FEDERAL UPDATES

FBI’s Cold Case Initiative: John Queen

John Queen was an elderly, paralyzed, African-American man who shined shoes in Fayette, Mississippi for change. On August 8, 1965, Queen was killed at the age of 65. At the time authorities claimed that the man who murdered him had fired in self-defense. In 2007, the Queen case was put on an FBI’s list of unsolved “racially motivated killings from the civil rights era.” There are 112 cases on the FBI’s list. Today, the Queen case is one of just 27 open cases on the FBI list. The vast majority of cases in the FBI's Cold Case Initiative have been closed without prosecution. National Public Radio recently featured the Queen case in the story “Justice in the Segregated South: A New Look at an Old Killing.” Apparently several witnesses knowledgeable about the Queen murder claim never to have spoken with authorities about the matter. Click here for more on this case from NPR.

STATE UPDATES

Mississippi: Commemoration of Evers’ Civil Rights Work

On June 12, 1963, fifty years ago, Medgar Evers was murdered in the driveway of his home in Jackson. The Kansas City branch of the NAACP hosted an event “Remember Medgar Evers and His Legacy on Voting Rights,” on June 13th to honor Evers’ life, remember his work and discuss current issues of voting rights. Evers championed equal voting rights in Mississippi and, after his slaying, his work helped to spur passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. See article.

Evers was the first Mississippi field secretary for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. A sniper killed him just after midnight June 12, 1963, as he returned home from a community meeting. Myrlie Evers-Williams has carried the torch for her husband and joined in the 50-year commemoration. In an interview with USA Today, Mrs. Evers-Williams stated, “His death helped to move this country forward.” Click here to watch the interview.

New Hampshire: Governor Frees 14 Slaves

On June 7, 2013, New Hampshire Governor Maggie Hassan signed a bill freeing 14 slaves who had petitioned for emancipation during the Revolutionary War. Gov. Hassan stated, “Their plea fell on deaf ears. But, today, more than 230 years too late for their petition, we say that freedom truly is an inherent right not to be surrendered.” The emancipation, the AP reported, is a part of an effort to bring attention to a memorial park to be built on an African-American burial ground in Portsmouth.
Louisiana: John Jones’ 1946 Murder by Two Webster Parish Sheriff’s Deputies Remains Unacknowledged

In August 1946 John C. Jones, an African American World War II veteran was beaten to death by six white men on the banks of Bayou Dorcheat. Two of those men were Webster Parish sheriffs’ deputies. Minden NAACP President Kevin Wallace sought an apology from the Webster Parish police jurors and an acknowledgement that the beating death of Jones and the attack on Albert Harris, Jr., who fled the Parish, violated the victims’ civil and human rights. For more information see article. The jurors unanimously denied the request of the NAACP. For additional news coverage click here.

Virginia: Danville Commemorates 50th anniversary of Bloody Monday, violent civil rights day

On June 10, Danville commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of Bloody Monday, the most violent day in Virginia’s Civil Rights Movement history. Thurman Echols Jr., a 16-year-old high school student at the time, gathered sixty fellow students and walked to the Municipal Building in one of a series of peaceful protest marches that had occurred the week leading up to June 10. The protest ended with sixty arrested and nearly fifty injured. Echols was arrested and released from jail three days later. He remained active in the Civil Rights Movement.

Echols proposed a marker at the Municipal Building to commemorate the event in 2007. Randall Jones, spokesman for the state's Department of Historic Resources, said the application for the Bloody Monday marker was approved in 2007. “The ‘Bloody Monday’ marker reminds us of the movement and that the success of the Civil Rights protesters rested not only on the actions of a visible leader such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who inspired the nation, but also upon the everyday heroism of the citizens in local communities, such as Danville, who refused to accept the status quo,” Jones said.

To commemorate the event this month, citizens marched to the Municipal Building on June 10 the Danville Register & Bee reported. See article for more information.

CRRJ UPDATES

“The Trouble I’ve Seen” Wins Gold

On June 4, CRRJ’s documentary, “The Trouble I’ve Seen,” received a gold medal award from CASE Circle of Excellence, an organization that promotes educational material. CASE Circle of Excellence received more than 2,900 entries for consideration in this year’s competition which included 45 categories by 615 member higher education institutions, independent schools, and nonprofits from around the world. The documentary has been viewed on YouTube more than 2,500 times. It has been shown in classrooms and at churches and community events, highlighted on local news programs, and featured on other civil rights organizations’ websites. To read more about the award click here.