

Central Kentucky Council for Peace and Justice

Award for a Lifetime of Waging Peace

Annual Dinner, February 26, 2012
Transylvania University, Lexington

The Council is pleased to recognize Ms. Yvonne Giles with our 2012 Lifetime of Waging Peace Award because we know that one of the key components to building public awareness and momentum for peace and justice is to offer up a clear and consistent voice for those not represented in the mainstream media or public discourse. This is what Ms. Giles had done for the betterment of all of us here in Lexington, in Kentucky, and beyond.



Many know Ms. Giles as a co-founder of Lexington's Isaac Scott Hathaway museum, which is dedicated to preserving Black heritage as it was experienced and memorialized within her community. Through her meticulous work on African-American artifacts, stories and memorials, many believe that Yvonne Giles has made herself into one of Lexington's experts on local Black history. While she prefers to be known as "one of Lexington's resource persons," by whatever name she is called, she shares the knowledge she's acquired generously and graciously, helping others understand just how important Black people were to building Lexington into the city it is now. The Council is very pleased to highlight her efforts as she continues her decades-long work with many organizations dedicated to making that history come alive for new generations.

Since Ms. Giles earned her M.S. from the University of Kentucky, she has spent innumerable hours researching and reclaiming a history in danger of being lost. Her book, Stilled Voices: Yet Speak: A History of Benevolent Society No. 2 Cemetery and Ladies' Auxiliary Cemetery, was

featured in a 2010 *Lexington Herald-Leader* article by Merlene Davis, who wrote that Ms. Giles “explored the society of slaves and freedmen who bought the land to bury their dead and the lengths they went to keep the cemetery as hallowed ground.”

In the course of researching the brochure “African American Heritage Guide” – published by the education committee of the Isaac Scott Hathaway Museum and the Lexington Convention and Visitors Bureau in 2010 – Ms. Giles was able to highlight homes, buildings and even a hideout for runaway slaves all within walking distance of Main Street. Much research had to be done to correct previous misinformation, because as Ms. Giles teaches us, “If you can’t document it, you can’t say it.”

In addition to CKCPJ’s award, she is a recipient of both the Clay Lancaster Heritage Education Award presented by the Bluegrass Trust for Historic Preservation and the Service to Preservation award presented by the Ida Lee Willis Memorial Foundation. The YMCA Black Achievers recognized her for five years of service as Arts and Culture leader and the William Wells Brown Community Center has annually acknowledged her work with students during Black History Month.

The Isaac Scott Hathaway museum moved last summer to the Robert H. Williams Cultural Center (644 Georgetown St.), formerly the Colored Orphan Industrial Home which opened in 1894. The home was incorporated by sixteen disenfranchised black women who made personal and financial commitments for the care of African American orphans and elderly women in this community. CKCPJ is looking forward to working with Ms. Giles and the museum’s board members on a number of events in our fall 2012 Voices events series.