

Commission on Human Rights

KY Human Rights Commission today inducts 14 into the KY Civil Rights Hall of Fame

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Lexington, KY - The Kentucky Commission on Human Rights today at the Lyric Theatre in Lexington, Ky., inducted 14 new members to the Kentucky Civil Rights Hall of Fame at the 2012 Kentucky Civil Rights Hall of Fame Inductions Ceremony and Celebration. Just under 600 people attended.

Following is a list of the new inductees (details follow the list):

- Lou Benn (deceased) (Louisville)
- Richard Brown (Owensboro)
- George Burney (Louisville)
- Rev. Thurmond Coleman, Sr. (Louisville)
- Gov. Martha Layne Collins (Lexington)
- Laken Cosby Jr. (Louisville)
- Delores Delahanty (Louisville)
- Rev. Charles Elliott (Louisville)
- Audrey Louise Grevious (Lexington)
- Jesse Harris (deceased) (Louisville)
- Carol Jackson (Ashland)
- Priscilla Johnson (Lexington)
- Edgardo Mansilla (Louisville)
- Marcellus Mayes (Louisville)

Following are profiles of the inductees who were selected by a volunteer panel of independent judges representing several regions in the state. The judges individually made their selections for inductees. An independent accountant tallied all of the judges' scores to determine the identity of those inductees announced today by the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights. The state Human Rights Commission established the Hall of Fame in 2000 and has since held periodic inductions. Attached to this press release is a PDF copy of this release; contained in it is all of the inductee photographs:

Louis M. Benn, 1912-2005, Louisville, KY. A philanthropist and retired manager of the old JC Penney Co. store in downtown Louisville. Mr. Benn and his late wife, Florence, set up a trust fund to help 11 non-profit organizations, 10 of which were in Louisville. Mr. Benn helped many students gain scholarships. He fought for civil and human rights through many groups to which he dedicated his service. As examples, he served on the boards of the YMCA, the Kentucky and Louisville Chambers of Commerce, the Louisville Urban League, the Louisville Deaf Oral School, the Kentucky Independent College Foundation, the Better Business Bureau and the Associated Industries of Kentucky. He worked to persuade other philanthropists to each donate \$100,000 to a trust that would finance 30,000 scholarships. He desegregated the bathrooms at his downtown store and hired African Americans when many businesses were segregated during the 1960s.

Richard E. Brown, 1942-, Owensboro, KY. A former member of the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights representing the Second District. He helped settle many cases involving discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodations and financial transactions. He has been a longtime activist for civil and human rights in Owensboro since the early 1960s. A local and statewide leader of the NAACP, he used his influence to calm racial tensions after a riot in 1968 caused police to heavily patrol black neighborhoods. He fought for more hiring of minorities in Owensboro city government, which resulted in the hiring of the city's first black firefighter in 1971. Mr. Brown and the NAACP addressed threats and racist protests toward black coal miners in Western Kentucky. He helped 30,000 Owensboro residents resist a march of the Ku Klux Klan by wearing yellow ribbons that indicated their city stood for unity rather than division. Mr. Brown helped the Daviess County Board of Education recruit minority teachers and organized scholarships and field trips for area youth.

George L. Burney, 1928-, Louisville, KY. A civil and human rights activist in Louisville for nearly 60 years, dating back to 1954, when he and Bishop C. Eubank Tucker conducted a sit-in in the "whites-only" section that led to the integration of the Louisville bus terminal. Since then, as the leader of PRIDE (People's Rights in Demanding Equality), he is best known for his annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. motorcade and memorial service, which began with 10 cars and now has multiplied to the hundreds that participate annually to honor the slain civil rights leader each January. He has fought for positive social change through voter registration and education. He has organized food, toy and clothes drives for the needy during Thanksgiving and Christmas. He has encouraged education leaders to improve programs for minorities. He has fought for job equality for minorities and women and has helped find lawyers for those who can't afford them. He has worked with youth to end violence and complete their education. He is a dancer who once toured with an integrated group during times of segregation consisting of Bob Hope, Duke Ellington, Red Foxx, Della Reese, Etta James, Joe Tex and Lionel Hampton.

Rev. Thurmond Coleman Sr., 1926-, Louisville, KY. He was named pastor of the First Baptist Church of Jeffersontown, Ky., in 1955, and served 45 years as the head of his congregation. He spent 16 years as the longest-serving member of the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights

before retiring in 2008. Rev. Coleman supported the creation of the Kentucky Civil Rights Hall of Fame to honor those who had fought for human rights in Kentucky. He helped the Human Rights Commission investigate and settle thousands of civil rights cases involving housing, employment, public accommodations and financial transactions during his tenure on the board and he supported the Commission's efforts to help other civil rights entities. He was a staunch supporter, worker and/or leader of civil rights organizations, including the NAACP, PRIDE, the Kentucky Alliance and the Justice Resource Center.

Martha Layne Collins, 1936-, Lexington, KY. Former Kentucky Governor Martha Layne Collins furthered the cause for women when she became the first female governor in the south and Kentucky's first and still only female governor in state history. She served the Commonwealth as governor from 1983 to 1987. At the time of her election, she was the seventh woman to serve as governor of any state, and the third to win the gubernatorial election as a self-made politician rather than as the wife or widow of a past governor. Because of her help with the development of economic ties with Japan when she negotiated a Kentucky Toyota Plant, she was named Honorary Consul General of Japan in Kentucky. President Ronald Reagan signed the Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Holiday bill in 1983, and Governor Collins signed the Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Bill in 1986, the first year the federal holiday achieved its official recognition. All 50 states did not recognize the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday until 1993. The former high school teacher is known for improving the educational system: She made kindergarten mandatory for all public school students; she instituted remedial programs for elementary students; she established mandatory testing and internships for teachers; and she provided academic receivership to help underperforming schools. Further, she set aside more funding for poor school districts and \$100 million for higher education. She served as a co-chair of the Kentucky Task Force on the Economic Status of Women, and she encourages women to achieve their goals while continuing her role as a leader on education issues in Kentucky.

Laken Cosby Jr., Louisville, KY. He fought for civil and human rights through education, the courts and community organizing. In 1988, he became the first African American to chair the Jefferson County Board of Education, which was nationally-known for its resistance to public school integration. He was appointed to the state Board of Education in 1994 and was vice-chairman for three terms and chair for two terms. He persuaded the Louisville and Jefferson County to adopt a program that helped neighborhood integration and reduce the need for busing to achieve racial balance. Mr. Cosby, through his role as the director of Housing for the Kentucky Human Rights Commission, developed Kentucky's first state-wide program to test for housing discrimination by using people of different races to see if properties were available to everyone. His program resulted in more than 200 housing discrimination complaints. He also developed a training program for real estate professionals to prevent discrimination in the sale and rental of housing. He is a former president of the Louisville NAACP and has served many years as a housing consultant to the state and national NAACP organizations.

Dolores Delahanty, 1929-, Louisville, KY. For more than 50 years, she has led national, state and local efforts to improve the lives of women, children, the poor and the homeless. She and

her late husband, Judge Robert Delahanty, were activists in the 1960s civil rights movement in Kentucky. They participated in demonstrations to end segregation in housing, public accommodations and employment. She helped establish Liberty House for children who were abandoned by their families. She helped develop the Winter Help Program to help low-income people pay their heating bills. She worked with Jefferson County Public Schools to create Regional Alcohol and Drug Abuse Diagnostic Centers to help school children. She co-founded the Women's Political Caucus in 1971 and was among the first appointees to the Kentucky Commission on Women. She helped win passage of the Fair Credit law in Kentucky, which allowed women to secure credit cards and loans in their own name. She is a tireless advocate in the struggle for just and equal opportunities.

Rev. Charles Elliott Jr., 1934-, Louisville, KY. He has been the pastor of the King Solomon Missionary Baptist Church in Louisville for more than 50 years. He has spent his life helping the poor, fighting the corrupt and teaching children that education and jobs – and not violence or gangs – are their tickets out of poverty and despair. In 1957, Rev. Elliott organized the Kentucky Christian Benevolent Association to help poor people in emergency situations after learning about a 9-year-old boy who had died of starvation. In 1967, he became chair of the Kentucky Christian Leadership Conference. He helped settle a riot in Louisville in 1968 by working with city officials to provide youth with after-school and weekend jobs. He investigated complaints that inmates were being abused at the county jail, and he marched at City Hall to protest the illegal firing of a police officer. In 1992, he raised food, money and clothing to help a city in Florida that was devastated by a hurricane. He has been instrumental in leading the Parkland Development Project in Louisville.

Audrey Louise Ross Grevious, 1930-, Lexington, KY. For more than 60 years, she has fought for civil and human rights with a quiet grace and dignity that gave her the strength to overcome beatings and threats during her participation in sit-ins to integrate restaurants, department stores and movie theaters. She had been told during the 1950s and 1960s that her house would be set on fire because of her stands for equality. And she was shunned by white teachers at the Kentucky Village Reform School when she ate lunch in the employee dining room to end segregation. Mrs. Grevious was a teacher who later became principal at both Kentucky Village and Maxwell Elementary School in Lexington. She used her position to fight for integration and equality for all children by demanding that children not be separated by race in classrooms and in housing. Mrs. Grevious was president of the Lexington NAACP and also joined the Congress for Racial Equality, or CORE. In 2000, her story was featured in the film, "Living The Story: A History of the Civil Rights Movement in Kentucky."

Dr. Jesse Harris, 1941-2012 Louisville, KY. (Deceased – Dr. Harris died earlier this month) He spent his career as an organizer for the United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 227 in Kentucky to build bridges with other organizations that protect low-income people, children, women and minorities who had been discriminated against at their workplaces, in their homes,

and by their government and neighbors. He used his Gospel music radio show on WLOU 1350 in Louisville to bring together people of all races, genders, nationalities and religions. He helped union leaders join forces with the NAACP, the Justice Resource Center, the Kentucky Alliance and other groups to protest racism and sexism. He began civil rights activism in 1974 when he became secretary-treasurer of a group of black men in his native Henry County, Ky., called People for Progress. In 1977, the Henry County Judge-Executive appointed Mr. Harris to open the first Henry County Youth Service Bureau to keep African American students in school and off the streets. In 2011, he organized a rally in Louisville that educated 2,500 people about plans to redistrict Metro Council One in Louisville, a majority African American section of town. He was the founder and president of Faces of Our Children Sickle Cell Foundation and founder of the nation's first and only Sickle Cell Choir.

Carol Jackson, 1952-, Ashland, KY. She has fought discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodations and financial transactions for more than 10 years as the chair of the Ashland Human Rights Commission. She developed a local commission from a committee that didn't have a permanent home into a full commission with office space in downtown Ashland, which has become a hub for civil rights activity. She was the first African American woman elected to the Ashland Independent Board of Education and the first to chair the board. She is the state representative from Ashland to the Kentucky Board of Education and a vice president of the Boyd-Greenup County NAACP. She has used her voice and organizing skills to bring people of all races together to fight discrimination. In the early 2000s, she organized a community rally that drew more than 500 people to the Paramount Theater in Ashland to offset the appearance in town of an anti-gay religious group. More than 3,000 people attended the Agri-Cultural Fair that she organized several years ago to celebrate the heritage of all people in Northeastern Kentucky. She created the Mayor's Youth Council to encourage students to learn about local government. The Ashland Human Rights Commission, under her leadership, holds annual Conversations about Race to produce discussions on human rights issues. She has worked with the National Conference on Community and Justice to bring diversity training to Ashland schools for administrators, teachers and students. Under her leadership, the Ashland Human Rights Commission in 2003 and 2004 provided a safe meeting place for members of the Gay-Straight Student Alliance at Boyd County High School. A nominator said Mrs. Jackson "has demonstrated her compassion and caring on many occasions, but refuses to accept credit or recognition."

Priscilla F. Johnson, Lexington, KY.: She was chair of the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights for eight years. Under her leadership, the board ruled on hundreds of discrimination complaints and established civil rights education programs like the Kentucky Civil Rights Hall of Fame. She was chair of the Lexington Human Rights Commission in 1991 and was later named chair of the Kentucky Human Rights Commission in 1999. She organized many programs to help youth graduate high school and attend college. For more than 10 years, she used her position as director of Minority Affairs at the Administrative Office of the Courts to hold an annual Lawyer's Lunch with the Northern Kentucky NAACP to encourage minority youth to become lawyers and judges. She worked with Kentucky judges to ensure minorities were treated fairly

in the justice system. She has worked on many voter registration drives and worked to empower women.

Edgardo Nestor Mansilla, 1953-, Louisville, KY. A native of Buenos Aires, Argentina, he moved to Louisville in 1991 through a sponsorship from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In 1993, he received his Master of Social Work degree and became Executive Director of the Americana Community Center in Louisville, which was designed to help an influx of new immigrants – from Vietnam, Bosnia, Cuba and other countries. He had already been a community activist fighting for the rights of the poor in Argentina before moving to Kentucky. He turned the Americana Center into a place where immigrants can learn to apply for housing, jobs and education. It is a place where immigrants can celebrate their culture through music, art, literature, family and friends. He became an American citizen in 2000 and currently fights for the rights of the undocumented. He regularly visits and counsels people in detention centers who face removal from America. He organized demonstrations against a 2011 Kentucky Senate bill that could have led to racial profiling of Latinos. He has used his influence to bring people of all colors, religions, nationalities and genders together to fight for basic human rights as education, jobs, housing and healthcare. He has received a host of awards for his advocacy of human rights, including the Charles Weisberg Humanitarian Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

Marcellus L. Mayes, 1958-, Louisville, KY. He is the President of the Metro Disability Coalition in Louisville, a non-profit organization that promotes equality for people with disabilities. He has spent his life fighting for people with disabilities to have jobs in state and local government, with the same access for training and promotion as their able-bodied colleagues. He regularly speaks at schools, rallies and seminars on the importance of voter registration for people with disabilities. He is a member of the Advisory Board for the Commonwealth of Kentucky Office of the Blind/McDowell Center, which helps blind Kentuckians receive jobs through vocational and educational training. He has worked with governors, mayors and heads of agencies to achieve his goal of universal access for people with disabilities to all buildings in Kentucky.

The Kentucky Commission on Human Rights is the state government authority that enforces the Kentucky Civil Rights Act and federal civil rights laws, all of which make discrimination illegal. For more information or for help with discrimination, contact the commission at 1.800.292.5566.