

REMARKS OF COURTLAND COX  
GOODWILL BAPTIST CHURCH, WASHINGTON, D.C.  
DECEMBER 15, 2012  
AT THE MEMORIAL SERVICE  
FOR  
LAWRENCE THOMAS GUYOT, JR.  
JULY 17, 1938 – NOVEMBER 23, 2012

TO MONICA AND THE GUYOT FAMILY, I WANT TO EXPRESS MY AFFECTION AND  
CONDOLENCES.

I MUST SAY THAT I WAS IMPRESSED BY THE “LETTER FROM THE FAMILY OF  
LAWRENCE GUYOT,” WRITTEN BY JULIE GUYOT AS SHE RECALLED THE WILL, GRIT AND  
DETERMINATION EXHIBITED BY HER FATHER DURING THE LAST EIGHT MONTHS OF HIS  
LIFE.

JULIE WRITES, “HE WAS UNRELENTING IN HIS COMMITMENT TO PEOPLE AND  
WORKED UNTIL THE VERY, VERY, END.” JULIE ENCOURAGES US ALL IN HER LETTER TO  
“TAKE PEOPLE SERIOUSLY, AND TAKE OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO EACH OTHER  
SERIOUSLY.” IN DOING SO, WE WILL WORK FOR FREEDOM.

LAWRENCE THOMAS GUYOT, JR. WORKED FOR FREEDOM. GUYOT WAS BLESSED  
BECAUSE HE WAS PART OF A VERY LARGE MISSISSIPPI MOVEMENT FAMILY. HIS  
FOREBEARERS WERE MISSISSIPPI MOVEMENT VETERANS SUCH AS MEDGAR EVERS,  
AMZIE MOORE, AND AARON HENRY. THEY INCLUDE WOMEN LIKE FANNIE LOU HAMER,  
ANNIE DEVINE AND VICTORIA GRAY ADAMS.

GUYOT'S MISSISSIPPI MOVEMENT FOREBEARERS ALSO INCLUDED SUCH PIONEERS AS HARTMAN TURNBOW OF HOLMES COUNTY, MCCOMB'S C.C. BRYANT AND E.W. STEPTOE OF AMITE COUNTY.

I TOLD YOU THAT GUYOT HAD AN EXTREMELY LARGE MISSISSIPPI MOVEMENT FAMILY.

GUYOT ALSO HAD MANY BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN MISSISSIPPI. I SUSPECT SOME OF HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS FROM MISSISSIPPI ARE HERE TODAY TO PAY THEIR LAST RESPECTS.

IN THE MOVEMENT, GUYOT COULD DEPEND ON DORIE AND JOYCE LADNER; CHARLES MCLAURIN; JESSIE HARRIS; MACARTHUR COTTON; HOLLIS WATKINS, EUVESTER SIMPSON AND MANY OTHERS BROTHERS AND SISTERS TOO NUMEROUS TO MENTION.

AS A RESULT OF HIS PARTICIPATION IN THE MOVEMENT, GUYOT ALSO HAS MISSISSIPPI MOVEMENT CHILDREN. THERE IS ALBERT SYKES FROM THE MISSISSIPPI YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROJECT; DAPHNE CHAMBERLAIN, THE PRESENT DIRECTOR OF THE COFO EDUCATIONAL CENTER; AND, THE STUDENTS FROM TUGALOO AND JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY WHO HAVE FORMED THE STUDENT JUSTICE ALLIANCE ADVOCATING FOR WORKERS RIGHTS.

THE INVOLVEMENT OF A NEW GENERATION OF MISSISSIPPI MOVEMENT PARTICIPANTS DEMONSTRATES THAT THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES. I AM SURE LAWRENCE IS PLEASED.

JULIE GUYOT, IN HER LETTER, ACURATELY CHARACTERIZES THE MOVEMENT WHEN SHE TALKS ABOUT GUYOT'S WILL, GRIT AND DETERMINATION. GUYOT, AND HIS BAND OF SNCC BROTHERS AND SISTERS, ARMED WITH ONLY THEIR WILL, GRIT, AND

DETERMINATION ENDED THE HISTORIC POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC OPPRESSION OF  
BLACK PEOPLE IN MISSISSIPPI.

IN THE 1960'S, GUYOT AND HIS BAND OF SNCC BROTHERS AND SISTERS WILLED THE  
END OF:

- 1) DENYING BLACK PEOPLE IN MISSISSIPPI THE RIGHT TO THE VOTE;
- 2) THE RIGHT TO ELECT REPRESENTATIVES TO PUBLIC OFFICE;
- 3) PROVIDING ACCESS TO A QUALITY EDUCATION;
- 4) AND, AN END TO VIOLENCE AND ECONOMIC INTIMIDATION TO MAINTAIN THE  
STATUS QUO.

GUYOT, AND HIS BAND OF SNCC BROTHERS AND SISTERS HAD THE GRIT TO--DAY IN-  
AND-DAY OUT--DO WHAT WAS NECESSARY TO WORK THEIR COLLECTIVE WILL. OVER  
MANY YEARS IN THE HEAT OF THE SUMMER AND IN THE DARK OF NIGHT:

1. GUYOT, AND HIS MOVEMENT FAMILY, KNOCKED ON THOUSANDS OF DOORS;
2. THEY TRAVELLED ON PLANTATIONS TO DISCUSS VOTING WITH  
SHARECROPPERS;
3. ORGANIZED MASS MEETINGS IN THE LOCAL CHURCHES;
4. VISITED CHURCHES ON SUNDAY MORNINGS TO TALK ABOUT THE MOVEMENT;
5. LOGGED HUNDRED OF THOUSANDS OF MILES ON THE MISSISSIPPI HIGHWAYS;
6. COMMUNICATED WITH THE U.S. JUSTICE DEPARTMENT AND OTHER FEDERAL  
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES DEMANDING AN END TO VOTING RIGHTS VIOLATIONS;
7. FILED MANY COURT BRIEFS TO END SEGREGATION;
8. AND, IN 1963-64 ORGANIZED THE MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY TO  
ASSERT THE RIGHT OF BLACK MISSISSIPPIANS TO REPRESENT THEIR STATE IN  
THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

IN ADDITION TO HIS WILL AND GRIT, GUYOT SHOWED GREAT DETERMINATION. EVERY DAY GUYOT FACED BEING SHOT ON THE PLANTATIONS OR ON THE MISSISSIPPI HIGHWAYS, OR BEATEN, AS HE ACTUALLY WAS IN 1963, IN PARCHMAN PENITENTIARY. HOWEVER, GUYOT DID NOT FLEE MISSISSIPPI, AND THE TERRORISTIC TACTICS OF THE KU KLUX KLAN AND THE WHITE CITIZEN COUNCILS DID NOT PREVENT HIM FROM DOING HIS LIFE'S WORK.

THE WORK OF GUYOT AS AN ORGANIZER OF THE MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY (MFDP) TO REPRESENT THE POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS OF THE PEOPLE OF MISSISSIPPI MADE PROFOUND CHANGES IN BOTH MISSISSIPPI AND AMERICA. TODAY, MISSISSIPPI HAS MORE BLACK ELECTED OFFICIALS THAN ANY OTHER STATE IN THE UNION. IN ADDITION, THE ATLANTIC CITY CHALLENGE OF THE MFDP HASTENED THE EXIT OF THE SOUTHERN DIXIECRATS FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY. TODAY WE CALL THOSE DIXIECRATS, REPUBLICANS.

GUYOT WAS A MAN OF IDEAS. HE LOVED TO READ AND HE LOVED TO TALK TO PEOPLE ABOUT BOOKS. WHEN HIS HEALTH ALLOWED HIM TO TRAVEL, GUYOT ATTENDED THE ANNUAL MISSISSIPPI CIVIL RIGHTS VETERANS CONFERENCE IN JACKSON.

EVERY TIME I SAW HIM IN JACKSON, HE WOULD HAVE A NUMBER OF BOOKS AND HE WOULD WANT TO KNOW IF I HAD SEEN AND/OR READ THE LATEST PUBLICATION. HE SPOKE WITH SUCH ENERGY ABOUT THE BOOKS THAT HE HAD READ AND THE IDEAS THAT THEY POSSESSED.

GUYOT, LIKE OUR GOOD BROTHER JAMES FOREMAN, ALSO ENCOURAGED MANY OF HIS SNCC BROTHERS AND SISTERS TO WRITE THEIR STORIES BECAUSE THEIR LIVES WERE PART OF THE FABRIC OF AMERICAN HISTORY.

GUYOT, AS WE ALL KNOW, WAS NOT A SHY PERSON. HE WAS FORCEFUL WHETHER HE WAS ORGANIZING, SPEAKING AT A SNCC MEETING, PLAYING POKER WITH THE BOYS, OR SPEAKING TO A GOVERNMENT AGENCY.

WHILE GUYOT IS WIDELY KNOWN AS A CIVIL ACTIVIST, JUST AS IMPORTANTLY HE WAS THE LOVING HUSBAND OF MONICA, THE PROUD FATHER OF JULIE AND LAWRENCE III, AND DOTING GRANDFATHER OF FOUR.

IT MUST BE SAID THAT AT THE END OF THE DAY, LAWRENCE THOMAS GUYOT, JUNIOR, LED A CONSEQUENCIAL LIFE AND CONTRIBUTED TO THE COMMON GOOD.