can be reached at (678) 825-2356 or reed2318@bellsouth.net

An insight into the difficulties of forming a new branch comes from another activist woman, Cora Britton of Columbia in southern Mississippi. The Marion County chapter formed in 1955, but on March 4, 1958 she wrote the national office in New York about tensions in the community:

"Our branch (Marion County) has been silent for a long time, mostly because of fear. When it was said that whoever belongs to the NAACP would not be given work, they decided to stop for a while."

NAACP records for 1963 show approximately 23 Mississippi chapters with 4,875 members. A report from the Fayette chapter in October of 1966 illustrates the depth of the struggle. The branch presented 16 requests to the county's superintendent of schools and the board of education including that black teachers receive at least the average salaries of the other teachers in the state, that non-teaching personnel be paid no less than \$1 per hour and classes have no more than 30 pupils. This branch, too, wanted "courtesy titles" on all communications from the superintendent's office.

While much progress has been made since 1952, the current racially divided environment makes us wonder how much has really changed. We should remember and applaud the bravery of the individuals who often risked their lives and livelihood but continued to fight for their rights despite almost constant threats of retaliation.

## PUBLIC NOTICES

IN THE CHANCERY COURT OF THE SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF YALOBUSHA COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

ESTATE OF CHARLES LYNN POTTS, SR., DECEASED NO: 19-CV-21  
CHARLES LYNN POTTS, JR., EXECUTOR

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Letters Testamentary having been granted on the 18th day of March, 2019, by the Chancery Court of the Second Judicial District of Yalobusha County, Mississippi to the undersigned Executor of the Estate of Charles Lynn Potts, Sr., deceased, notice is hereby given to all persons having claims against said estate to present the same to the Clerk of this Court for probate and registration according to law, within ninety (90) days from the first publication of this notice, or they will be forever barred.

THIS the 22nd day of March, 2019.

/s/ Charles Lynn Potts, Jr.  
CHARLES LYNN POTTS, JR.  
Executor of the Estate of  
Charles Lynn Potts, Sr., Deceased

AMY F. MCMINN  
Chancery Clerk

TRENT L. HOWELL, PLLC  
P. O. Box 947  
109 N. Court Street  
Water Valley, MS 38965  
(662) 473-3307  
Miss. Bar No. 2751

PUBLISH: March 28, April 4 & 11, 2019

IN THE CHANCERY COURT OF THE SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF YALOBUSHA COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

ESTATE OF MOSE YOUNG HENDERSON, DECEASED NO: 19-CV-28  
RODNEY WOODARD HENDERSON, EXECUTOR

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Letters Testamentary having been granted on the 20th day of March, 2019 by the Chancery Court of Yalobusha County, Mississippi to the undersigned Executor upon the Estate of Mose Young Henderson, deceased, notice is hereby given to all persons having claims against said estate to present the same to the Clerk of this Court for probate and registration according to law, within ninety (90) days from the first publication of this notice, or they will be forever barred.

THIS the 27th day of March, 2019.

/s/ Rodney Woodard Henderson

RODNEY WOODARD HENDERSON  
Executor of the Estate of  
Mose Young Henderson, deceased

AMY F. MCMINN  
Chancery Clerk

TRENT L. HOWELL, PLLC  
P. O. Box 947  
Water Valley, MS 38965  
(662) 473-3307  
Miss. Bar No. 2751

PUBLISH: April 4, 11, and 18, 2019

IN THE CHANCERY COURT OF THE SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF YALOBUSHA COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

ESTATE OF DOLLIE ANN HENDERSON, DECEASED NO: 19-CV-29  
RODNEY WOODARD HENDERSON, EXECUTOR

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Letters Testamentary having been granted on the 20th day of March, 2019 by the Chancery Court of Yalobusha County, Mississippi to the undersigned Executor upon the Estate of Dollie Ann Henderson, deceased, notice is hereby given to all persons having claims against said estate to present the same to the Clerk of this Court for probate and registration according to law, within ninety (90) days from the first publication of this notice, or they will be forever barred.

THIS the 27th day of March, 2019.

/s/ Rodney Woodard Henderson  
RODNEY WOODARD HENDERSON  
Executor of the Estate of  
Dollie Ann Henderson, deceased

AMY F. MCMINN  
Chancery Clerk

TRENT L. HOWELL, PLLC  
P. O. Box 947  
Water Valley, MS 38965  
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PUBLISH: April 4, 11, and 18, 2019

In the meantime, perhaps we can find comfort in comments by Jennifer Gunter, the director of the South Carolina Collaborative on Race & Reconciliation (SCRR).

"People are literally dying over misconceptions of history and race" she said. "I hope to see a reckoning with the past, something that goes beyond apologies. I hope to see the power of conversations and listening transform our understanding of each other." The SCRR works in South Carolina communities and classrooms to support those seeking greater civic engagement, civil discourse and active understanding to lessen the divides created by our differences.

To whom do you owe your success besides those who brought you into this world? Do you owe anything to anyone beyond your own offspring? Should you offer thanks or try to inspire others to reach their goals by sharing what others have done for you?

In the fall University of Mississippi students will be visiting Yalobusha County to collect oral histories of African Americans in Water Valley, Coffeerville and Oakland. This will provide an opportunity to further document stories and personal histories of some of the outstanding women mentioned above. If you know already that you want to be included, or have suggestions for individuals that we should contact, email me. There will be several local opportunities for you to sign up and participate in the near future. And yes, we are featuring men as I have gotten several recommendations, including Vietnam veterans, my readers would like to see profiled.

My hope is that this project will illuminate the great sacrifices that were made in the past years for all people and encourage us to continue standing up for civil rights and equality for all.

### Board of Supervisors Allowance Proceedings For the Month of March 2019

It is hereby ORDERED that claims be allowed and paid from the following funds in the total amounts listed alongside each, to wit:

General County	406,648.19
G O Jail Bond Fund	28,984.38
REAPPRAISAL ESCROW	48,251.03
Park Patrol	11,017.51
Reappraisal Maintenance	50,643.81
E-911	5,709.18
Multi-Purpose Bldg. Operation	1,111.38
Law Library	41.58
Rural Fire	48,356.38
Didistrict One Road	17,659.44
District Two Road	19,597.29
District Three Road	12,888.18
District Four Road	17,165.997
District Five Road	30,579.94
District One Bridge	16,345.99
District Two Bridge	4,137.26
District Three Bridge	3,206.90
District Four Bridge	3,507.19
District Five Bridge	3,377.81
Rubbish Landfill	6,104.33
Environmental Clean-up	5,988.66
Industrial Operation	1,730.00
Traffic Violation	5,947.10
Implied Consent	4,281.00
Judicial System Fund	560.00
Other Misdemeanors	440.00
Other Felonies	514.50
Appearance Bond Fee	666.50
Court Constituents	49.00
Traffic Trauma	49.00
Game and Fish	520.00
State Court Education	178.00
Domestic Violence Fund	81.50
Motor Vehicle Liability	28.00
2% Bond Fee 83-29-31	162.50
Motor Vehicle Liability	142.50
DPS Fund #3747	594.00
Comp. Electronic Court Systems Fund	110.00
Civil Legal Assistance	55.00
Victims Compensation Fund	129.30
NWCC Support/Maitenance	16.30
NWCC Improvement	14.96
School Miscellaneous	1,488.97
Victim Bond	10.00
DIP Grant	71,841.13
Interlock Device Fund	250.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>831,181.66</b>

A motion was made by Kenny Rogers and seconded by Lee McMinn to allow the amount of the claims as set out above.

The motion was brought forward for a roll call vote and the result was as follows:

Cayce Washington	voted	Yes
Kenny Rogers	voted	Yes
Lee McMinn	voted	Yes
Timothy Booker	voted	Yes
Gaylon Gray	voted	No

It is hereby ordered that claims be allowed and paid from the above funds in the total amounts listed alongside each.

It is hereby ordered that the following be allowed the amount set forth opposite their names for services at this term payable out of General County funds:

Amy F. McMinn—Attending Board Meetings 2 days—\$40.00 so ordered this the 4th day of March, 2019.

/s/ Cayce Washington  
Cayce Washington, Board President

Attest  
/s/Amy F. McMinn  
AMY F. MCMINN, Clerk

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