

# Black History Month is personal, professional for greeting card company associate

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

CLEVELAND - Damita Curry celebrates Black History Month with family and friends, but on the job at American Greetings she has been preparing for the annual February observance for months by planning a collection of the company's newest African-American greeting card line, "In Rhythm."

"Martin Luther King Day and Black History Month mean a lot to all of us," said Curry. "My generation certainly grew up appreciating all that our parents and ancestors went through to get to this point, but it's nice that the rest of the country designates the month of February to acknowledge the pride in heritage we feel every day."

Curry, in her professional life, works part time as a member of the American Greetings product development team responsible for the company's ethnic greeting card lines, among others.

"Life is very full for me now,

with the baby, working part-time, home life and my husband's career," said Curry. "My friends are important to me, but it gets tougher to see each other. There are eight of us, friends from college, who used to get together for 'girl talk' regularly at what we called 'the ladies' luncheon.' Because we're all so busy, it didn't happen this year. So we use every occasion, birthdays, holidays, even Black History Month, to drop a note in a card to stay close. So it's real special for me to work on products, greeting cards, that are so relevant to my life and so important to maintaining friendships."

American Greetings' popular "In Rhythm" cards have been celebrating the African-American culture in words and illustrations since the line was launched last February. For this year's Black History Month in particular, Curry's team assembled a special selection of romantic, birthday, friendship, miss you and thank you "In Rhythm" cards. The casual

card line addresses woman-to-woman relationships, reflecting the important roles of sisters, mothers, friends, aunts and grandmothers in the African-American culture.

Curry feels "In Rhythm" is one of American Greetings' strongest African-American card programs because the illustrations, artwork, and inspiring messages are reflective of the African-American woman's lifestyle.

American Greetings has offered ethnic greeting cards for African Americans for more than 25 years to meet the birthday, holiday and everyday communication needs of this growing segment of the population.

One "In Rhythm" card features a trendy black and white photo of two African-American women, close friends smiling at one another and clinking their coffee cups together. The verse on the cover reads, "I feel like I've known you since childhood, because you're such a special part of my life now." Inside, the card reads, "You have a

beautiful way of being a friend."

American Greetings "In Rhythm" cards are an example of the way greeting cards typify our world's changing lifestyles. Trend spotters at American Greetings forecast color, style, language and social trends in creative communications technologies.

One of these trends, "Uniquely Me," speaks to diverse attitudes, heritage, humor and interests.

American Greetings' commitment to cultural diversity is exemplified through product offerings such as "In Rhythm" and "Baobab Tree," as well as the company's extensive Spanish card offerings.

In all, the Company has identified eight trends, including informal lifestyles, changing family dynamics, the pursuit of style and the search for spiritual meaning, which have influenced the creation of its fresh new products.



"In Rhythm" cards for Black History Month are available throughout the month of February at participating supermarket, drug and mass retail stores, as well as card and gift shops that carry American Greetings or Carlton cards.

According to American Greetings research, the observance began with Carter G. Woodson's "Negro History Week" (Feb. 1-7), starting in 1926. It was later

changed to "African American History Week," and in 1976, became a month-long celebration. Woodson, historian, publisher and a dean at Howard University in Washington, D.C., selected the month of February, because, even though the 13th Amendment to the constitution abolishing slavery, the Emancipation Proclamation, was signed on Jan. 1, 1863, many slaves did not learn about their freedom until February.

## Civil rights activist Evelyn Gibson Lowery leads 15th annual African-American Civil Rights Educational Tour

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For the 15th consecutive year, on March 3 and 4, people of all ages, races, and backgrounds will join prominent civil rights leader Evelyn Gibson Lowery as she personally guides them on a tour through the cradle of the Civil Rights Movement, revisiting the significant sites, actions, and struggles that brought such dramatic change to our nation in the sixties that it remains embedded in the hearts and minds of people around the world. Coinciding annually with "Bloody Sunday" weekend, the much-heralded "African-American Civil Rights Educational Heritage Tour" has become a tradition for those who

enjoy recapturing the sights and sounds of the civil rights movement.

Originating at the SCLC/WOMEN Inc.'s headquarters on Auburn Avenue in Atlanta, the tour travels to Birmingham, Marion, Selma, Whitehall and Montgomery Ala. They are joined by leaders and activists who give vivid accounts of the grassroots movement and explain the significance of the many historic sites on the tour, including the National Voting Rights Museum and Institute, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, the gravesite of Jimmy Lee Jackson and the church where Dr. King and others pastored. The tour includes a re-enactment

of the march over the Edmund Pettus Bridge, retracing the path of the 1965 Voting Rights March, and a stop on Highway 80, where, in 1991, SCLC/W.O.M.E.N. erected a memorial at the site where civil rights activist Viola Liuzzo was killed after the Selma to Montgomery March.

According to Lowery, creator of the tour and founder of SCLC/WOMEN Inc., "Having lived in Alabama during the movement and experiencing much of that struggle, I wanted to share and expose this heritage to people, young and old. This year is very special. We will unveil and dedicate a memorial monument to Albert Turner Sr.,

an icon of the movement in Marion, Alabama, and, near Tuskegee, there will be a very special tribute to young international leader and freedom fighter Earl Shinhoster, who was killed in a car accident last year. Additionally, as we cross the Edmunds Pettus Bridge we will give tribute to longtime friend and activist Rev. Hosea Williams, who has accompanied us on this tour in the past."

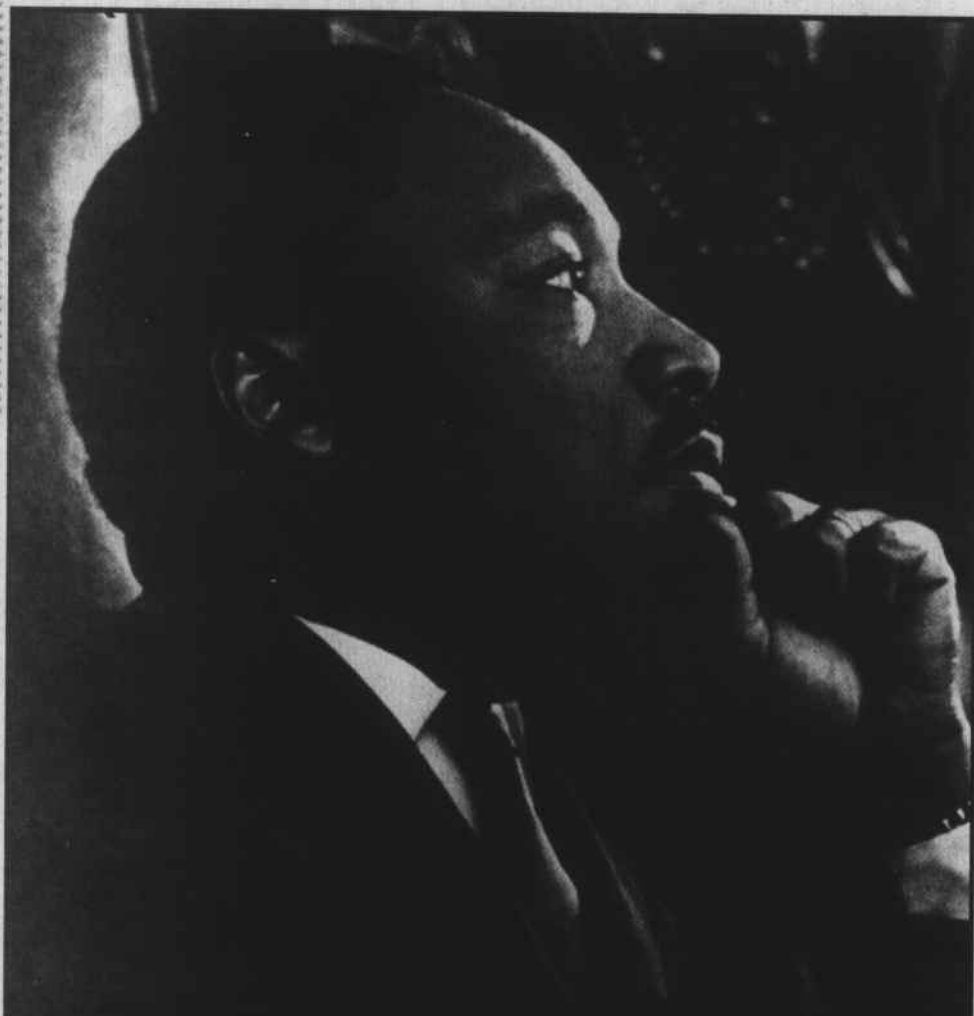
The wife of Rev. Joseph Lowery, co-founder with Martin Luther King Jr. of the SCLC, Lowery has been arrested, jailed and even shot at by the Ku Klux

Klan, while peacefully demonstrating for the rights of others. She was a leader in the fight to free Maggie Bozeman and Julia Wilder when they were wrongfully imprisoned for voting fraud in Pickens County, Ala. She also participated in the SCLC support of the controversial 1979 Tommy Lee Hines case in Decatur, Ala. Lowery's efforts to bring about human rights have led her to travel to Africa, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Russia and East Germany.

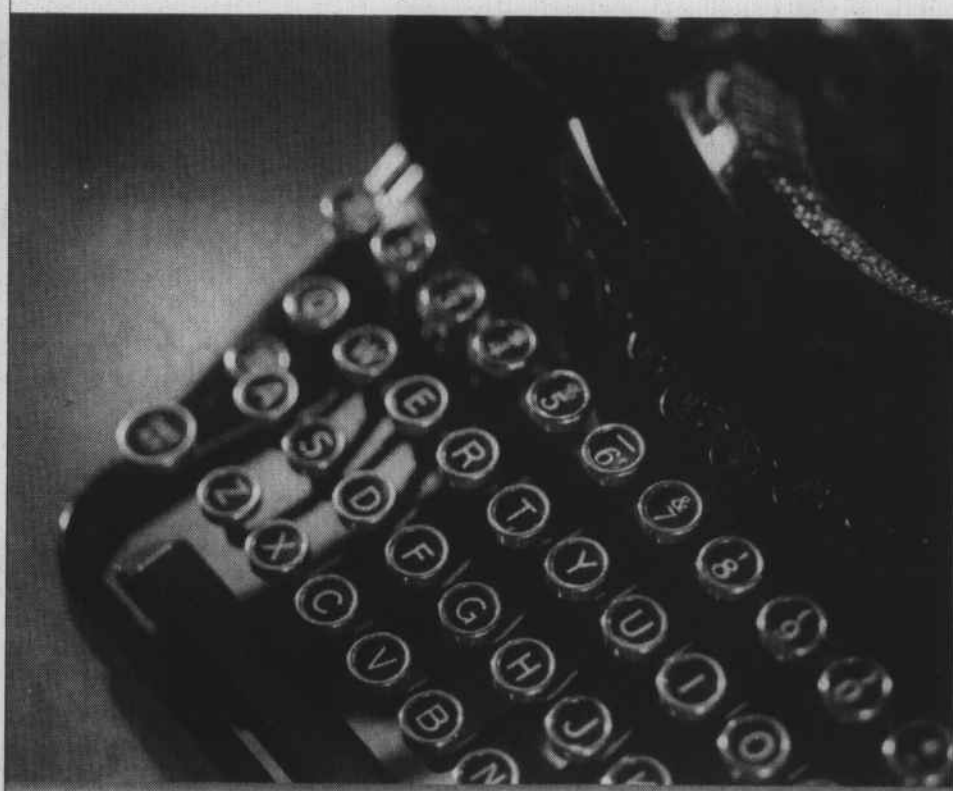
Currently Lowery serves as chair of SCLC/WOMEN board of directors. Since 1979

SCLC/WOMEN has worked to combat teen-age pregnancy, drug abuse, child abuse, high-school dropouts, spousal abuse and youth violence. Seminars, conferences, workshops, teach-ins, and mentoring programs are used to reach people who in turn reach out to other people.

For more information on the African American Civil Rights Heritage Tour or any SCLC/WOMEN activities, call (404) 584-0303. For information, photos and video of previous tours visit [www.sclcwomen.org](http://www.sclcwomen.org).



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IMPORTANT JOURNALIST,  
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When William C. Smith came to Charlotte in 1879, it was with a purpose. He wanted to give a voice to the city's African American community, a voice that was slowly being silenced in the wake of Reconstruction's end. Using the skills he had learned as a newspaperman in Memphis and Washington, Smith started up the Charlotte Messenger in 1882. The weekly paper printed stories the mainstream press wouldn't carry. Stories that documented the social and political life of Charlotte's black community.

Smith modeled his paper on the ideals of Booker T. Washington, emphasizing the need for self-education, self-improvement, and hard work. He sought to commend and encourage Charlotte's black citizens, championing not only the extraordinary but also the everyday. In doing so, he lent his community the strength of legitimacy.

Today, those newspapers give us a glimpse into an important part of Charlotte's history, a history that, were it not for people like W. C. Smith, would most likely be lost to us forever.

Duke Power salutes William C. Smith for his invaluable contributions to the African American community and our region's history. We're proud to acknowledge his achievements and to honor him.

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