



Welcome

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Action Council Newsletter

■ APRIL 2024

■ CONFERENCE EDITION



Message From Action Council **PRESIDENT JAMES STARNES**

I am convinced that there is a better way for mankind to co-exist in this finite space we call Earth. Throughout its existence, the Cross-Cultural Conference has addressed meeting the needs of the disenfranchised. There appears to be a proliferation of efforts at home and abroad to increase the number of disenfranchised persons. The mission of the Action Council and Cross-Cultural Conference are profoundly relevant.

The time for the 46th annual Cross-Cultural Conference is February 29th through March 2nd. I encourage everyone to register now and reserve your room now at the Greenville South Carolina Hilton. The Planning Committee has secured a group of highly qualified presenters who will guide us to another mountain top experience. At this point, the missing ingredient is your insight and input. Please be an active participant. As always, we desire and embrace a family environment. During this holiday season, I acknowledge that most with whom we share the planet do not celebrate. I wish for all of us peace and joy that eludes our understanding.

From the Editor's Desk **ERNEST SHAW, LMSW**



Thank you for reviewing the 2024 Conference Edition of our newsletter. I am honored to serve as editor, and I strive to make each edition informative and accurate. I appreciate the opportunity to continue indulging 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 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 the name or an event and I will try to tell you a story.



In The Corner for Kathy's Fight

Tamekia Hunter Ross, a Sumter native endured the deaths of her father and three of his brothers during an eleven-month period. All four men succumbed to cancer a condition that struck approximately two million Americans in 2023 according to the American Cancer Society. Most of us know someone who has battled cancer.

Mrs. Ross is also a cancer survivor, thriver, and so much more. She is an advocate for cancer prevention and treatment, a full-time employee, a motivational speaker, and author. Her 2022 book, *High Heels in Low Places*, describes the battle that twenty-two courageous women waged and are waging against



a common foe. One of them is our own Kathy N. Bellamy. Kathy has been a regular presence at our events and the wife of long-time Action Council Board Member Mark Bellamy. Kathy's story and the stories of the other ladies should be read by all our readers and members. We wish Kathy continued good health and look forward to seeing them in Greenville soon.



Our Roots and Branches are There

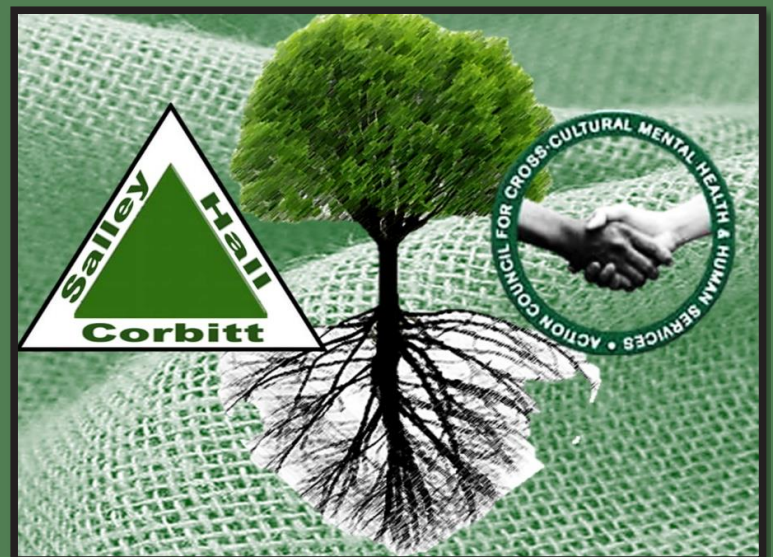
Ernest Shaw, LMSW

William Stone Hall was born in Wagener, SC in 1915. He and two of his brothers graduated from medical school and he went to work at the state mental hospital consisting of a facility downtown in Columbia for white patients and another one six miles out in the country for Black patients. The two parts of the hospital were separate but unequal.

After a dozen years Dr. Hall became the director of the hospital and when SC Department of Mental Health (SCDMH) was created in 1963 he was appointed the first commissioner. He retired in 1985 as the nation's longest tenured commissioner. Dr. Richard Harding, psychiatrist, and former SCDMH Commission Chairman said Dr. Hall "brought our mental health system into the 20th century."

By 1960 the winds of change reached maximum velocity and arrived at the door of our racially segregated world including the place where our mentally ill citizens existed. Managing desegregation of this system was no small challenge. It required not only treating mentally ill Black people and whites in the same setting but hiring staff that looked like patients as well.

Dr. Hall hired a well-traveled college professor from up north to tap a formerly ignored source, Columbia's Black colleges. Ironically, among the best and brightest scholars produced by these schools located half a mile from Dr. Hall's office at the SC State Hospital (SCSH) were a couple from his community who had also come to Columbia to prepare for the roles that awaited them. This is a story that should be told.



Another person could have been hired for this special project. However, in 1960 little notice was taken when a migrant from New England was hired to aid in the transition. Clyde Amis Goodrum was born three years prior to Hall in New Hampshire and graduated from the state university. He earned a degree in psychology and a PhD from the New School for Social Research. Goodrum taught at Harvard, Georgia Tech, Thiel College, and Harford Junior College before coming to Benedict in 1959 to serve as Dean of Instruction.

Founded in 1870 on a former plantation in Columbia to educate freed slaves, Benedict Institute (College) was a dream of Mrs. Bathsheba Benedict, a white Rhode Island abolitionist under the auspices of the American Baptist Home Mission Society. From 1870 until 1930 Benedict was led by northern white Baptist ministers, but in 1930 Rev. John J. Starks a Benedict graduate became its first Black president. In 2017 Dr. Roslyn Artis became the first female President of the college.

Payne Institute was founded by the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Cokesbury, SC within months of the establishment of Benedict. Ten years later the school became Allen University and moved to Columbia next door to Benedict.

Ninety years after Allen and Benedict were founded, one could stand at the side gate of SCSH and clearly see Benedict and Allen five city blocks away on Harden Street. Allen, Benedict and Claflin, founded in Orangeburg a year before the other two by white Methodists from Massachusetts had produced generations of educated Black people but our state institutions rarely tapped the talented graduates of the ABC schools.

In his 1960 report for the SCSH Dr. Hall announced the hiring of Dr. Goodrum to help develop a “coordinated effort at training graduates of Negro colleges,” and that Goodrum and four graduate students from Benedict and Allen had begun counseling patients at State Park.

In 1963 State Park was administratively separated from SCSH and renamed Palmetto State Hospital, primarily to preserve accreditation of the hospital for whites downtown. Civil Rights advocate Modjeska Simpkins and others protested the unequal treatment accorded to Black patients and staff at the hospital. Dr. Hall disputed some of the “complaints” but acknowledged that Black people did have some grounds for complaints because many were being paid less than others doing similar work and that deficiencies at Palmetto were well founded.

In his 1965 Report for SCSH Dr. Hall also outlined plans to recruit more Black staff for SCSH and more White staff for Palmetto State Hospital to create a more fully biracial staff at both hospitals.

A line on a map separates Dr. Hall’s birthplace in Wagener and nearby Salley in Aiken County from Sawyerdale in Orangeburg County. Just east of Sawyerdale is North, SC where Action Council member Julius Jones served as mayor. Floster Leon Ellison, Jr was born six years after Dr. Hall just ten miles away in Sawyerdale. Ellison’s sister Thelma, who was born in Wagener would give birth to Otis Alvin Corbitt in Salley a generation after Hall was born less than eight miles away.

Best known today as home of the Chitlin Strut, Salley, SC was founded in 1735 as “Johns Town” by Swiss Germans, John Corbitt, his son John Jr., and John Salley. In 1887 Capt. D. H. Salley brought in the railroad and donated land to the town and it was renamed “Salley.” His descendant Bob Salley was elected mayor in 1995 and served for a quarter century. In 2019 a write in candidate Ladonna Hall defeated Mayor Salley by six votes to become the first Black and first female Mayor of Salley.

Floster Ellison graduated from the historic Schofield School in Aiken, which was founded by Martha Schofield, a Quaker from Pennsylvania in 1866. Current Action Council President Mr. James Starnes also graduated from



Schofield. Ellison served in the US Navy during World War II where he learned the art of barbering. Please read “You Heard What at the Barbershop” in this newsletter.

In the summer of 1944, he got married and moved to Columbia. He worked as a barber, rubbing shoulders with educated men who inspired him. Floster received his bachelor’s degree from Benedict in 1954 and a master’s degree in social work from Atlanta University in 1960 while Whitney

Young, future president of the National Urban League and the National Association of Social Workers served as Dean. Ellison’s master’s thesis was a study of the convalescent program at a Michigan psychiatric hospital. This Black barber from Sawyerdale now possessed the qualifications that Dr. Hall and Dr. Goodrum were seeking to help bring about change.

The 1956 Columbia City Directory list Leon Ellison and Stray (Stroy) Barber Shop in the Greenview neighborhood where he, Otis Corbitt and future congressman James Clyburn lived on the same street for years. Listed on the same page was Floster Ellison a social worker at the State Hospital. His leadership skills, education, and experience facilitated his rise within the social service department. He was acting chief for a time and in the summer of 1965, Ellison was promoted to Chief of Social Services.

Alice Hurley perhaps better known as operator of a Columbia funeral home studied at Atlanta University under Dean of Social Work, Whitney Young. Hurley remained at Crafts-Farrow until 1967. She also helped to organize the Columbia Urban League that year with the support of Young. Mrs. Hurley was the reporter for the hospital’s newsletter and recorded much of what we know about the workplace and coworkers of dreamers such as Otis Corbitt and his uncle at that time.

Hurley wrote in November of 1965 “To him goes the credit for recruiting our new staff members” He was director for two decades. In the same edition Hurley wrote the department was “growing by leaps and bounds.” Benedict graduates, Floster Ellison, Augustus Roger. Benjamin Taylor, William McIlwain, Willie Josey, Selena Felder, and Evelyn Hill along with Allen graduates Otis Corbitt, Cynthia Taylor, Charlean E. Bates, and Mary Etta Mays Wilson all worked with and for Floster Ellison during the 1960s.

Mary L. Williams of Fort Motte graduated from Benedict and Atlanta University. She arrived at the hospital in 1970 and was present as Floster Ellison continued to recruit staff and his nephew, Dr. Corbitt formulated plans for a conference in Greenville at decades’ end. Ms. Green said that this conference was so successful that it was decided to make it an annual event and we are all set to go back to Greenville for the 46th edition of the conference whose existence is due to the approval and support of men such as Dr. Hall, his neighbor Mr. Floster Ellison who hired Allen and Benedict graduates who were educated under the shadow of a kingdom ruled by a doctor from Wagener. The final piece was put in place when Ellison’s cousin from Salley was allowed to practice his craft.



Cross-Cultural Conference 101 for Future Cousins



At our conferences several people who are never present are frequently mentioned. For years we started conferences with The Grace Brooks Palmer Convocation at which time the Grace Brooks Palmer Humanitarian Award was given out to an individual whose work symbolized the ideals of our organization.

The Otis A Corbit Luncheon and speech is a high point of the conference where the Irene Singleton Award is annually given to a support staff at a facility of the SCDMH. So who were Corbitt, Palmer, and Singleton?

Otis Alvin Corbitt was born in Aiken County.

He attended Allen University and later earned a Doctorate in Social Work from Columbia University and was the highest-ranking black staffer in SCDMH for many years. He came to an agency struggling to integrate their facilities. With the hiring of the first group of black professionals, Corbitt used his skills to form a diverse network of professionals who held a conference in Greenville in 1979. Mary Green joined Dr. Corbitt later and said that the conference was such a success that it was decided to make it an annual event.

Several years after the first conference Corbitt, Dr. Dolores Macey and others formed the Action Council For Cross Cultural Mental Health and other Human Services. Dr. Corbitt served as the Action Council's first President and the Director of the Cross-Cultural Conference for many years. This year we gather in Greenville for the 46th Annual Cross Cultural Conference.

Grace Justine Brooks was born in Augusta and grew up in Aiken County. She was educated at Fisk and Columbia University. She taught at SC State, Norfolk State, Morris and Benedict Colleges. She was a civil rights advocate and operated a funeral business with her husband E. Perry Palmer. They supported activities designed to make their community better. Mrs. Palmer died tragically when she was hit by a car in April of 1984. The Grace Brooks Palmer Convocation and the humanitarian Award allowed the conference to highlight the work of individuals who "made significant contributions to the community, exemplified values and behavior that transcended issues of race, ethnicity and gender, and was tolerant of divergent views." Mrs. Palmer's husband supported our efforts for many years following her death and he died in 2010.

Irene Harrison Singleton was born in Fairfield County. She worked as an administrative staffer at the mental health clinic in Fairfield County where Mary Green, who was present when Dr. Corbitt and Mr. Ellison were sowing seeds, managed the clinic. Mrs. Singleton was more than a secretary, according to Ms. Green and Singleton's sister Mrs. Janet Harrison Mason. We know this because each year at the conference the two ladies present the Irene Singleton Award to an administrative person at a SCDMH facility. Recognition of the work done by the Irene Singletons working throughout our mental health system is essential.

Irene Singleton died in 1991 at the age of sixty-three. We also had the opportunity to meet another member of this family. Jayne Kennedy is the daughter of Irene Singleton and Janet Mason's brother. Jayne was crowned Miss Ohio in 1970, the first African American to win the title and was one of the finalist in the Miss USA Pageant. Jayne went on to have a successful career in television and movies. In December of 1987 Jayne Kennedy came to Columbia to meet with the Action Council.

Dr. Corbitt often referred to anyone associated with our effort as "cousin." Therefore, we would expect each cousin we encountered to know who Otis Corbitt, Irene Singleton and Grace Brooks Palmer were.



2023 Conference in a Nutshell



THIS IS HOW WE DID!

45TH ANNUAL CROSS CULTURAL CONFERENCE



2023 Overall Conference Evaluation

	2018	2019	2020	2023
Educational Value of Conference	3.96	3.8	3.9	3.8
General Sessions	3.88	3.75	3.83	3.75
Concurrent Sessions	3.91	3.83	3.84	3.74
Roundtable Discussions	3.82	3.5	3.73	3.74
Extent Workshops were as stated	3.88	3.75	3.68	3.65
Average:	3.89	3.72	3.8	3.74

	Yes	No	Maybe
Personal goals and objectives met during the conference?	68	1*	0
Plan to attend the conference next year	50	0	15**
Action Council Member	21	43***	

* (Somewhat)

** (1 person said they would attend if employer paid)

*** (1 expressed interest and one promised to join)



You Heard What at the Barbershop

Ernest Shaw, LMSW

For centuries they were called barber-surgeons because they trimmed hair, dressed wounds, pulled teeth, and performed operations. A 1745 English law separated barbering from medical procedures. However, today the symbol of the barber is still the pole with red, white, and blue stripes representing blood, bandages, and veins.

In early America, barbering was generally considered beneath the dignity of whites and most barbers were black slaves. Emancipation of slaves was followed by the influx of European immigrants including barbers whose arrival elevated the profession's reputation. Donald Trump's grandfather came from Germany and worked as a barber while acquiring real estate in New York. Barbershops remained segregated as they became much more than a place to get a haircut, particularly in the Black community. During his recent campaign stop in Columbia President Biden visited a barbershop. The barbershop might be compared to the modern university or think tank.

Isaac Samuel Levy was the most prominent African American businessman in Columbia in the first half of last century. In 1925 he operated a department store with a barbershop managed by Christopher Luther Lilliewood of Clinton, SC. Lilliewood graduated from Allen University and married Mary Gregory, the daughter of teachers and homeowners in Columbia's black business district.

Lilliewood, the son of Methodist Minister Rev. Eugene Lucius Lilliewood was a member of a remarkable family. He owned and operated Lilliewood Barbershop for decades. His brother Samuel Lilliewood graduated from Allen University and worked as a teacher. His brother Eugene and wife Mary Goodwin Lilliewood both graduated from Allen University. He worked as a barber in Columbia and in New York where his wife worked as a seamstress.

Another brother was William L. Lilliewood. His wife Bernice earned degrees from Morris College and Allen and did graduate work at SC State and Columbia College. While teaching in the Newberry County schools, she was also a licensed cosmetologist and operated Bernice's Beauty Shop for years. Their son Eugene Wade Lilliewood graduated from Benedict and studied medicine at Meharry, New York, and Harvard Medical Schools. Dr. Lilliewood practiced obstetrics and gynecology and served as chief of those departments at Providence, Richland Memorial and Beaufort Memorial Hospital. He also taught at the Medical University of S.C., the University of S.C. School of Medicine, and Baylor University Medical School.

At last year's conference we discussed characters who fostered the birth and growth of our organization. When Floster Ellison from Salley, SC returned home from the navy he came to Columbia and worked as a barber for Lilliewood. In 1944 when Black registered voters were turned away from the polls in Columbia, C. L. Lilliewood was one of them. Two years later George Elmore, a Black Columbia businessman was not allowed to vote in the Democratic Primary. He sued and in *Elmore v. Rice* U.S. District Judge Waring ruled that the state's Whites only primaries were unconstitutional.

In 1960 Lilliewood and Floster Ellison formed the Palmetto State Barber Association that still exists. In 1961 tickets to the Brook Benton concert in Columbia were available at Lilliewood's Barbershop. Seven years later tickets for the 1968 Allen and Morris Brown football game were sold between clips. Most importantly, the shop was a place where change was discussed. Luther Christopher Lilliewood died in 1970.

His widow Mary Gregory Lilliewood lived another three decades and witnessed a cruel irony as integration that so many had sacrificed to achieve led to the death of the once thriving Black business district where barbers like her husband and Floster Ellison worked. In a world of inevitable change her refusal to sell the home that she had lived in since 1914 forced the Richland County Library to alter the design of their multi million dollar building on Assembly Street and leave her home standing. She died at 97 in 2000.

Joseph Stroy, the son of Deacon William Stroy was the first Black magistrate from Hopkins. He was a Sunday School teacher and deacon at St. James Baptist Church in Hopkins. Deacon Stroy and Deacon Floster Ellison operated a barber shop in the Columbia Black business district when this editor came to Columbia in 1982. Upon entering the establishment, one usually saw several young barbers busy cutting hair and one older barber asleep in his chair. He would eventually wake up, get out of the chair and motion for the editor to get in the chair.



The elderly barber was Mr. Floster Ellison. While working as a barber, Floster Ellison earned a BS degree from Benedict College in 1954 and the 1956 Columbia City Directory listed his occupation as Social Worker at the State Hospital. Another listing on the same page was for Leon Ellison and Stray (Stroy) Barber Shop in the Greenview Community of Columbia. He earned a master's degree from Atlanta University in 1960.

Floster Ellison became Director of Social Work Services at the former State Park Hospital north of Columbia and accelerated the hiring of black professionals including his nephew Otis Corbitt and others. Interestingly in 1967 Ellison along with social workers Cynthia Taylor, Thomas Davis, and Otis Corbitt attended the Annual Meeting of SCDMH at the Greenville Mental Health Center where Joe James, a white social worker, began work in 1964. One can imagine that the idea that became our movement came into the mind of Dr. Corbitt at a meeting such as that one or even in his uncle's mind at a barbershop earlier.

Decades later, a barbershop stood at the forefront of another important piece of our history. We previously highlighted the rich history of the family of Mariscia C. Cooper, a "Cousin" from Darlington. She was educated at Vorhees and Morris Colleges, and Francis Marion University and spent her entire career working to improve her community. Her son James Cooper III operates Cooper's Barbershop where her husband James II worked for years. Her husband's father, James retired after owning and operating Cooper's Barber Shop for more than 50 years. In 1910 his great-grandfather Eugene Cooper, who was born in 1886, worked as a barber. Mariscia Cummings Cooper has been a presence at conferences for years and she served on the Board of Directors of the Pee Dee Mental Health Center. We celebrated the life of her mother Mrs. Eula Mae Cummings who lived 105 years. Mariscia introduced us to her brother Dr. Bill Cummings who has performed for the rich and the famous all around the world. He also enlightened and entertained us with his words and his inspirational music that could be played at a barbershop or even a future conference.



Well Deserved: Dr. Hollis



Tiffany Hollis, Ph.D. received the Champion of Diversity award at the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce in April. This award is presented by TD Bank to individuals and businesses who make durable commitment to embracing diversity in the workplace and community.

Tiffany Hollis was born in Norwalk, Connecticut, grew up in Gaffney, SC. She earned her Bachelor's degree from Davidson College, a Master's degree from Columbia College, and a Ph. D. from UNC Charlotte in 2017. Dr. Hollis is an associate professor at Coastal Carolina University, and she was chosen as Coastal's 2019 Professor of the Year.

In addition to teaching at Coastal, Dr. Hollis is a student advisor including work with the Call Me MISTER Program, which has worked to recruit and train individuals from disadvantaged communities hoping to teach, especially in the lowest-performing elementary schools.

Dr. Hollis has published works in her area of expertise and has spoken at conferences nationally and internationally. In 2020 she worked with Dr. Thommi Lawson and others to conduct the Student Track of the Conference. She also presented "Fostering Resilience: Putting "Self" Back into Self-care." We thank Dr. Hollis for her support and congratulate her.

Last Year in Greenville

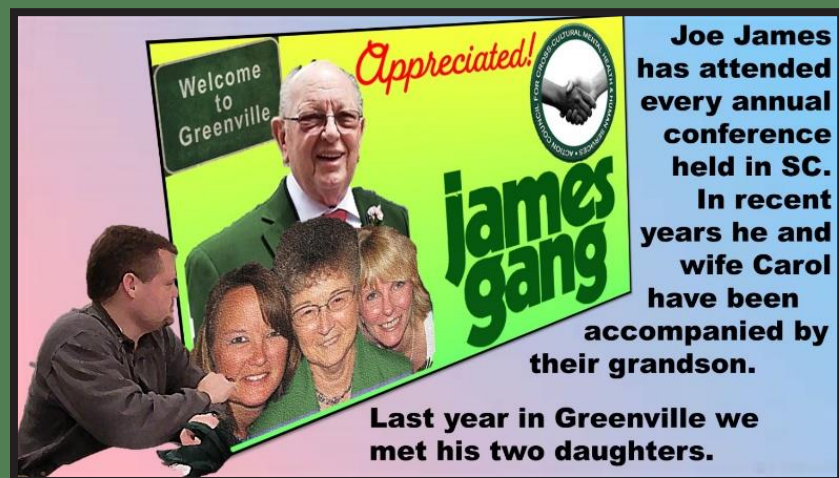


At last year's conference in Greenville, we met notable individuals including Rev. Dr. John H. Corbitt, Ms. Charlotte Walker and the daughters of Joe James. In last year's newsletter we noted that Rev. John H. Corbitt, the brother of Dr. Otis Corbitt became pastor of Springfield Baptist Church in Greenville and was at the helm when his brother came to town in 1979. Dr. John H. Corbitt served as pastor until his retirement in 2011 and in 2018 returned as interim pastor and served for four years until a few months prior to last year's conference. Ironically, when the conference was moved to Augusta, Georgia in 2000 due to the Confederate flag controversy the Grace Brooks Palmer Convocation was held at Springfield Baptist Church in Augusta where the Augusta Baptist Institute at Springfield Church was organized in 1867 before eventually moving to Atlanta and becoming Morehouse College. Greenville's Springfield Baptist Church has a rich history with deep involvement in the civil rights movement.

Silver Hill the oldest historically Black Methodist Church in Greenville was founded in 1866 by former slave James R. Rosemond. Daniel Milton Minus, another former slave from Colleton County attended Claflin College in Orangeburg but his tuition was paid by Mrs. Eunice Sterling, a white New Yorker. In the 1890s Minus became pastor at Silver Hill and in 1896 opened Greenville Academy, the city's first high school for Blacks in a room in the church. In 1902 former pastor Rosemond died. Silver Hill's name was changed to John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church, and Rev. Minus renamed the school Sterling Industrial College in honor of his benefactor.

In last year's edition we reviewed Sterling High School's equally rich history with graduates such as Rev. Jesse Jackson, Robert Anderson, and Thurmond

Norris. Anderson along with two others were the first to enroll in the University of South Carolina in 1963 and Mr. Norris was active in our early movement.

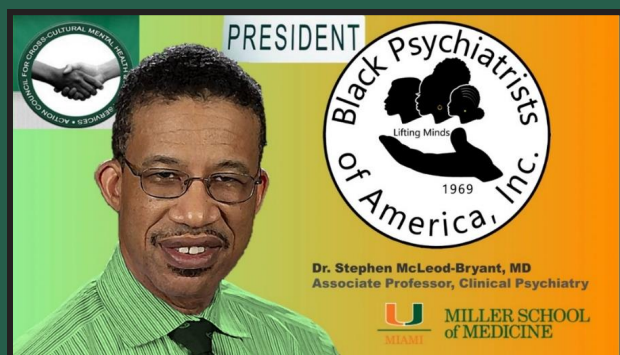


Last year's story had one significant omission. Charlotte E. Walker. She was selected Miss Sterling High School in 1967 and graduated as Salutatorian of her class. She was educated at the University of Chicago. She returned home and began work as a social worker at the Greenville Mental Health Center and remained for 33 years. She was a coworker of Joe James for a time before he left for Piedmont Mental Health Center. Immediately after retiring she was appointed to the

board of directors of Greenville Mental Health Center, later becoming the chairperson. Her center is now Greater Greenville Mental Health Center with the merger of Greenville with Piedmont Mental Health Center where Joe James served as Director for ages. Charlotte is also an active member of Springfield Baptist Church where Dr. Corbitt's brother reigned for decades. Therefore, Charlotte E. Walker was at precise place and time to work with Dr. Corbitt and others to plant the seed that grew into the Cross Cultural Conference and the Action Council.

After years of seeing Joe James, his wife, and his grandson at so many conferences we had the opportunity to meet his two daughters in Greenville. We are grateful to know that pioneers of our movement have remained faithful after so many years. We look forward to our return to Greenville in 2024.

Dr. McLeod-Bryant: Been There and still Going Places



Our own Dr. Stephen McLeod-Bryant has been elected President of Black Psychiatrists of America, Inc., an organization created in 1969 to break down obstacles faced by Black psychiatrists. Today its members serve as expert clinicians and educators in the field of mental health. A Binghamton, New York native, he graduated magna cum laude at the University of Rochester where he received his M.D. in 1984. He completed his residency in psychiatry at the Tufts-New England Medical Center in Boston, MA in 1988.

He came south and spent 24 years at the Medical University of SC. He also devoted those years to the Action Council and the Cross-Cultural Conference serving as President of the Action Council and a member of the Board of Directors. Dr. McLeod-Bryant is a talented lecturer who has presented at dozens of our conferences and his offerings have always been rated highly. Even after moving on to Meharry Medical College and the University of Miami he continued to be a dependable provider of substantive education at our events. At last year's conference he was the opening speaker. Although he was too ill to appear in person he presented remotely from Miami. We congratulate Dr. McLeod-Bryant on his election, and we are certain he will provide competent leadership to Black Psychiatrists of America, Inc.

Mrs. Otis A. Corbitt: Lady Behind the Dream

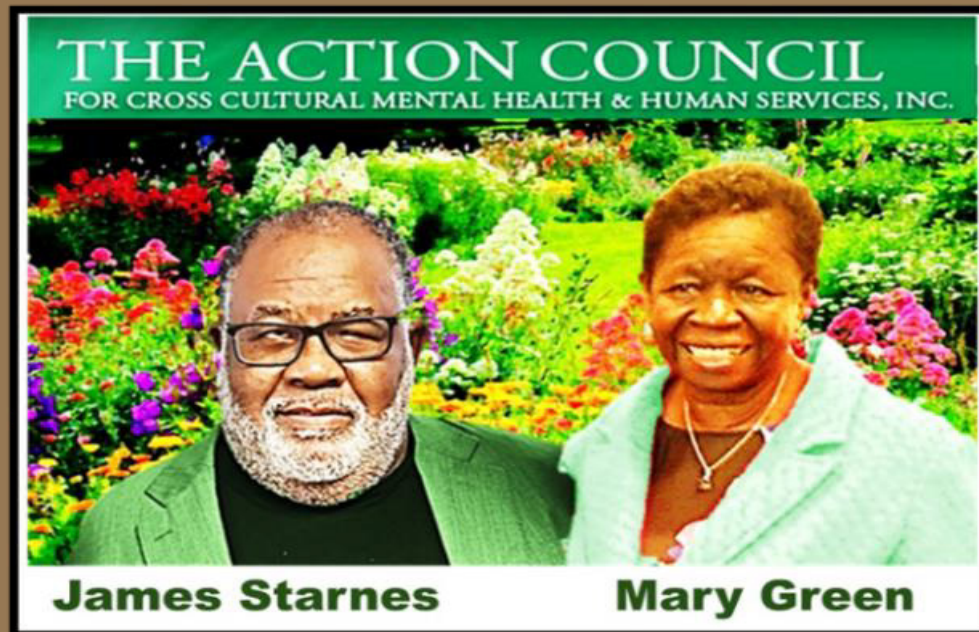


For many years we have highlighted the life of Dr. Otis A. Corbitt. While preparing an earlier edition of this newsletter this editor decided to take note of Mrs. Otis A. Corbitt, the lady behind the dreamer. Their daughter Monica, a Durham, NC psychologist and wife of a minister said “I cannot thank you enough for your care for my mom and commitment to sustaining my dad’s legacy. You all meant so very much to him. I am eternally grateful.”

Please refer to the 2022 Conference Edition of our newsletter. As this edition was being prepared, this editor intended to contact the family to inquire about Mrs. Corbitt’s condition when President Starnes transmitted that fateful message, “My heart is heavy as I inform you of the passing of our beloved Mrs. Betty Corbitt.



President Starnes later wrote “Please know that the thoughts and prayers of the Action Council for Cross Cultural Mental Health and Human Services are with your family as you mourn the passing of your dear mother. Over 46 years ago, we became familiar with Mrs. Corbitt as the wife of our beloved founder, Dr. Otis A. Corbitt. We soon came to know her as a kind lady with a cheerful spirit. We celebrate the support she gave and sacrifices she made to make this organization a success. We also celebrate God’s plan to reunite two faithful servants whom he joined together years ago. Monica and Aubria, thank you for sharing your precious parents with us.



James C. Starnes | January 3, 2024

Sorry to hear of the passing of Betty. A beautiful, genuinely decent person. God chose this time to pluck her from his garden of beautiful flowers! Rest well with the Ancestors.

Mary Green, LMSW | January 1, 2024

That Friday in February of 2017

It was Friday in Myrtle Beach on the first full day of the 2017 Cross Cultural Conference. Dr. Angelo McClain, the CEO of the National Association of Social Workers was the Opening Plenary speaker. He retired at the end of 2022.



Rev. George P. Windley, Pastor of Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church in Manning since 1977 came back home to talk to us about "Healing Wounded Spirits." He retired at the beginning of 2023.

Ann Jacobs, Executive Director at John Jay College Institute for Justice, and Opportunity was the President's Luncheon Speaker. She is now the former director.

Our own Dr. Carol Apt spoke about The Stratification System of the United States:

Correlations Between Social Class and Health. Her performance was judged perfect by those in attendance. Dr. Apt had enlightened us so many times but we had no way of knowing we had witnessed her last performance. Dr. Apt, the little lady from Queens in New York City, soon left our board and died in the summer of 2022.

Helen Pridgen, whose son Clay committed suicide in 2000 talked to us about suicide. In 2020 the SC Senate recognized her for her work promoting suicide prevention in our state.

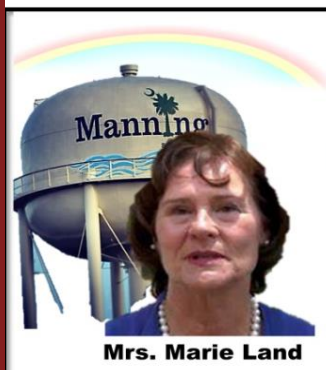
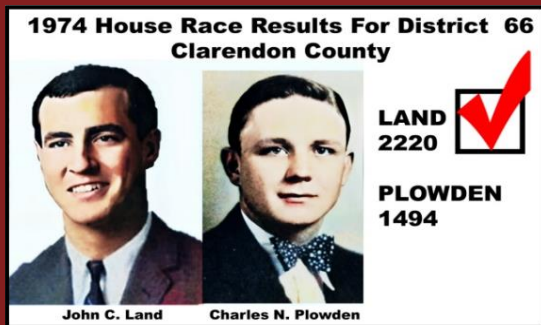
At the end of that day, we reflected on all that we had learned from so many special people. We would not learn until later that Dr. Joseph Bevilacqua, Director of SCDMH from 1986 to 1996 died that day in Rhode Island. It seems fitting that he died while our conference was going on. At last year's Conference this editor was approached by Action Council Board member John Connery and his wife Dr. Hilda Ross and later by former member Joe James. Mr. Connery and Mr. James underscored the contributions that Dr. William S. Hall and Dr. Bevilacqua made to enable our organization and our conference to prosper. The two men, one a southerner and the other a Yankee provided contrast for their agency with approval and support for our movement.



Kindred Spirits at Work: The Lands of Clarendon County

Ernest Shaw, LMSW

It is no surprise that Mrs. Marie Land was given the Key to the City of Manning early in 2023. At several conferences the editor of this newsletter spoke about the 1944 execution of a fourteen-year-old black Clarendon County boy. Hoping not to offend voters, his court-appointed attorney Charles Plowden, an aspiring politician, provided little defense for him. Thirty years later Plowden was a member of the SC House of Representative when he lost to Mrs. Land's husband John C. Land III who served in the SC House from 1975 to 1976 the Senate from 1976 to 2013.



The Land family has long been one of Clarendon County's most prominent. In 1901 Land's grandfather bought land from the editor's great-grandfather in Clarendon County. Someone might be writing about Senator Shaw if his ancestor had kept that land. John Land came of age in racially segregated Clarendon County in the late 1950s when white businesses boycotted Blacks supporting desegregation in the schools. John Land delivered kerosene to Black people from his uncle's dealership. In the 1970's when whites abandoned the public schools, the Lands, like the Beardsleys in Columbia kept their children in the overwhelmingly Black public schools. Flip through the pages of Manning High School yearbook from 40 years ago and you will see smiling photos of the Lands.

This editor came to work at Santee Wateree Mental Health Center in 1975 and was welcomed by an employee of the center. She was Land's wife Marie, daughter of an air force pilot who came to South Carolina to serve at Shaw Air Force Base. The Land's beautiful home served as a place of entertainment for the staff of the center that Christmas.

Mrs. Land has had a hand in so many worthwhile projects in Clarendon County including Harvin Clarendon Public Library, Weldon Auditorium, Clarendon County Archives and History Center, Habitat for Humanity, and others. She is one of the longest serving member of the Board of Trustees at the College of Charleston and the first woman to serve as chairperson. Locally, Mrs. Land, a "master gardener" worked with the children at Manning Early Childhood Center to pass her passion for plants on to the children.

The Lands have supported our effort as well. Amy Louise Anders Land wife of the Land's son was the Luncheon Speaker at the 2012 Conference. Judge Land of the Third Circuit Drug Court spoke on the topic, Treatment and Criminal Justice Working Together. Her presentation was described as "great." Two years later former Senator John Land III was awarded the Grace Brooks Palmer Humanitarian Award. We appreciate the work of so many like the Lands and we must not forget that a kindred spirit exists between so many others and our organization.