



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6633

allison.fore@mwrdr.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

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Late Mayor Harold Washington's 21 reunites and reflects after 30 years during MWRD's African American History Month



In the photo: (L-R) Front row: William Beavers, Allan Streeter, Timothy Evans, Clifford Kelley, Wallace Davis, Jr., and David Orr. Back row: Mercedes Mallette.

It was a tumultuous time in Chicago history, but the infamous "Council Wars" that occurred between 1983 and 1986 ultimately provided an education in racial equality, breaking down barriers and helping shape the city that it is today. It was that lesson that Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) Vice President Barbara McGowan embraced in convening the District's annual African American History Month celebration. The program ushered in a night of conversation, music, food and celebration at the MWRD boardroom on Feb. 16.

The focus of this year's event was the Chicago Council Wars of 1983-1986, and Vice President McGowan brought together a panel of former aldermen: Cook County Circuit Court Chief Judge Timothy C. Evans (4th Ward); William Beavers (7th Ward); Allan Streeter (17th Ward); radio personality for WVON AM1690 Clifford Kelley (20th Ward); Wallace Davis, Jr. (27th Ward); Ed Smith (28th Ward); and Cook County Clerk David Orr (49th Ward).



In the photo (L-R): Robert Shaw, Howard Medley, Vice President Barbara McGowan, Helen Shiller, Wallace Davis, Jr., Allan Streeter, Dr. Conrad Worrill, and Mercedes Mallette.

Dr. Conrad Worrill, retired Professor and Director of the Center for Inner City Studies at Northeastern Illinois University, served as Master of Ceremonies. Panel moderators included Mercedes Mallette, Community Activist and Deputy Director of the late Mayor Harold Washington's Political Education Project, and Robert Shaw, former 9th Ward Alderman and former Cook County Commissioner. The audience listened to prerecorded messages from Congressmen Danny Davis and Bobby Rush.

Families of three former aldermen now deceased received resolutions: Mayor Eugene Sawyer (6th Ward), Anna Langford (16th Ward) and Niles Sherman (21st Ward). Also honored were the late former Aldermen Tyrone Kenner (3rd Ward); Marian Humes (8th Ward); Perry Hutchinson (9th Ward); and William Henry (24th Ward).

"Just as Mayor Washington overcame a divisive City Council to bring the city together, this annual African American History Month celebration (*continued*)

Late Mayor Harold Washington's 21 reunites and reflects *(continued)*

also allows us to reunite each year to reflect on what we have learned from our past and celebrate the progress we have made together," said Vice President McGowan. "While we still have a long way to go in society, we strive each day to promote a fair and equitable workplace that protects the environment and provides reputable services for all people across Cook County."

Following Mayor Washington's election in 1983, the all white "Vrdolyak 29," led by Ald. Edward Vrdolyak and Ald. Ed Burke, fought to take control of City Council committees and blocked Mayor Washington's proposals and appointments. Three years later, in 1986, a federal court ordered that special elections take place in seven wards that were remapped to better reflect the city's racial demographics; this court action allowed black and other minority voices a chance to be sufficiently heard and represented.

Each of Mayor Washington's 21 supporting aldermen were highlighted and applauded during the event. Earlier in the day, the MWRD Board of Commissioners paused to recognize many of the former aldermen with a resolution recognizing each of their efforts to promote equality in the City Council.

"We thank these men and women for their invaluable efforts in promoting fairness, inclusion and progress for Chicago," said Vice President McGowan. "It is because of their contributions that our diversity has become one of the strengths of our city and region, and it's from that pool of talent we draw to create an elite, world-class workforce at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago."

For their various contributions to Chicago's African American community, three posthumous awards were

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In the photo (L-R): Back row: Dr. Conrad Worrill, Robert Shaw and Mercedes Mallette. Front row: Allan Streeter, Clifford Kelley, Wallace Davis, Jr., Ed Smith, David Orr.

presented to the late Rev. John C. Hatchett, CEO of the Coalition for United Community Labor Force; the late William Garth, Sr., CEO of Chicago Citizen Newspaper Group Inc.; and the late Fred Rice, former Superintendent of the Chicago Police Department.

"Black History Month gives us a chance to recognize the many African Americans who have strengthened our nation, urged reforms, overcome obstacles, broken down barriers and enriched our society," said Vice President McGowan. "The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago has sought to achieve these same principles in our early adoption of policies that support the involvement and advancement of African Americans in the workplace and throughout all business opportunities."

"I greatly appreciate the efforts of the District's Diversity and Public Affairs departments for helping to bring this program together," said Vice President McGowan.

Program video will soon be available at www.mwrd.org.

Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwrd.org) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.