

COMMENTARY

Marc Morial

President and CEO, National Urban League



To Be Equal:

Sybil Haydel Morial, Mother to Five Children, Was Matriarch to an Entire City and the Steel in the Spine of the Civil Rights Movement

“Though not tall in stature, Sybil Haydel Morial was a tower of grace, kindness, dignity and strength who inspired generations of servant leaders. For the past three decades, she was the matriarch of New Orleans politics ... Sybil was just as tenacious and just as fearless, but in a quiet yet iron-willed way—the epitome of a Steel Magnolia.”

—Clancy DuBos

New Orleans has lost its matriarch. America has lost one of the last soldiers in that

battle of the 1950s and 1960s that opened doors so we could walk through them.

My family has lost its mother, grandmother, and grandmother, Sybil Haydel Morial. But our grief is tempered by our gratitude, and the knowledge that her wisdom, passions, tenacity and love will live on for generations.

My father, Ernest “Dutch” Morial, was a trailblazer: the first Black graduate of Louisiana State University School of Law, the first in Louisiana to be elected or appointed to his many public of-

fices, including Mayor of New Orleans, and a major force in the Civil Rights Movement.

But he’d have been nothing without Sybil.

One of the enduring memories from my early childhood was a serious car accident in one of the most stringently segregated areas of the Jim Crow South, Columbia, Mississippi. My parents, my sister Julie, and I escaped injury, but the brand-new Cadillac my parents had borrowed from Sybil’s father was totaled.

My parents had to decide whether we would continue our journey to the NAACP meeting in Chicago, where they would continue planning for the March on Washington. It was Sybil who urged my father to forge ahead. It was Sybil who made arrangements for us to ride a Trailways bus to a Greyhound bus to a train that would take us to Chicago.

When my father ran for mayor in 1977, his campaign was planning a huge fundraising concert at the Rivergate Convention Center. But as the date of the concert approached, he found that the people he had entrusted to organize it has sold no ticket, booked no musicians, and failed to lock down the venue. Once again, it was Sybil to the rescue. Headlined by the late jazz legend Lionel Hampton, the concert she organized raised the

then-significant sum of \$25,000, and saved my father’s campaign.

The House of Sybil was a no-nonsense place. In the House of Sybil, you were going to school. You were going to church. You did your chores. She was a diplomatic drill sergeant.

I see my mother’s many attributes in my siblings, our children, and our children’s children: her keen intelligence, her ease of making friends, and her drill-sergeant-like ability to take charge. What I think I inherited was her ability to multitask. She could cook dinner, talk on the phone, and help us with homework, all at the same time, without missing a beat, without a hair out of place.

Now she has gone to join her husband, her parents, her siblings. But she also has gone to join her fellow “sheroes” of the Movement like Mary McLeod Bethune, Rosa Parks, Coretta Scott King and Fanny Lou Hamer. They’ve gathered beyond the Pearly Gates for a strategy session, and they’re going to send a message back down here to the men of the Movement.

That message is this: “You all have been running things, and we’ve been standing by you. You did some great things, and you made some mistakes. Now it’s time for us to lead, and we expect you to stand by us as we stood by you.” —Sept. 27, 2024

Bowie High School NJROTC Congressional Representative Visit

By PRESS OFFICER
Bowie High School NJROTC

On Wednesday, September 25, the Battalion received two speakers, Mr. Dwayne B. Hooper Sr, a United States Naval Academy Blue and Gold Officer, and Ms. Stefanie Carey Barone, an aide from Congressman Steny Hoyer’s Office (District

05). NS2, 3 and 4’s received advice on how to go about their application process for the different service academies. Additionally, cadets were given steps on what to do when applying for Congressman Steny Hoyer’s Congressional nomination, Representative for the 5th Congressional District of Maryland. Ms. Stefanie Carey Barone spoke to

cadets about the requirements to apply for nominations. Both advised and gave tips on what would be needed during interviews for their scholarships. Overall, we greatly appreciate these two visitors for sharing such great knowledge to the battalion.

Assistant PAO
C/SR Omowunmi Ogunbanwo



PHOTO COURTESY BOWIE HIGH SCHOOL NJROTC

Mr. Dwayne B. Hooper Sr, a United States Naval Academy Blue and Gold Officer, and Ms. Stefanie Carey Barone, an aide from Congressman Steny Hoyer’s Office (District 05) (third and fourth from left) met with Bowie High School NJROTC cadets and representatives.

Varonika Ware Graduates From Georgia State University in Summer 2024

ATLANTA, Ga. (Sept. 30, 2024)—Varonika Ware of Bowie (20721) earned a Master of Science degree in Marketing and a Graduate Certificate in Brand & Customer Management from Georgia State University during summer 2024.

More than 2,000 students graduated with certificates and degrees during the semester.

Georgia State University, one of the largest,

most innovative multi-campus public research universities, transforms the lives of students, advances the frontiers of knowledge and strengthens the workforce of the future. With campuses in and around metro Atlanta, Georgia State readies students for professional pursuits, educates future leaders and prepares citizens for lifelong learning.

—Georgia State University

Honored from A1

In the few instances Waverly Woodson talked about the beaches of Normandy, his son recalled, one story was always repeated more than any acknowledgment of the hundreds of people he saved.

When his father got to shore, Stephen Woodson said, there was one soldier calling out for a doctor. The soldier was dying quickly, his body blown in half.

“My dad could do nothing for him, other than console him,” Stephen Woodson said.

Woodson stayed with the soldier and performed last rites.

“That is the most emotional thing that he talked about in all of D-Day,” Stephen Woodson said.

His father never sought recognition and never talked about how he was overlooked, Stephen Woodson said. Instead, his son said, he was driven to save lives.

After the war, Woodson and his family

moved to Clarksburg from their home state of Pennsylvania.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Stephen Woodson said, there were very few doctors in the area open to serving Black patients. His father stepped in to help once again.

Affectionately called “Doc Woodson,” Waverly Woodson would perform medical checkups for families who lived nearby.

While he was never able to become a licensed physician due to limited medical school options for Black Americans, Woodson with his strong medical experience and training in the Army was able to provide medical care for dozens of families.

Woodson died in 2005 at the age of 83. Although he did not live to see his service properly recognized, his widow said her husband would have loved an event—with family and friends mingling—like the ceremony that was held on Tuesday.

“He was so good to everybody,” Joann Woodson said. “Our house was always open

to all of the family. So if he were here, he’d love this.”

As Army Lt. Gen. Mark Landes looked at a photo of Woodson, propped up next to him at the Capitol Hill ceremony, he said that Woodson embodied “the greatest legacy of our Army and our nation: ordinary Americans who become extraordinary.”

“For the better part of eight decades, his contributions to one of the most iconic operations of modern military history, D-Day, have remained unrecognized and forgotten,” Landes said. “It may have remained unsung for far too long, but a legacy it still is.”

Stephen Woodson said his father is living through him and the rest of the family every day.

“He deserved to know what his country thinks of him,” Stephen Woodson said. “Even 80 years later, he’s smiling down on us right now.”

Maryland Youth Wins National Award for Heroic Service Activity

By PRESS OFFICER
Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes

BOULDER, Colo. (Sept. 17, 2024)—Esther Bonney, age 17, of La Plata, Maryland, has been named a winner of the 2024 Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes. The Barron Prize annually honors 25 outstanding young leaders who have made a significant positive impact on their communities or the environment. Fifteen top winners each receive \$10,000 to support their service work or higher education.

Esther founded Nurture Natives to protect native species and biodiversity while empowering youth. Her nonprofit educates adults and children about the increasing problems non-natives pose to agriculture, pollinators, and homeowners. To promote native plantings, her youth-led group hosts plant giveaways across Maryland where they have distributed more than 47,000 native seedlings and 550 sapling trees and shrubs. Nurture Natives has also planted 2.2 million seeds and distributed \$24,000 worth of native plants to underprivileged communities. Collaborating with horticulture experts, Esther has published Nurture Natives: A Guide to Invasive Species and their Native Look-Alikes. She has distributed hundreds of her guides to nurseries across seven east coast states.

Esther’s program grew out of personal tragedy when as a 13-year-old, she lost her older brother to suicide. She sought solace and refuge in nature, filling her days with walks along the creek near her home. She learned to identify native plants and pollinators, rediscovering herself in the process. She became a 4-H Pollinator Ambassador, leading presentations at schools and li-



PHOTO COURTESY GLORIA BARRON PRIZE FOR YOUNG HEROES

Esther Bonney

braries. After attending the National 4-H Summit on Agriculture, she returned home eager to address a local agricultural problem. Through discussions with local farmers and scientists, she identified a critical concern: the proliferation of invasive plant species threatening local crops and native ecosystems. Nurture Natives is her way to help through education and native plant giveaways. Esther’s team has also helped pass state legislation banning Callery pear trees, a fast-growing non-native used in landscaping, and is working on new legislation that will enforce the integration of native plants into public landscaping. “My experiences have reinforced my belief that a flourishing environment is inseparable from the health of the communities it sustains,” says Esther. “I am committed to advocating for a future in which both our youth and en-

vironment thrive.”

The Barron Prize was founded in 2001 by author T. A. Barron and was named for his mother, Gloria Barron. Since then, the Prize has honored 600 young people who reflect the great diversity of America. All of them demonstrate heroic qualities like courage, compassion, and perseverance as they work to help their communities or protect the planet.

“Nothing is more inspiring than stories about heroic people who have truly made a difference to the world,” says T. A. Barron. “And we need our heroes today more than ever. Not celebrities, but heroes—people whose character can inspire us all. That is the purpose of the Barron Prize: to shine the spotlight on these amazing young people so that their stories will inspire others.”

For more information, visit www.barronprize.org.

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