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Julian Bond Praised For Unselfish Devotion To Human Rights

By Freddie Allen

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WASHINGTON (NNPA) – Julian Bond, a founding member and communications director of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and immediate past board chairman of the NAACP, is being praised for his lifelong human rights contributions by people ranging from President Obama and his former civil rights colleagues to ordinary people who have benefited from his courage and advocacy.

Bond, co-founder of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), died Saturday night, August 15, at the age of 75. He served as the president of the SPLC, a legal advocacy organization that promotes equality and tracks hate groups, from 1971 to 1979 and later on the board of directors, according to a statement issued by the group.

"With Julian's passing, the country has lost one of its most passionate and eloquent voices for the cause of justice," SPLC said in a statement announcing Bond's death. "He advocated not just for African Americans, but for every group, indeed every person subject to oppression and discrimination, because he recognized the common humanity in us all."

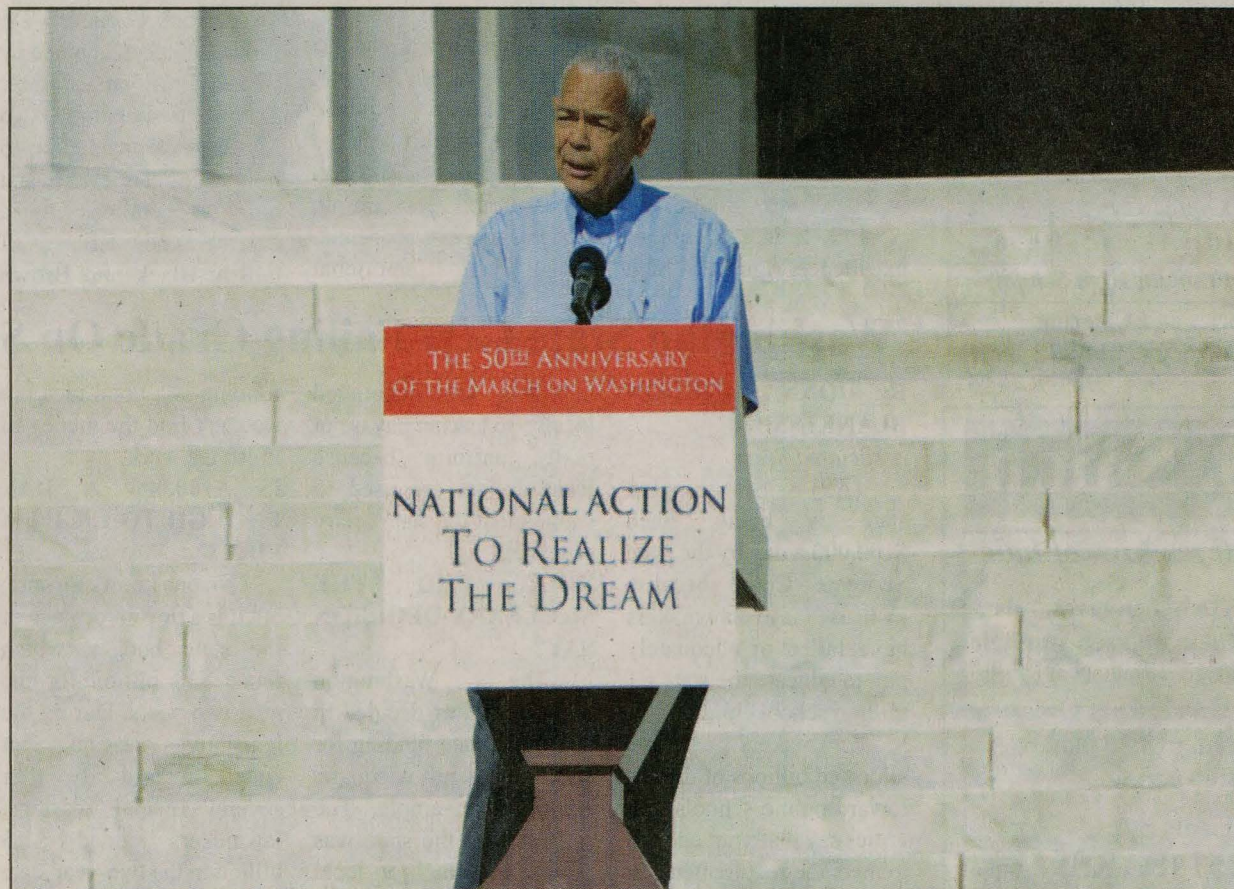
The statement continued: "Not only has the country lost a hero today, we've lost a great friend."

President Obama said in a statement, "Julian Bond was a hero and, I'm privileged to say, a friend. Justice and equality was the mission that spanned his life – from his leadership of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, to his founding role with the Southern Poverty Law Center, to his pioneering service in the Georgia legislature and his steady hand at the helm of the NAACP. Michelle and I have benefited from his example, his counsel, and his friendship – and we offer our prayers and sympathies to his wife, Pamela, and his children."

Obama added, "Julian Bond helped change this country for the better. And what better way to be remembered than that."

Denise Rolark Barnes, Chairperson of the National Newspaper Publishers Association

(NNPA) and publisher of The Washington Informer, said: On behalf of the members of the National Newspaper Publishers Association – the Black Press of America – we are extremely saddened to learn of the recent death of Julian Bond, a stalwart of



(Photo by Freddie Allen/NNPA)

the Civil and Human Rights Movement. His lifelong dedication and commitment to political and economic empowerment, journalistic diversity and integrity, and educational equality served as a beacon for others to follow. His presence and voice will be sorely missed, but his words remain true for the NNPA: 'Good things don't come to those who wait. They come to those who agitate!' Julian Bond, thank you. Now may you rest in peace!"

NNPA President and CEO Benjamin F. Chavis said, "On behalf of the National Newspapers Publishers Association (NNPA), we mourn the passing of civil rights leader Julian Bond. The enduring impact of Bond's legacy was his long-term dedication to fight for freedom, justice and equality. As an effective chairman of the NAACP, cofounder of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Georgia State Senator, college professor and columnist for the NNPA, Julian Bond was a gallant warrior who championed the interests of Black America."

Horace Julian Bond was born Jan. 14, 1940, in Nashville, Tenn. His father, Horace Mann Bond, was a prominent educator, serving as president of Fort Valley State University in Georgia and the first Black president of Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, his alma mater.

During his time with SNCC, Julian Bond protested against segregation of public facilities in Georgia and was arrested during a sit-in at Atlanta's City Hall.

Later, as a member of the Georgia House of Representatives, he was a vocal critic of the Vietnam War. When the White members of the House refused to seat him because of his

opposition to the war, Bond took his case to the United States Supreme Court where he won a unanimous ruling in 1966, saying his freedom of speech had been violated and ordering the legislature to seat him. Bond served in the Georgia's House for a decade and went on to serve six terms in the state senate.

He ran for the United States House of Representatives, but lost a bitter race to John Lewis, a former colleague who had been chairman of SNCC.

Bond was elected as chairman of the board of the NAACP in 1998 and served for 11 years. Bond was not only a consistent agent for civil rights, he was also a writer, poet, author and professor at number of colleges and universities, including American University in Washington, D.C., the University of Pennsylvania, Harvard University and the University of Virginia.

Bond also narrated "Eyes on the Prize," a documentary on the Civil Rights Movement, that was nominated for an Academy Award in 1988.

Mary Frances Berry, a history professor at the University of Pennsylvania and former chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, recalled Bond challenging the credentials of the all-White Georgia delegation at the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago and becoming the first African American nominated for vice president by a major party.

"It was on TV. It was all over the place and people who had not ever seen Julian saw this very bright, funny guy and then we had to point out that he was too young for the nomination," Berry said chuckling. "That sort of thing sticks in everybody's mind. When people saw him and who this guy was, it was like a meteor went

across the sky. In a way, it was like, years later, when people first saw Barack Obama.

"Here's this personable guy with a twinkle in his eye and he's sort of cute and he's funny and he has stature immediately. You had to pay attention to this."

Rev. Amos Brown, who has known Bond since his days at Morehouse College, also remembers the importance of the Chicago convention.

"In Chicago, we were not just fighting for civil rights we were fighting to empower Black people to be involved in the political process," said Brown, a NAACP board member from San Francisco. "Back then, we were pushing for people to get registered to vote and to be engaged and fight against the political structure continuing to be a monopoly of power for Whites.

"He was a man beyond his years, in terms of his depth and breadth of understanding of the issues. That's, why he was nominated. There was great agitation and protests and they were making waves as young people in the nation. The attitude was, 'Why not?'"

Tryone Brooks served six years in the Georgia legislature with Bond and grew up around Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Hosea Williams, John Lewis and other activists in Atlanta.

"Julian Bond was a great leader a great hero, one of the smartest minds that I ever met and at 75 years-old we should be celebrating his legacy we shouldn't be sad about it at all," said Brooks. "Before I got elected, Julian Bond had already introduced legislation to make Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday a state legal holiday."

Brooks said that Bond also introduced legislation to create the 5th Congressional District of

Georgia, the district that John Lewis won in 1986. He said Bond's loss to Lewis in that bitter race was not a total loss.

"It was kind of like a blessing in disguise that he did not win the 5th Congressional district seat here in Atlanta," explained Brooks. "If he had been elected to Congress in 1986, he never would have got to be the chairman of the board of the NAACP."

Wade Henderson, president and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of more than 200 human and civil rights organizations, said in a statement: "Bond measured civil and human rights by a single yard stick and he applied that guiding principle of equality to all people. He was a champion for immigrants and immigration reform, a leader in the fight against poverty, and a passionate advocate for the equal rights of LGBT people. He is one of our icons and will be deeply missed. But his moral voice will continue to be a guide for all of us seeking to advance civil and human rights for all people."

Derrick Johnson, who served on the national NAACP board with Bond, recalled Bond's famous ability to remain composed under fire.

"He was always a voice of reason and someone who could paint a clear picture of the significance and the role of the struggle for human dignity for African Americans in this country," said Johnson, president of the state conference of the Mississippi NAACP.

Hilary Shelton, Washington D.C. bureau chief of the NAACP, agrees.

"Julian embodied someone who was meticulous in their assessment of the problems

and challenges of the African American community and people who supported civil rights and human rights everywhere," he said.

Civil rights leaders are continuing to mourn the loss of Bond.

Jesse Jackson, Sr., tweeted:

"#JulianBond, a friend & fellow traveler who with courage, set the moral & academic tone of our generation. RIP"

In a statement, Al Sharpton said, "National Action Network (NAN) mourns the loss of civil rights leader and former NAACP board chairman Julian Bond, a trailblazer for equality and inclusion. As one who came out of the immediate generation after him, I grew up admiring and studying the work of Julian Bond and the country has lost a champion for human rights. The work of Mr. Bond will be missed but not forgotten as we march forward for civil rights."

Charles Steele, Jr., president and CEO of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, said in a statement: "Julian Bond was a passionate and charismatic human rights activist; a transformative and triumphant civil rights leader whose eloquent voice made him a symbol and iconic figure of the 1960's civil rights movement. I am saddened by his sudden death, but heartened by the dynamic life he lived and difference his considerable contributions made for all Americans... Julian Bond will be remembered and revered as one of the leading lights of our nation's civil rights movement."

Marc Morial, president and CEO of the National Urban League, said in a statement: "The Urban League family deeply grieves the loss of Julian Bond, a true warrior for civil rights and social justice. He embodied integrity, passion and dignity, and was a role model for all Americans. He was a bridge between the civil rights pioneers of the 1960's and the dynamic young activists of today, employing both a deep sense of history and a keen instinct for action."

Bond died in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., and is survived by his wife, Pamela Horowitz, and his five children.

Rev. Wendell Anthony, president of the Detroit chapter of the NAACP and a longtime NAACP board member, said: "They are not making them like Julian Bond anymore. Here's man that stayed in the struggle until he couldn't stay in it anymore."