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Darius Swann, who fought for school integration, dies at 95

By Tom Foreman Jr.
The Rev. Darius L. Swann, whose challenge to the notion of segregated public schools helped spark the use of busing to integrate schools across the country, has died at his Virginia home. He was 95.
The Rev. David Ensign, interim pastor at Burke Presbyterian Church, where Swann's family attended church, confirmed in an email that Swann died on March 8.

Swann's wife, Vera, told The Washington Post that her husband died of pneumonia.
On Sept. 2, 1964, Swann wrote a letter to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school board, asking that his son James be allowed to attend Seversville School, two blocks from his home, rather than the all-black Biddleville School, which was more than twice as far away. He was allowed to argue his case at a subsequent meeting of the

suggested that the Swanns enroll James in Biddleville, then request a transfer.
The Swanns said no thanks.
"We figured that the system was really protecting segregation," Swann told The Associated Press in an interview in 2000. "What they wanted to do was decide things on a case-by-case basis, when what they needed to do was change the whole system; there was a systemic problem."

Enlisting the support of local activist Reginald Hawkins and civil rights attorney Julius Chambers, Swann sued the school system in January 1965. While they pursued their legal fight, the Swanns enrolled James and his younger sister, Edith, in a private Lutheran school. After one year there, the Swanns moved their children to Eastover, a public school in the affluent, predominantly white Myers Park neighborhood.
Chambers continued the lawsuit even after the Swanns moved to New York, where Swann and his wife worked at Columbia University, and later to Hawaii before moving to India, where he researched Asian theater.



In this Aug. 12, 2009, file photo, President Barack Obama presents a 2009 Presidential Medal of Freedom to the Rev. Joseph E. Lowery in the East Room of the White House in Washington. Lowery held back tears. Lowery, a veteran civil rights leader who helped the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and fought against racial discrimination, died Friday, March 27, 2020, a family statement said. He was 98. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite, File)

Civil rights leader, MLK aide Joseph Lowery dies at 98

By The Associated Press
ATLANTA (AP) — The Rev. Joseph E. Lowery, a veteran civil rights leader who helped the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and fought against racial discrimination, died March 27, a family statement said. He was 98.
A charismatic and fiery preacher, Lowery led the SCLC for two decades — restoring the organization's financial stability and pressuring businesses not to trade with South Africa's apartheid-era regime — before retiring in 1997.
Lowery, considered the dean of civil rights veterans, lived to celebrate a November 2008 milestone that few of his movement colleagues

thought they would ever witness — the election of an African American president.
At an emotional victory celebration for President-elect Barack Obama in Atlanta, Lowery said, "America tonight is in the process of being born again."
An early and enthusiastic supporter of Obama over then-Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton, Lowery also gave the benediction at Obama's inauguration.
"We thank you for the empowering of thy servant, our 44th president, to inspire our nation to believe that, yes, we can work together to achieve a more perfect union," he said.
In 2009, Obama awarded Lowery the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest

civilian honor.
In a statement March 28, Obama said Lowery "changed the face of America."
"He carried the baton longer and surer than almost anybody. It falls to the rest of us now to pick it up and never stop moving forward until we finish what he started — that journey to justice," he said.
Obama said he and his wife, Michelle, were grateful for Lowery's "personal and spiritual support he offered us from the early days of our campaign ... and for the friendship and counsel he provided ever since."
In another high-profile moment, Lowery drew a standing ovation at the 2006 funeral of King's widow, Coretta Scott King, when he criticized the war in Iraq, saying, "For war, billions more, but no more for the poor." The comment also drew head shakes from then-President George Bush and his father,
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Rep. MaryAnn Black

Funeral held for N. C. Rep. MaryAnn Black

(AP) - A private funeral was held March 27 for North Carolina state Rep. MaryAnn Black, who died at age 76.
Black, a Democrat who joined the state House in early 2017, died March 25 at her Durham home, Fisher Memorial Funeral Parlor owner Chris Fisher said. The funeral home handled the service at a local cemetery.



Martin Luther King Jr.
Jan. 15, 1929 - April 4, 1968

Will Smith says he's humbled by rapper's tribute music video

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Will Smith says he was "humbled and honored" after rapper Joyner Lucas released a tribute song honoring his career work.
Lucas released the music video for his track "Will" on Monday. In the video, the rapper paid homage to Smith through a reenactment of the actor's biggest projects including the "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air," "Bad Boys," "Men in Black" and "Pursuit of Happyness."
Smith on Wednesday shared a clip of "Will" with his nearly 44 million followers on Instagram. He personally thanked Lucas in a separate video on social media, calling the rapper's song "creative."
Smith also said he hopes to meet Lucas one day. In a post, Lucas said he needed to "take a cold shower and wake up. I'm dreaming right now."
"Will" is a single from Lucas' debut studio album "ADHD," which releases on Friday.

Black's son, Jonathan, said March 27 that his mother died from natural causes stemming from a long-term illness.

Black announced in November she wouldn't be seeking reelection to her Durham County seat this year.

Black was a social worker for more than 30 years, providing psychotherapy services to children and families. She most recently worked as an associate vice president for Duke University Health System.

Black was on the Durham County commission from 1990 to 2002, serving the last six years as chairwoman.

"She proudly served her local community long before joining the General Assembly, and was committed to improving the lives of all North Carolinians - from raising wages to advocating for environmental justice (and) to addressing the opioid epidemic," state Democratic Party Chair Wayne Goodwin said in a news release.

Durham County Democratic activists will now choose someone to fill her seat through 2020. A likely replacement is Durham City Council member Vernetta Alston, who is the only candidate seeking the seat that Black wasn't running for this November. The district is heavily Democratic.

In addition to her son, Black's survivors include a grandson and her mother, according to an obituary on the Fisher Memorial website.

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