

# Looking Back

## Juanita Setzer: One of the NAACP's most ardent and dedicated supporters

By ROBIN BARKSDALE  
Chronicle Staff Writer

Through the years the NAACP has had countless supporters and contributors, but one Winston-Salem resident ranks among the organization's most dedicated friends and assistants.

Juanita Setzer walked alongside well-known civil rights leaders in the 1963 march on Washington, and today she still speaks fondly of the organization which she has devoted so much time and energy to supporting.

"The NAACP is a very important organization," Miss Setzer says, surrounded by files of NAACP history and memorabilia. "I have just always felt that it was important to be active in supporting the organization."

Miss Setzer's involvement with the civil rights organization began while she was living in Washington. She joined the NAACP's Washington branch and bought her first life membership in the early 1960s. One of her greatest contributions to the NAACP has been her recruitment of life members.

Inspired by Kivie Kaplan, then chairman of the life memberships committee, Miss Setzer concentrated her efforts on persuading black citizens to join the organization, which she says was essential to the survival of the black race in America.

"When I first heard that Mr. Kaplan had helped increase the number of life memberships by thousands of people, I just assumed he was a black man,"

says Miss Setzer. "I saw him at a national convention in the 1960s and discovered that he was a white man. So I said to myself, 'If this Jewish businessman is doing all he is to assure our freedom and equal opportunity, surely I can do more.'"

From that point on, Miss Setzer devoted most of her life to advancing the causes of the NAACP. She was also instrumental in elevating the status of the Washington branch.

A 1978 report by then NAACP Vice President Sherman Briscoe documented Miss Setzer's accomplishments and service to the organization. His report noted that she recruited more than 500 members annually.

Her recruitment campaigns brought in \$19,000 annually, and in a 1978 newsletter Briscoe said, "... Juanita Setzer has become the main sustaining force of the local branch, raising nearly half its annual budget every year."

"I'm just an ordinary person," Miss Setzer says when reviewing her achievements with the NAACP. "But I love the NAACP. I'm not a person to join everything, but what I'm in, I'm in all the way. You don't have to be anything special, just dedicated."

Miss Setzer's love for the organization led her to join the Washington picket lines in the 1960s to protest racial inequality. She stood alongside Mary Church Terrell, who helped organize the NAACP's Washington branch and became its first vice president.

Miss Setzer is moved as she recalls standing with Mrs. Terrell, who was still walking the picket lines at age 90.

"Mary Church Terrell was one of the bravest women I've ever known," says Miss Setzer. "She was just some kind of woman. One of the last times I was with her was out on the picket lines, and her back had become hunched and she was a little slower, but she was still out there fighting. She was something else indeed."

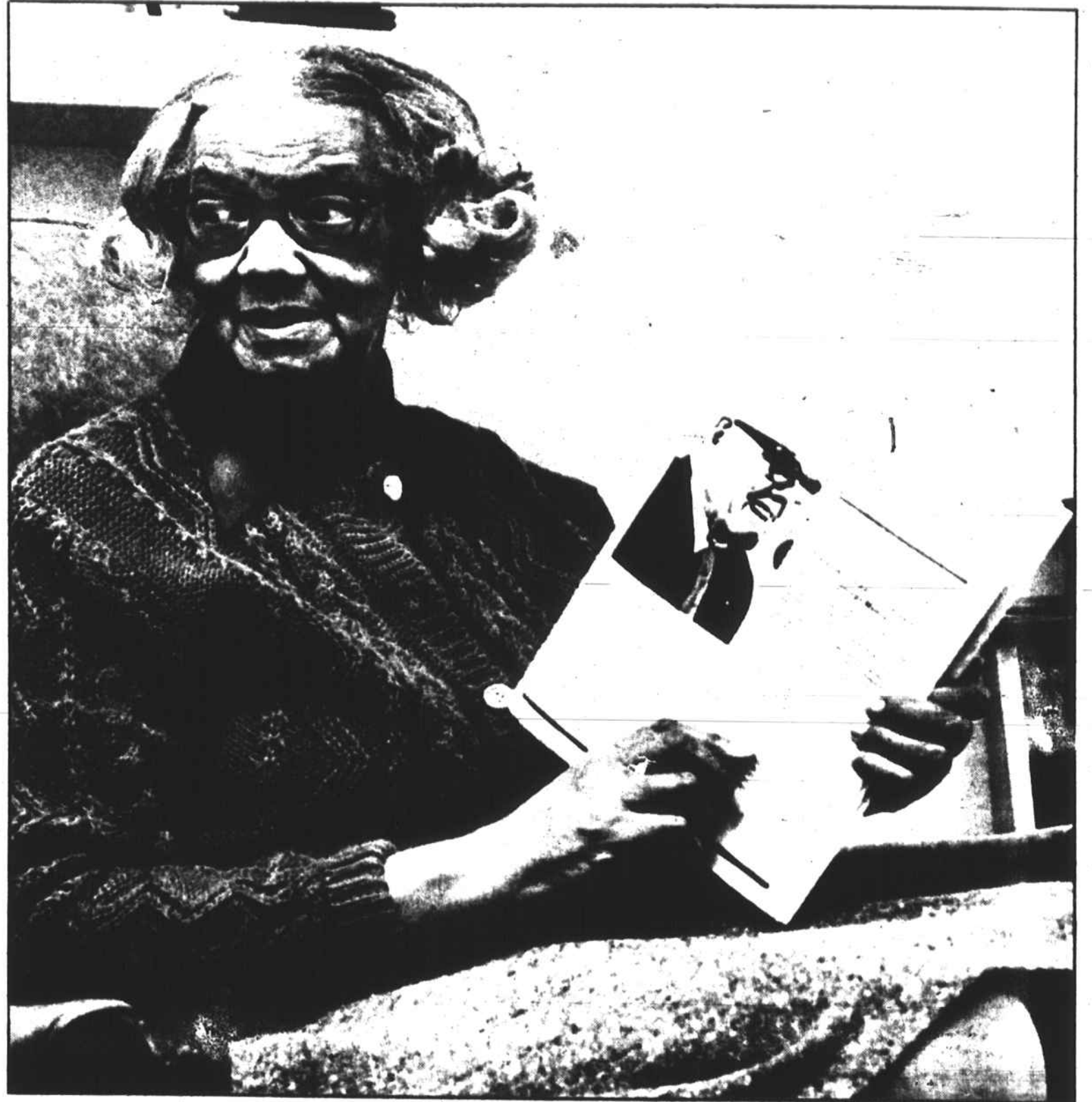
Though Miss Setzer values the goals of the organization more than the recognition she has received, her efforts have not gone unnoticed. She has received two Kivie Kaplan Awards for outstanding achievement in membership recruitment.

She has lost track of the number of plaques presented to her at NAACP conventions, but her living room mantel is decorated with several NAACP awards.

She has large medallions commemorating her life memberships, and she has countless appreciation letters from high-ranking NAACP officials thanking her for her involvement with the organization.

Miss Setzer shrugs at the honors, saying the overall purpose is more important.

"All of this stuff is just sitting around. I don't pay it a whole lot of attention," she says, seemingly none too impressed by her tributes. "I'm more concerned with doing a job than with collecting plaques. They're nice, but please see page A14



'Not Special, Just Dedicated'

Juanita Setzer: "I'm just an ordinary person. But I love the NAACP" (photo by James Parker).

## She gives her community the credit

By L.A.A. WILLIAMS  
Chronicle Staff Writer

The year was 1957. The place was Winston-Salem. The issue was freedom, and the human and civil rights of black people to attend whatever school they pleased.

Into this scenario stepped a 16-year-old black girl named Gwendolyn Bailey. In the midst of the beginning of the civil rights movement, her task was to be the first black student to attend Reynolds High School, then a bastion of white southern racism.

"My parents (the Rev. and Mrs. E.E. Bailey) told me it was up to me," Miss Bailey, now Mrs. Gwendolyn Bailey Coleman of Waldorf, Md., said. "It didn't dawn on me how difficult it would be. My purpose was to do the best I could. People were depending on me. I felt the weight, and I felt a sense of loyal-

ty to my people.

"But it was not me," Mrs. Coleman added. "It was the community deciding on a cause. The gratitude and praise goes to the community."

She was one of three black students who applied to Reynolds. For various reasons, the others were not able to attend.

Before spending the last two lonely years of high school at Reynolds, Mrs. Coleman had attended all-black Atkins High in the ninth and 10th grades.

"The black school system here was very strong," she said. "Everything here was so well-coordinated. Parents, teachers, the religious community — all wanted to see this thing through."

She said all those involved with the effort even went through a dry run of her first day of school at Reynolds.

Despite the potentially explosive atmosphere, her entry at Reynolds in September 1957 was relatively quiet.

"It was so peaceful that the newspapers did not carry the story," she said. Though there was no violence, there were incidents.

Scrawled on the pavement at the entrance of the school on her first day were the words, "Go home nigger," she said. The Senior Service Club at the school was trying to wash it off as she approached.

Though she did well academically, socially she was a complete outcast. Pain and loneliness were her two most constant friends.

"There were two or three ... but not a friend like black friends," she explained. "There were a few who wanted to get to know me, but they would be

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Gwendolyn Bailey Coleman: "It was not me. It was the community deciding on a cause" (photo by James Parker).

## Black American women: Key players in the civil rights drama

By ALDON MORRIS  
Special To The Chronicle

Black women were crucial to the rise and success of the civil rights movement.

This fact has often been overlooked because of the visibility of male leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Stokely Carmichael, Roy Wilkins, Whitney Young Jr. and Malcolm X. Nevertheless, black women assumed both leadership and behind-the-scenes roles in the movement.

This is not surprising, because black women have always been in the forefront of the black liberation struggle. The brutal oppression of Afro-Americans has always prevented black women from being confined exclusively to the role of housewife.

They worked in the fields during slavery, and they suffered the sting of the whip. At the same time, women like Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth worked fearlessly on the Underground Railroad to free their brothers and sisters.

Following slavery, black women organized campaigns against lynching while they cooked, scrubbed, ironed and mothered for white women. These were the circumstances that produced strong, determined women who never knew what it meant to be placed on a "female" pedestal.

Like their historical counterparts, contemporary black women were prominent figures of the modern civil rights movement.

Some led and organized dangerous demonstrations, making it clear that they were ready to go to jail and even die for liberation. Others worked the typewriters and mimeograph machines, turning out those communications crucial to the mobilization of the grassroots constituency.

Many black women risked jobs and the lives of their families by

opening their homes to civil rights activists in the heat of battle. Others erected "citizenship" schools and "freedom" schools in beauty shops and back yards, where they taught thousands of illiterate people how to read, write and struggle for freedom.

There were also black women who challenged the men in the movement to abandon sexism so that total freedom could emerge within the movement, making the struggle against injustice in the larger society even more powerful and effective.

As Fred Shuttlesworth, a great leader of the movement, put it, "the women made it real."

To capture the spirit and dedication of the women who propelled

*"In '56 and '57, night after night, I sat down and wrote out a citizenship education program which would help illiterates to learn to read and write so they could register to vote."*

-- Septima Clark

the civil rights movement, the following paragraphs will take a brief look at the contributions of Rosa Parks, Ella Baker, Septima Clark and Diane Nash-Bevel. These women, like so many others, played paramount roles in the movement.

### Rosa Parks

Rosa Parks is the mother of the modern civil rights movement. Without her actions, the world might not have been privileged to witness the famous yearlong bus boycott in Montgomery, Ala., in 1955-56 and the rise of Martin Luther King Jr.'s brilliant leadership.

On Dec. 1, 1955, Mrs. Parks — a quiet, dignified black resident of Montgomery — defied local laws by refusing to give her bus seat to a white man.

Shortly after Mrs. Parks' arrest, the black community of Montgomery organized a mass boycott of the segregated buses. This development is considered to be the starting point of the modern civil rights movement.

Most people believe that Mrs. Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man because she was tired and weary after a long day at work. They believe that her courage that day stemmed from impulse. This was not at all the case.

Like so many freedom fighters, Mrs. Parks had a long history of rebelling against racial segregation and inequality. By the time of her arrest in 1955, Mrs. Parks had been secretary of the local NAACP for more than a decade, and she had been the adviser to the NAACP Youth Council. It should be remembered that white Southerners in the 1940s and '50s viewed the NAACP as a militant and dangerous organization and treated its members accordingly. Nevertheless, Mrs. Parks continued to fight racial segregation through the NAACP.

In fact, during the 1940s, Mrs. Parks had refused several times to comply with segregation rules on the buses. In the early 1940s, Mrs. Parks was ejected from a bus for failing to comply. Ironically, the very same bus driver who ejected her that time was the one who had her arrested on Dec. 1, 1955.

According to Mrs. Parks, "My resistance to being mistreated on the buses and anywhere else was just a regular thing with me and not just that day." Clearly, then, the woman who launched the modern civil rights movement was a seasoned fighter for justice. This is why the black masses of Montgomery readily followed her

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