

FRIENDS,

LAST YEAR THIS TIME, I WAS DOWN WITH A SEVERE COLD.

IDESSA, RODERICK AND PARIS BROUGHT ME XMAS DINNER TO MY HOME. THIS IS HOW I WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER IDESSA: SERVING AND CARING ABOUT OTHERS.

THE MORNING BEFORE IDESSA FELL, SHE CALLED TO TELL ME THAT SHE HAD RECEIVED THE BOOK, WOMEN OF COURAGE, BY PEGGY CULBERTSON. SHE WAS SO HAPPY BECAUSE THERE WAS A CHAPTER IN THE BOOK ABOUT HER AND HER UNTIRING AND UNDAUNTING SERVICE IN OUR MOVEMENT FOR FREEDOM AND DIGNITY.

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I SIMPLY WANT TO SAY: THANK YOU IDESSA FOR RECOGNIZING AND NURTURING MY THIRST FOR FREEDOM WHEN I WAS A YOUNG GIRL IN THE MID 1950S. THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING ME (NO DOUBT AS A PEST WHO CONSTANTLY ASKED YOU "WHEN DO WE GET OUR FREEDOM?") TO TRAVEL WITH YOU AND TO LEARN FROM YOU COMMUNITY-ORGANIZING SKILLS. WHAT I LEARNED FROM YOU FORTIFIED MY SENSE OF SELF-WORTH, SELF-CONFIDENCE AND SELF-CRITICISM AS THE FOUNDATION TO SERVE OTHERS.

THANK YU FOR ALWAYS BEING THERE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, FROM OUR EARLY DAYS IN OUR "STRIDE TOWARDS FREEDOM" TO YOUR LAST WHEN WE CALLED UPON YOU TO MOTIVATE YOUNG PEOPLE TO TAKE UP THE CHALLENGE TO CONTINUE THE LEGACY.

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THANK YOU FOR ALWAYS BEING "ON READY" FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION IN LINKING OUR LIFETIMES IN OUR QUEST FOR FREEDOM.

THANK YOU FOR BEING MY MENTOR, MY LEADER, MY BUDDY FOR 50 YEARS AND FOR ENCOURAGING ME TO "HANG IN THERE AND HANG TOUGH." I PRAY THAT I WILL BE, AND MAY ALL OF US BE, AS MUCH OF A BLESSING TO OTHERS AS YOU, IDESSA, WAS TO US. SO LONG, MY FRIEND. IT IS MY PRAYER TO SEE YOU ON THE OTHER SIDE. GWEN PATTON

*at that Great Mass Meeting Around
the Throne*