

NORTHSIDE NEWS

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The Marian Cheek Jackson Center For Saving and Making History

50 Years Later: The Struggle and Legacy of the Lenoir Strike

On February 24, 1969, UNC cafeteria workers—almost all of whom were African American and many of whom lived in Northside—began a major stoppage that became known as “The Lenoir Strike.” At stake were pay well below minimum wage, a long-delayed raise, hiring practices that denied benefits, and supervisory discrimination against Black employees. The protest grew, and while the demands seemed within reach, negotiations ran out of steam in early March. Protests boiled over, and an uprising ensued. The Governor then called in the National Guard and authorized use of force by riot police to reopen the dining hall.

With courageous leadership by women like Elizabeth Brooks and Mary Smith, the first phase of the strike met with some success. The strike ended on March 21 when the governor authorized a raise and met most demands. But many workers were laid off, and the University contracted out food services to the private California company SAGA. When Lenoir workers attempted to unionize, the company balked. Elizabeth Brooks, a cafeteria worker and union organizer told the *Daily Tarheel* that at that point she “could not think of any options the workers had except strike or slowly be laid off.”

On November 7, 250 Lenoir workers resumed the strike. Eventually, after negotiations and concessions from strikers, the strike came to an end on December 9, 1969. The University met many of the workers’ demands; the workers formed the historic UNC Non-Academic Workers Union. On the anniversary of this remarkable success, we should remember the violence inflicted on protestors and on the 69 workers (of an original 150 full-time workers) who were laid off by SAGA within a year of the original February 1969 strike.

— Wyatt Woodson

Hear from Mary Smith, one of the strike leaders, at: soundcloud.com/sohp/e0080_mary-smith-police.

Meet Pastor McMillan



In honor of Women’s History Month, we recognize the Pastor of New Vision Church of God of Prophecy (COGOP), Rev. Dardanella McMillan. Pastor McMillan was called into the ministry in 1996 and has been pastoring for approximately 8 years. She has been at New Vision COGOP for almost 5 years. She and her family live in Graham and commute to Chapel Hill. COGOP has been on Church Street since 1972 after moving from Merritt Mill Road. Here is a short excerpt from a conversation with Kathy Atwater:

Q. What are some of the challenges you face as a female Pastor?

A. Changing the mindset of people who still think God did not call women to pastor or to preach. This could be a struggle if I allowed it to be, but I’m not listening to man, I’m listening to God, because He called me.

Q. What gets you through these challenges?

A. I love excitement, I love to smile, I love to be happy, and I want to share the Word! The joy of The Lord is my strength. If I lose my strength, then I lose my purpose.

Q. What is the funniest thing you recall as a Pastor?

A. One Sunday morning the Sunday School class, which ranges in age from 2-16, was asked, “How many of you know that God is good?” The kids shouted, “I do!” “Who is good?” “God is!” “Who woke you up this morning?” “God did!” “Who fed you this morning?” They paused and looked at each other and said, “Nobody!” They hadn’t eaten before they came to church!

Q. What has been the response of the students in the neighborhood?

A. We’ve had students visit our services, and they enjoyed it, calling New Vision the “Spirit-filled church.” Some students have even interviewed us. We try to make them feel welcomed by reaching out to them first.

Q. What advice would you give to other female leaders?

A. I have been blessed to have support from my family and my church family. Surround yourself with strong leaders who will be your biggest supporters and aid you in facing the challenges you will encounter as a female leader; trust God and allow Him to lead you.

— Kathy Atwater

A Story of Food and Fearlessness

UNC students Jess Casimir, Tatiana Farmer, and Ray Garcia reflect on the impact of the Lenoir strike and confront historical amnesia on campus:

The UNC Food Workers Strike of 1969, commonly known as the Lenoir Strike, catalyzed concern about the working conditions of cafeteria workers at UNC. The nearly year-long strike put gender and race at the center of labor disputes, protest, and organizing.

Under threat of arrest and violence, with the support of the emerging Black Student Movement, the Campus Y, and civil rights leaders from across the South, workers finally gained improvements in wages and policy.

We learned from Angela Bynum, whose family is six generations strong in Northside and whose mother participated in the 1969 Lenoir strike, what it’s like to work in Lenoir today. Before speaking with Angela we were under the impression that the mass production of food took all essence of meaning out of it. However, Angela’s use of mass produced food shows that it’s not the food itself, but those who make and serve it, that give it power.

With Angela’s help, we produced a digital story that connects the past with the present and explores how students can address social justice.

Visit our project on the website of the Jackson Center: <https://archives.jacksoncenter.info/APAT/841>) or go to <https://jacksoncenter.info>, click on *Northside Stories*, then *Oral History Trust*, then type “Lenoir strike” into the search bar.



"Angie always brightens my day...she used to slide me some extra cookies every once in a while."
— Mabel D’Souza, UNC student

If you have stories you want to share about the Cafeteria Workers Strike, contact the Jackson Center at 919-960-1670. We’d like to make sure that your history is heard!

Performance, Exhibit Recognize Lenoir Cafeteria Workers Strike

Fifty years after the Lenoir strikes, on March 20, 2019, members of PlayMakers Repertory Company will join with the Wilson Library to recognize the workers’ struggle. They will present, *Voices From the Archives: The 1969 UNC Food Workers Strike*.

The performance is created from oral histories of students and workers involved in the strike, including Mary Smith and Elizabeth Brooks—two of the strike leaders—as well as UNC student and BSM President Preston Dobbins. Director Kathryn Hunter Williams is excited to bring these voices to life: “Given the student leadership with Silent Sam, it is so good to be reminded of how vital student actions are. We saw it with the confederate monument, and we will now hear the words of the students and workers from 1969. It is a good lesson to remember when times are tough and forward momentum seems doubtful.”



The performance is part of the special exhibit, *Service Not Servitude: The 1969 Food Workers Strikes at UNC-Chapel Hill*. It is free and open to the public. *Voices From The Archives* will be presented Wednesday March 20, 2019 at Wilson Library, UNC, Chapel Hill. Come from 4:30-5:30 pm for the reception and the exhibition. The program and performance will begin at 5:30.



In Memoriam: Celebrating the life of Ms. Valencia Selene Clark

Ms. Valencia Clark, a member of Orange Grove Missionary Baptist Church in Durham and resident of the Pine Knolls neighborhood, departed from this life on February 11, 2019. She graduated from Chapel Hill High School in 1975 and served the community for many years as a Certified Nurse's Assistant. Her friends and neighbors knew her as a high-spirited woman who enjoyed the many activities at the Seymour Senior Center and was actively involved with the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship. She is survived by six sisters and one brother, seven nieces and nephews, five great nieces and nephews, and a host of relatives and friends.

A Month of Mentoring: Reminding Students Every Day Is Black History Day

The Jackson Center's Community Mentor team was very busy speaking to students in schools throughout the district in February. Here are just some of the highlights:

Rev. Albert Williams Speaks at Carrboro



Rev. Albert Williams, one of the Chapel Hill Nine who participated in Chapel Hill's first sit-in at Colonial Drug Store on Franklin Street on February 28, 1960, spoke together with Howard Lee, Chapel Hill's first and only black mayor, at Carrboro High School on February 7. He recalled the interview that got him the job as Chapel Hill's first black firefighter: "They asked me, 'If you were given an order to put the firehose on a group of protestors to break up a crowd, would you do it?' That was a hot question to me, and in my mind I said, 'Here it goes. I won't get the job.' I said, 'No, sir, I would not.'"

Ms. Clementine Self on panel at East Chapel Hill High



Ms. Clementine Fearington Self, a resident of Broad St. and a long-time teacher in Chapel Hill, spoke on a panel with Chapel Hill-Carrboro school district Superintendent Pamela Baldwin and Lee Williams, Director for Equity. She addressed racism in a school district with one of the largest opportunity gaps between white and black students in the country: "Just because our schools desegregated doesn't mean they integrated. That's just words being tossed around. Because there is just as much racism in our country today as there was when *Brown v. Board of Education* took place. ... The children feel it, and the parents feel it."

Mr. Ronnie Bynum and Ms. Pat Jackson featured at McDougle Elementary

Mr. Ronnie Bynum, one of the first students to integrate the all-white Carrboro Elementary school, and Ms. Pat Jackson, a passionate speaker and a young participant in the freedom movement, spoke at McDougle Elementary on February 27.

When one of the students asked Ms. Pat what lessons she learned from the civil rights movement, Ms. Pat told the audience of fourth graders: "I am better able to stand up to adversity, to stand up for things that are not right, and to always make sure that my voice is heard."

Ms. Gwen Atwater and Mr. Ronnie Bynum Join Read-In at Carrboro Elementary

Mr. Ronnie Bynum and Ms. Gwen Atwater, a retired Frank Porter Graham teacher revered for her high expectations and support for all of her students, participated in a "Read-in" featuring African-American children's books at Carrboro Elementary on February 20. Students listened attentively as Mr. Ronnie added some lesser-known details to the familiar story about Rosa Parks:

"Rosa was not the first African-American to sit at the front of the bus. It was a fifteen-year old young lady that sat on the bus and got thrown out of the bus. ... The NAACP picked Rosa and had her sit on the bus, because she would make a great spokesperson. Now the NAACP and the rest of the world could see Rosa Parks fighting for the rights of this fifteen-year-old."

**"Children have opinions
just like adults do."**

Ms. Gwen Atwater

Drumroll please...

The Northside Festival REUNITE!

Saturday, April 27th 11:30-3:30
Corner of W. Rosemary & Graham
Fun, Fellowship, and Food: Free for all!

Northside Trivia

This month's question: Who are the two members of the band *Liquid Pleasure* that grew up in the Northside neighborhood?

Last month's answer: Northside civil rights movement leader Harold Foster stated, "Man this town is hard to crack. It's called a liberal place, but that's a mirage, man. When you go to get water, all you get is a mouthful of sand."

How it works: If you think you know the answer, call the Jackson Center at (919) 960-1670 any time from 9-5 to win a Northside button! Whoever ends the year with the most buttons will be our Northside News Trivia Champion and receive a trophy!

April Birthdays

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|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 4/6 Matthew Fearington | 4/22 Nikki Harmony, Seth Kotch |
| 4/12 Barbara Davis | 4/23 Calvin Neville |
| 4/17 William Page | 4/28 Michael Palmer |

If you are interested in receiving a digital copy of the newsletter, send us your email address! contact@jacksoncenter.info

Seeking Neighborhood Volunteers!!

The Jackson Center is looking for neighbors to host small **porch/front yard celebrations in March and April**. We'll provide the charcoal!

Newsies needed! If you can help by taking on a **Northside News delivery route**, call us!

919-960-1670

Ask Keith

Q: Following the Chapel Hill 9 dedication, are there any other unsung heroes in Chapel Hill-Carrboro the public should know about?

A: Recently, the Town of Chapel Hill honored the Chapel Hill 9 for their contribution to the Civil Rights Movement in Chapel Hill. This was a great honor that the town bestowed upon this group of men. But there are many others. Who else should be recognized? I have had many inquiries asking if I knew any other unsung heroes in Chapel Hill and Carrboro. If you know of any other unsung heroes (i.e. civil rights, social issues, athletics, etc.), please call or email the Jackson Center to let us know so we can include them in our newsletters.

Community Board

Parks and Rec Programs at Hargraves for Children Ages 2-5

Next event: March 20
9:30-10:30

Hargraves Community Center, Roberson St.

Sham-Rockin' Good Time
March 20, 9:30-10:30 am
\$2 Registered
\$3 Non-registered
Kids will take home St. Patrick-themed arts and crafts and enjoy storytelling with songs and much more!

**Save the date:
Spring Fever**
April 17, 9:30-10:30 am

Orange County Senior Games

April 6-May 4
Celebration: May 8

OCSG celebrates artists and athletes! If you're over 50 and into arts or sports—from quilting to horseshoes—register now!

Registration deadline:
March 22

Call Myra Austin
919-245-2020
maustin@orangecountync.gov

'I love my HBCU' Alumni Event

Saturday, April 13
7-10PM

Tickets: \$25

Hampton Inn & Suites, 370 E. Main St., Carrboro

The Orange Chapter of the NCCU Alumni Association is hosting a game night with line dancing, food, and fun. Represent your HBCU (t-shirt, hat, pin, colors or more) for a chance for your university to win a \$250 donation to the scholarship fund.