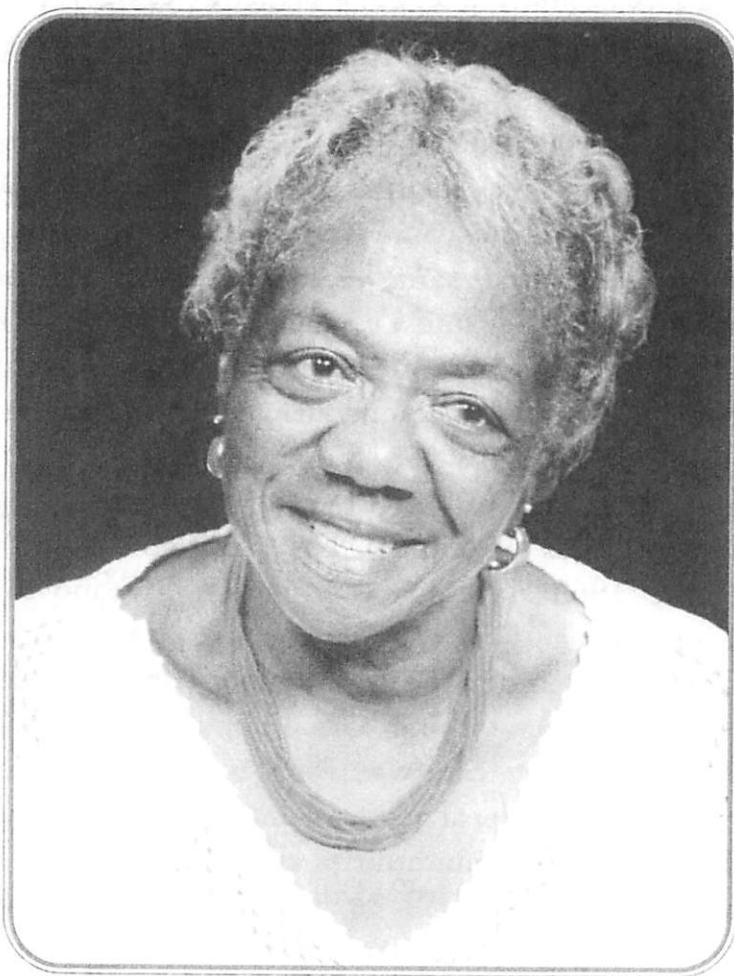


A Celebration of Life
Mrs. Idessa Williams-Redden

Pioneer Voting Rights
Activist

A Warrior

A Community Leader



Wednesday, December 21, 2005 • 10:00 A.M.

ST. JUDE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Montgomery, Alabama

OFFICIATING

Father James Holden, Pastor

Father Manuel Williams, CR, Guest Officiant

INTERMENT

Greenwood Cemetery

Montgomery, Alabama



ROSS-CLAYTON FUNERAL HOME

Montgomery, Alabama • DIRECTING

Mrs. Idessa Williams-Redden (1912-2005)

Born Idessa Taylor on November 27, 1912 in Montgomery, Alabama. Idessa answered the call to return to her heavenly home on December 15, 2005. While being reared by her maternal grandparents, Julius and Louisa Harris she attended St. Paul Methodist Church School, Loveless School, St. John Catholic School and State Normal High School all in Montgomery, Alabama. After high school she began working at Reliance Manufacturing Company (known as "The "Shirt Factory"). While employed there she enrolled in Bethesda Beauty and Culture School which later led to the opening of her very own business, "Odessa's Beauty Nook" in 1949. She was very excited and proud to finally become a business owner.

During that same year of 1949 she decided to join the struggle and as a committed crusader, she became a registered voter. She knew there was no turning back after joining Coach Rufus Lewis in the crusade for full voting rights for all Blacks. What was called "Block Captains" she encouraged people to sign up for voting rights clinics and taught them how to fill out the "literacy test", the prerequisite for Blacks to become registered voters. This step motivated her to begin organizing, crusading and teaching others the need for first class citizenship. Then in 1963 she was known as one of the 200,000 who attended the "1963 March on Washington, DC; moving on to work with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and served as an organizer with Rufus Lewis in the Voter Registration Committee under the Montgomery Improvement Association. Many years later (1970), Idessa began working as a Family Service Worker with the Montgomery Community Action Agency. She was very proud to be apart of this agency; which was formed as a result of the federal government's response to correct the inequalities that had affected our Black families communities since slavery time. These were difficult times both for Idessa and her marriage. Her dedication to the movement and the civil rights struggles obviously placed a strain on her first marriage. Her first husband George Williams began to suffer reprisals by not being hired by White construction companies. Work became so scarce and tension arose to the point where they divorced in 1971.

In 1978, Idessa married her second husband, John Redden, Sr. he was a retired school teacher who unconditionally supported all of her Movement activities and endeavors. He brought to this loving union his son, John Jr. Upon his passing in 1981, she vowed to continue what she started and believed in until her retirement.

Before her death, Idessa retired in 1998 at the age of 85, satisfied that she had honored her childhood vow to serve her people. During her retirement she devoted many hours to a number of services at her church she called "Home", St. Jude Catholic Church and quickly became active within a church organization, the Ladies of Charity. She visited the sick, the disabled and her first love the children. She often was quoted as saying, *"I Love to help my People". "I don't do things for honor or recognition I just do things."*

Known as a "civil rights pioneer", "a warrior," a forced to be reckoned with during the movement and a well respected and recognized face, she made herself extremely visible

at all mass meetings, marches and the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Having drove around 30-40 people to work each day during the Bus Boycott, she often shouted, "I am not afraid of no One, no Law and no Walking, I'll do what I have to do and help my people to do it to!"

Idessa will be terribly missed by her most precious grandsons, Parrish (Nancy) Crittenden and family and Roderick (Jackie) Crittenden and family, all of Atlanta, GA; son, John Redden, Jr; niece and loving caregiver, Addie M. Tigner, Montgomery, AL; cousins, Emma Joyce Oliver, Montgomery, AL, Yvonne O. Jones and family, Birmingham, AL, Cheryl Brown and family of Atlantic City, NJ; Mary L. Oliver and family, Christine Scott and family all of Montgomery, AL; her St. Jude Church Family, the Ladies of Charity along with many community leaders, friends and her wonderful neighbors on the westside of Montgomery.

Mrs. Idessa Redden Awards and Recognitions:

*Woman of the Year, Iota Phi Lambda Sorority
Idessa Redden Early Childhood Development Center (4544 So. Court St)
Citizen of the Year Award, City of Montgomery
Senior of Achievement, City of Montgomery
Certified Poll Worker State of Alabama
Appreciation for Outstanding Service, So. Poverty Law Center
Distinguished Achievement Award, Operation M-PAC
Appreciation of Work with Children, U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare
Outstanding Community Leadership, Al State Board of Education
Appreciation Award, The Law Enforcement Legal Defense Fund
Outstanding Leadership Award, Montgomery Community Action
Outstanding Service, Emancipation Proclamation Committee
Commendation Resolution, Governor Don Siegelman
Donor of the Year, Hospitalized Veterans of America
Appreciation, U.S. Veterans of Foreign Wars
Appreciation, Rosa Parks Museum
Appreciation, March of Dimes
"You Will Not Be Forgotten" Award, Montgomery Friends of the
Historic Voting Rights Trail
Citizenship Award, Montgomery Friends of the Historic Voting Rights Trail
Appreciation, Headstart Program
Appreciation, St. Jude Catholic Church
Appreciation, National Federation of the Blind
Recognition, Dr. M.L. King, Jr. Commemoration Committee
Freedom Award, National Association for the Advancement of Colored
People (NAACP)
Woman of the Year, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority
City of Montgomery Resolution, Mayor Bobby Bright
Alabama Hall of Fame, Federation of Childcare Centers of Alabama
Unsung Hero Award, MIA 50th Anniversary of the Montgomery Bus
Boycott Committee*

Memberships:

*Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA)—1974-77 Chair of
Voter Registration Committee
Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)
Women Political Caucus
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
Montgomery Friends of the Historic Voting Rights Trail
St. Jude Social Service Committee
Mrs. Idessa Redden's Collection is housed in Trenholm Tech College Archives*

In the Garden

I come to the garden alone
While the dew is still on the roses
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear
The song of God discloses

Refrain

And he walks with me, and he talks with me
And he tells me I am his own
And the joy we share as we tarry there
None other has ever known

He speaks, and the sound of his voice
Is so sweet the birds hush their singing
And the melody that he gave to me
Within my heart is ringing

I'd stay in the garden with him
Though the night around me be falling
But, he bids me go thru the voice of woe
His voice to me is calling



The Celebration

Rite of Christian Burial
For our Beloved Friend and Member

INTRODUCTORY ENTRANCE RITE
ENTRANCE HYMN & PROCESSION ST. JUDE CHURCH CHOIR
WELCOME AND GREETING
SPRINKLING OF THE HOLY WATER

OPENING PRAYER
LITURGY OF THE WORD
(SACRED READINGS)

FIRST READING
RESPONSORIAL PSALM
SECOND READING

~ALLELUIA~

HOLY GOSPEL
HOMILY~

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

PRESENTATION OF GIFTS THE LADIES OF CHARITY
OFFERTORY HYMN ST. JUDE CHURCH CHOIR
EUCHARISTIC PRAYER
LORD'S PRAYER
COMMUNION HYMN ST. JUDE CHURCH CHOIR
MEDITATION HYMN....."AMAZING GRACE".....AMON ROBINSON

(This selection and soloist was requested earlier by Idessa Redden)

HEART-FELT WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE

PARRISH CRITTENDEN GRANDSON
RODERICK CRITTENDEN GRANDSON
AVRIL HARRIS FRIEND
QUINN BRISBEN FRIEND
ALVIN HOLMES STATE REPRESENTATIVE AND FRIEND
REV. JAMES ORANGE UNION ORGANIZER AND FRIEND
TOM GARDNER DIRECTOR OF MONTGOMERY COMMUNITY ACTION AND FRIEND
EVELYN G. LOWERY FOUNDING PRESIDENT & CEO OF SCLC WOMEN AND FRIEND
DR. GWENDOLYN M. PATTON TRENHOLM TECHNICAL ARCHIVIST AND FRIEND

FINAL COMMENDATION AND FAREWELL
RECESSIONAL HYMN ST. JUDE CHURCH CHOIR

MR. HERBERT POREA
ORGANIST / MUSICIAN

NOTE: IDESSA'S FAVORITE HYMN: "BE NOT AFRAID"

Bibliography

(Archived in Trenholm Technical College's Library Collection)
Gwendolyn Patton, Archivist

Idessa Williams-Redden became an avowed "freedom fighter," known as a "race person," at the tender age of 16, in 1928. It was during this period when she listened to a radio-talk show with influential White, racist politicians, who were laughing at the fact that Blacks were so poor until they could never be voters because they will never be able to pay poll taxes. As Idessa listened, she vowed that she would save money for the poll tax and become a registered voter when she became 21 years old. The politicians were Tom Heflin, the father of future U.S. Senator Howel Heflin, E.C. "Bud" Boswell, who shepherded the passage of the "Boswell Amendment" that became law in 1945 to issue the "literacy test" as a pre-requisite to voters' registration and designed to keep Blacks off of the voting rolls.



Having been born in Montgomery Alabama on Nov. 27, 1912 she never got to know her mother who passed when Idessa was 2 years old. Soon afterwards, her father moved out of town and abdicated all responsibility to his toddler daughter. Idessa was raised by her maternal grandparents, Julius and Lousa Harris. Her great grandparents were born and lived a significant part of their lives as slaves. Important to note is that Idessa's grandmother died in 1925 at the age of 90+, meaning that she was born at least by 1835.

From listening to that racist, radio broadcast in 1928 until the late 1940s, Idessa, like all Black Montgomerians, was hogtied in the vicious grip of "Jim Crow," apartheid USA-southern style. Idessa had married George Williams in 1938. Williams was a carpenter and his work depended upon getting jobs with White construction companies. Blacks knew by custom that if they attempted to wrench from the grip of legal racism, it could be instant death by any White person to whip or kill any Black person who got "out of place."

However, change was on the horizon. A young, Black AME Zion minister and his family moved from North Carolina to Montgomery in 1948. Reverend Solomon S. Seay, Sr. was assigned the pastorate at Mt. Zion AME Zion Church, the site where the Montgomery Improvement Association (1955) was born to steer the Montgomery Bus Boycott Movement.

By 1949, Reverend Seay, a native Alabamian, was firmly entrenched, recognized and respected as a fearless and moral leader in the Black community. It surprised no one, though many feared for his life, when Reverend Seay took on the issue of the rape of a Black woman, Gertrude Perkins, by police officers, who, of course, were White.

The White, power structure did nothing to correct this egregious injustice. Reverend Seay championed the cause for respect and dignity of Black womanhood. This voice to honor Black women motivated Idessa to become a registered voter, no matter what the consequences.

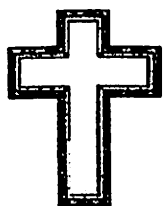
After four attempts and exchanging terse words with the insulting registrars, Willis and Mulligan, Idessa finally became a registered voter in 1949. There was no turning back for Idessa's commitment to the "struggle." She immediately joined Coach Rufus Lewis in his crusade for full voting rights to encourage people to sign up to vote.

Black youth gravitated to Mrs. Williams-Redden because of her obvious conviction to gain first-class citizenship for Black people. This was most symbolized by the right to vote, free of all barriers. Her positive stance and fearless expression imbued youth, especially with the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in their militant demand, "Freedom Now!"

Idessa was targeted by the Montgomery Police as one who should not be arrested and thrown in jail. The "Jim Crow" authorities feared she would be a "cause celebre" thus, swelling the ranks of the Movement, particularly with Black youth and Northern Whites who were joining the Movement in legions.

The Idessa Williams-Redden Papers (located at Trenholm Tech College Archives) document her movement involvement and how these experiences influenced her personal life. Williams-Redden was a key participant in the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott Movement, never missing a Monday Night Mass meeting (1955-58), except when visiting 2 weeks out of year with out-of-town relatives. She was one of 20 Montgomeries who joined Birminghamians on the bus ride to the 1963 March on Washington. In 1993, Williams-Redden was a part of the 30th March on Washington Anniversary. The papers are divided into the following series: chronicling the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott with news articles, programs, pamphlets, sermons and related information; the 1963 March on Washington and its 30th Anniversary with original posters, bumper stickers, programs, news articles and related information; Personal Papers, comprising correspondences and her speeches, church activities, news articles about her movement involvement, college grades and term papers in social work; and Awards.

"Working in the Civil/Voting Rights Movement was the greatest challenge of my life. I was in the Movement to help my people. I have dedicated my life to help uplift all human beings," she said upon her retirement.





Casketbearers

Fiends and Family Members



Flower Bearers

Ladies of Charity

Ladies of St. Jude Church

Describing our Beloved

IDESSA

I ~ Innovative & Inspiring
D ~ Devoted & Determined
E ~ Earnest & Empowered
S ~ Supportive & Smart
S ~ Sincere & Serious
A ~ Aspiring & Assertive

Idessa achieved amazing strides in Life and changed the lives of others along the way.

"She was no ways tired"

I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.

St. John 11: 25-26

Acknowledgements

The family of the late **Idessa Williams-Redden** wishes to express their sincere gratitude to everyone for their acts of kindness and thoughtfulness during our loss. Your continuous prayers, phone calls, visits, cards, flowers, messages and food will forever be appreciated. May the Lord richly shower you with His grace and mercy for the comforting and encouragement that you brought to our hearts and to our lives.

-The Family

Repast & Fellowship

Knights of Peter Claver Lodge • Goode Street