

# Charleston Club Tattler

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## Black History Month Salute-Mrs. O

### Black History Month Salutes...Michelle R. Obama



With delicate sophistication and style, Michelle LaVaughn Robinson Obama graced us with her candid conversation during her greatly anticipated interview with Oprah Winfrey on December 19, 2016. The First Lady reflected on some of her greatest memories and achievements during her time in the White House along with some things she wished she had

more time to tackle. She held her head high for 8 years along her husband's side as he stepped into one of the most difficult and scrutinized political positions. Her quiet and reserved demeanor was often referred to as "arrogance" and like many women of color, she was often called an "angry black woman." But somehow, despite the harsh criticisms and slander, Michelle handled each issue with poise. She challenged Americans to stop using the color of someone's skin or the size of their bank account to pass inaccurate judgments on who they are at the core. Echoing the sentiments of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., she hopes that Americans will learn to "judge people not by the color of their skin, but rather by the content of their character."

During a time when racial tensions are at an all-time high in the United States, along with the recent defeat of Hillary Clinton's run for presidency, Michelle could have taken a completely different approach to this interview. But like she said in her renowned Democratic National Convention Speech last, "when they go low, we go high," and that is exactly what she did. Focusing on the high points during President Obama's eight year term. As a loving mother, influential wife, outspoken feminist, social activist, public speaker and fashion icon, it's no surprise that this first lady will be dearly missed. Her multi-faceted personality and innate ability to create programs that promote important issues will never go unnoticed. Her silent dignity demanded reverence as she worked quietly and confidently to refine the course of American History.

President Obama chimed in and described his wife as, "brilliant and cute and strong and a great mom," he said, "but I think the way in which she blended purpose and policy with fun so that she was able to reach beyond Washington...was masterful." I think we can all agree with Mr. Obama that this beautiful bombshell left her mark on the White House through many ways but one of the most memorable may have been when she lifted the 40-year ban that allowed guests to take photos while on tour

in the White House.

As soft chants can be heard from people urging the First Lady to eventually run for presidency, she strongly denied all claims and rumors. Michelle Obama has enjoyed her spotlight taking America by storm with her two beautiful daughters under her arms, but she said enough is enough. During the interview she briefly hinted at the strain of the presidency on her family. When asked why she would not run for president she simply said, "sixteen years? ... I would not do that to my kids." Mrs. Obama does however plan to continue to the programs she initiated and speak up about important causes she tackled while in the White House like her initiatives on children's health. She hopes to do so without the spotlight and cameras from the White House but rather with her platform and voice. As Michelle Obama steps out of the Presidential spotlight she will do so with dignity and pride. With an undergraduate education from Princeton University and a law degree from Harvard University, it's no surprise that this First Lady was more than qualified for her role, which can be attributed to her success. In such a small amount of time she has made such a huge impact on this country. It is no feat that she will be leaving some large heels to fill. (pun intended) But all jokes aside, we are forever inspired by Michelle Obama's wisdom and intelligence, she is a true exemplar of black excellence for people worldwide.

Michelle Obama celebrated her 53<sup>rd</sup> birthday (January 17<sup>th</sup>) during their last week in The White House; Happy belated 53<sup>rd</sup> Birthday, MRS. OBAMA!

### Chief Justice Donald Beatty – S.C. Supreme Court

Meet The Honorable Donald W. Beatty, the new Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of South Carolina. Donald Wayne Beatty was sworn in on Jan. 6<sup>th</sup> in Columbia. Beatty is a native of Spartanburg, he and his wife, Angela Beatty are the proud parents of three adult children. Justice Beatty is a cum laude graduate of South Carolina State (1974) and earned a J.D. degree from the University of South Carolina, School of Law (1979). He is the second African-American to be chief justice of the South Carolina Supreme Court since Reconstruction. The Honorable Ernest A. Finney, Jr. was the first chief justice in 1994~1985.



Justice Beatty began his legal career working for the Neighborhood Legal Assistance Program, fulfilling a personal commitment to use his legal training to benefit those who could not afford paid legal representation. Then he established a private practice in his home town,

Spartanburg. Here, Beatty maintained a commitment to public service with his election to Spartanburg City Council, later moving to the state level with his election to the House of Representatives. While in the South Carolina General Assembly he served as a member of the Medical Military, Public and Municipal affairs Committee and the Judiciary Committee. He also served as Vice-Chairman/Chairman-elect of the S.C. Legislative Black Caucus.

His dedication to community led to his service on the Piedmont Legal Services Board, Spartanburg Residential Development Corp., Southside Neighborhoods Association Partnership, BB&T Advisory Board, and many other community organizations on uplifting his community. Justice Beatty also finds time to appear at various schools and often speaks to youth groups.

He has received numerous awards for community service and leadership; e.g. Profile in Leadership Award from Benedict College, Honorary Doctor of Laws from South Carolina State University, Living Legend Award from the NAACP, Man of the Year from the Epsilon Nu Chapter, Omega Psi Phi, and the Vision Award from the South Carolina Business Network.

After five years of distinguished service in the General Assembly, he was elected to the Circuit Court in 1995 where he served as a trial judge until he was elevated to the Court of Appeals in 2003. In 2007, Justice Beatty was elected as an Associate Justice on the South Carolina Supreme Court.

### Obama Renews Emmett Till Civil Rights Crimes Act

President Obama signed legislation on December 16<sup>th</sup> that further allows the Department of Justice and the FBI to reopen unsolved civil rights crimes. The Emmett Till Civil Rights Crimes Reauthorization Act of 2016 grants agencies access to pursue crimes committed before 1980. The act is an expansion of a previous bill that was signed into law in 2008. The original bill was named after Emmett Till, the 14-year-old African-American boy who was kidnapped and brutally tortured by two White men after allegedly whistling at a White woman in 1955.

The bill was first introduced by activist Alvin Sykes in 2005. After the two men were acquitted, Sykes promised Till's mother he'd pursue her son's case. As part of his continued mission, Sykes named the bill after the teen boy. The FBI has investigated more than 100 cold cases since the bill's introduction. The updated act encourages the agencies to reach out to "activists, advocates and academics working on these issues." The law also calls for "the full accounting of all victims whose deaths or disappearances were the result of racially-motivated crimes."

### Emancipation Day Parade Rings In the New Year

The celebration of the New Year started off with a bang, when hundreds of local churches, organizations and civic groups gathered at the campus of Burke High School for the Annual Emancipation Proclamation Day 'Big Street' Parade on Monday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>. This year's festivities celebrated the 154<sup>th</sup> signing of the Emancipation Proclama-

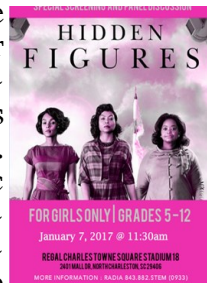
tion. The parade began at 11:00 a.m. on Fishburne Street near Burke High School with an assemblage of participating church units, floats, kings and queens from



various civic & social community groups. The crowd gathered along the streets and cheered as they were entertained by the colorful and enthusiastic participants of this year's grand event. The parade ended on Calhoun Street at Mother Emanuel A.M.E. Church. Bible Way Baptist Church (2019 Savage Rd, West of Ashley) was the site for the church service that was held after the parade.

### Free showing of the movie Hidden Figures

An admission-free showing of the movie Hidden Figures, exclusively for girls grades 5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>, was held on Saturday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, at the Regal Charles Towne Square Stadium in N. Charleston. It was sponsored by local business/civic organizations. Hidden Figures is an excellent tool for educating and empowering women and girl scholars to examine history, civics, and science as it relates to allowing them to create successful pathways for career and personal development. A panel discussion followed after the private screening. Panelists consisted of female pioneers in STEM fields from various backgrounds. The panelists guided students in a robust discussion centered on the efforts of women in STEM, steps to pursue a career in STEM, and the benefits of a STEM Career. Prizes and giveaways were given out during this wonderful STEM Experience.



### Ugly Green Sign Is MLK District's Only Significance

As Charleston observed another Martin L. King, Jr. birthday holiday in 2017, there are those who point to Charleston's designation of the Spring St/Cannon St corridors as the Martin L. King Jr. Memorial District with some disappointment. The area at the peninsula's geographic center formerly was a hub for black business activity and a black elite residential community. But since that 1999 designation, urban gentrification has transformed the area displacing most of its former businesses and residents.



In 1999 then City Councilman Wendell Gilliard proposed renaming Spring Street in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The proposal drew significant opposition, but in consolation city officials named the Spring Street/Cannon Street corridors the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial District. Naming the area in honor of Dr. King in some ways gave honor to the martyred civil rights icon. The area that once was a hub of the city's vibrant black business and residential community had embodied King's

vision of empowered black communities. But since the district was designated, the Spring Street/Cannon Street corridors have become classic examples of the displacement of black businesses and residents that characterizes most of the peninsular city. Today, the Spring Street/Cannon Street corridors are almost exclusively home to increasingly more white residents and businesses.

Gilliard, who now is a S.C. State Senator, said he and his colleague former Councilman Kwadjo Campbell had a plan, the Minority Business Participation Plan that was supposed to help perpetuate black business and residential participation in the growth and redevelopment of the area. That didn't happen as gentrification displaced most former residents and business owners over the past 20 years. "Nobody took the baton," Gilliard said of black city councilmen who once represented as much as 50 percent of the council's members. Five blacks still serve on the 12-member council. "Gentrification not only displaced black people and businesses in the MLK District, it has displaced black people and businesses all over the peninsula. It has produced only two classes of citizens on the peninsula – the rich and the poor. There no longer is a middle class on the peninsula."

Oncoming transformative gentrification was obvious though it was ignored. Residents living in the area also vehemently opposed the street name change. The consolation prize that came in the form of the district designation was a disgraceful attempt to placate the leadership, said Councilman James Lewis. Additional consolation promises never have been realized either. Among them were promises to create in the district a park bearing King's name that would include a monument. When plans for the park in King's honor were abandoned, city officials selected a committee to coordinate the erection of a monument elsewhere in the city. "The only thing that's come out of all of it is an ugly green sign above Spring Street near the intersection of King Street," Lewis scoffed. "That didn't happen by chance or design. Traditionally that area has had the highest concentration of black owned businesses. The more important question now is how we get more of them..."

### **'Giving Tuesday': The Start of A Holiday Tradition?**

First, there was the post-Thanksgiving sales spectacle "Black Friday" and then the online version, "Cyber Monday." Now, charitable groups want to start a new holiday tradition - it's called "Giving Tuesday." GivingTuesday is the 2012 brainchild of the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y, a nonprofit cultural and community center in New York. The group had an anonymous donor who would match contributions up to a total of \$50,000. The United Nations Foundation, a GivingTuesday organizer said the goal was to get people to think about charitable giving in a different way.

#GivingTuesday has become a global day of giving fueled by the power of social media and collaboration. Celebrated on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving (in the U.S.) and the widely recognized shopping events Black Friday



and Cyber Monday, #GivingTuesday kicks off the charitable season, when many focus on their holiday and end-of-year giving.

NBA great Charles Barkley, known for being vocal about black issues, doesn't mind giving back. In 2015, The NBA On TNT co-anchor revealed plans to donate \$1M to Morehouse College's Journalism and Sports Program (JSP). In 2016 the former Auburn All-American and retired NBA Hall of Famer donated \$1M each to two historically black colleges; \$1 million to Alabama A&M in Huntsville, AL, and another \$1 million to Clark Atlanta in Atlanta, GA.

Barnes & Noble's founder and chairman, Leonard Riggio, along with his wife Louise, gave \$1M to Spelman College in December. The donation was to kick start the new Riggio Scholars Program and to support Spelman's arts and innovation center.

Billionaire Charles Koch, who is a frequent conservative political donor, has made a massive contributions to historically black colleges. Through the Koch Foundation, he has donated \$25.6 million to historically black colleges for the purpose of conducting research on criminal justice and entrepreneurship in high crime cities. "Education transformed my life, and I've committed to do all I can to give others that same opportunity," Koch said in a statement. The Marshall fund has made that same commitment, he said, "giving students and scholars the chance to discover new ways to overcome barriers holding too many people back. As they succeed, so does our society." The donations were made to the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, which benefits students at 47 historical black universities.

### **Medgar Evers' Home named National Historic Landmark**

Medgar Evers stood for several key issues in the civil rights movement, but nothing held more importance to him than getting African Americans to exercise their rights as citizens by registering to vote. The Jackson (MS) home of slain civil rights leader Medgar Wiley Evers (July 2, 1925 – June 12, 1963) is now a National Historic Landmark, the National Parks Service announced it on January 11, 2017; it was one of 24 new Historic Landmarks.

Evers, a World War II veteran, was assassinated on June 12, 1963, in the driveway of the home he shared with his wife Myrlie Evers and their children. After his assassination, the all-white Jackson Police Department began to integrate as did restaurants and schools.

Medgar Evers, Mississippi's NAACP field secretary, had filed a lawsuit to desegregate the all-white public schools and had helped organize protests and boycotts of downtown Jackson restaurants. In the wake of his assassination and that of President John F. Kennedy, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

### **Navy Ship to be Commissioned in Honor of Local Hero**

A Navy destroyer that is named for Charleston-native Marine Pfc. Ralph Henry Johnson (1949-1968) will be commissioned in Charleston, according to a news release.



The USS Ralph Johnson (DDG-114) was launched in December 12, 2015 in Pascagoula, Miss. During the Vietnam War, the 19-year-old used his body to shield two fellow Marines from a grenade, dying instantly on March 5, 1968. He posthumously received the U.S. military's highest award for his actions during the War, the Congressional Medal of Honor, the Purple Heart, among other awards, and the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center in Charleston was named after him. The USS Ralph Johnson, will be the 64<sup>th</sup> of the 75 Arleigh Burke class destroyers. After it's commissioned, the destroyer will be based at Naval Station Everett in Washington. A date for the commissioning ceremony in Charleston has not been set. The announcements were made on January 11<sup>th</sup>, the date of what would have been Pfc. Ralph H. Johnson's 68<sup>th</sup> birthday.



### Awendaw Native To Become One Of The Army's Rare Black Female Battalion Commanders

U.S. Army, Lt. Col. Willette Alston-Williams in June 2017 will assume battalion command at the Chicago Military Entrance Processing Station in IL. It is one of the Army's major military entrance processing stations.



The Awendaw native is the youngest of former Awendaw Mayor Rev. William Alston's four daughters. The 1989 Lincoln High School graduate will accomplish a rare achievement for either African Americans or females in the Army when she assumes the battalion command. But she's accustomed to stepping into uncharted territory. The military was an unexpected choice for Alston-Williams who admits being somewhat of a tomboy as a child; a self-confessed sore loser; both characteristics have served her well in the military.

Growing up she liked sports, but hated losing. "I'm very competitive. But when we were losing, I'd quit and go home," Alston-Williams said. Still that tendency, which drove her playmates crazy, had nothing to do with her will to stay the course and endure.

In 1990 she enlisted in the Army National Guard after her freshman year at Benedict College in Columbia. It took four more years, a six-month deployment to Saudi Arabia in Operation Desert Storm/Shield, the birth of her son in 1992 and a distaste for entry level jobs in local fast food restaurants before she returned to college. In Jan. 1994 she enrolled at Johnson C. Smith University. The next fall she joined the ROTC program. She had a plan to become an officer, but she remained in the reserves. In 1997 she became the first Johnson C. Smith graduate in 15 years to earn a military commission. Upon receiving her commission she left her Army Reserves job as truck driver to become a desk jockey in personnel. Until 2013, that was the only job she performed since becoming an officer.

After two years as an executive staff officer at the Penta-

gon, Alston-Williams currently has been stationed in Arkansas as a Military Science professor at the University of Arkansas -Fine Bluff where she teaches ROTC students. Alston-Williams said she wants to end her military career with a bang. She's on course to doing that as battalion commander of Chicago MEF where some 10,000 recruits are processed each year. She is slated to assume command at Chicago MEF on June 23, 2017.

### Charleston Club Tattler ~ One liners ...

- Dylann S. Roof, the man who killed nine churchgoers at Mother Emanuel A.M.E. on June 17, 2015, was condemned to death by a federal jury on January 10<sup>th</sup>. The jury found Roof guilty on Dec. 15<sup>th</sup> of all counts for the murder of the *Emanuel 9*, returned their unanimous verdict of death, in the penalty phase of his trial.
- The state retrial of Michael Slager has been postponed until late August 2017 to allow for the former North Charleston officer's federal trial to proceed without conflict. Originally scheduled for March, Slager's retrial on murder charges in the death of **Walter Scott** will now follow his federal trial for civil rights violations taking place in May 2017.
- Next month's edition of the **Charleston Club Tattler** will be the 100<sup>th</sup> edition of the Tattler. It started on Sept. 15, 2001 as a one-page agenda for the club's meeting.



**Mr. Reginald Herman Lee** entered into eternal rest on January 10<sup>th</sup> in MD; he was 91 years old. Reggie was the uncle of Charleston Club member **Adrienne "Mimi" Macbeth**. In the 1950/60s, Reggie and his wife "Kitty" were active members in the Charleston Club. Reggie was born in Charleston and he graduated from Avery. Mr. Lee began his career in the Virginia area where he taught health and physical education, and coached basketball/football for years. He later worked in the DC School System as a biology and PE teacher; an acting principal at Coolidge High, a special education teacher as well as an adult education/GED teacher in the evenings. Reggie's sister, Corine Lee wrote I.C.S.' school song ("Dear I.C.S."). He is survived by his wife, Katherine and four daughters. Funeral services were January 17<sup>th</sup> at the J.B. Jenkins Funeral Home, on Landover Road, in Hyattsville. Burial was at Ft. Lincoln Cemetery on Bladensburg Road, in Brentwood, MD.

*Happy Birthdays!*

February Birthdays:

**Marian Bennett** ~ Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup> ~ **Aurelia Cobb-White** ~ Feb. 4<sup>th</sup>  
 ~ **George Johnson** ~ Feb. 8<sup>th</sup> ~ **Ralph McNeill** ~ Feb. 9<sup>th</sup> ~  
**Mary Lou Palmer** ~ Feb. 10<sup>th</sup> **Rosalie Randall** ~ Feb. 13<sup>th</sup> ~  
**Bernice Johnson** ~ Feb. 18<sup>th</sup> ~ **Velveeta Black** ~ Feb. 21<sup>st</sup> ~  
**Brenda Owens** ~ Feb. 25<sup>th</sup>.      *- The Fly on The Wall !*