

Civil Rights Heroine Honored Across Nation

by William F. Wertz, Jr.

Amelia Boynton Robinson, the Vice Chairwoman of the Schiller Institute, who is 95 years young, received numerous honors over the last month for her pioneering role in the Civil Rights Movement. But Amelia, for whom recognition of her unique contribution to the history of this nation and thereby the world is long overdue, is not one to rest on her laurels. For Amelia, the fight in which she and her late husband, S.W. Boynton, were engaged in Dallas County (Selma), Alabama, 30 years before it caught the headlines in the 1960s, is not a museum relic, but rather a continuing, living mission to the present day, a mission she shares with Lyndon and Helga LaRouche, the Schiller Institute, and the LaRouche Youth Movement.

In early February, Amelia, who now lives in Tuskegee, Alabama, travelled to Rhode Island, where she was joined on Feb. 13 by Bernard LaFayette, Jr., director of the University of Rhode Island's Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies, in a public dialogue on their shared experiences in the Civil Rights Movement. Lafayette had been sent to Selma by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.—who had earlier, virtually written

off the city as too dangerous a place to organize—to work with Amelia out of her home and office, which was the center of Selma's Civil Rights battles. (Last year the street on which her home, now run by the National Voting Rights Museum, is located, was renamed from Lapsley Street to Amelia Boynton Robinson Street, by the Selma City Council.)

After this event, Amelia spent several days in the Boston area, at the invitation of the LaRouche Youth Movement, meeting with high school students and others. On Feb. 16, she was the featured speaker at a town hall meeting in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Returning to Tuskegee Feb. 18, Amelia was honored at the Greenwood Missionary Baptist Church, Tuskegee Institute, as one of the planners and leaders of the "Bloody Sunday" March from Selma to Montgomery, on March 7, 1965. This was the famous march at which Alabama state troopers, under orders from the late Gov. George Wallace, brutally attacked the marchers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. A photo of Amelia, gassed, beaten, and left for dead, which appeared in the news media worldwide, helped galvanize the nation and the world, resulting in the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, later that year.

In announcing the recognition of Amelia at the church of which she is a member, the Rev. John L. Cantelow, III, said: "It is most timely and appropriate that we pause to honor and recognize our member, Mrs. Amelia Boynton Robinson, especially during African American Heritage Month. Her boldness during the historic march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge 42 years ago is a true testimony of the journey from 'Slavery to Freedom.' Mrs. Robinson's role as a social advocate is an expressed extension of her commitment to freedom,



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis

Today, Amelia Boynton Robinson carries on the fight for human rights for all mankind, alongside Lyndon and Helga LaRouche. The three are shown here at a conference in February 1994.



Courtesy of Mrs. Robinson

Five months after Amelia was nearly killed in Selma, she was in the Rose Garden with President Lyndon Johnson (they are shown shanking hands), following the signing of the Voting Rights Act on Aug. 6, 1965.

justice, and equality.”

In recognition of Amelia’s world-historic role, the honorable Johnny Ford, Mayor of the City of Tuskegee proclaimed the 18th day of February “Amelia Platts Boynton Robinson Day.”



EIRNS/Leon Fraser

Here is Amelia, with some of her friends from the LaRouche Youth Movement, who visited her in Selma in November 2006.



EIRNS/Wes Irwin

On the 40th anniversary of Bloody Sunday in 2005, a monument, dedicated to Amelia and Marie Foster was unveiled at the base of the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma.

On Feb. 21, Amelia was again honored when a group of students at Tuskegee Institute, her alma mater, performed portions of the play she authored in the 1930s, “Through the Years.” Then, on March 1, before departing for Selma, Amelia was honored by the National Conference of Black Mayors assembled in Tuskegee.

Following this meeting, Amelia returned to Selma for the annual celebration and reenactment of “Bloody Sunday.”

Two years ago at this time, on the 40th anniversary of “Bloody Sunday,” a monument was erected at the base of the Edmund Pettus Bridge honoring Amelia and Marie Foster, a close friend of Amelia’s, who has since passed away. This year, the Alabama State Legislature approved resolutions on March 1, submitted by State Senator Hank Sanders (D-Selma), dedicating three one-mile sections of U.S. 80 to Amelia Platts Boynton Robinson, John Hulett, and Marie Foster, respectively.

On Feb. 22, at the Bridge Crossing Jubilee’s mass meeting, Rev. James Orange, who gave the keynote, said that he would never forget when Civil Rights leader Rev. James Bevel (who ran as Lyndon LaRouche’s Vice Presidential running mate in 1992) sent him to Selma in December 1964. Orange and eight of his peers were asked to go to the home of Amelia Boynton Robinson and deliver the message that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. would arrive in Selma on Jan. 2, 1965.

Freedom Flame Awards Banquet

On Saturday, March 3, Amelia, Rep. John Lewis, and others were honored at the Freedom Flame Awards Banquet at the Elks Lodge. As news coverage of the event reported, on March 7, 1965, “participants in the first of three marches for voting rights were beaten and gassed and one organizer, Amelia Boynton Robinson, was nearly killed. Five months later, she was present for the signing of the Voting Rights Act by President Lyndon Johnson.” At the banquet, Amelia was greeted by former President Bill Clinton and his wife, Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.), both of whom told her that they had read and remembered her book, *Bridge Across Jordan*, which was published by the Schiller Institute in 1991.

Less than a week after returning home to Tuskegee, Amelia was on the road again. She is now on the West Coast, where she has been addressing groups from San Diego, California to Seattle, Washington. On March 13, she addressed 250 members of the Central Committee of the Los Angeles County Democratic Party.

Amelia Boynton Robinson should rightfully be viewed as a national treasure. Many of her contemporaries in the Civil Rights Movement have unfortunately passed away. But Amelia keeps on fighting, mindful of her responsibility to pass on the torch to a new generation. Although she has quietly assembled a museum in her home in Tuskegee, she is not stuck in the past.

While Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was still alive, many in the South were afraid to associate with him openly. He was slandered as a communist and a troublemaker in order to undermine his leadership. Today, Lyndon LaRouche is similarly slandered to intimidate those without Amelia’s courage from openly working with him and recognizing his leadership.

After King’s death, the remaining leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, lacking the leadership qualities of Dr. King, were unable to replace him. Today, as Amelia uniquely among the veterans of the Civil Rights Movement recognizes, Lyndon LaRouche has the quality of leadership which has been lacking in this country since King’s assassination.

As important as is the contribution Amelia made to the enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, for which she is increasingly honored today, in a very real sense, her greatest achievement is to have continued her long fight by now collaborating with the LaRouches and the LYM. If you ask her, she will tell you: That is what keeps her young. That is what led her and her husband, S.W. Boynton, to fight for justice in Dallas County for decades. That is what led her to invite Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to Selma; to risk her life on the Edmund Pettus Bridge on “Bloody Sunday”; and then, not to consider her work done after King’s assassination, but rather to continue to fight under the leadership of Lyndon LaRouche. That is what makes her unique.

Amelia Boynton Robinson lives among the angels. More should join her.