

Chronicle Profile

Lowery: He just wanted to hear the music

By AUDREY L. WILLIAMS
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Joseph Lowery: an unsung hero?

Over 20 years ago, the 71-year-old retired educator took his family for a summer evening outing to listen to Tanglewood Park's popular Music at Sunset. The only problem was that Lowery wasn't welcomed.

"We thought it would be nice to go and hear the music," he says, remembering when blacks were excluded from "public" social events.

In his will, William Neal Reynolds, who donated the land to the county, requested that no blacks be allowed to use the area.

Lowery didn't know that.

"We sat down," says Lowery explaining the events that led up to what would be a series of chain reactions. "and the sympathy of officers started meandering around. They finally came over and asked us to leave."

From there, a public outcry began on Lowery's behalf and questions arose about the fairness of the will that excluded blacks from a public park.

Because he says he was known by several of Winston-Salem's more affluent and powerful white families, an editorial was written expressing concern over what had happened that summer evening in Tanglewood Park. After being asked to leave, says Lowery, an Oriental and his family were admitted inside the park with no problem.

"Nothing in the paper said the concert was for 'white only,' says Lowery. "We weren't trying to set any precedence. The ticket salesman sold me the tickets.

"They were very apologetic," he says, "but it was very embarrassing."

The next year, Music at Sunset was moved to the Graylyn mansion and after more than 20 years, the concert has returned to Tanglewood.

And the statement in the will excluding blacks has been deleted, says Lowery.

"People were telling me I should sue," he says, "but I wasn't interested in suing. I was interested in having fun that day."

Fun to Lowery, who shares his stately East Fourth Street home with his wife, Grace, is listening to music -- any kind of music.

"I love symphony," he says. "I love jazz. I love bepop. I love all of it. Sometimes I even try to dance.

"What's that music you listen to now?" Lowery asks. "Rock. I like that, too. I listen to Michael Jackson. I like 'Beat It' and 'Thriller. I'm receptive."

Born and raised in Winston-Salem, Lowery taught contained elementary classes in Pender County and later returned to Winston-Salem and worked in the local school system until his retirement in 1975.

He is chairman of the scholarship committee of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc., which awarded close to \$3,000 this year to youth, treasurer of the Columbia Heights Winston-Salem State University Alumni Association and is an active member of Mt. Zion Baptist Church.

A champion for historically black institutions, Lowery served for seven years as president of the National Alumni Association for Black Colleges.

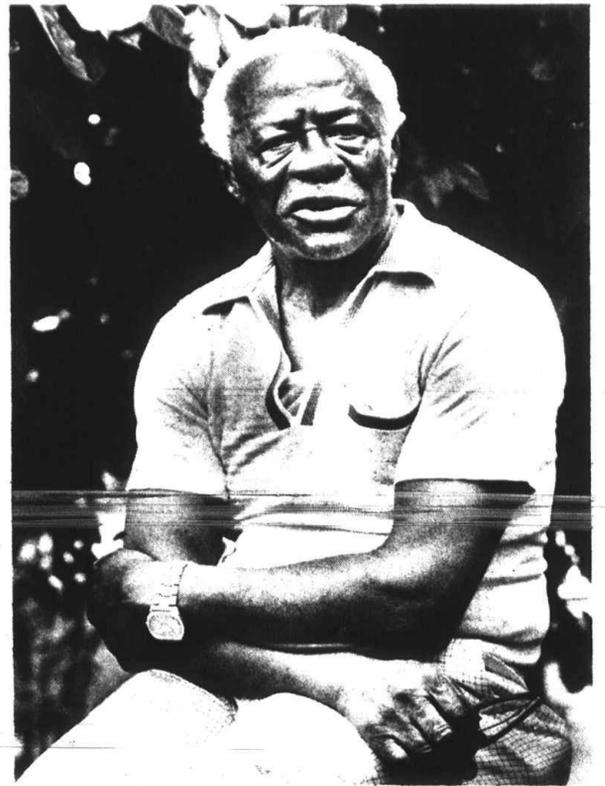
What happened 20 years ago is as vivid to Lowery as yesterday, but it's his work in the classroom he most often eludes to.

"People have always known me as an educator," he says. "The boys and girls that I taught, they'll see me now and say, 'That was my fifth-grade teacher.'

"I enjoyed children," Lowery says, "and I still do, but not enough to go back into teaching."

Like most people during their youth, Lowery had ambition. "My ambition was to be a physician," he says. "But the year I wanted to go college the Depression struck; therefore, I wasn't able to study."

However, he worked four years until he got the opportunity to go attend Winston-Salem Teachers College (now Winston-Salem State University).



Joseph Lowery: All he wanted was an evening in the park (photo by James Parker).

"I don't regret what I have done," says Lowery. "I made many contributions by helping the young boys and girls. I helped get Tanglewood integrated.

"It's been rewarding. Life has been beautiful. It all comes from having faith and trust in the Master."

Acquire skills, audience told

COLUMBUS, Ohio -- Perseverance and acquiring required skills are the keys to overcoming remaining obstacles for full economic participation, an officer of a major U.S. corporation told about 1,000 attendees at the first Governor's Minority Business Conference here.

Marshall B. Bass, vice president of R.J. Reynolds Industries Inc., delivered the keynote address to the gathering of minority and women suppliers at the Sheraton Columbus Plaza. The conference was sponsored by the Ohio Department of Development's Small and Developing Business Division.

Bass said there are three business requirements that must be met by vendors who want to sell to a major corporation.

"The first requirement is quality goods," Bass said. "Rest assured if you are building a better mousetrap, you are going to be able to sell it to major companies because they are in business to make quality products."

Bass also indicated that timely delivery and competitive pricing were essential in order to compete.

"Businesses must make a return on their investment dollars," Bass said. "And they cannot unless they can make timely delivery of their own products and can competitively price them. That means companies are looking for reliable vendors



Marshall Bass

whose pricing meets their cost requirements."

Bass, whose own company purchased more than \$82 million in goods and services from minority vendors in 1983, also outlined three skills minority and women vendors need to fully participate in the marketplace.

"First, is a knowledge about how to do business with major companies," he said.

Bass recommended formal education or on-the-job experience to obtain the technical knowledge and personal skills necessary to know how to work with a large purchasing department.

Second, Bass told the audience, is developing personal ac-

John Jacob

From Page A4

given "special interests" is brought to us by the same people that try to change the word "conservative" from something that stood for stability and patriotism into something that stands for greed and narrow nationalism.

It comes from the same people who try to redefine poverty in such a way as to exclude poor people who get in-kind benefits like subsidized housing and Medicaid.

It comes from many of the same people that label affirmative action's goals as "quotas" and attempts to desegregate America as "reverse discrimination."

If we keep on this path we'll wind up calling war peace, poverty affluence, and oppres-

sion freedom. This is 1984, and George Orwell's famous book of the same name depicted a society whose language was "Newspeak" -- consisting of just the perversions of meaning I have discussed here.

One way to assure that the fictional 1984 doesn't become reality is to insist on recapturing the integrity of those loaded phrases whose meaning is being distorted today.

And the place to start is by reclaiming "special interest" as a term depicting private greed and not the broad-based groups fighting to make American work for all its people.

John Jacob is president of the National Urban League.

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