

A NAACP Tribute
January 2016
Patricia "Pat" Simmons
A Quiet Smile

... And when her nephew joined the Youth Council, she became more immersed in the struggle for equal educational opportunities for the kids in East Ramapo Central School District.

Whether it was putting together a choral group of students from Fleetwood Elementary School to sing at the Annual Life Membership Breakfast of the Spring Valley NAACP or attending a school board meeting, she always approached it with a quiet smile.

Whether it was co-founding the Rockland Association of Black School Educators or participating with the CEJES Community Partnership, she always walked with a quiet smile.

Whether it was leading one of those awesome cultural assemblies in the cafeteria at Fleetwood or receiving the Unsung Heroes Award from the Branch in 2010, she approached it with humbleness and a quiet smile. Whether it was being Mistress of Ceremonies for the Annual NAACP Freedom Fund Dinner or sharing her views with the Education Committee, she spoke with calmness and a quiet smile.

Whether it was planning her daughter's wedding, her students saying "have you seen Mrs. Simmons" or Tell Mrs. Simmons hello" or "tell Mrs. Simmons to come by as see us" or Mrs. Simmons asking about her students, she always walked with a sense of pride and a quiet smile.

Even when she thought she was being followed home from school board meetings, she remained undaunted and kept standing staunch for her students with a quiet smile.

You see the legacy of Patricia Simmons cannot be summed up by the wealth she accrued, by the speeches she made, not even by the education she attained, it just seems most appropriate to say her legacy can be summed up "by the lives she impacted and the smiles she made". From Brooklyn to East Ramapo, she affected lives, giving children the motivation to challenge their dreams and the world, yet always with a quiet smile.

Whether hosting the NAACP Executive Committee in her back yard or the chorus from an upstate college on behalf of President Barack Obama or simply preparing refreshments for a NAACP Education Committee Forum, she walked with grace and a silent smile.

This drum majorette for education and women's rights strolled this earth with the uprightness of a southern pine tree, the purity of a newborn baby, the courage of Harriet Tubman, the warmth of the sun, the force of the wind and the gentleness of a quiet smile.

While we are left to ponder good and evil, life and death, this angel of education soared through life on the wings of Aphrodite leaving this world a little less challenging for the people she touched. What will this world be like for the thousands of students and those of us so impacted without the gentle quiet smile of Patricia Simmons?

Willie J. Trotman, President
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