

Quarterly Newsletter of the LOUISIANA COUNCIL ON HUMAN RELATIONS
incorporating the BATON ROUGE HUMAN RELATIONS COUNCIL NEWSLETTER
OCT/NOV/DEC 2006 SPEAKING OUT FOR A BETTER LOUISIANA SINCE 1964

L.C.H.R. Board Meets in Lafayette

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The first meeting of the L.C.H.R. for the new term was held in Lafayette. Hosting were Joe and Mildred Dennis. At the meeting Dick Haymaker reported he is recording all checks to be sure contributors are in our database. Paul Burns noted that our money market account at the Liberty Bank is building up.

The mail-outs to the smattering of supporters and members of the Council living in New Orleans have been returned by the postal department, according to Paul Burns.

Pat Rickels noted that a student member of the Board, William Kellner, has graduated and moved out-of-state. He is a grandson of Dr. Jim Oliver, a founder of L.C.H.R. He attended a few meetings but was not able to be very active during his term on the Board. She also reported that her nephew, Wes Kennedy, has returned to his home state of Washington. He had accompanied Dr. Pat to a number of meetings, and prepared the meals when the Board met at her home.

Dick Haymaker reviewed the history of L.C.H.R.'s relationship as a non-profit conduit between Equity Now! Baton Rouge and their funding source, the Casey Family Foundation. He lauded Paul Burns for his sleuthing to find the bank where the money was stashed. As you probably have heard, Equity Now! Baton Rouge became defunct and L.C.H.R. was unable to deliver a report on what had happened to the money to the Casey Foundation. Dick Haymaker resourcefully got together with Rev. Jeff Day, the only
(continued on p. 2)



Rickels Portrait Unveiled at Board Meeting

A painting of our beloved Dr. Pat Rickels was unveiled at the October 28th meeting. The large oil painting is the work of Tony Mayard. In it Dr. Pat is holding a glass pear as she stands before a "Blue Bottle Tree". These folkloric assemblages are found in Louisiana gardens. One was located near the front door of Dr. Pat's home, until a wind-

storm demolished it. Over a period of two years, Joe McCarty and Tony Mayard purchased cobalt blue bottles and ornaments. They commissioned Mr. Dave Besse, an old carpenter from Rayne, to build the tree-like wooden structure and presented it to Dr. Pat this past spring. The portrait then followed as a labor of
(cont. on p. 2)

LCHR BOARD MEETS *CONT.*

member of the Equity Now! board to be found. A meeting was called and a reconstituted board, which included Dick as Treasurer, was put in place for the purpose of formally dissolving the organization and getting signatories to get into the bank account.

Fortunately they found that the money was all there.

Dick reported there was some stirrings to keep Equity Now! alive, but he felt this would be prolonging the agony, and he will vote to fold it up. He felt that the Y.W.C.A. has done a very good job of promoting race relations

through their "Dialogues on Race", and various programs. While originally it seemed like a good idea to have a new organization focus on this same mission, in actuality it accomplished little.

The Board passed a resolution to send a letter to Equity Now! to formally give notice that they are in default of the contractual agreement with LCHR. This is to force our hand, so the relationship may be formally severed.

A motion was also approved to commend Dr. Pat Rickels for her donation of the money for the plaques for the 2006 Oliver-Sigur Award recipi-

ents, Dennis Paul Williams and Bill Quigley.

It was noted that Dr. Holley Galland, wife of Dick Haymaker, has been appointed to the LA Healthcare Commission and is chairing a committee on the uninsured. She has spoken out for single-payer comprehensive health insurance.

A resolution was proposed that LCHR support the raising of the minimum wage to a level that would constitute a living wage Dr. Barbara Conner offered to e-mail this resolution to political and media addresses.

John Mikell noted that "The Times of Acadiana" has descended into sewer journalism with an article that argued in

favor of the death penalty as effective, and did so in very crude and dehumanizing manner. Pat Rickels will send the article to Prof. Burk Foster, asking him to respond to the article in an essay for our newsletter.

The next Board meeting was set for January 13th at Dr. Pat Rickels home.



FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH

In Abbeville, the Historical and Cultural Alliance Center Museum and Gallery will be featuring a photography exhibit entitled "Rejoice When You Die." Many of the black and white photos had illustrated a coffee table book of the same name with text by Vernel Bagneris and Introduction by Ellis Mar-salis. They celebrate one of the defining cultural traditions of African-

Americans, specific to New Orleans; the Jazz Funeral. Sensively documented are the solemnity of the procession, the character of the spectators, and the exuberant abandon of the second line.

Mr. Leo Touchet, a native of Abbeville, is the photographer. His work has been purchased for major collections such as those of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. He has exhibited at

major museums and galleries. After traveling the globe, he recently returned to live in Abbeville following an assignment to document the devastation of Hurricane Rita. It was fortuitous for the Museum and Gallery that such a fine exhibit became available, and would coincide with Black History Month. The exhibit title is taken from an expression that typifies the African-American response to the reality of death—"You cry when you are

born, so rejoice when you die." The exhibit will be shown from Jan. 9 through Mar. 16.

The Museum and Gallery is located at 200 N. Magdalen Sq. Hours are: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. —Tuesday, Saturday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.—Wed., Thurs., and Friday.

**RICKELS
PORTRAIT
UNVEILED cont.**

Invisible Activists

The above is the title of a book published by the LSU University Press which is the winner of the 2007 Jules and Frances Landry Award. The full title is **Invisible Activists: Women of the Louisiana NAACP in the Struggle for Civil Rights, 1915-1945.** The author is Lee Sartain. The book examines attitudes

toward gender, race, and citizenship of African-American women through some the most challenging years of the civil rights struggle. During the renewal of the KKK in the 1920's and the extreme poverty of the Depression years, the author contends that the role of the women of the NAACP was the critical core that kept the movement from collapse.

Though organization leadership was allotted to men, women could exert influence through strong positions in families and communities. They were effective in public relations, mobilizing youth, and grassroots organizing. Their long unheralded dedicated contributions now have been given their due in this excellent new book.

love.

The Board members were surprised and delighted with the portrait of Dr. Pat. Dr. Pat expressed how she was pleased with the quality of the work. She is enjoying it in her home but has declared her intention to have it displayed in Judice-Rickels Hall, where the Honors Program and her office are located.

REMEMBERING DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. (1929-1968)

On April 4, 1967, one year before his death, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his historic speech at the Riverside Church in New York, entitled "Beyond Vietnam—A Time to Break Silence."

While he had been a critic of the war in Vietnam for some time, with that speech he committed himself wholeheartedly to active and unrelenting opposition to the war. In re-reading that text today it is amazing how true his words ring today. His argument indicting the war in Vietnam could apply as well to the current war in Iraq. Below are quotations from his historic speech.

"If we continue, there will be no doubt in my mind and in the mind of the world that we have no honorable intentions in Vietnam [Iraq]. If we do not stop our war against the people of Vietnam [Iraq] immediately, the world will be left with no other alternative than to see this as some horrible, clumsy, and deadly game we have decided to play.

The world now demands a maturity of America that we may not be able to achieve. It demands that we admit that we have been wrong from the beginning of our adventure in Vietnam [Iraq], that we have been detrimental to the life of the Vietnamese [Iraqi] people. The situation is one in which we must be ready to return sharply from our present ways. In order to atone for our sins and errors in Vietnam [Iraq], we should take the initiative in bringing a halt to this tragic war."

"Meanwhile, we in the churches and synagogues have a continuing task while we urge our government to disengage itself from a disgraceful commitment. We must continue to raise our voice and our lives if our nation persists in its perverse ways in Vietnam. We must be prepared to match actions with words by seeking out every creative method of protest possible."

"A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the world order and say of war, 'This way of settling differences is not just.' This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into the veins of people normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically damaged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice, and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."

"We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence or violent co-annihilation. We must move past indecision to action. We must find new ways to speak for peace in Vietnam and justice throughout the developing world, a world that borders on our doors. If we

do not act, we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark, and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight."

"If we only make the right choice, we will be able to transform this pending cosmic elegy into a creative psalm of peace.

"If we will make the right choice, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our world into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood.

"If we but make the right choice, we will be able to speed up the day, all over America and the all over the world, when justice will roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream."

Yale University Creates Anti-Semitism Center

Yale University recently announced the creation of the first university-based center in North America dedicated to the study of Anti-Semitism. Dr. Charles Small, director of the new Yale Initiative for Interdisciplinary Study of Anti-Semitism, said "Increasingly, Jewish communities around the world feel under threat, and I think we need to understand the current manifestations of this disease." The Center will provide a place where scholars can research contemporary causes of anti-Semitism and ways to combat it. Courses, seminars, and conferences will be offered. Last year the organization, Human Rights First, found that racist and anti-Semitic violence had greatly increased in Europe.

EQUITY! CONTRACT TO BE TERMINATED!

LCHR is in the process of terminating its contracts with Equity!Baton Rouge and the Casey Family Programs (CFP). Equity! had nearly two years "to build within Baton Rouge a sustainable movement to create more equitable race relations." With LCHR playing the role of middleperson, since it has 501C(3) status, CFP donated \$3,750 to Equity!, match-

ing \$3,750 which Equity! had raised from member donors. Equity!'s president, Ethyl Harris, died in January 2005, its treasurer and its secretary moved out-of-state, and the organization folded. Investigations by Dick Haymaker, LCHR's liaison in the Equity! project, resulted in Dick being elected treasurer of Equity!. Dick located the bank where the organization's

money was being held, and learned that none of the CFP grant had been spent. LCHR is in the process of terminating its contracts with Equity! and CFP and returning the grant money to CFP.

(ed.'s note: Although notes of the Board meeting cover the discussion on this issue, it was felt appropriate to include the asst. editor's definitive article, as well.)

Understanding ISLAM

The *Times of Acadiana* was justifiably criticized at the LCHR Fall Board Meeting for an atrocious pro-death penalty article. While the standards of this publication have slipped, they recently had an article, that from the standpoint of human relations, was very positive.

In the first issue of 2007, there was a cover article, "Accessing Islam: Understanding our Muslim neighbors." It told of the efforts of Deacon Reggie Bollich to educate Acadiana Catholics, and other Christians, about Islam. Pope Benedict XVI has recently been emphasizing the need to promote dialogue and prevent a dangerous clash of cultures. In this spirit, Deacon Bollich has been giving talks to small groups in such places as Scott and Gueydan. He seeks to dispel misinformation and promote respect, understanding, and peace between Christians and Muslims. He is quoted as saying "What would Jesus do? Would he encourage war? would he condone hate?" Deacon Bollich had become friends with Muslims during numerous trips to Israel to engage in archaeological digs. He educated himself on inter-faith issues and is now on a mission to share the message with church members.

The article told of the faith journey of Carmen Broussard. She is a recent convert to Islam. Although from a Catholic background, she was not raised in the Church. At age 20 she went through adult sacramental initiation as a Catholic, but questions remained about various doctrines, such as the Trinity. She

attended the Islamic Center at the invitation of a co-worker and there found a direct and simple faith that immediately appealed to her. She became aware of bigotry toward Muslims when walking with a Muslim friend in the Acadiana Mall, and some other women were threatening to yank off her friends chador (head scarf).

Interviewed in the article were several Muslim immigrants, who expressed positive impressions of living in Acadiana. Ehab Meselhe, from Egypt, said that "if all that Americans know about Muslims is what they hear from Rush Limbaugh or Sean Hannity, then I don't blame them for feeling hostile." He became a U.S. citizen by choice and said that "faith has nothing to do with criminal acts of terrorism... with a billion Muslims in the world, there are going to be some good and some bad."

Eid Kneifati is a native of Palestine and now an American citizen. He pointed out that after Hurricane Katrina, the Islamic Center of Lafayette provided help to evacuees of all faiths, along with other local religious groups. He appreciated being invited to participate in a 4th of July Inter-faith Service at St. Peter's Church in New Iberia, for the last several



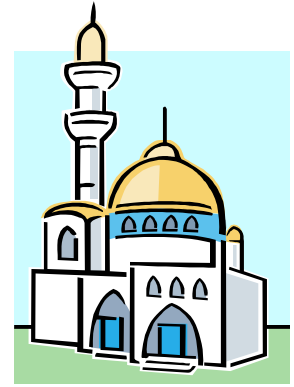
years.

Samir El-Helou is owner of a successful Oriental rug business with locations in Lafayette and Baton Rouge. As a younger man he had first moved to Franklin and worked for former governor Foster, until he could open his own business. He was never harassed when he took his breaks to pray toward Mecca.

Hesham Tillawi, a Palestinian-American, has lived in America for 23 years and hosts a politically-charged program on the Acadiana Open Channel, *Current Issues*. He has found people to be curious and interested in learning about his religious, cultural, and political viewpoints. He had not found such openness when he had been to Dallas, TX and thought that Cajuns, having a history of dispersal and exile, related well with Palestinians, who currently experience dispersal and exile. Tillawi said that the best way to learn of Islam is to read the Quran and get to know Muslims personally.

Lisa Blackburn was the local freelancer who wrote the article in *The Times*. Credit is due to her and *The Times* for promoting human relations and inter-faith dialogue. Immediately after the 9/11 act of terrorism there were threats of violence and acts of discrimination here in Acadiana directed toward Muslims. Some on the religious and political right continue to fan the flames of hostility and discrimination.

The LCHR Board is proud to have a Muslim on the Board, Mr. Abnur Musa. There are also Catholics, Protestants, Unitarians, Jews, and Agnostics represented on our Board.



Remembering James Brown

Another cultural icon of the civil rights era of the '50's and '60's, James Brown, recently died while in the midst of another tour. Over the years his figure became bloated, and his image tarnished by arrests. However, in death, he is likely to be transmogrified into a mythic figure, much like Elvis. Certainly he earned the accolade often bestowed on him, as "The Hardest Working Man in Show Business."

Brown could be said to have composed the sound-track of the civil rights era. He was the real thing, a living embodiment of southern black culture who could work an audience into a frenzy as he strutted, sweated, and screamed. His great hit "Say it Loud (I'm Black and I'm Proud)" summed it all up. It so exuberantly expressed the sea change that had taken place in Black America over those tumultuous decades.

Brown rose from abject poverty to become a multi-millionaire entertainer, owning a publishing company, restaurants and several radio stations. His music and act were very influential in the development of rock 'n roll, funk, disco, and rap. Thousands viewed his body as it lay before burial in Augusta, GA, at the auditorium named in his honor.

HUMAN RELATIONS NEWS

Vol. 42

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations

No. 1

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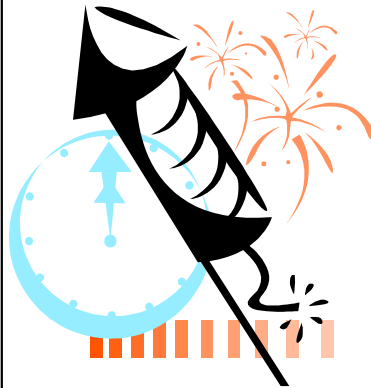
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Children's Coalition

The Children's Coalition of Greater Baton Rouge launched the implementation of its Community Plan for Children 2006-20011, on October 18th. Phil Woodland and Marjorie Green represented the BRHCR, and the meeting was heralded as the "Action Summit." Speaking in support of the plan were Mayor-President Melvin "Kip" Holden and Superintendent Charlotte Placide, EBR Public Schools.

The plan aims to improve the quality of life for children in East Baton Rouge Parish. Some of the goals of the plan are to ensure that children have access to dental care, protection from internet predators, and classrooms with increased numbers of skilled teachers. The plan operates on the premise that all children deserve a chance.

On November 17th, the Coalition held a membership meeting to discuss goals and make plans. For more information, our readers should visit the Coalition website, www.ccofgbr.org.

BRCHR Board Actions

The Board of Directors met in September and October, with President Marjorie Green presiding. In September the Board appointed committee members and reviewed committee duties. The program committee reported that it planned to have a Dialogue on Racism at Courtyard of the Marriott.

At the October meeting, a forum was planned on the Baton Rouge bus system, to be held November 9th. Several other organizations were asked to take part in this meeting. It was agreed that C.A.T.S., the Baton Rouge bus company, needs to have a better financial base in order to serve the community.

Diversity Youth Summit

The Second Baptist Church hosted a meeting in October for E.B.R. Parish middle-school students. They were concerned with ending violence on their school campuses. The 100 Black Men of metropolitan Baton Rouge organized the summit in the wake of recent fights and gun incidents at Baton Rouge schools. Several organizations participated, (cont. on next page)



Dr. Diola Bagayoko Speaks on Changes at Prescott Middle

Dr. Bagayoko, Southern University professor, student conflict consultant and member of the BRCHR Board, addressed one of the October meetings of the Downtown Kiwanis Club. He spoke of his work to produce literature on teaching to make a genius out of any child. He applied this principle in the Timbuktu Academy, with which he has been associated since 1990. His system works, he said, if every stakeholder participates, including the student, the teacher, the principal, and the administrator. He has worked with Superintendent Charlotte Placide to implement this process at Prescott Middle School. There was a drastic change of culture, perception, and opinion at the school, but not immediately. Parents had to see that students came to school, on time, and there was to be no TV watching without study first. The end result was a dramatic increase in Prescott School's performance score!

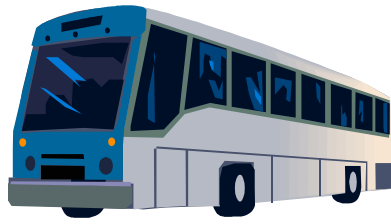


Diversity Summit, cont.

including Campus Crime Stoppers, the I CARE drug abuse and crisis counseling group, and Volunteer!Baton Rouge. The students came up with several good ideas for stopping school violence. The meeting was attended by Marjorie Green, president of the Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations.

One Book, One Community Program

To Kill a Mockingbird, a 1960 novel by Harper Lee, has become the first selection by the E.B.R. Parish Library and the B.R. Area Chamber for its "One Book, One Community" program. Ms. Lee won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1961, deservedly in my opinion. The book is a classic. In 1962 Gregory Peck starred as Atticus Finch in a movie made from the novel. The book and the film contributed significantly to America's civil rights movement in the '60's. The One Book, One Community program extends to nine parishes—Ascension, East and West Feliciana, East and West Baton Rouge, Iberville, Point Coupee, Livingston, and St. Helena.



November Transit Meeting

Consistent with the efforts over many years of attempting to help Baton Rouge develop a decent public transit system, the BRHR sponsored a meeting on November 9th, at Sacred Heart Church, just across the street from the bus terminal. The theme was "Public Transit Solutions: "Get Behind CATS and Board the Bus!!!"

A panel of speakers addressed possible solutions for the transit system in Baton Rouge: a stable funding source, the environmental /economic impact, and a plan to attract all citizens to utilize the transit system. Speakers included Cynthia Manson (Board member of BRCHR), Sierra Club; Richard Haymaker (Immediate Past President, BRCHR), Baton Rouge Area Chamber; Eric Lewis, Baton Rouge Black Chamber; John Denman, CATS (Capital Area Transportation Service); and Creola Jackson, bus rider. The E.B.R. Mayor's Office shared some news articles.

Attendance was 80, and the program was video-taped. DVDs were sent to participants. Southern University students from the Department of Engineering plan to follow up this meeting with a forum in March regarding possible solutions to present to the public and the City Council. Disabled riders were concerned that services will be cut. They gave emotional testimonies and stressed the need for services to continue.

The meeting was cosponsored by the Working Interfaith Network, National Association of University Women, National Coalition of 100 Black Women, and the Community Association for the Welfare of School Children.

Women's Council Sponsor Women's Week

Women! a Week-Long Celebration, was sponsored by the Women's Council September 15-21. Many study groups, lectures, and discussions were held in various places in town, varying from motels to sorority houses to libraries and to schools. Marjorie Green, President of BRCHR and Board Chair of the Working Interfaith Network, went to the "Presidents' Receptions" held at the Governor's Mansion, honoring women leaders in Baton Rouge. Roberta Madden, BRCHR member, presented "Dialogue on Race," an on-going program of the local YWCA. Other BRCHR members attending the celebration included James Cross, Phil Woodland, Patrice Niquille, Margaret Pereboom, and Diola Bagayoko. The local and national YWCA have two slogans on their brochures, both of which are also our concerns in the Council on Human Relations: *eliminating racism* and *empowering women*.



Maefield Kiper R.I.P.

Mr. Maefield Kiper died July 30, 2006. He and his wife, who survives him, were long-time members of the Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations. After several years as a teacher, he became head of the Louisiana School for the Blind at Southern University. When the two state schools for the blind were racially integrated, he became and administrator in the combined school, now called the School for the Visually Impaired. He served as the supervisor of the work of Marjorie Green, now president of the Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations. Mr. Kiper is remembered fondly as solid citizen and a fine human being. He will be missed by family and friends alike.

Rebel Flag at LSU

White Southerners for years have taunted Black Americans by displaying the Confederate Battle Flag. At L.S.U., football fans have purchased Confederate banners with the yellow and purple colors of L.S.U. They have a legal right to display these flags, but they should not. To many persons, the Confederate Battle Flag is a symbol of racial discrimination. Chancellor Sean O'Keefe (cont. on next page)

Rebel Flag at LSU cont.

and other LSU leaders are right to discourage Tiger fans from displaying this symbol of hatred, whether the LSU leaders are thinking of the damage to LSU's reputation outside Louisiana when this flag is televised, or whether they want to show respect for those of us who are offended by seeing this flag on display.



Taking a Seat for Justice

I went on Nov. 10 with one of my daughters to see the 60-min. documentary of the above title, written and produced by Dr. Rachel L. Emanuel of Southern University, at the Manship Theatre located in the Shaw Center for the Arts. It is about the March 1960 Baton Rouge Sit-Ins, involving 16 S.U. students. Sponsored by the S.U. Law Center, the documentary was very professionally produced. It was broadcast state-wide on the LPB network on November 12th. As the booklet handed out at the Shaw Theatre door states, this documentary provides another important link in Louisiana's significance in the legal history of the country's move from "Separate, But Equal" doctrine, established in the 1896 Supreme Court's decision in Plessy vs. Fergu-

YWCA's DIALOGUE ON RACE—Editor Burns Went to One this Fall

The writer, Paul Y. Burns, 86 years old, has been involved as a leader in trying to overcome racial discrimination in the U.S. since 1933. I protested against racial discrimination in the buses of my home town, Tulsa, OK (Tulsa had Jim Crow laws). Even earlier, in September 1926, when I started in the first grade, as a Caucasian lad with a pretty good tan, and told the teacher I was part Indian (now called Native American). I lied, partly because I liked the gentle way the Indians treated the environment, and partly because I had begun a lifelong identification with "the underdog".

Active in Baton Rouge's anti-racial discrimination programs since 1965, I figured there wasn't much I still could learn on this topic. However, in a dialogue the participants learn by talking to each other, so I thought that even if I did not learn much, perhaps other dialoguers might learn something from my experience. Besides, I had be-

come an Associate Member of the YWCA, and Robbie Madden, one of my favorite YW leaders and long-time BRCHR member, seemed to be the staff member in charge of the dialogues. Also, Maxine Crump, in whom I have a lot of confidence, works with Robbie on the dialogue program. In November, Maxine spoke to students and faculty at LSU on her experience as the black female campus resident.

The dialogue workshop was worth my participation. I recommend it to our members. Each Dialogue on Race consists of six two-hour sessions (with a break after an hour). Our group had about 14 members, and we sat around a table in LSU's Hodges Hall from six to eight p.m. on six successive Mondays. The cost was \$20. Refreshments were provided. A booklet was given to each participant, containing an excellent lesson article form race relations literature for each session.

Among other things, I learned that there was quite a "generation gap." I was the oldest person there, representing the Great Depression and World War II generation. Some were Baby Boomers (like my children), and at least one was Gen X, the children of the Baby Boomers (like my grandchildren). When I asked, "How many of you have heard of Martin Luther King's famous 'Letter from the Birmingham Jail'?", only two hands went up. This means to me that those of us who were involved in the civil rights movement need to keep telling our stories.



son, to "Desegregation, with all Deliberate Speed," in the 1954 landmark decision in Brown vs. Board of Education.

Those persons who were shown in the documentary and who were able to come to the Nov. 10th performance, went on stage at the end, and were applauded. I was delighted to see on stage my old friend Johnnie A. Jones, Sr., who played an important role as legal

counsel, representing the students after they were arrested. On Dec. 11, 1961, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the convictions of the sixteen students.

After the showing, I bought a copy of the DVD documentary. If any readers want to borrow it, please let me know and I'll send it to you, free. Email me at pyburns@lycos.com or

call me at 225-387-4755 or write to me at 2137 Cedardale, Baton Rouge, LA 70808.



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