

and administrative staff, who were able to gain invaluable experience in the organization prior to moving on to other important positions or launching private practices in social work. Additionally, many of the clients Dixon Family Services provides resources to have gone on to make their own contributions to the community, paying forward the same assistance that they received.

Although, historically, many of its programs were funded by government contracts or grants, in recent years Dixon Family Services has been supported primarily by private foundations, corporations, churches, service organizations, and businesses, as well as many caring and generous community members whose donations and kind words of support sustained the organization.

Mr. Speaker, during these last 40 years Dixon Family Services has consistently upheld a devotion to the highest ideals of community service. It is therefore fitting and proper that we honor Dixon Family Services' outstanding work by and for our Dixon community, and its 40th year of service.

CELEBRATING THE INCREDIBLE
LIFE OF TESSIE NELDA
PREVOST-WILLIAMS

HON. TROY A. CARTER

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 25, 2024

Mr. CARTER of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize New Orleans' beloved native daughter, a true friend, mentor and confidant to many, and most notably, a Civil Rights Pioneer of the New Orleans Public School Desegregation—The New Orleans Four, Tessie Nelda Prevost-Williams. She was born Tessie Nelda Prevost at Charity Hospital on September 26, 1954. She passed away surrounded by her immediate family and loved ones on Saturday July 6, 2024, at the age of 69. She is survived by her mother Dorothy Mackey Prevost (93), her sister Tory Prevost (D'Wayne Hulbert), and her lifelong friends, Civil Rights Pioneers Gail Etienne and Leona Tate. She was preceded in death by her father Charles Henry Prevost, Jr., and her husband Dwight Williams.

She was a life member of Branch Bell Baptist Church, located in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, Louisiana, christened, baptized and later joined in holy matrimony on October 20, 1984, to the late Dwight Williams at that location. She was an active member in the church from a very young age, from serving as president of the Youth Usher Board to serving as President of the Senior Usher Board. Always on program at church, speaking and performing, she was a spirited child who was loved and known by many.

Tessie Prevost is most noted as one of four 6-year-old girls who became the first African Americans to desegregate formerly white only public elementary schools in New Orleans and the Deep South. On November 14, 1960, with world-wide attention set on the city of New Orleans, Ruby Bridges, Gail Etienne, Tessie Prevost, and Leona Tate (The New Orleans Four) escorted by U.S. Federal Marshals wearing yellow armbands desegregated two schools. Three of the girls (Gail Etienne, Tessie Prevost, and Leona Tate) enrolled at

McDonogh 19 elementary school located at 5909 St. Claude Ave. The fourth girl (Ruby Bridges) enrolled at William Frantz elementary school located at 3811 N. Galvez St. As America's Little Soldier Girls, they played an integral and pivotal role in the Civil Rights Movement sparking the inspiration for the Children's Crusade of 1963.

After McDonogh 19 became predominantly black, Tessie, Gail and Leona along with 8 other students desegregated another formerly white only public elementary school in the Lower Ninth Ward Thomas Jefferson Semmes, where they endured violent, horrifying and dehumanizing treatment from white teachers, students and cafeteria workers who spit in their food and at times refused to serve them.

After successfully desegregating TJ Semmes and completing 6th grade, Tessie's parents enrolled her at Rivers Frederick Junior High School, where she found music. She learned to play the flute and joined the marching band. Tessie remained in predominantly Black schools continuing her education at Joseph S. Clark Senior High School. There, she also played in the Joseph S. Clark Marching Band. Following high school, she attended the University of New Orleans and University of Southeastern Louisiana focusing her studies on education and history. She stayed active in community civic engagement to make things better for her people and served as a member of Women for Progressive Action, where she would encourage her community to register to vote.

As a professional, Tessie was employed by the U.S. Postal Service for several years, but she answered her call to work in education and community. Her proud moments were supporting young kids and families who didn't have dental insurance when she first started working at Louisiana State University Health Science Center in the Department of Pediatric Dentistry. She later became an assistant to Professors in the Biochemistry Department where she prepared syllabi for the Ph.D. program at LSU School of Dentistry. After 27 years of service, she retired in 2017.

In celebration of the 60th Anniversary of school desegregation, then N. O. Councilperson Cyndi Nguyen brought forth the resolution to honor Tessie Prevost, Gail Etienne, Leona Tate, and Ruby Bridges recognizing November 14th and New Orleans Four Day. The City Council of New Orleans voted Yes unanimously. On November 14, 2020, the City Council of New Orleans and the office of Mayor LaToya Cantrell hosted a special Proclamation Day Ceremony at Gather Hall to commemorate the 60th Anniversary proclaiming November 14th forever New Orleans Four Day. On that day, all four Civil Rights Pioneers were honored equivalently and each of them were given a Proclamation. Finally, after 60 years, they each received the Key to The City from the office of Mayor LaToya Cantrell.

Following the Gallier Hall celebration, the members of The New Orleans Four started receiving national recognition and accolades due to the work of various media industry professionals, elected officials and Black women in corporate executive leadership. The multimedia project called The New Orleans Legacy Project, collaborated inducting The New Orleans Four into "Voices of The Civil Rights Movement". Their Interview segments garnered over one million views across the entire Comcast/NBCUniversal and NBC platforms.

As a result, Tessie Prevost, Leona Tate, and Gail Etienne appeared in their first national network television interview on the Today Show with Rhema Ellis reporting from New Orleans. This news feature exposed the untold story about Tessie Prevost, Leona Tate and Gail Etienne and catapulted the three members of The New Orleans Four to equivalent recognition and honor to Ruby Bridges for their sacrifice and courage. For decades as hidden figures, they endured dehumanizing degradation and felt the world and America forgot about them.

Following the Today Show news feature, the Civil Rights Pioneers received their first national award during the 2022 Essence Festival of Culture Dove/Unilever Crown Awards held July 2, 2022, honored the members of The New Orleans Four with the Living Legend Award. On August 6, 2022, the Urban League of Louisiana honored the three hidden figures as notable Changemakers Tessie, Leona, and Gail's story moved many to recognize the importance of fact checking.

The following year, they garnered more local and national news features like the 2023 CBS News Black History Month feature by reporter Jamie Wax which highlighted the untold story of The New Orleans Four helping to raise more awareness about the illegitimate revision of the accurate historical record. Now, America and the world have been re-inspired by the powerful courage of The New Orleans Four who rocked the Nation and changed the world.

In October 2023, at 69 years of age, Tessie became Chief Operating Officer of her own company, New Orleans Four, LLC., partnering with her childhood friend and fellow classmate, Gail Etienne who serves as Chief Executive Officer. Ms. Prevost and Ms. Etienne committed themselves to preserving and protecting the history and legacy of The New Orleans Four. Before her passing, Tessie and Gail partnered with the industry professionals who paid it forward to ensure that the story of The New Orleans Four would never be lost in history again. They planned to release a host of projects with the launch of The New Orleans Four Legacy Collection and their Serving Black Girl Magic Since 1960 brand and initiative.

Tessie Prevost, a child soldier, a civil rights pioneer, an activist for justice and a businesswoman and entrepreneur, profoundly stressed a quality and equitable education as the key to success and achievements "Education unleashes the past and paves the path of the future".

In November 2023, as part of the 50th Anniversary of Bayou Classic, the Southern University Law Center at the Louis A. Berry Institute for Civil Rights & Justice presented and honored the members of The New Orleans Four during the Southern University convening of the Board of Directors. Civil Rights Pioneers Tessie Prevost, Gail Etienne and Leona Tate were honorary Marshals in the Bayou Classic Parade. The ladies received joyous shouts of thank you from parade goers. State Representative Alonzo Knox petitioned Governor John Bel Edwards to sign an official statement. In November, for their 63rd anniversary, the Governor signed the official statement in support of the City Council of New Orleans proclaiming November 14th—New Orleans Four Day.

On May 14, 2024, Tessie Prevost, Gail Etienne, and Leona Tate were invited to be

honored by the United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division and the United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights for the 70th Anniversary of Brown v Board. All three of them were slated to fly to Washington D.C. to be honored by Attorney General Merrick B Garland, and Secretary of Education Miquel Cardona. Due to her illness, Tessie was unable to fly with Gail and Leona. These women joined Assistant Attorney General for a fireside chat, and they shared the platform with other powerful notables like Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Catherine E. Lhamon, President & Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund Janai Nelson, and Saba Bireda, Co-founder, and Chief Legal Counsel of Brown's Promise.

Before her illness, she continued to lend herself in service to the community of La-

Place, Louisiana and New Orleans with hopes that by sharing their story and school experiences, she will inspire the next generation to pick up the torch to protect and continue the movement toward equitable opportunities and racial harmony. Ms. Prevost lived in LaPlace, Louisiana, as a faithful member of Rising Star Baptist Church and a former president of the usher board at Blanch Bell Baptist Church.

She is also survived by her niece Deja Hulbert, nephew Derius Hulbert, her godchild, Ahtika Monique Merricks, her cousin, who was like a sister, Sharon Merricks, sister-laws, Dorothy Williams Grimble, Shirley Williams and Brenda Brock Williams, as well as a host of and friends. She was loved and adored by her late grandmothers, Dora Prevost, and Arie Ruth Mackey.

I am so blessed and grateful to have known this phenomenal woman, a real trailblazer, leader and my true friend. May her story forever remain in the history books for everyone across the world.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JIMMY GOMEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 25, 2024

Mr. GOMEZ. Mr. Speaker, on July 22, 2024, I was not recorded on Roll Call No. 356 and No. 358. Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 356 and Roll Call No. 358.