



## CIVIL RIGHTS FREEDOM FIGHTERS EXONERATED



*Dr. Robert B. Hayling, former First Lieutenant in the Air Force, dentist, and leader of the St. Augustine Civil Rights Movement along with Joe Ann Anderson Hughes, and Maude Burroughs, former students of Florida Normal & Industrial College and retired teachers, attend the reading of the Historic Commemorative Resolution exonerating their arrest records*

The State of Florida outgoing Governor Charlie Crist and his Cabinet, Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink, Attorney General Bill McCollum, and Commissioner of Agriculture Charles Brunson, sitting as the Executive Clemency Board, all voted in favor of adopting a Resolution exonerating demonstrators of their 1963-'64 arrest records for participating in the non-violent struggle for equal rights in St. Augustine, Florida.

Over two hundred persons witnessed this Historic Moment in Time at the Cabinet Meeting room on December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Many people were there for different reasons but a delegation gathered in support of Florida State Senator Tony Hill's efforts to grant clemency to the *Freedom Fighters*, came from St. Augustine, Jacksonville, Middleburg, Mandarin, Sarasota, Ft. Lauderdale, & Tallahassee, FL

Many wrote letters in support of this effort including [Attorney Dan R. Warren](#), author of *If It Takes All Summer: Martin Luther King, the KKK, and States' Rights in St. Augustine, 1964*. [Dr. Kathryn Fentress](#), civil rights activist, also wrote a letter to Senator Hill in which she stated, "Those arrests caused considerable hardship to many who were not then eligible to work in a variety of occupations and lived with this blemish on their public records...I no longer reside in Florida...actively involved in this movement and a resident at the time. Now would be a good time to honor the folks who sacrificed so much to bring about a more tolerant and humane community and whose efforts help with the passage of the Civil Rights' Bill in 1964. I add my support to this appeal...action would go a long way to heal these hurts of the past and to facilitate a greater sense of harmony and justice for our citizens of St. Augustine and the larger state of Florida".

*"Civil Rights Freedom Fighters Exonerated" cont.*  
Local historian David Nolan in his letter to Senator Hill states, "The St. Augustine civil rights movement, led by Dr. Robert B. Hayling and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was the most important event in St. Augustine's modern history...the youngest people who took part are starting to qualify for Social Security and Medicare, and Mrs. Rena Ayers---one of the legendary "House Mothers" of the civil rights movement recently celebrated her 106<sup>th</sup> birthday...no time to waste...heroes paid a heavy price...every time they sought a job and were turned down because they had been to jail...future will honor those who take this step...move the 'criminal records' out of the legal system and into the historic archives where they belong...the struggles will not be forgotten...record can no longer be used to harm those gallant foot soldiers who helped to shape our modern democracy"... Martin Luther King, Jr., and others.

### ACCORD Sponsors a Delegation to the Capitol

ACCORD rented two vans to transport supporters and Freedom Fighters to Tallahassee for the Historic Event. Thirteen persons which included yours truly, Purcell Conway, James Allen the drivers, Barbara B. Allen, Gale Burnick, Barbara James, Shirley Williams-Galvin, Lula Wise, Mary Richard, June Conway, , Walter & Virginia Celenski, and Elizabeth Duncan. We left out early Thursday morning from Palm Coast, FL to make pick-ups in St. Augustine and Mandarin, FL. We arrived in Tallahassee a little after 8 AM and spent a few minutes parking and headed to the Capitol. Some of us made it to Senator Hill's office and others met up at the Cabinet Meeting Room. The room was packed with attorneys, reporters, families, supporters, and Legislators. All there for diverse reasons, but all to seek clemency for their loved ones, but in our case, for all those Freedom Fighters who were unjustly arrested and incarcerated for exercising their rights to free speech and peaceful assembly back in 1963-'64.

We looked over the Agenda but did not see our case on it. There were many pages and we had no idea how long we would be there. But, to our amazement, after the prayer and pledge, we were the first ones up. They called for the Freedom Fighters, then the ACCORD Members, and all those who came to Tallahassee for this issue. We all went up front. There we were greeted with handshakes from Charles Bronson, Alex Sink, Governor Crist, and Attorney General, Bill McCollum.

After the greeting, we all stood to hear the Governor speak about the Civil Rights Bill he just signed on the previous day, initiating a Civil Rights Hall of Fame, then he read the Resolution and it was unanimously voted on 4-0 in favor of it passing. Oh Happy Day!!!! There were cheers and tears as Senator Hill spoke and Dr. Robert B. Hayling. We were even given a standing Ovation---as one reporter states, "...three times". There were reporters and photographers taking pictures and video taping the event. It was grand. We then went back around and shook Governor Crist's hand and took group photos.

All of the delegates assembled in a Conference Room prepared by Senator Tony Hill. He introduced Jane Tillman and Will Kendrick, Leaders from the NAACP & SCLC, then Dr. Hayling spoke. Reporters were there taking pictures and interviewing the Freedom Fighters. Many thanks to Senator Tony Hill and his staff who treated us to brunch and lunch afterwards in the Conference Room. Glory was given to God who by faith wrought great and mighty things on that day!!!



## The Commemorative Resolution

### The text of the Resolution Reads as Follows:

*The Governor and Cabinet, sitting as the Florida Board of Executive Clemency, express their profound regret for Florida's role in sanctioning the injustices perpetrated upon the courageous African American citizens of St. Augustine, St. Johns County, Florida, who, along with many others, were known as the "Freedom Fighters," and who participated in the historic civil rights events that took place in that city during the years 1963 and 1964.*

**WHEREAS**, the city of St. Augustine, St. Johns County, Florida, known as the "Nation's Oldest City" became the center stage for Florida's historical role in the great American human drama leading up to the passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 and mirroring the struggle of African Americans nationwide seeking freedom and equality of opportunity; and

**WHEREAS**, a local movement led by Dr. Robert B. Haling picketing segregated local businesses resulted in the beatings and jailing of several residents of St. Augustine and St. Johns County; and

**WHEREAS**, nightriders shot into African American homes and teenagers were arrested and placed in reform schools for attempting to eat at local lunch counters; and

**WHEREAS**, it took action by Florida's Governor and Cabinet to obtain their release after a nationwide display of public outcry over their incarcerations; and

**WHEREAS**, these courageous individuals who were arrested and/or incarcerated in St. Augustine, St. Johns County, Florida, during the years 1963 and 1964 for their role in support of Florida's Civil Rights Movement still have arrest records on file today; and

**WHEREAS**, even though the laws permitting such injustices have been repealed, it is important that the Florida Board of Executive Clemency acknowledge the injustices meted out to the Freedom Fighters who bravely demonstrated time and again against the shameful practices which were dictated by segregationist policies of the day; and

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Legislature, in Senate Concurrent Resolution 2930 passed in 2008, expressed "profound regret" for the involuntary servitude of Africans and freemen by the state and apologized on behalf of the State of Florida for its role in slavery;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, Be It Resolved by the Governor and Cabinet sitting as the Florida Board of Executive Clemency do hereby recommend that the appropriate governmental entities immediately act to expunge any and all arrest and conviction records, for which the related charges or convictions were dismissed or reversed by court order or for which the subjects were released without prosecution, utilizing the administrative expunction process in the most expedient and efficient means available at law to absolve these individuals from any wrongdoing associated with the aforementioned events and to forever remove such records for any future review other than historical documentation and duly authorizing the transfer of such records to the Florida State Archives to be made available for historical review or reference and to forever serve as a living and viable testament to their courage, ideals, and bravery during these fateful months in 1963 and 1964 in a city named St. Augustine, St. Johns County, Florida.



Interesting Comment Made by [Jerry Mitchell](#) an investigative reporter for [The Clarion-Ledger](#), a newspaper in [Jackson, Mississippi](#) (see below)

*The [ACCORD Freedom Trail](#) features 30 historical markers in St. Augustine, where Klansmen terrorized the black community at night. While Martin Luther King Jr. visited one night in June 1964, the beach cottage where he was staying was shot up. In contrast, there are fewer historical markers than that regarding the civil rights movement in the entire state of Mississippi.*



**See More Photos by Shirley Williams-Galvin**  
Please visit:



**Happy Birthday Greetings To All Born In**  
December and January  
**Merry Christmas & Happy Hanukah**  
*Jesus Is The Reason For The Season!*