

Charles Steele breathes life into SCLC

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice
PHOENIX (NNPA) - The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Dr. Martin Luther King's old organization, turns 50 this year and Charles Steele Jr., its president and CEO, has already presented Dr. King with the best possible birthday gift — he has revived SCLC.

Speaking to the mid-winter conference of the National Newspaper Publishers Association here, Steele, a former Alabama State Senator, recounted how he resurrected the dying organization over the past two years.

"When we were coming to SCLC, the headline in the *AJC (Atlanta Journal Constitution)* said, 'SCLC is on the verge of collapse.'" Steele recounted. "The subtitle was, 'Only God can resurrect the dead.' Well, we didn't die, but we were on life support."

There wasn't much of any other kind of support when Steele, then a board member, was selected to take over SCLC. The organization was sharply divided, and some of its lifelong members were predicting a quick death. The convention at which Steele was elected was so emotional that the local police had to be summoned to maintain order. Steele wasn't prepared for what greeted him upon his arrival at the Atlanta headquarters.

"When we got there, the lights were off," Steele said. "The phone was off. Dr. King's organization couldn't meet payroll; inherited a \$100,000 debt from the convention coming out of Jacksonville, Fla., and owed the federal government. And now the federal government owes us. In the last two years, we have raised \$6 million."

Steele described John B. Smith, publisher of the *Atlanta Inquirer* and chairman of the National Newspaper Publishers Association, as the first business leader to embrace him. Steele began calling on business leaders he had supported as a state legislator to help him raise funds for a \$3 million international headquarters, to be built in the same block as the old

SCLC building on Auburn Avenue in Atlanta. Having placed SCLC back on sound financial footing, Steele said his next goal is to build an institution that continues long into the future, far after an individual leader of the organization dies.

"People remember Dr. King, but they don't remember SCLC," said Steele, who as a teenager witnessed Dr. King coming to his hometown, Tuscaloosa, Ala., to help desegregate public facilities. He also noted that SCLC was at the forefront of protests that led to the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

As a group, Blacks are younger than other groups in (See Steele, Page 6)

Shaq chases erractic motorist

MIAMI (AP) - Shaquille O'Neal put his police skills to use early Sunday. O'Neal, the Miami Heat's All-Star center and a reserve officer with the Miami Beach Police Department, followed a driver who allegedly crashed into his Cadillac Escalade and tried to flee the scene, the team said.

O'Neal and bodyguard Jerome Crawford followed the driver for about five minutes.

When the driver, identified by *The Miami Herald* as 18-year-old Emmnueo Cibrin of Tampa, stopped near a gas station, O'Neal approached the car and summoned a nearby police officer.

Police did not release an incident report Sunday night. Miami-Dade Corrections officials said they had no record of anyone by Cibrin's name being booked on a

criminal charge, and it was unclear if he was ticketed for any moving violations.

The incident happened around 4 a.m., shortly after the Heat got home from a Saturday game in Chicago. O'Neal was helping Crawford, a team security official, unload luggage outside Crawford's home in Miami's Coconut Grove neighborhood when the accident occurred.

O'Neal, through the team, said Sunday night that he followed proper police protocol during the chase, including pursuing at a safe distance and speed. He contacted police officers along the way, he said.

O'Neal was sworn in as a reserve officer in 2005. He has long said he intends to pursue a career in law enforcement when he retires from basketball.

Stylist

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his chair. Matreal and I have cried together as I sat in his chair. I've sat in his chair sad and crying, and when I've left, I feel much better. Some people just don't understand the gift that they have, and Matreal does. He has a gift of encouragement and I love him for that."

Mildred Drumgole, his mother, traveled from Houston, Texas, to participate in this tribute to her son.

"I thought that it was a beautiful event. He has a lot of good friends and I'm glad that they took the opportunity to show their appreciation of him and that they love him."

"My life has been a simple one, and I have suf-



"Matreal is my boy, my baby. He's a pleasant young man and has always treated me well."

— Carol Friend-Junior

fered from diabetes for the past thirty years. This was truly a surprise to me," Drumgole said.

As an independent contractor, Drumgole has shouldered the burden of paying his medical costs of addressing his illness. Anyone wish-

ing to donate money or any other support to him as he battles this life threatening are asked to contact Arrington at 279-4088, or send contributions to 1416 Jimmy Street, Las Vegas, Nev., 89106, in care of Matreal Drumgole.



Sentinel-Voice photo by Dianna Saffold

THREE GENERATIONS

The Walker family connecting on Saturday at "The Gathering," an event at Nevada Partners honoring Black pioneers in Nevada which was hosted by the Las Vegas Black Historical Society. Pictured from right: Gwen Walker, creator of the Walker African-American Museum, her daughter, Nika, and her grandmother, Juanita Walker.

Publishers

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have to understand that we have a responsibility. We have to make a difference. We have to invest the time and energy. But, we also have to understand that if we don't, nobody else is going to do it."

Black issues also stretch beyond America, reminds Dortch, imploring the publishers to be sensitive toward international trade issues.

"It's you that we depend on because it's you who have that power of the press, the pen, the truth, to circulate the truth, to make sure that we are enlightened and to also understand for each and every one of us that it's not just about what's happening in our neighborhoods. It's about what's happening globally that impacts our neighborhoods."

He says Africa warrants special attention. "They're saying, 'We need help in Kenya because we have to go through third party people to get our products to U.S. markets and the farmers only make 5 percent of the value of the crops that they grow,'" said Dortch.

"And if you're drinking Starbucks coffee, nine times out of 10, you're drinking some Kenyan coffee that's been used to cut other inferior coffee that they bought. And we think

Starbucks is so great."

Dortch says newspapers in general, including Black-owned ones, don't address those international wrongs nearly enough. "We sit around and don't talk about those issues. Something's got to give."

Chicago Crusader Publisher Dorothy Leavell, chair of the NNPA Foundation, responded in closing remarks that she might be tired of marching, but felt like returning to the streets over the Kenyan coffee issue.

Taking such an overt stand would not be usual for NNPA, Leavell says.

"NNPA came here years ago and heard about resistance to the Martin Luther King Holiday. We all came here; then we all packed up and went home," she said.

Recognizing temptations by some publishers, who are also businessmen and businesswomen, to sacrifice truth for advertising dollars in order to survive, Dortch pleaded that none ever make that sacrifice.

NNPA Chair John Smith, a member of the 100 Black Men who met Dortch 37-years-ago when they served on the board of the Atlanta Branch of the NAACP, called Dortch a "quiet giant with a vision to change the world for the better for all mankind."



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