



■ 44th Annual Cross Cultural Conference

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ISSUE



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Action Council Newsletter

■ APRIL 2022

■ ANNUAL EDITION

Message From the **THE PRESIDENT**



James Starnes, Action Council President

Thank you for reviewing the 2022 Annual Edition of our newsletter. I am honored to serve as President of The Action Council and lead our effort to advocate for cultural competence at this crucial time in our history. We are proud that we were able to hold a successful in person conference this year and we thank all presenters who will give of their time and expertise to make our effort possible. We thank the attendees who braved the elements to be with us and we thank Ms. Leonard and the nurses who worked to ensure our safety.

We thank the Planning Committee for its creativity. As always, we are grateful for all who continue to support us with your presence and gifts. May we be unmovable in our efforts to protect and enhance the dignity of all providers and consumers of human services. In this edition you will find summaries and highlights of the activities of our members and

our organization during the year including the conference. We will also note the passing of individuals who were central characters in the cross-cultural movement and key contributors to our efforts to continue the legacy of Dr. Corbitt.

We lost several friends of our organization in 2022. Dr. Carol Victoria Apt, a Professor at SC State University and a former member of the Board of Directors of the Action Council died on August 13, 2022. Dr. Rose Wilder, a trailblazer in education and a contributor to our effort died on August 30, 2022. Mr. Henry Vincent Ford died at the age of sixty-four on December 6, 2022. He was a community leader and a friend of our organization who was with us at this year's conference. Mr. Norman Deas died on December 21, 2022 at the age of 87. He was a mental health advocate who was perhaps best known as a member of the Local planning committee, the group that has been instrumental in planning for so many of our conferences in Myrtle Beach. We appreciate the contributions each of these individuals and extend our condolences to family members.

We thank Dr. Thommi Lawson, Rev. Johnny Ray Noble, and Mrs. Ramona Carr for their contributions and look forward to their continued support. We note the resignation of Dr. Rogers, the first African-American director of the SC Department of Mental Health and we celebrate the appointment of Dr. Carl E. Jones, a member of our board to the SC Mental Health Commission.

From the Editor's Desk ERNEST SHAW, LMSW



Thank you for reviewing the 2022 Annual Edition of our newsletter. I am honored to serve as editor, and I strive to make each edition informative and correct. I appreciate the opportunity to continue indulge in my passion to document the rich history of the Action Council and the Cross-Cultural Conference. In this edition you will find summaries and highlights of the activities of our members and our organization.

We will also note the passing of individuals who were central characters in the cross-cultural movement and key contributors to our efforts to continue the legacy of Dr. Corbitt. Please review what is written and help me improve the quality of the newsletter by sending stories of interest for future editions. Let us know about your lives, the triumphs, and the losses.

I have only been involved with the Action Council and the conference for the last half of their existence and I have done extensive research on the early history of our movement. Nevertheless, there is so much that I do not know. There are individuals and events that I should know about but do not. So, give me a name or an event and I will try to bring you a story.

Who are these Conway High Grads?



Keep Reading, Please.

This is What the 2022 Conference Looked Like!



The 44th Annual Cross-Cultural Conference was held February 24 – 27, 2022 in Myrtle Beach. Our goal was to offer a positive experience to everyone in attendance by providing the highest quality training possible.

The Education Committee, led by Ms. Livingston should be commended for their outstanding work in assembling a faculty of presenters who represented great diversity in all of its characteristics. We will always be indebted to the individual presenters as well as the agencies and organizations that they represent for the generosity shown by those who provided us with a wealth of enlightening information. The content of the conference was divided into the usual tracks such as Policy, Community, Clinical, and Family.



Major addresses were presented by Dr. Rogers, the State Director of the SC Department of Mental Health; Dr. Bell, The Chief Epidemiologist of the SC Department of Health and Environmental

Control; Dr. Smith=Brice. the Vice President of Education for the Council of Social Work Education, and Dr. Butler, the President of the American Counseling Association. We are also happy to note that Dr. Bell of SC Department of Health and Environmental Control was one of the honorees on the 2022 African-American History Calendar.



A Richland County Sheriffs Deputy, Solicitor, a police chief and a Judge of a Mental Health Court all spoke of their work with the mentally ill. The president of a Mobile Crisis Team, the Director of the Office of Suicide Prevention at SCDMH as well as professionals from Greater Greenville Mental Health Center, Pee Dee Mental Health Center and G. Werber Bryan Psychiatric Hospital joined the agency director to update us in best practices designed to address the needs of individuals that our organization was founded to advocate for.



Mr. Vince Ford who has since died drew upon his years of experience in the field of community health and public education to enlighten us regarding the interconnectiveness of physical and mental health. A physician, three nurses from North Carolina, professors from the USC School of Medicine, Jacksonville State University, George Washington University, and Morehouse School of Medicine added to that effort. A minister, students, and academic and counseling staff from Coastal Carolina University made significant contributions. A Human Trafficking Specialist and an Intercultural Specialist rounded out the faculty.

We believe that the best indicator of the quality of our conference has always been the frank assessment of all of our educational offerings by the attendees who support us by paying the cost of registration and other expenses while taking time out of their busy schedules to attend and participate in our conference. In the words of Dr. Corbett, “Our goal is to make each conference a mountaintop experience.”

We ask each attendee to rate the quality of each presentation and presenter on a scale of one to five in nine areas with five representing the highest quality. Using this method we are able to arrive at a numerical rating for each presentation as well as the entire conference. The overall score for the conference was 4.9 out of a possible 5.0 score. This is an exceptionally high score with several of the presentations achieving perfect scores. We commend all of our presenters as well as the organizations that so many of our presenters represent.

Remembering Dr. Carol Victoria Apt



**Dr. Carol Victoria Apt
1951 - 2022**

We have lost another friend of our organization. Dr. Carol Victoria Apt, a Professor at SC State University and a former member of the Board of Directors of the Action Council died in Orangeburg at the age of seventy on August 13, 2022. Carol was born in 1951, in the Queens, New York. She grew up in Westchester, New York, and earned a Bachelors in Sociology from Indiana University, a Masters in Sociology from Boston University, and a Ph.D. in Sociology from Northeastern University. She also has a Certificate of French Studies from Ecole Lamonia in Lausanne, Switzerland and she completed an internship in Applied Medical Sociology from the American Sociological

Association at the University of Texas Medical School, Department of Psychiatry, in San Antonio, Texas.

While in Texas Dr. Apt did HIV/AIDS research and wrote educational materials for use with inmates in the San Antonio jail. She also taught at the University of Texas at San Antonio. She worked as a clinical social worker and a cultural consultant for Toyota Motor Corporation and a professor at Loyola University before coming to our state. Dr. Apt taught at Claflin University and SC State University where she hosted a radio show, "Talk to Me," on 90.3 WSSB for many years as well.

Dr. Apt won numerous awards. I will never forget the grace that she showed in 2009 when she was one of the nominees for Professor of the year at SC State, an award won by my daughter, Dr. Angela Shaw-Thornburg. Dr. Apt was the first person to offer congratulations along with Dr. Carl E. Jones another member of the Board of Directors of our organization.

Dr. Apt possessed so much knowledge and willingly shared it. I was given the responsibility of coordinating training for the mental health staff at the SC Department of Corrections and was able to successfully do so because I was able to call on a network of gifted professionals like fellow Action Council Board members Shirley Furtick and Dr. Apt. When our organization sponsored a Poverty Forum at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Columbia, Dr. Apt and I collaborated to speak on the topic assigned to us, I often reminded her affectionately that we did so well that her next speaking engagement was before an international audience in China and my next speech was made to a group of deacons at another Columbia church a few miles away. She was always prepared, and I will not forget the occasion when the closing speaker at our conference did not show and Dr. Apt stepped in and saved the day.

President Starnes noted, "Dr. Apt was a valued former board member and cherished friend of the Action Council. She was an excellent trainer, and during her tenure on the board, rarely missed an Action Council event. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family." Dr. Apt was a prolific writer and as editor of this newsletter I appreciated her willingness to supply scholarly works for publication and continued to do so even after leaving the board. We have lost a friend that I look forward to meeting again.

Highlighting Commissioner Jones



The members of the Board of Directors of the Action Council celebrated when Dr. Carl Edison Jones was Appointed to the SC Mental Health Commission. Dr. Jones had already walked among us for years and we knew that he was uniquely qualified to help lead SCDMH into the challenging future.

Dr. Jones is a native of Conway and a graduate of Conway High School like several other individuals featured in this edition of this newsletter. He is a graduate of SC State University, where he majored in psychology and minored in French. He earned his doctorate degree in Counseling and Psychological Services from Clark Atlanta University in Atlanta, Georgia.

He worked as a special education teacher in the Horry County School system. Like so many members of our board, he once worked for SC Department of Mental Health where he was an addictions specialist and program coordinator at the Waccamaw Center for Mental Health. Dr. Jones spent more than two decades at SC State University where his last position was vice president for academic success and retention programs. Dr. Jones also spent several years as vice president for enrollment services and student affairs at Clark Atlanta University in Atlanta, Georgia.

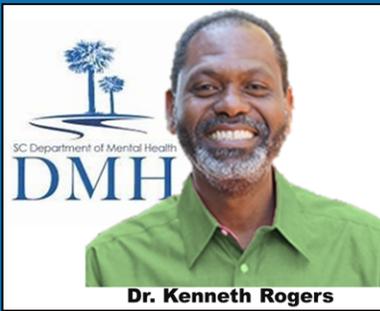
Dr. Jones is a former board member and former president of the Southeastern Testing Association, and a former president of the Counseling and Educational Psychology Association. Dr. Jones is a current board member and past president of the Action Council for Mental Health and Human Services. Dr. Jones is a frequent speaker at our events and an advocate for higher education.

Mr. Greg Pearce, the Chairperson of the SCDMH Commission said, "His extensive expertise in mental health along with his wide-ranging experience in the administration and development of comprehensive programs make him an excellent addition to this Body." Those of us who have had the opportunity to rub shoulders with Dr. Jones are happy that he will have the opportunity to use his tremendous skills to aid SCDMH in providing care for the mentally ill citizens of our state.



We Salute SCDMH Commissioner Jones

Dr. Rogers Resigns as Director of SCDMH



Dr. Kenneth Rogers, the first African American to serve as Director of the South Carolina Department of Mental Health resigned effective November 1, 2022. The cross-cultural movement grew out of efforts by individuals such as Dr. Otis Corbitt and other professionals who made up the first wave of Blacks hired by SCDMH and other agencies. After nearly a half century, we continue to serve as advocates for diversity among the providers of mental health and other human services and those that they serve.

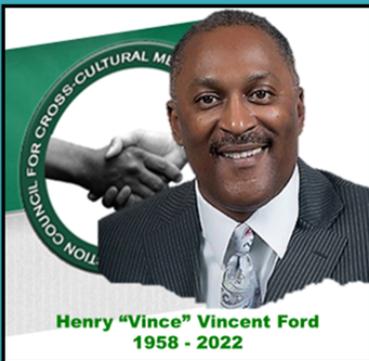
We appreciate the support that we have received from the SC Department of Mental Health and the contributions of Dr. Rogers has been a visible manifestation of that support.

In 2016 when Dr. Rogers was Professor and Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at Greenville Health System/University of South Carolina- School of Medicine-Greenville he spoke at our conference. Dr. Rogers explored the impact of poverty, race, and mental illness on the labeling of children of African descent in the U.S. in a presentation titled, The Story of a Child Who Became a Victim, But Was Called a Criminal. His presentation was described as “Excellent!” Dr. Rogers has “a highly effective communication style which the audience delighted in! This was a real down-to-earth session providing information and insight into issues affecting African American males. “Like the way he presented stats and other info and interwove the story of John,” wrote one person. Other comments included “Excellent,” “Probably should be offered at least every other year,” and riveting presentation. Invite him back. “Best speaker so far.”

Dr. Rogers was the Opening Plenary Speaker at the 2022 Cross-Cultural Conference. Comments from the evaluation of his presentation included: Great historical information. Excellent speaker.” “Very personable and transparent.” “Excellent and inspiring, pertinent.” “Absolutely Great!” “Dr. Rogers. Appreciate you being at the helm.” Dr. Rogers also served as one of the panelists for the presentation titled “Addressing Disparities in Health for Improved Health Outcomes” Comments made by attendees included, “Simply the best! Excellent job. Wonderful.” “Great questions, great responses. Thought provoking.” “Excellent overview and even solution focused.” One attendee added “Strongly encourage continuing having panel at each conference, Allow audience to put questions in basket for anonymity. As a Black woman I was highly motivated.”

We appreciate the contributions of Dr. Rogers and wish him only the best in his future endeavors as we look forward to our continuing collaboration with his successor and SCDMH. Dr. Robert Bank was appointed to serve as interim state director.

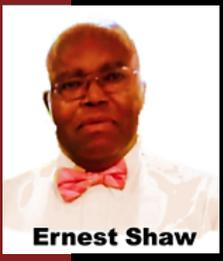
Farewell to Mr. Ford



Another community leader and a friend of our organization has left us with memories of his many contributions. In the 1940s the Columbia Housing Authority opened Gonzalezs Gardens Housing Project for low-income white residents and Allen-Benedict Court for low income blacks. Henry Vincent Ford grew up in Allen-Benedict and later in life he was honored by having his name listed on the Columbia Housing Authority’s Wall of Fame. Mr. Ford died at the age of sixty-four on December 6, 2022. He was a graduate of Benedict College and devoted his life to serving others.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of America had its beginnings in 1860 in Connecticut. A century later Ford, a product of the once segregated housing project was selected to lead the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Midlands. Ford was Executive Director of the James R. Clark Memorial Sickle Cell Foundation. He worked at the South Carolina Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse coordinating and managing alcohol and drug abuse programs. Ford served on Richland School District One School Board in various positions, including board chair. In 2017 he was awarded the Council of Urban Education’s Benjamin E. Mays Lifetime Achievement Award. Beginning in 1997, he led Palmetto Health’s initiative to serve the unmet health needs of the community. For a quarter of a century, he met and exceeded expectations with the successful programs that improved the lives of so many. Palmetto Health was awarded the 2014 American Hospital Association’s Foster G. McGaw Award, the highest national honor for community health initiatives. He retired as the senior vice president of community affairs for Prisma Health one year ago.

His daughter Robyn Ford noted “He was strong, he was people focused, he was hilarious, and he was authentic.” Vince Ford was a tireless worker, but he was never too busy to lend his talents to our organization. On numerous occasions he was an integral part of our effort to provide cross culturally based education to the community because of the commonality of our goals. At the 2022 conference Mr. Ford served as moderator of the panel discussion titled “Addressing Disparities in Health for Improved Health Outcomes that featured Dr. Kenneth Rogers and Dr. Jacob White.” Comments made by attendees were very favorable although one person wrote “the moderator talked too much.” I was there and there was so much passion and wisdom uttered by a man who could never be just a moderator when the topic was health care. Mr. Ford we will miss you.



An Apple and a Rose for Dr. Wilder

By Ernest Shaw

A great lady passed our way recently and, now she is gone. With the death of Dr. Rose Wilder, former superintendent of Williamsburg

County School district I, realized that there are times when we may not fully grasp the accomplishment of some who walk among during the walk. Therefore, I request this opportunity to reflect on the life and work of Dr. Wilder by simply reviewing words that I had penned about her earlier along with the views of my associates who observed her efforts.

Four years ago, I wrote in these pages about the reunion of the class of 1968 at Williamsburg County Training School in Greeleyville shortly after the SC Department of Education assumed control of our troubled school district and appointed Dr. Wilder as superintendent. I knew at the time that Dr. Wilder was already a trailblazing woman who could have rested on her laurels but instead chose to continue to work in the so-called Corridor of Shame, that I am proud to say that I am a product of.

In 1994, Dr. Wilder became the first Black female superintendent in our state since Reconstruction when she was appointed to lead Clarendon School District 2. She served with distinction and was honored as Outstanding Superintendent by the SC School Board Association five years later. She also led the troubled Fairfield County School District before returning home to lead Clarendon School District 1. When Dr. Wilder was honored as state Superintendent of the Year in 2014, I heard that she generously donated her monetary prize to teachers to purchase school supplies that teachers in many schools pay for out of their salaries.

When she was picked to run our school system, I wrote that no one would be rooting for success by Dr. Wilder and state officials more than I, and I looked forward to the day when a better school system would be returned to the control of local officials, parents, and students.

My confidence in Dr. Wilder was also based on her work in another setting. The Action Council for Cross-Cultural Mental Health and other Human Services was founded four decades ago by Dr. Otis Corbitt and others, and I have had the privilege to serve on the Board of Directors of the organization. Our goal is to encourage and promote diversity in the provision and utilization of mental health and other services. We do so primarily through our educational effort that would not be possible without the

generosity of agencies, organizations, and gifted individuals such as Dr. Wilder.

The Action Council collaborated with Francis Marion University to present the 2016 Female Leadership Conference. As editor of our organizational newsletter, I wrote that we were especially pleased that many of those in attendance were young ladies. Dr. Wilder presented *The Public School System: What You Need to Know* and a direct quote from our evaluation was “She was very organized and very knowledgeable about her subject. She was one of the best, if not the best presenter for today.”

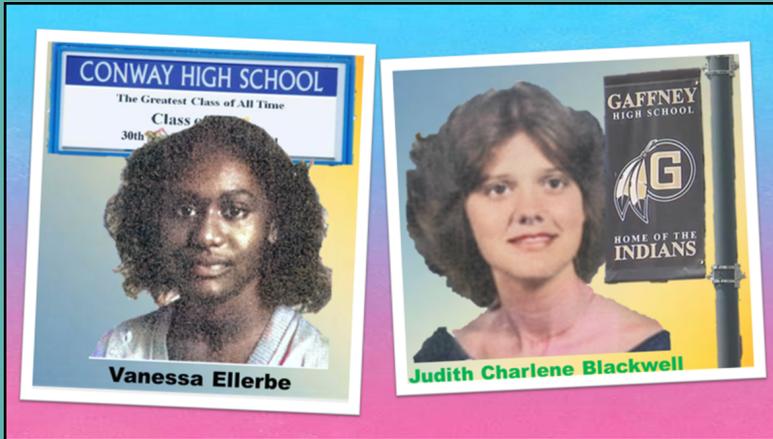
The primary educational event of our organization is the annual Cross-Cultural Conference which has been held each year since 1979. At the 2014 conference Dr. Wilder took time out of her busy schedule to come to Myrtle Beach to moderate a panel discussion of Strategic Advocacy for Children of Poverty and Children of Color. The panelists included Ronald Epps, Ph.D., the former Richland School District One Superintendent; Vince Ford of Palmetto Health; Nathan White, the Principal of Columbia’s C.A. Johnson High School and Thomas Holmes, M.S. an Information Resource Consultant. Their effort was described as “A well-needed presentation of the impact of poverty on children” and “Informative innovated research that provide action to-do items.” “Powerful!!” one attendee noted, and another person suggested that the panelists be brought back to address the same issue next year.

Dr. Rose Wilder has been honored by the state legislature with a senate resolution in 2020, and the historic St. Paul Elementary School in Clarendon County was renamed Rose Wilder Elementary School in her honor. Recently in these pages, I wrote that I wish that I could give an apple to the teachers who educated generations of students at the former Williamsburg County Training School in Greeleyville that graduated its last class this year. Now with the passing of Dr. Rose Wilder, I would recognize the contributions of this remarkable woman with an apple and a rose.

Reprinted from The News, The (Kingstree, SC), September 28, 2022, Page 13



To the Carolina Ladies Not Limited by the Sky



Recently Artemis I blasted off from Kennedy Space Center for a journey to the moon as America began a new and exciting phase of space exploration that will expand the diversity of the exclusive club consisting of persons who will have walked on the moon. Two young ladies, one white and one Black, from our state developed an interest in space travel while attending public schools. Decades later, both would play crucial roles in our latest adventure in space.

Vanessa attended Conway High School like members of our board Dr. Carl Jones, Mr. Mark Bellamy, and Mr. Steven Gaither. Her father was Gilbert Burke Ellerbe, and her mother was Inez Bethea Ellerbe. Mr. Ellerbe was the assistant principal at Conway High School, and his wife was an elementary school teacher. Their Vanessa became interested in science at an early age and her parents supported her interest. She attended the Governor's School as a junior.

More than two hundred miles away from Conway Judith Charlene Blackwell was born to Judy and Johnny Blackwell in Gaffney in 1965. When her grandparents were married in 1937 her grandmother was working for the Cherokee County Traveling Library before working for decades in textile mills during her 98 years of life. Her parents restored a 1938 Cadillac LaSalle and it won "Best in Show" at the 2008 car show in Gaffney. Charlie, as she is known, became interested in space travel after watching the Apollo launches while in grade school.

Vanessa graduated from Conway High School and Charlie was a 1983 graduate of Gaffney High School. Both furthered their education at Clemson University. Charlie earned a degree in Computer Engineering in 1988. Vanessa earned a Bachelor of Science in Engineering and a Master of Science in bioengineering from Clemson. While working for the Food and Drug Administration in Washington, D.C., she met her husband, Georgetown law student George Wyche, Jr. and they are parents of one son.

Immediately after graduating from Clemson, Charlie went to work for the aerospace company, Boeing where she worked with NASA at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. In 1991 Charlie married Richard Allen Thompson and they have three children.

Vanessa's career with NASA began in 1989 when few women or Black people worked for the agency. Throughout the years she advanced up the career ladder at the agency as the workforce became more diverse. In 2004, Charlie Blackwell-Thompson left Boeing and joined NASA. She now holds several patents for systems that she developed at NASA.

Three decades after joining NASA, Vanessa is the Director of NASA's Johnson Space Center, the home of the astronaut corps, Mission Control Center, International Space Station, Orion, and Gateway programs and its more than 11,000 employees. This African American native of Conway is responsible for the program that will land the first woman and the first person of color on the surface of the moon and that is just the beginning. In 2016 Charlie Blackwell-Thompson, the Gaffney High School graduate became the first female Launch Director for the Kennedy Space Center, and she was at the helm when the Orion spacecraft Artemis blasted off.

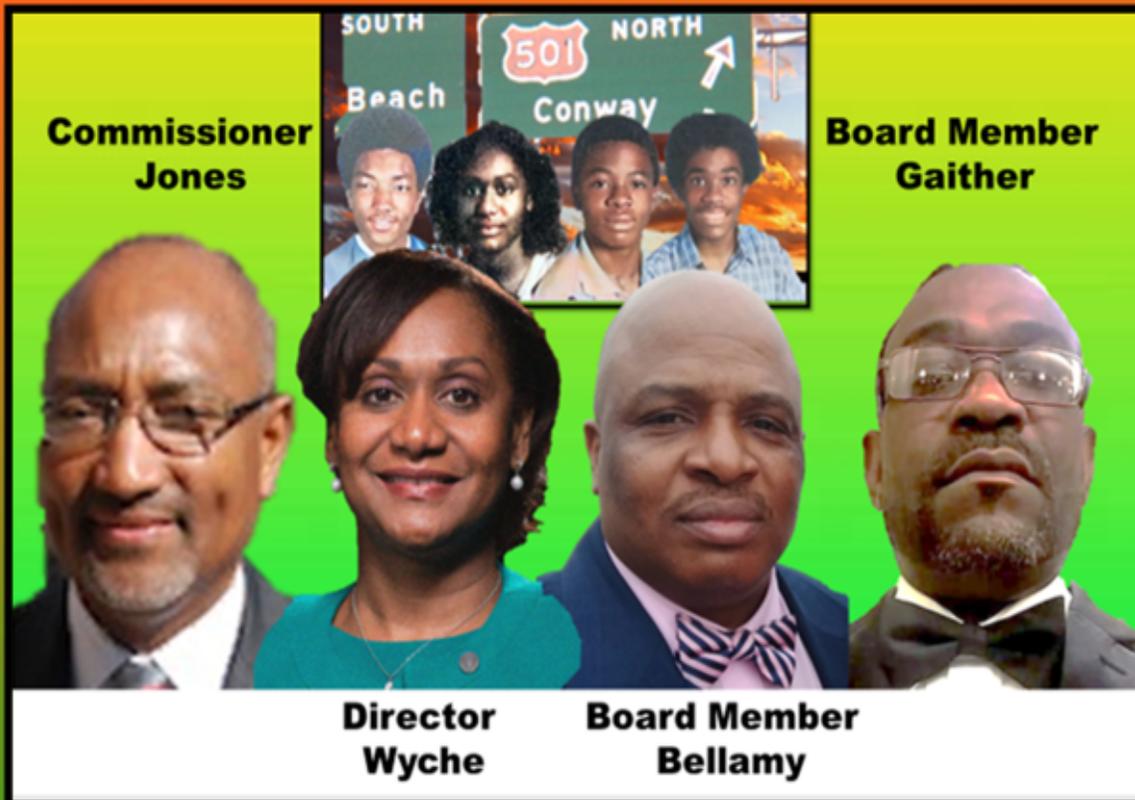
Vanessa Wyche is a frequent speaker at her alma mater, Clemson University, and Ivy League institutions. She has also return to Conway to speak at Coastal Carolina University where she was awarded an honorary Doctor of Science degree in 2022. She is an award-winning role model and inspiration for students from underrepresented groups and an avid promoter of the advantages of STEM education. We are proud of the work of both women.



Thanks For Your Service



A member of the Board of Directors attended a funeral recently and a list of dignitaries spoke. One was a member of our board. When the talking was done, the choir sang and one of its members was a member of our board. It would not be possible for us to do what we do without the enduring dedication of the members of the board of the Action Council. Our formula is to find talented individuals who take on specific tasks and complete them on behalf of the board and our organization. Dr. Thommi Lawson, Rev. Johnny Ray Noble, and Mrs. Ramona Carr are three such individuals. We thank them for their contributions and look forward to their continued support.



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