



## Message from the President

Greetings,

I hope that you have enjoyed your summer vacations and time with family and friends. This year is already in full swing. The cooler nights signal the end of another season and the fall and winter to come.

This summer has been one of great sadness and of change. You will find a new section in our newsletter filled with incidents of hope and of sadness. Around the country and the world we find examples of hope and promise. But on the other side of the coin, we still see how far we have to go. Take a look at Equity News and Notes.

The state of Maryland has lost an incredible leader in the area of equity and multicultural education. Maria Whitmore was an educator in the Fredrick County Public School System. She received the Jack Epstein award two years ago for her work. See more about her incredible life in the newsletter.



While recently watching the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of Ken Burns' The Civil War, it made me realize how very hard it is to create change in the world and how very long it can take. That coupled with the final removal of the Confederate Flag in South Carolina can make you realize the amount of work there is yet to do. As a history major in college, I remember the quote, that if we don't study history, we will repeat it. It is so important that we do not forget the struggles that have come before us. It is important to honor and remember those that laid the foundation for others to follow.

The 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Women's right to vote was celebrated a couple of weeks ago. It is hard to believe there was a time when women could not vote. My grandmother, who was born in 1905 was 14 when women got the right. She later was involved in local politics and even served on the school board. And yet, we have struggled to get women in positions of power or in higher office. That was evident even watching the Republican debate with **Carly Fiorina** and the 10 men that surrounded her.

I hope that you realize how much you make a difference each day with your students. You give them hope and promise. You have the power to teach them equity, fairness, tolerance and acceptance. The work you do each day is as important as any other - except you get to work with students all day.

Have a great school year.

Sincerely,

Debbie Misiag

President MMC 2015-2017

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## Documentary looks at gay issues in Maryland, within the black community

**T**he *New Black* is a documentary that tells the story of how the African-American community is grappling with the gay rights issue in light of the recent gay marriage movement and the fight over civil rights.

The Howard County, Maryland Office of Human Rights has partnered with the Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) Columbia-Howard County chapter, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights and Promised Land Film to host community screenings - September 10 & 17, and October 15 & 29 - of the award-winning documentary, *The New*

*Black*.

Honored by a number of national film festivals, including AFI Docs, UrbanWorld Film Festival and the Los Angeles Film Festival, *The New Black* tells the story of the historic fight to win marriage equality in Maryland and charts the evolution of this divisive issue within the black community. The film documents activists, families and clergy on both sides of the campaign to legalize gay marriage and examines homophobia in the black community's institutional pillar, the black church, and reveals the Christian right wing's strategy of exploiting this phenomenon in order to pursue an anti-gay political agenda.

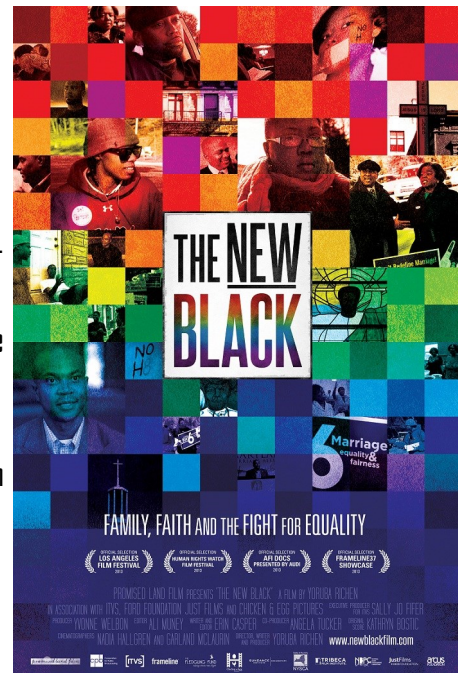
*The New Black* takes viewers into the pews and onto the streets and provides a seat at the kitchen table as it tells the story of the historic fight to win marriage equality in Maryland and charts the evolution of this divisive issue within the black community.

Each screening will be followed by a 30-minute audience discussion on the issues raised in the film, facilitated by Office of Human Rights Administrator, Reverend Dr. Barbara Sands. Admission to each screening is free and all are invited to attend. For more

information about the screenings, contact the Office of Human Rights at 410-313-6430 or email Mary Toth at [mtoth@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:mtoth@howardcountymd.gov).

The Bain Center, 5470 Ruth Keeton Way, Columbia / 7 pm / Contact: Office of Human Rights, 410-313-6430

• Story by Bonnie Brownell



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## Civil rights leader, Julian Bond, passes away at 75

**I**t is with great sadness that we announce the passing of legendary civil rights activist Julian Bond, SPLC's first president. He was 75 years old and died last evening, August 15, in Fort Walton Beach, Florida.

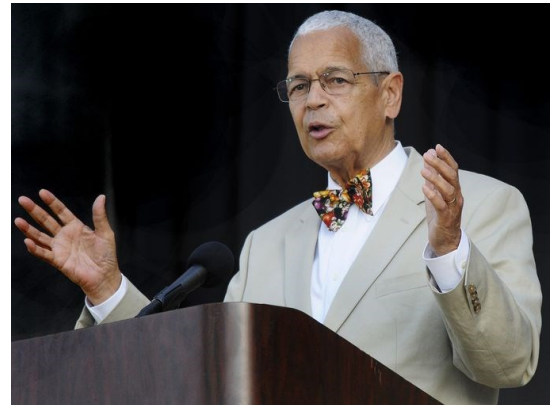
From his days as the co-founder and communications director of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in the 1960s to his chairmanship of the NAACP in the 21st century, Julian

was a visionary and tireless champion for civil and human rights. He served as the SPLC's president from our founding in 1971 to 1979, and later as a member of its board of directors.

With Julian's passing, the country has lost one of its most passionate and eloquent voices for the cause of justice. 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.

Julian is survived by his wife, Pamela Horowitz, a former SPLC staff



This message was written and distributed by Morris Dees of the Southern Poverty Law Center on August 16, 2015.

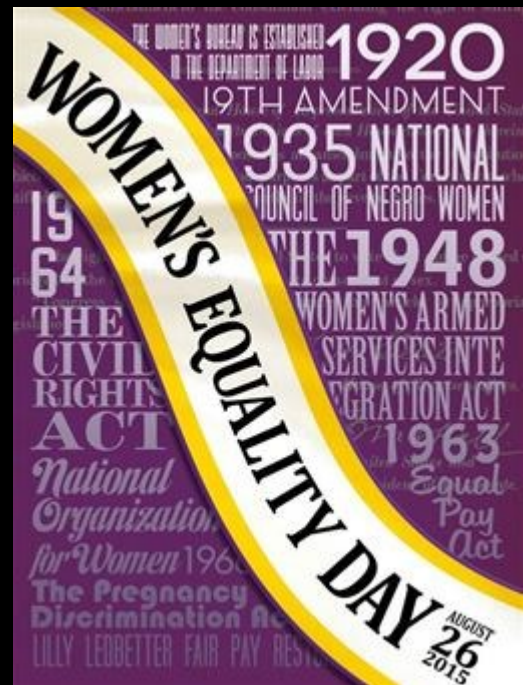
## Women's Equality Day 2015

At the behest of Rep. Bella Abzug (D-NY), in 1971 the U.S. Congress designated August 26 as "Women's Equality Day." The date was selected to commemorate the 1920 passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, granting women the right to vote. This was the culmination of a massive, peaceful civil rights movement by women that had its formal beginnings in 1848 at the world's first

women's rights convention, in Seneca Falls, New York. The observance of Women's Equality Day not only commemorates the passage of the 19th Amendment, but also calls attention to women's continuing efforts toward full equality. Workplaces, libraries, organizations, and public facilities now participate with Women's Equality Day programs, displays, video showings, or other activities.

### Presidential Proclamation -- Women's Equality Day, 2015

<<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/08/24/presidential-proclamation-womens-equality-day-2015>>



**Women's Suffrage: 95 Years Later and Still Much to be Done. Click here.**

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## Ava Maria Whittemore passes away at 66

### *"Reflections of Life"*

Ava Maria Whittemore, 66, of Frederick, MD, passed away Tuesday, September 1, 2015, at her home, surrounded by loved ones, following a lengthy battle with cancer. She was born on May 6, 1949 to the late John H. Smith, Jr and the late Helen Butler Smith. She was the youngest child of six. She was preceded in death by her husband Clabon A. Whittemore; sister, Shirley E. Snowden; brothers, Thomas W. Smith and Robert E. Smith; and brother-in-law Russell A. Snowden.

Ava, also fondly known as Maria, Marie, and Lucy, graduated from Walkersville High School and went on to earn a BS in psychology from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, graduating magna cum laude. She also earned a MA in school administration and supervision from Hood College, and holds many advanced professional certificates. She began with FCPS in 1971, where she taught and was assistant vice principal at many elementary and secondary schools in Frederick County for about 30 years. After working directly in the schools, she found her way to the Board of Education office. She held the position of FCPS Coordinator for Education that is Multicultural. September 1, 2015, she retired from that position. Ava loved her job, but was looking forward to retirement.

Maria was a member of several organization, including: Eliminating Achievement Gaps (EAG), where she was a founding member of the board of directors; Lincoln Alumni Association, YMCA, NAACP, NANBPW, and Friends of Mullinix Park....just to name a few. She received many, many awards during her professional career, such as, the MSTA King Award, the MD State DoE Vanguard Award, a BoE pin for leadership, the MD State Education Association's Minority Recognition in Education Award, and most recently, in 2014, The Jack Epstein Award. An essay she co-wrote was published, and her reviews of educational books, by Dr. Carl Grant and Dr. Bonnie Davis, appear on the book's covers. She was a member of Silver Hill and Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Churches. Ava loved working with children, and dedicated her life to ensuring educational achievements were possible for ALL students.

Ava Maria is survived by her loyal companion of 12 years, Ronald J. Anderson; brothers, John H. Smith, III (Shirley) of Alexandria, VA and Gordon E. Smith of Morristown, NJ; sister-in-law, Barbara Smith and Aunt, Clara Butler, both of Frederick. She is also survived by many nieces, nephews, great nieces, great nephews, cousins, very special friends....Debbie Bowie, Alice Hall, Sarah Harrison, and Eric Phillips, a host of other friends and her FCPS family.



## Equity News and Notes

The passing of Maria Whitmore. What a loss to FCPSS, multicultural education and to the educators in the State of Maryland.

The Supreme Court decision to uphold same sex marriages.

The countless shootings of unarmed African American males by police officers in numerous states.

The removal of the Confederate flag from the grounds of the State House in South Carolina.

The mass exodus of families from many countries in the middle east to flee from terrorist groups.

The passing of Julian Bonds, civil rights activist and first president of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Hispanic Heritage Month is September 15-October 15.

