

JOHN CASHIN

# Civil rights leader dies

By Jay Reeves  
The Associated Press

John Cashin, a black dentist and Alabama civil rights leader who once unsuccessfully ran for governor against George C. Wallace and saw his political organization make gains at the courthouse level, has died, his daughter said Wednesday.

He was 82.

Daughter Sheryll Cashin, a law professor at Georgetown University, said her father died Monday of kidney failure in a hospital in Washington, D.C., after a bout of pneumonia.

The Huntsville native received almost 15 percent of the statewide vote in 1970 as the gubernatorial nominee of the National Democratic Party of Alabama, a mostly black organization he founded as an alternative to the Alabama Democratic Party, which had used the official slogan "White Supremacy — For the Right" until 1966.

Cashin lost badly to Wallace, a segregationist who disavowed his racist views in later years.

Despite Cashin's lack of success at the state level, his group helped elect supporters at the local level and speeded up the integration of county courthouses.

Sheryll Cashin said her father financed much of the NDPA's activities from his dental practice and personal savings. A licensed pilot, Cashin would use his airplane to fly over mostly black areas of rural west Alabama to distribute leaflets, she said.

"It was his way of showing affection for the people of the Black Belt and for debunking stereotypes about what a black person could do," Cashin said. "He would give a ride to anyone who could mark an X and encourage his passengers to steer the plane and comprehend freedom."

Services for Cashin are planned for April 16 at First Missionary Baptist Church in Huntsville. Survivors include his wife, Louise White Cashin, and three children.

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## ---News Wire---

### Dr. John Cashin, former head of National Democratic Party of Alabama (NDPA) dies at 82

Dr. John Cashin, formerly a Huntsville dentist, who founded the National Democratic Party of Alabama (NDPA) in the 1960's died Monday night in Washington, D.C. The NDPA challenged the segregated Democratic Party in Alabama and was the party which helped elect the first Black public office holders in the state since Reconstruction, including the Special Election of 1969 which swept Black people into control of the County Commission, School Board, Probate Judge's office and Sheriff in Greene County, Alabama.



Dr. John Cashin

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## Dr. John Cashin

Dr. John Logan Cashin, Jr. was born on April 16, 1928 in Huntsville, Alabama to Grace Brandon Cashin, a school principal, and Dr. John Logan Cashin, Sr., a dentist. Cashin was a precocious youth who started kindergarten at the age of three. He and his older brother, who were always in the same year at school, were co-valedictorians of their Alabama A&M High School graduating class.

Cashin decided to become a dentist, like his father. He spent two years at Fisk University and then attended Tennessee State University. Cashin then received his D.D.S. degree from Meharry Medical School in 1952.

Immediately after Cashin graduated from medical school, he was drafted into the U.S. Army, where he was made a first lieutenant and Chief of Dental Services for soldiers stationed near Fountainebleau, France. While in France, Cashin became familiar with a number of Black American expatriates, including writer Richard Wright and the *Chicago Defender's* Ollie Stewart.

After two years in the Army, Cashin returned to the United States, where he became active in the Civil Rights Movement. In 1967, he helped found the National Democratic Party of Alabama (NDPA) and was elected as the organization's first party chairman. He led a delegation to the Democratic National Convention in 1968, challenging the representative nature of the regular delegation and its loyalty to the national Democratic Party.

Cashin once ran for Mayor of Huntsville, and in 1970, he was the NDPA's candidate for governor, running against George Wallace. He received more than 16% of the votes in that election. Between 1968 and 1974, the NDPA facilitated the election of more than 100 Blacks to public office in Alabama. In 1974, the Alabama Democratic Party surrendered and integrated their ballot.

Cashin's daughter, Sheryll Cashin, a Georgetown University law professor, wrote a book about him entitled, *The Agitator's Daughter* which chronicled his history and work in forming the NDPA, including his efforts in Greene County.

In an interview with NPR, Sheryll Cashin states, "My father attracted enemies. There's no question in my mind. You know, I can't prove it, but so many things happened at once. His dental office was taken by imminent domain by the City of Huntsville, and a parking lot was put there. The IRS charged him with owing \$800,000 in back taxes and investigated him in a very harassing way for about five years. The FBI began an investigation of him."

"In a space of a year and a half, we moved from an all-white neighborhood and a palatial house back to an all-Black neighborhood. And we went from a life of affluence to one where a family of five was living on my mother's \$17,000-a-year salary. So it was a dramatic change, and it became more painful as time went on."

When asked what her father had given her that she would pass on to her children, Sheryll Cashin responded saying, "Well, I pass on to them what was passed on to me, which is, you know, one of the things that I'm so grateful to my dad that he gave me. I mean, he was broke when I was going off to college, but he gave me everything I needed to succeed, which is this idea that you are excellent. You can do anything you want that you put your mind to. There's no limits on you as long as you're willing to, you know, have a dream and apply yourself with the discipline."

"And I write about this in the book. You know, my father was brilliant. He was a two-time valedictorian. When I came home with a test that had a 95 on it, he would say what happened to the other five? Because he knew that I could do better. And so I would say to the next generation - this is what I'm saying to my own children - that you can be anything. You can do anything. But it takes work."

At press time there were no details on funeral arrangements for Cashin but memorial services will be planned in Washington D. C. and Alabama.

Dr. John Cashin was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on April 24, 2007.

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