

A SNAPSHOT OF THE TROY TURNER CLAN: PAST AND PRESENT

Charles Henry Turner II and Terri Small -Turner

Introduction

My name is Charles Henry Turner, although I now call myself, Chuck Turner. I am a Blackman in consciousness; of African, European, and Native American descent; a Boston City Councilor; a Harvard College graduate; a Massachusetts Institute of Technology Community Fellow; thrice married: twice divorced: stepfather of three; a spiritual scientist by avocation; and a self proclaimed rebel; driven by a desire to see justice triumph within my lifetime.

Since I am writing this piece, I thought it appropriate that you have some awareness of my experience and background. However, the focus of this story is not on me. This is snapshot of the life of my grandfather, Charles Henry Turner as seen through my reflections. It is story, of a Black man, driven by a love of learning, who became a gifted teacher and scientist, recognized by the peers of his time, but unrecognized today, even by the children of his people whom he loved and sought to inspire through science. It is also the story of the Troys, a remarkable family in its own right, the branch of the family into which he married, and the children who emerged out of this union.

On a deeper level, however, it is the story of my people, broadly defined, people of African descent who have somehow survived a four hundred year odyssey from the shores of Africa to what the Honorable Elijah Muhammad called “The wilderness of North America.” It is the story of a people who understood the value of education, who understood the necessity of hard work, who understood that thought without action has no power effect change, who understood that God is within and without, and who, most importantly understood in their hearts that heaven will come to earth as we merge our souls into the heart of God.

I end this introduction with my answer to a question that you may have at the end of this piece. Why is this clan that seems to have contributed so much through the five generation, described in this piece, dying out? While the question focuses on physical life on earth, its answer must come from one’s beliefs regarding the divine plan working itself out through physical life on earth. My belief is that the earth is a field of evolution for life forces that carry a spark of divinity wrapped within its experiences in the cosmos. These sparks of divinity are within us all and I do mean all—humans, animals, plants, and earth.

Life and death therefore mark each earthly phase of evolution of these life forces. From this perspective, I see the generations of my family as a grouping of divine sparks using the earth to advance their own evolution. At the same time, their evolution was also stimulating the evolution of their fellow divine sparks who with them we’re creating

a new race (Africans as my friend Bob Walthall calls us)—a race now composed of the bloods of all people of the earth but distinguished by its African lineage. What could be more logical! If human life began its evolution in Africa, what could be more appropriate than to have the last race evolve here in America out of the mingling of African blood with the blood of all races?

While the above is important as background, it is not the answer to the question. The answer to the question why the Cincinnati branch of the Turner-Troy clan seems to be dying out is that our job as a group of life spirits helping to implant a set of values in a new race will soon be accomplished. This will allow us to move on to new cosmological adventures. This does not mean that I believe that justice for all, including my people, is about to come. However, it does mean that the four hundred year servitude of people of African descent to the Anglo Saxons, their allies, and their primitive culture here in the wilderness of North America is now ending. As a new race, we will be entering a new phase of evolution where our service to God and human beings will no longer be smothered under the blanket of Anglo-Saxon oppression.

In this next phase of evolution, others will not be able to claim our contributions as their own, take our talents and resources as theirs and most important will be able to make mockery of hard work, faith in God, and morality, the cornerstone of our race. As my people prepare to “leave Egypt” as the Jews did after their four hundred years of bondage, it is fitting that my line seems to be preparing to disappear into the annals of history. While the struggle will continue, our job is almost done!

(You will find that first names are passed from one generation to the other. We will use the middle initial of the three Darwins to help distinguish between them. However, we would suggest that you look at the family tree before reading our story)

Our Story

Strange as it may seem, I can't remember being aware of my fraternal grandfather, Charles Henry Turner, before my seventh year. My awareness began when my maternal grandmother, Laura Troy Knight known to me as Mom, asked me to give a speech about him at the Jackson School in Cincinnati, where she had just retired as a principal. She said that the students at the school were studying his scientific work and would appreciate hearing from his grandson.

Since I was seven, Mom, as I called her played a large role in writing my speech about my grandfather and his work as a teacher and a scientist who “studied bugs”. I don't remember much about the speech but I do remember staring out into the audience of older black, brown and yellow faces and saying “Charles Henry Turner, for whom I was named, was a great Negro scientist.”

The next year I traveled to St. Louis to visit my father's sister, Aunt Mae Turner, a teacher in the St. Louis system. The most unusual part of the trip was being taken to a school and seeing my name etched into the stone over the doorway leading into a castle like school building. This experience stirred questions about him more than the speech stirred questions about him. However, my eight-year-old attention wandered and questions that I would like to have answered now were left unasked.

While it seems strange to be unconscious of my grandfather until seven, the fact of his death seventeen years before I was born and that I grew up with my mother's side of the family makes it somewhat clearer. My mother, Laura Knight Turner, permanently separated from my father, Darwin Romenes Turner, shortly after my birth which led to a limited contact with my father and his family during my first nine years. He lived in Chicago and my mother, my brother and I lived with mom and my Aunt Mamie Leontine in Cincinnati. While it is true that my fraternal grandmother, Leontine Troy Turner and my maternal grandmother Laura Troy Knight (Mom) were sisters, Leontine died in her late twenties making her as much of a hazy shadow in my world as my grandfather, except for Aunt Mamie bearing his name.

However, while murkiness surrounded my fraternal side, the saga of my mother's family was indelibly etched in my mind both by the pictures of family members on the walls and the stories at the dinner table. The most fascinating picture was one displaying seven impressive black men, my maternal great grandfather and his six sons, dressed elegantly in their three buttoned suits and boots. As I grew into my teenage years, I would often wish that I could dress with the style and flair they displayed.

The most impressive of all the men was my great grandfather, Samuel Troy, whose stern gaze and resolute face seemed appropriate for a man who, born in 1796, was able to take his family (wife and six sons) out of slavery and bring them to Cincinnati. They established themselves by opening a boot making shop, the trade Sam Troy learned during his years of slavery. However, after Sam's retirement, all his sons left the shoe making business and became bank messengers. It is said that one of them earned a desk in the bank, a Cincinnati first for anyone of African descent. As I grew older and the reality of the being black in America became clearer, I wondered how they were hired as bank messengers in a southern Ohio town in the late 1800's.

Another fascinating picture was that of my maternal grandmother (Laura Troy Knight), six of her seven living sisters and three of her four living brothers, her mother, Alpha Nickens Troy and her father, Theodore Troy one of Sam and Sarah Troy's six sons. Laura Troy Knight's mother Alpha was the daughter of "Grandma" Nickens and Owen Nickens. Mr. Nickens established himself as one of Cincinnati's first black teachers. Later he established the first successful school for Black children in Cincinnati. The family story was that he got the money to establish the school from Charles Nippert, the founder of the University of Cincinnati. As the story goes, Nippert did not want

blacks going to his school and therefore to perhaps assuage his guilt gave money to establish a private school for blacks.

While the histories of my grand mother's uncles are somewhat murky, I was surprised to learn from my Aunt Mamie a few years ago that a school in Dayton, Ohio was named after Louise Troy, the daughter of one of her granduncles Samuel Troy Jr. and his wife, Mariah Troy. More than a decade before her cousin, Laura, my grandmother established herself in education in the Dayton school system. An activist as well as an educator, she was a founder and treasurer of the NAACP branch in Dayton and a founder of the Dayton YMCA. In retrospect I should not have been surprised at Louise's accomplishments since my grandmother and her brothers and sisters were quite successful in their own right.

While one of Mom's sisters, Aunt Florence became a house wife in Oxford, Ohio and her other sister Aunt Leontine married my grandfather, Charles Henry Turner, and died as a young woman, Mom became a teacher and then a principal. Loretta moved to Cleveland and focused on her family and civic work. Two other sisters, Augustine and Albertine moved to California and established families there. They were following in their brothers' footsteps who, perhaps inheriting their grandfather's adventurousness, had moved in the early 1900s to Southern California just after the "gold rush" to seek their fortunes.

One of Mom's (Laura Troy Knight) brothers, Theodore Troy Jr., became a minister and eventually a high-ranking official in the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Uncle Owen, perhaps the most adventurous, became a rancher in Mexico, borrowing the money from Mom to buy his share of the ranch. (Some of my most fascinating memories are visiting the ranch when I was four.) Owen also distinguished himself; I was told, by attending the 1909 Niagara Conference, which led to establishment of the NAACP.

Claude and Ralph, Mom's two youngest brothers, became Los Angeles businessmen. Uncle Claude endeared himself to me by sending each year, the Rose Bowl copy of the Los Angeles newspaper. While I have not had much contact with this branch of my family, my understanding is that they have not only pursued the professions of teaching and business but also have produced a number of artists and dancers.

They have continued the family' activist strain, perhaps influenced by Olivia Chavez-Hines, who was voted, Women of the Year, in San Pedro, California in 1978 at age 76, based on her work in her church, the YWCA, the Girls and Boys Scouts, the Salvation Army, and other organizations. Olivia, daughter of my grandmother's sister, Albertine, worked as a Los Angeles County civil servant until retiring in 1955. In addition to her volunteer activities, she later became part owner of the Golden State Homemakers.

While I listed Mom's professional accomplishments above, they don't give you a picture of her driving life force. I remember the family stories about how she wouldn't

marry without saving the money to establish a strong foundation for the marriage and expected family.

Even after marriage, this drive to establish material security continued. Her husband James Knight, a heating engineer worked at Miami University in Oxford Ohio, thirty miles from Cincinnati, lived with Mom's sister Florence, and came home on the weekends. While they shared the dream of moving their family from the grass and trees around it, James' work out of town left the job of finding and securing the house up to Mom.

As the story goes, she located an estate, on a hill overlooking Cincinnati and the Ohio River, which had been built by a former Mayor of Cincinnati. The estate has been bought by an Italian family who tried to break the family house into apartments but failed in the venture. While Mom and James had saved enough money to buy the house, it was in a White neighborhood that didn't want Blacks. So she had a friend who owned the Cincinnati Black newspaper locate a White person who was willing to act as a straw and buy the house for her. Ironically, James Knight had grown up on an estate on the same hill where his family worked as gardeners.

As accomplished as she was as a teacher and principal, her passion for gardening was equally great. With the help of other, she transformed the two and a half acres that surrounded the family house into a magical garden that to me, as a young boy, seemed to be as beautiful as I imagined Eden. The hues, the fragrances, the manicured lawn created a sense frenzy that I still remember vividly. Yet, every summer from shortly after my brother's birth until the beginning of World War II, she, Darwin T., Mother, and a group of Black teachers from the Cincinnati school system would travel the world. Europe, Africa, Russian, Brazil, it seems that through these trips she indulged her share of the family passion for travel and adventure.

The stories about Mom that perhaps had the greatest effect on me were the ones that described her going down with her children to the docks where the boats came, bringing Black people up the Ohio River from the South. These newcomers would be met by Mom and other elders of their community who went to the docks to meet, greet, welcome, and orient them to their new home, building the sense of community necessary for their survival and growth.

Mom's first child was my mother, Laura Knight Turner. By all accounts she was a beautiful child (my father once remarked she was the most beautiful woman he had ever met) brilliant orator, and an avid student. She distinguished herself at an early age, fifteen, by becoming the youngest student to gain admission to the University of Cincinnati and at eighteen became the youngest graduate. (Ironically, my brother, Darwin, topped her achievement by gaining admission to the University of Cincinnati at thirteen and graduating at sixteen.)

At twenty years of age, after obtaining her Master of Arts Degree Mother (as my brother Darwin T. and I call her) married my father Darwin Romans. Dad had left Stylus

where his father, Charles Henry Turner, was teaching and had lived with our family in Cincinnati while attending the University. After a stint in World War I, he returned to Cincinnati, received his BA and asked Mother to marry him. She agreed and went with him to Chicago. However, she hated Chicago and Dad was unwilling to leave his business. So Mother returned to Cincinnati to live with her family and become a teacher like her mother while remaining married to Dad and visiting on holidays and in the summer until my birth in June 1940.

In addition to her responsibilities as teacher, she also was raising a child prodigy, my brother Darwin Theodore Turner. Darwin's gifts soon became apparent when he scored over 140 on the IQ test. However, his gifts became even more evident when Mother asked the second grade teacher at Jackson School where she taught and Mom was principal to let him stay in her classroom until she could secure a nurse for him. The former nurse apparently took him to the racetrack.

When an appropriate sitter was found and he was to be removed from the class, the teacher asked if he could stay since he was stimulating the other students. And he didn't leave until he graduated the sixth grade at the age of seven. A friend of the family who was a principal at a junior high school agreed to admit him despite his age. He graduated from Douglas Junior High School at nine and entered Walnut Hills High School, Cincinnati's College Preparatory school, graduating at thirteen. He enters the University of Cincinnati, graduating at sixteen. He received his Masters at eighteen rather than seventeen since University of Cincinnati officials said they did not want a graduate of theirs teaching at seventeen.

Upon receiving his Masters, he married his college sweetheart, Edna Bonner, and went South to teach at Clark College in Georgia as his grandfather had done some forty years before him. While moving around the South, he taught at Florida A&M, Morgan State in Baltimore, and became Dean of the Graduate School at North Carolina A&T in Greensboro, N.C in the early sixties. Although he at onetime had thought about being an actor and at another time wanted to be a lawyer, the family's profession won out, perhaps because he easily gained scholarships to pursue his studies in the fields of English and teaching.

While he focused on his academic responsibilities as a teacher, he also understood his responsibility to imbue these young blacks about to be pillars of their community to understand their responsibility to struggle for change. A colleague of mine, who was taught by Darwin at North Carolina A&T, often recounts stories of Darwin's work with those who led the first college sit in (Greensboro N.C.) as well as others who were attempting to balance their studies while participating in "the movement".

He received his Ph.D from the University of Chicago at twenty-five, again following in Charles Henry's footsteps. He said he would have preferred to go to the University of Cincinnati but the University said that they did not believe he could be academically objective as a "Negro" doing a PhD on the Harlem Renaissance. Darwin

sited it as an example of White academic arrogance. The problem he said was that they didn't have enough background to evaluate his work but wouldn't admit it. Once I read that he said the University said that he was too young. However, I believe that was the P.C. version of the story. The University of Cincinnati gave him an honorary Ph.D in the 1980's and after his death named their scholarship program for students of color after him.

During the late 1960's, when Black studies became fashionable, he was hired by the University of Michigan as a full professor. A few years later he went to the University of Iowa to head their African-American Studies program and died in 1991 while continuing to head the program. During his lifetime and after his death, he was honored as a gifted teacher, critic, and scholar. However, it occurred to me that if Darwin T. had been born in the late 1800's as his grandfather, Charles Turner, had been, he too might have disappeared from view, despite his brilliance. Such is life for the Black Man in America.

He was survived by his second wife, Maggie Jean Turner, a teacher in Iowa City; his daughter, Pamela, an artist and writer in Cincinnati, and his son, Darwin Keith, a construction company owner in Atlanta and amateur composer in Atlanta. Following in their mother and father's footsteps, Pam and Darwin K. graduated from the University of Cincinnati. Ironically, their vocations and avocations followed in the footsteps of family members. Pamela and her husband, Bobby Welch, a professor at the University of Texas and industrial designer, have a son, Reggie Welch, now in college at the University of Texas and working in his father's industrial design firm.

Mom's two other children, Mamie and Jamie, were twins. Both were forceful and successful in their own ways. Mamie became a social worker after receiving a Masters of Social Work from the University of Cincinnati. I attribute my activist inclination in part to Mamie's example of activism through her work in the YWCA and church. Jamie spent his life working as a gardener and carpenter after marrying Clara Ferguson, who was a seamstress. They had one child, Yvonne McKinney Ewing, who recently retired after teaching thirty years in the Cincinnati Public School System and lives with her husband, Chuck Ewing who is a retired engineer. Yvonne and her first husband, Carl McKinney had one child, Clara, who was the Director of Special Education for the Cincinnati Public School System and now is assistant to the Superintendent. Clara is married to David Martin, a business consultant with a national consulting firm. They have no children. Aunt Mamie also had no children of her own but spread her love to those around her.

As I said, my stories of my grandfather's life are few. Ironically, however, after my father died, information began to come from those researching his life, raising questions that no family members were left to answer. For example, upon learning that my great grandfather had migrated to Cincinnati from Canada, I began to wonder if his family had fled into Canada to escape slavery in the United States. However, the

information also began to point to interesting parallels in the family lines. The migration of Thomas from Canada reminded me of the migrations of the Troys from Virginia to Ohio and from Ohio to California. The fact that Charles' mother Addie and father Thomas had a library in their home that stimulated my grandfather's thirst for knowledge, reminded me of the library in our family home in Cincinnati and its stimulating effect on me.

My admiration for him as a man grew as I learned that his first wife, Leontine did in her twenties, and while developing his career as a teacher and scientist, he also successfully struggled to keep his young family together. While the researchers have focused on his work as a scientist, I had an unusual opportunity to see the impression he made on his students. One summer while visiting my father in Chicago, I was introduced to a woman who I was told was a student of my grandfather some forty years previously. I will never forget the gleam that came to her eyes and the smile that lit up her face when she said to me, "Your grandfather was a wonderful teacher".

Charles Henry Turner was the first on either side of the family to graduate from the University of Cincinnati, gaining a B.S. in Biology in 1891. However, from the beginning of our family relationship with the University, racial issues were part of the experience. Although working as a graduate student at U.C. after obtaining his B.S., Charles left the University and went south to teach at Clark College in Atlanta, due in part to racial tension experienced at the University.

Although Charles Henry wanted to teach at Tuskegee, the family story is that Booker T. Washington told him that Tuskegee could not financially afford to have George Washington Carver and he in the same Department with funds so scarce. He eventually decided to settle at a prestigious public high school for Blacks in St. Louis, Sumner High, where he taught science during the day while raising his family and conducting his experiments at night. For many years, I saw few parallels between my grandfather and I. It seemed in many ways that my brother's life seemed to follow my grandfather's patterns.

However, as I began to learn more through the research of others on Charles and his work, I began to realize that there were very significant parallels between his passions and mine. A few years ago one of his researchers told me that based on Charles' scientific studies, he believed that Charles was one of this country's first behavioral scientists and that he had written many papers, revealing his deep commitment to the advancement of Black people.

There in those snippets of information lay the connection between my grandfather and I that I felt was there but never could see. The parallel was not only our commitment to our people's liberation but also in our work as behaviorist. While I call myself an organizer by profession, my work is rooted in studying psychology and behavior and the conducting experiments to see whether that behavior could be moved in ways that induced positive change. Charles I studied the behavior of insects in his lab, Charles II

studies the behavior of people in the streets. My work as a City Councilor is a continuation of this life long study.

Although contact with my father, Darwin R. was limited during my early years, beginning in my ninth year. I visited him each summer until graduating from high school. Through these trips, we developed a friendship that lasted until his death in 1985. While my father loved to talk, he said very little about his early years and unfortunately I did not ask the questions that he perhaps awaited.

Fortunately, he did talk about his life in Chicago as a pharmacist and businessman. As he talked about the corruption and racism of the police and politicians, I began to have a clearer picture of the reality lurking beneath the academic rhetoric of the civics books. However, I was somewhat surprised when he said one day that the two year pharmacy school in Chicago that he graduated from was so tough that many dropped out. Yet, Chicago was so corrupt that he could name prominent white Chicago pharmacists who bought their licenses.

His most vivid story flowed forth one day when we were driving by a Walgreen's store and he said "Let me tell you the difference between Sam Walgreen who owns this drug store chain and me. Sam and I were classmates in pharmacy school. When we got out of school, we both decided to open drug stores and both were successful. However, when Sam and I each had three stores, Sam went to the owner of Armour and Co. who bankrolled the development of his chain.

"I couldn't find anyone with the capital willing to back me and without the capital that Sam had, I couldn't hire the management and secure the stock to open new stores and was killing myself trying to manage the three. So I decided to be content with the one that Owen (his brother) and I owned," This story was partially confirmed one day when "Uncle" Anthony, a prominent Chicago dentist and friend of my father, said, "Charles, you may not know it but your father is one of the best business men in Chicago."

Owen Turner, my father's brother, was a partner with Dad in his business ventures from their twenties until Owen died in his seventies. Owen reminded me of Shakespeare's Falstaff with his charm, his quick wit, his robust size, and his "gift to gab". Ironically, Aunt Harriet, his wife, was a prim and proper schoolteacher who seemed the opposite of Owen in many ways. A highlight of my trips to Chicago was being taken by Owen to the Wednesday night fights and rubbing elbows with the sportsmen of Chicago's Southside. Ironically Dad loved the Chicago Cubs as much as Owen seemed to love boxing.

Although a great businessman, Dad was passionately committed to being of service to his people. As I annually visited his drug store and listened to people bringing their problems to him both, personal and medical, I realized that his drug store was not just a business—it was a counseling center, a refuge from the storm, and a place for pharmaceutical advice. Once after witnessing yet another person, describing their

symptoms and asking for advice, he turned to me and said, "In a poor community, a druggist has to aid those who can't afford to go to the doctor as well as those who can." Dad died in 1985. While born in St. Louis, he finished this he spent his adult years in Chicago, serving the people of his community.

Let me finish this snapshot of the Troy-Turner Clan by telling you a little bit about myself, Charles Henry Turner II. As I look at my early life, I often think of a book I never read, "My Brother Was an Only Child". While that is not literally true, the fact that Darwin T. was nine years older, entered college when I was four, and was married and teaching college when I was nine created a significant generational gap. Yet, there was an emotional bond that spanned the gap and blunted the weight that comes from being the younger brother of a genius. The fact that I tried to balance my studies with football, band, and other extracurricular activities perhaps was my attempt to find other areas in which to excel.

However, I did well enough academically to get a scholarship to Harvard and graduated with a BA in 1963. Since I had graduated with a degree in government, I decided to go to Washington to see if there was anything that interested me while I waited to apply to law school. The fact that I arrived there before the "March on Washington" was a foreshadowing of my life to come. After the march was over and everyone had cleared town by sundown, I noticed a copy of the Washington Afro-American, part of a Black owned newspaper chain, and decided to see if I could get a job on the newspaper's staff.

Given my writing skills and their need for writers who would work for little pay, I got a job and soon found myself covering the civil rights activities of D.C. as well as a little of everything else. While covering the Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee (SNCC) conference, I not only interviewed Fannie Lou Hammer but also ran into a friend from Harvard, Bill Strickland. He was heading an organization called the Northern Student Movement, which was organizing, in the Black community of Detroit, Hartford, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. When he asked whether I was interested in joining NSM as an organizer and editor of their newsletter at their Harlem, New York office, for the first time I acknowledged I was an activist at heart and permanently abandoned the thought of law school.

In addition to editing NSM's newsletter, I began my lifetime of activism by participating in a rent strike organizing drive in Harlem, led by long time activist, Jessie Gray, and assisted by staff from NSM, during the winter of 1964. It was a cold, snowy, dreary winter. Yet, the weather could not dampen my enthusiasm as Jessie taught us the fundamentals of rent strike organizing. We would then trudge out into the cold streets to climb flights of stairs in Harlem tenements to encourage tenants to use their rights and fight back against unscrupulous landlords. It was hard, tiring, often frustration work. At the same time there was the exhilaration of seeing people begin to realize that they had the power to change conditions through working together.

The resignation of the director of our Hartford project gave me an opportunity to try organizing in both another city and state. While Hartford was a different locale, the principles of the work were the same. Talk with people to identify the problems. Identify targets of organizing opportunity. Encourage people to look at the opportunities for change. Work with them to develop plans of actions and then implement the plans, while constantly evaluating the work. It didn't matter whether the issue was discrimination, education, bureaucratic indifference, the principles were the same.

When a number of us were arrested for sedition under the old Sacco and Vanzetti laws during what the police called a riot in the summer of 1965, the organization suggested that those of us who were not from Hartford should go other places until the trial was over. Since I had NSM ties in Boston, I went there just to wait for the trial to begin. However, by the time the charges were dismissed, I had a job as an organizer in a War on Poverty project in a gentrifying neighborhood in Boston.

After a sit in at City Hall regarding housing conditions and the burning of trash that was being dumped in the neighborhood, the director of the project and I agreed that while we had achieved results, it would be better for me to practice my activism in another setting. Yes, the politics became too hot! However, this gave me the opportunity to work with two other organizers in a project called the Roxbury Associates, funded by the Mass Council of Churches.

My work focused with the Roxbury Associates focused on organizing a food buying club and a housing development organization in a neighborhood that was transitioning from White to Black. The food-buying club became part of a citywide organization with seven outlets. The housing development group bought two houses and then transferred them to an American Friends Service Committee project, the Roxbury Action Program (RAP), that moved into the neighborhood to develop a base of low and moderate housing in a community which, we believed, eventually would gentrify. Today, the organization owns and manages over one hundred units of low and moderate housing, which it intends to convert into coop ownership. Yes, the community did gentrify. However, it is a mixed income neighborhood given the affordable housing developed by RAP.

During this period, in the late sixties, I helped to found the Boston Black United Front, an alliance of individuals and in the Black and Latin areas of Boston. The Front was designed to strengthen the community through collective action and to protect those of us who were more radical from government action through unifying with more conservative elements in the community. During the Front's seven-year history, its most significant accomplishment was becoming part of a regional alliance that stopped a highway that would have devastated a significant part of the community. The Front was also able to raise \$40,000 during this period, a significant part of which was distributed to the community through the United Front Foundation.

These early experiences established for me a foundation of activism and a pattern of moving from project to project that has rippled consistently through my work. In the late sixties, I was asked to apply for the directorship of the Northeastern University into establishing the Institute on campus as a cultural center, counseling center, and Black studies program for Black students.

Excited about the potential of linkage between the community and Black students at N.U., I applied and was hired. While there were a number of positive accomplishments, including the development of a three story Institute by a Black architectural firm and a Black construction company, I soon learned that the bridge between the community and students on their way to “fame and fortune” is often a shaky one.

The Institute is still functioning in its original building although last year there was a major struggle on the part of students to stop the University from tearing it down and moving the Institute elsewhere to make way for campus expansion. A compromise was reached after a twenty day sit in by students that will have the Institute housed in its present location as part of the new structure. “An interesting sidelight of the Institute history is that the original director of the Black Studies Program who was hired a year after he obtained his B.A. is now Superintendent of Schools in Rochester, New York.

While serving as director of one of the country’s first community development corporation, Circle Inc., I led a dumping of trash on City Hall plaza to dramatize the community’s concern for a lack of city services. At the same time we were able to develop joint ventures with local businesspeople that led to the development of a drug store, laundromat, restaurant, construction company, and a mini office building with the assistance of Office of Economic Opportunity development dollars. Some wondered at the range of our activities. However, my perspective was while business development was an important aspect of community development, it was equally important to hold the City accountable by whatever means practical.

In the middle seventies, concerned about construction worker in our racially mixed communities getting a fair share of the construction work, we formed an alliance of Black, Latin, Asian, and Native American organizations to challenge the union stranglehold over jobs. We were able to get funding from the City to staff the Third World Jobs Clearinghouse and I became its first director. However, when we still were not able to get the white contractors to respond we organized the workers who engaged in work stoppages at construction sites. While the City tried to defund us, the federal Labor Department threatened to take away Boston’s federal training dollars if the Clearing House was not funded. Understanding that our victory might be short lived, we were able to open branches in Cambridge, Worcester, and Springfield, having obtained State discretionary dollars.

While the Labor Department officials’ blocking the City’s action to fund us enabled us to continue and motivated us to open branches in other cities to protect our

political existence, we realized that there was need for an alliance between white workers in the City of Boston and workers of color since both groups were being victimized by the suburban based unions. This realization led to the formation of the Boston Jobs Coalition, an alliance of organizations throughout the City, focused on City jobs for city residents. The Coalition developed what became known as the Boston Jobs Policy. This policy stated that a minimum of fifty percent of the hours on construction projects, funded or supported by the City, would be required to go to Boston workers, twenty five percent at a minimum to workers of color, and ten percent at a minimum to women.

During a tough election race in 1979, Mayor White adopted the policy as an executive order. Despite the challenge by the unions and contractors that said that the policy was an fair restraint of trade, the Supreme Court ruled that the Policy was constitutional with Judge Renquist writing the opinion that Mayors had a right to enact policies that would act to ensure the public welfare. In 1983, the City Council with eight White members and one Black member, voted nine to nothing to establish the policy that joined affirmative action and residency.

After two years as director of the Clearing House, I received Board approval to establish the Fannie Lou Hamer Foundation and the Square Deal Construction Company and resigned as director of the Clearinghouse to head the foundation. Our concept was to rehab H.U.D. foreclosed housing using Clearing House workers under the leadership of a contractor hired to head Square Deal Contracting. The Fannie Lou Hamer Foundation was able to obtain a \$50,000 loan from the Episcopal Church, which enabled us to rehab and sell six duplexes, ranging in costs from \$12000 to \$20,000. However, the greed and internal turmoil released by the project was such that I was left searching for other models of development.

Stung by the realities of the business world, I jumped at the chance to become education director of a national consulting firm based in Cambridge that focused on establishing worker cooperatives. Under this model, all the employees in the firm were owners, having one equal share, and the right to elect the board of directors. Profits were distributed either on the basis of percent of hours worked of the percentage of income earned. We applied this model to small companies in the inner city areas of Detroit and Milwaukee, to a unionized brass company in Connecticut, to a furniture manufacturing company in California, as well as other locales. While there were innumerable obstacles in establishing this new way of thinking and working, I came away from the experience, convinced that this was a model for the future.

However, while intrigued by the application of the model, I left the firm after five years, when the community in which I lived began to confront a serious gentrification crisis. Although stimulated by the work, it became increasingly difficult to leave my neighborhood for weeks at a time when the forces of development were driving the costs of housing up and thereby driving those with low and moderate incomes out.

Given the reality that the majority of vacant land in the City was located in our community, I joined activists in forming an organization, the Roxbury Neighborhood Council, designed to share power with the City in determining how the vacant land would be distributed. Our strategy was to form a board whose members were representatives of caucuses of ministers, businesspeople, neighborhood associations, housing developments and community agencies. This body, ratified as the community voice, at a meeting of over five hundred members of the community, then began negotiations with the City. Eventually, the City agreed to give us advisory power over land use and who would have the right to develop it. While the gentrification was stopped by the recession of the late eighties, the Council played a key role in establishing power within the community regarding land use.

During the same period in the late eighties the Episcopal Church decided to establish a Center for training organizers. Fortunately, given the limitations of my finances, I was hired as director. While our primary responsibility was to offer classes for organizers, we also focused on providing the support to ongoing organizing efforts as well as starting new organizations to fill gaps. Our most significant accomplishment was to cosponsor with four organizational partners a citywide conference focused on community control of development, building on the work of the Roxbury Neighborhood Council. This conference, which over six hundred people attended, laid the foundation for inter-neighborhood cooperation, which continues today.

Unfortunately, we put more time into teaching, technical assistance, and organizing than into fund raising, so four years later, I was again looking for a way to earn a living while pursuing my desire to be of service. Since the gentrification wave had been accompanied by a rise in gang activity focused on turf control, drugs selling, and violence, I became increasingly aware of, not only the issue of how to curtail the drug selling but also with the issue of violence within the community. Obviously, police action could provide momentary relief but it was no long-term cure. Eventually, those who were locked up were released and often went back to their old behaviors particularly given the lack of rehabilitation work being done in the prisons.

And of a part time job at Emerge, the nation's first educational program for men who are violent toward women led to the opportunity to get hands on experienced dealing with men and the thinking that leads to violence. As often happens, the experience was much more than I bargained for. The more I worked at Emerge, the more I began to understand about my own male chauvinism as well as understand that a part-time experience was not enough if I was to come to grips with the issue of male violence. The part time job led to a half time job, a full time job, and eventually a management opportunity. Through my seven years at Emerge, I learned that only as the idea that one is a victim and therefore entitled to abusive behavior could the roots of violence be confronted. But that is a much longer story.

Before commenting on my becoming a City Councilor let me also note that perhaps my greatest failure during my adulthood was a inability to balance my work with my family life. Unfortunately, this led to divorces from my first wife, Camille Hildebrand, an artist, and my second wife, Pat Bonner-Lyons, professional fundraiser. They are wonderful women who came to the conclusion that my frenetic pace as an activist got in the way of their view of what a marriage was supposed to be. Stephanie Bonner-Lyons, my stepdaughter by Pat, is now a businesswoman, operating a boutique in Boston.

After a fourteen-year break from marriage, I felt that I had matured enough to try a third marriage since I am inveterate optimist. Eight years ago in 1994 I married Terri Small whose daughter Alana, is about to graduate from Boston Latin School and Levar who is about to graduate from Fitchburg State College with a degree in civil engineering. I don't know how much I have matured; however, Terri, a wonderful woman in her own right has helped me to understand that if you are going to get love you have to give love. Terri has a Master's from the University of Southern New Hampshire, and is an activist and teacher. She serves as my campaign treasurer, and most important from her perspective and mine manages the home, enabling me to focus my energy on my life's work.

In thinking about my adult choices, I am reminded of a passage I read about the sons of English families where the first son inherits the family business or profession and the second goes off to war. I have often though that paradigm fits Darwin and I. We both were imbued with the framework of the family profession of teaching; mine was within the framework of the struggle for liberation—our war in America.

I have often thought that the accomplishments of my family gave me the space if not right to be adventurous, to follow my heart, to focus on my goals, and not worry whether those goals would make it more difficult to fit into American life as a Black man. I remember my Aunt Harriet warning me that my associations with the “Black Muslims” as a young adult would make it difficult for me to get a good job. I don't think I was ever able to help my older family members understand that their accomplishments helped me cast my lot beyond a good job. My brother's dream had been to be an actor not an academic. However he would not shake loose the yoke of the family profession—education. For me, there was nothing to shake loose, nothing to prove, no reason to play it safe. My family had proved it all—if anything was necessary to be proved.

After thirty-five years of working as an organizer/activist, I decided to run for office (given a new wave of gentrification sweeping my community), winning at age 59 a seat on the Boston City Council. However, in the spirit of Charles Henry Turner I, I see my work as an experiment to see the extent to which, as a public official, I can use the information, resources, and public platform provided to help organize my community to move against those forces that are oppressing us.

While it is too early to draw conclusions I think the work is going well! Yes, some outside the community were concerned when I lead a successful sit-in with parents who had been disrespected by the Superintendent of Schools. Many were upset when I led a group from my community to be arrested to draw attention to the plight of those who are being discriminated against because they have criminal records. Some even suggested I should be censored by the City Council when I publicly said at an anti-war rally after 9/11 that we, the people of this country, need to atone for the terrorism of our government at home and abroad.

However, as I see the increasing willingness of people in my community to stand up, to speak what is in their hearts and on their minds, and to challenge those who do not have our interests at heart, I know the experiment is working. Even more importantly I know that Charles Henry and all the rest of my clan who have been imbued with the passion for liberation, a love of learning and the commitment to be of service appreciate my willingness to carry on their struggle.

A Luta Continua (Swahili)/The Struggle Continues

P.S. While this piece is written in the first person, I share the authorship line with my wife Terri. Not only is she the editor of the piece but also has helped to shape my consciousness of my family through an ongoing dialogue about the Troy-Turner Clan. Since this story flows out of the consciousness, it is appropriate that this piece is viewed as being written by us both.