

# Northside News

## MIGHTY MARCHing WOMEN OF CHANGE

From our staff, to our community teams, to our service partners, the majority of our work is accomplished by women. This isn't unique to us; over 73% of the nonprofit workforce is women. And of course, that impacts how much value is given to the work. Why do newspapers have dedicated sections for news on business, but don't dedicate space and resources for professional reporting on the nonprofit world? Why is information about for-profit companies more important than the work that nonprofits do to address society's most urgent problems? We weren't planning on doing two features on women restaurant owners for Women's History Month, but how serendipitous that the timing worked out like that! Both articles vocalize that their work is about giving back and nurturing the community. "Women's work" is powerful. It's not just what we do, but *why* we do it, and *who* we do it for. Women's work is about making the world better, starting with our own communities.

-NNews Editor Diana Koo

### “Food is about Giving and Nurturing”

A Conversation with Spring and Annette “Necy” Council  
By Kathy Atwater, Mae McLendon, and Kathryn Wall

Spring and Necy Council have been working in the family business since their youth. Their grandfather, Bill Council, ran Bill’s Bar-b-que where the grandkids were paid 1 cent per box to prepare chicken boxes that were sold out of their grandfather’s truck at UNC football games. After the restaurant closed, their mother Mildred Cotton Council cooked food for their father’s food truck every morning before going to her job at the hospital, and the couple used the money from the food truck to reopen Bill’s Bar-b-que. In 1976, Mama Dip branched out on her own and opened Dip’s Country Kitchen. Mildred Council got the nickname “Dip” because she was tall enough to dip water out of the bottom of the barrel in her Chatham County childhood home. Spring remembers, “I was working [at Bill’s Bar-b-que] one day and I just thought about Mama down the street, and so the next day I went there where she was and started working with her. So she was the cook and I was the waitress when we first started off.” Other family members, including Necy (an NCCU alumna), soon joined her in the new restaurant. As customers heard her children calling her “Mama” at work, they started calling Mrs. Council “Mama Dip” as well, and soon everybody knew that the best place in town to get good country cooking was “Mama Dip’s.” Running the restaurant wasn’t always easy. When a recession hit, the family had to work for nothing but tips, but as her daughters remembered, “Mama always – no matter what was going on – she kept going, and you never heard her complain about money or business or anything. She just kept going until we worked it out.”

In 1985, New York Times restaurant critic Craig Claiborne wrote a review of Mama Dip’s proclaiming praising “deep-fried chicken livers as crisp and tasty as any I have ever had.” Her fame spread, through appearing in magazines and on TV and publishing two books. Spring remembered, “People called her a celebrity and she would say she would tell you she ain’t no celebrity.” “She didn’t care,” Necy added, “she was just the same.” In 1999, the restaurant moved to its current location on Rosemary Street, changing the name to simply “Mama Dip’s Kitchen.” Whatever the location, the food at Mama Dip’s has always been fresh and seasonal. Necy recalled, “Mama didn’t call her food soul food. [She called it] traditional country cooking because we all ate the same thing, basically. Everybody ate meats and vegetables back then.” The comfort foods on the menu have brought customers to tears recalling the foods they grew up with. As their mother’s popularity grew, Spring said that she “realized that connection between food and memories and emotions and how people feel about what their grandmother cooked – and when you get to the table how that brings that closeness and love and nurturing.”



Mama Dip died in 2018, but her legacy lives on. Necy remembered: “When Mama passed away it was no problem for us going on with the business because we know every aspect of it...” But even a time-tested local institution like Mama Dip’s has faced challenges during the pandemic. At first the family had to let their staff take unemployment while they kept curbside pickup going with a shoestring crew of Spring , Necy and other family members taking turns cooking and running meals out to cars awaiting curbside pickup. With the support of PPP funding and restaurant revitalization funds, the family persevered. Some days they only brought in \$100 for the whole day, but as Spring Council said, “we kept going.” They brought back their staff and added hand-held credit card readers for easy curbside pickups, with the family following Mama Dip’s example to just “do what you need to get done” to keep on giving and nurturing in the community.

Front row: Stephanie (granddaughter), Sandra (daughter), Mama Dip, Joe (son), Annette (daughter) Back row: Tonya (granddaughter), Spring (daughter)  
Photo courtesy of Spring Council.

### “Every Day Is a Celebration of All That We Are”

Written by Vimala Rajendran

Photo courtesy of Chapel Hill Magazine: Beth Mann

I came to Chapel Hill in 1985. My first job was at Community School for People Under Six. The children at the daycare lived in the Northside neighborhood where the daycare center was located at that time. Through my interactions with the other teachers at the school and the parents of the kids I got to become friends with several African American folks. I had just arrived from India and was new to the South. Being immersed in this particular school gave me a sense of belonging in the Northside Community, just like if I had lived there.

The food at the daycare was brought in each day from a kitchen where African-American women made soul food for us all of the weekdays. After the kids ate, we teachers got to eat the delicious food. I grew very fond of the cuisine and soon wanted to learn to make it myself. The teachers at the school were very welcoming to me, and they shared their family recipes whenever I asked them. I would try to attend fish fry or seafood boil, or barbecues in the neighborhood if I could get an invitation to any when they happened.

Before long, I was hosting my own backyard picnics with southern food I had made myself. That may seem like a leap, but those events prepared me to be a beloved chef when I hosted dinners at my home, and later as I opened Vimala’s Curryblossom Cafe, open since 2010. The spot where my restaurant is located was the home of the first desegregated ice-cream shop in Chapel Hill. Residents of Northside once reminisced that in their childhood they crossed Rosemary Street and came through South Roberson and crossed Franklin Street because all were welcome here...just as it is today. When we opened the restaurant, it was clear that we would have a sign that read, “Vimala cooks, everybody eats. No one turned away due to lack of money”.

It was during the pandemic that I asked myself what more I needed to do to reach out to the elderly, shut-in folk in the Northside. A quick phone call to the Jackson Center made it clear that there was a need for some deliveries of home-cooked meals to our neighbors. When we were making the menu, there was no question what the meals would consist of... local meats, produce and flour came together to make the same food I had relished so heartily at the daycare in the Northside, this time cooked by me with the help of my restaurant workers who were all too grateful to have the work during the uncertain times for employment anywhere. That is soul food, alright, which I define as good food, made with love.

Of all the residents who I love and admire from the Northside area I particularly have been inspired by Ms Esphur Foster. I met her first at Carr Mill Mall at a specialty paper and print shop. She was always encouraging in her interactions with me, telling me stories from her day and asking how I was doing. Sometimes I took her a little food leftover from my home after a community dinner. I later ran into her after I opened the restaurant. She was very proud of me for my entrepreneurship, and she had noticed that I was impacting the growth of the neighborhood and community through my business. Anyone can open and run a business. But I came up against some hard challenges being a woman of color and having no capital to begin with. It was because of microloans from numerous friends and community members, and the hard work of the team members at Vimala’s Curryblossom Cafe that we were able to stay open.

What makes my work exceptional is that I source all from places and people who grow them ethically. We pay living wages, and benefits to the employees. We are transparent and accountable to the community we serve. We make our food wholesome and accessible, through affordability for ALL people of all races, ability, income levels, and also immune-compromised guests. Everyday is a celebration of all that we are --- a blessed community serving each other. Love your neighbor. Happy Women’s History Month.



Edited by Christine Abernathy



Daydreamer to Visionary: a Glimpse at Education Access by Aisha Booze-hall

In 800 AD Fatima al-Fihri was born into a wealthy family who valued intelligence, and generosity. In 825 AD her family was forced to migrate from Qairawan, Tunisia, to Fez, known today as Morocco. While in Fez Fatima helped her father to run their successful family business. Fatima spent her free time dreaming about an educational utopia. Things in this new home went smoothly until Fatima’s husband, father and brother all suddenly passed away. These tragedies happened in quick succession leaving Fatima and her sister, Maryam in despair. Maryam and Fatima inherited their families fortune and desired to give back. In 859 AD Maryam opened a mosque that was a safe space for refugees, masjid Al-Andalus. That same year Fatima opened the University of al-Qarawiyyin, the very first university in the world. It opened 200 years before the University of Bologna (1088) and Oxford University (1096).

In order to understand a tad more, I spoke to three muslim community members about the University of al-Qarawiyyin and how they had experienced muslim women’s access to education. This is what they had to say...

One community member was excited to attend university, and her parents were extremely supportive of her journey. At the same time, she felt some social backlash from others her age due to education being her main focus. She was aware that being able to seek education as a primary goal was a privilege.

Another community member mentioned that education was at the center of her raising. Her parents focused on gaining knowledge being a main priority, both career wise and related to deen (religion). She believes that access to education is a work in progress and that there are many practitioners of education in her community.

Another member mentioned that growing up in the Middle East he and his sisters were provided with all of the educational opportunities they desired. They were able to travel alone internationally and focus on education as a primary desire. From his experience, it seemed that most professional schools were 70 % female, so women who desired education had access. At the same time, asked a classmate about her desire to travel internationally to study to which she responded that because she had “chromosomes x” it wouldn’t be allowed. The community member finished by stating that the Middle East is getting more progessive in terms of education but family culture dictated a lot of what women can do.

There is a rich history of trailblazing that empowers individuals to seek the education they desire. I hope that the legacy continues and that culture shifts so that everyone can thrive inside and outside of the classroom.

Northside Women

Northside women, once Northside girls  
Beaded braids and ribbons that twirl  
Shiny silk press and copper-colored curls

Northside women, once Northside girls  
Marched for progress while insults were hurled  
Planned for progress more priceless than pearls  
Preached for progress with words that whirled  
Prayed for progress so freedom’s flag may fly unfurled

Northside women, once Northside girls  
Cinnamon apples and ice cream swirls  
Colorful Countesses more influential than Earles  
Northside women, once Northside girls  
Help longleaf pines heal from oppression’s burl

Poem by Phillip Ty Chapman

April Birthdays

- April 6 - Mr. Matthew Farrington
- April 12 - Ms. Barbara Davis
- April 17 - Mr. William Page
- April 18 - Ms. Stella Farrar
- April 22 - Ms. Nikki Harmony
- April 23 - Mr. Calvin Neville
- April 24 - Mr. Frederic Williams
- April 24 - Mr. Prince Taylor
- April 25 - Ms. Odessa Wilson
- April 26 - Mr. Christian Foushee Green
- April 28 - Mr. Michael Palmer

IN MEMORIAM



Mr. Willie Carson, Jr.  
August 29, 1936 - March 6, 2022



Mr. John H. Jones, Jr.  
January 31, 1946 - March 3, 2022



Mrs. Mary Alice Edwards Hubbard  
February 26, 1942 - February 28, 2022



Mrs. Jean Elizabeth Mason Taylor  
October 19, 1936 - February 26, 2022



Mr. Johnnie Joseph “Suttcake” Robinson  
May 7, 1945 - February 13, 2022



Mr. Robert Craig  
August 3, 1940 - March 6, 2022

Mama Dip’s Chicken and Dumplings

Around corn-shucking time, an old rooster or hen would be put in a coop to fatten for this old-time favorite.



- 1 stewing chicken (about 5 pounds)
  - 1 can (10 ½ ounces) chicken broth
  - ½ stick butter, cut into pieces
  - 2 cups all-purpose flour
  - ½ cup warm stock
  - 1 bay leaf
- Rinse the chicken under cold running water. Put it into a large pot with the bay leaf and cover with water. Let cook over medium heat until tender, about 40 minutes. Remove the chicken and set aside. When it cools, remove the meat from the bones and chop. Skim the fat off the chicken stock, straining the stock, and return it to the pot, adding water to make 10 cups. Add the broth and the butter to the stock and heat until the butter melts. Stir to mix.

Take ½ cup of the stock from the pot and add 2 ice cubes to it so that it cools. Put the flour in a bowl and pour in the cooled stock. Mix well with a fork or your fingertips to form a dough. Add a little more flour if the dough is too wet.

Roll out the dough, on a floured board, thinner than pie crust (not more than ⅛ inch thick). Cut into strips, and then into 1-inch pieces. Let the stock come to a boil, and then drop in pieces of dough. The dumplings will stir themselves in the boiling liquid. When you’re finished putting the dumplings in the liquid, shake the pot.

Stir the chopped chicken into the pot, reducing the heat to low. Let cook slowly for 10 minutes.  
Serves 8 to 10.

From Mama Dip’s Kitchen. © 1999 by Mildred Council. Used by permission of the University of North Carolina Press.



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NORTHSIDEFAMILIES, JOIN US FOR A MELODIOUS  
AFTERNOON WITH ACTIVITIES INCLUDING  
DIY GUITARS, BASICS OF BEATBOXING,  
INSTRUMENT PETTING ZOO, AND MORE!  
Snacks and drinks will also be provided

WHEN: SATURDAY MARCH 26, 2-4PM  
WHERE: 505 CRAIG ST, OUTSIDE AT CRAIG/GOMAINS BOYS  
& GIRLS CLUB  
RAIN DATE: SUNDAY MARCH 27, 3-5PM  
RSVP not required but appreciated! Contact Diana at [diana@jacksoncenter.info](mailto:diana@jacksoncenter.info) or text 669-254-8381 to RSVP, if you have questions, to help with or lead an activity, or if you’d like to bring a snack to share!



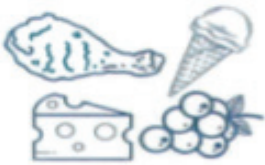
MASK encouraged

HOUSE US NOW!  
MARCHING INTO APRIL  
FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING  
30% AMI and below



Rally in Chapel Hill

Saturday April 9 from 1pm to 5pm  
Meet at Peace & Justice Plaza, 179 E Franklin St.  
March to the Jackson Center, 512 W Rosemary St.



Food



Speak Out!



Live DJ

For transportation info call CEF at 919-200-0233

