



Congressman Parren J. Mitchell

April 29, 1922 - May 28, 2007

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The State of Maryland was still trying to keep African American students out of the University of Maryland, College Park, when Parren J. Mitchell applied to graduate school there in 1950. The University President called his effort to study there "inadvisable." But Parren persisted, declining the offer of a special program of study in Baltimore. As a result, he became the first African American student, graduate or undergraduate at College Park, then still a bastion of whites-only higher education in Maryland. Mr. Mitchell, who died in Baltimore, Maryland on May 28, 2007, at the age of 85, had broken through barriers that excluded generations of Maryland's state's black students. This achievement was one of many in an illustrious career that took him through a variety of social service and civil rights appointments to the U. S. House of Representatives, where he was the first black Marylander elected to serve eight distinguished terms. Known to many as "P J", he had applied to graduate school to study sociology long after the university system and state government as a whole had been forced to concede that blacks had a right to be educated in institutions they were helping to finance. By then, some of the University's professional schools, as a result of earlier law suits, had admitted black students. The School of Law had been open to blacks since 1936, when Donald Gaines Murray, was ordered admitted in a case argued by Thurgood Marshall. The University of Maryland cases, including Parren's case, were important early steps on the road to Brown v. Board of Education, the

landmark school desegregation and anti-discrimination case. Parren Mitchell's resolve in the matter of his graduate education helped define the man. He was establishing his own profile in the battle against Jim Crow already being waged by his brother, Clarence M. Mitchell Jr., the NAACP's chief lobbyist in Washington, by Clarence's wife, Juanita Jackson Mitchell, and her mother, Lillie May Jackson, the first lady of civil rights in Maryland for many years. Generations of the Mitchell family would join the fight for civil rights. Slight of build, Parren Mitchell was a fiery and eloquent figure in debate. He was often described as "impassioned." He was not reluctant to take on presidents if he found them insufficiently sensitive to the rights of his poor, black constituents. He truly could "walk with kings and yet not lose the common touch."

PARREN JAMES MITCHELL Mr. Mitchell was born on April 29, 1922. His father, Clarence M. Mitchell Sr., was a waiter at the Rennert Hotel in Baltimore. His mother was Elsie Davis Mitchell, a homemaker. Parren became a lifelong member of St. Katherine of Alexandria Episcopal Church. He graduated from Frederick Douglass High School in 1940 and served in the Army in World War II where he was awarded a Purple Heart after being wounded in Italy. After the war, he then returned to Morgan State College from which he graduated. After a series of other assignments, he was named head of the Baltimore antipoverty program in 1965 by Mayor Theodore R. McKeldin. Regarded as one of the most effective administrators of any community action program in the nation, Mr. Mitchell's credibility with a wide spectrum of Baltimore residents grew as well. When the city erupted in anger at the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, Mr. Mitchell served as an important link between the troubled streets and public officials. He ran for the U. S. Congress in 1968, losing to the incumbent Samuel N. Friedel but doing well enough to attract positive responses in the political community. In 1970, he ran again and won by 38 votes. In Washington, he was a passionate and effective advocate for the poor and disadvantaged. His 16-year tenure in Washington was marked by fearless criticism of economic policies he regarded as harmful to the poor and for championing programs designed to

promote minority business enterprise. He was a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus and one of its chairmen. Congressman Mitchell rose to become the Chairman of the Small Business Committee. He attached to a \$4 billion public works bill an amendment that compelled state and local governments seeking federal grants to set aside 10% of the funds to retain minority firms as contractors and subcontractors. This law has produced billions of dollars in contracts to minority businesses and remains in operation. He retired from the Congress in 1986, but stayed active in public life. In that same year, he ran for lieutenant governor of Maryland on a ticket with Stephen Sachs. In recent years, after a series of strokes, he lived in nursing homes, while making periodic appearances at community events. In 2007, Congressman Mitchell was honored by having a United States Post Office in the Baltimore City named for him. In addition to many significant firsts, Parren leaves a legacy of inspirational leadership. Both Kweisi Mfume and Elijah E. Cummings, who followed him to Congress from the 7th Congressional District, have said repeatedly that Parren Mitchell inspired them to seek lives in public office. Even twenty years after he left the Congress, Mr. Mitchell is remembered for his courageous and persistent advocacy for justice and for uplifting the disadvantaged.

Tribute Wall



“ *Congressman Parren J. Mitchell*

October 13, 2022 at 08:33 AM



“ *My first job was working for Parren at Urban Studies at Morgan U... For me, it was the beginning of a life long effort to help African Americans to start businesses, as it would be their only change as a group to truly break the chains of slavery... GOD bless the Mitchell family!##imported-begin##Jimmy Wilson##imported-end##*

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ *To the Mitchell family Elite People Protective srv send our condalstion out to you as your going threw a hard time if you need anything please lets us no agian were sorry for your loss and god bless##imported-begin##Elite People Protective Srv##imported-end##*

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ *You will be truly missed. I am forever grateful for your years of dedicated service. You were of great support to me during my service in the USMC in the early eighties in addressing open racism within the Corps.##imported-begin##Kevin Hargrave##imported-end##*

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ To the Mitchell Family: Though you have truly lost a very precious loved one, know that others share in your sorrow. He is no longer here to suffer. He is home with his Lord. Continue on with his legacy. You had some very powerful members of your family - Mrs. Lillie M. Carroll Jackson, Mrs. Juanita Jackson Mitchell, and Mr. Clarence Mitchell, Jr. I have been reading on their many works. They layed down the groundwork, and paved the way for all of us. We have been, and continue to be exposed to some of the same obstacles, your loved ones had to endure. Your Uncle was our guest speaker at my church 31 years ago. I was entering my freshman year at Morgan State University. I never forgot the inspiring words he spoke to us. I graduated with a B.S. degree from Morgan State University in 1983, and graduated last year from Kaplan University, with a Certificate in Paralegal Studies. While a student at Morgan, my instructor, the late Dr. Robert Gill, taught us Political Science. We heard about "PJ" from the first day, until the end of the semester. He was so proud of Parren J. Mitchell. That made all of us feel good, to know we were taught by the same teacher as PJ, to know where PJ sat in that classroom, and of his mighty works. God bless all of you, and may God sustain you all now and forever. Love, Karen##imported-begin##Karen Y. Harris##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ With Deepest Sympathy Our Thoughts and Prayers are with you during this difficult time Edward E.Fox, Jr##imported-begin##EDWARD E. FOX, JR. CHEIF##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ My God bless you and your family. We will keep will keep you in our prayers druing your hour of need###imported-begin##Mrs. Madge Rice Cannon###imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ Congressman Mitchell was a man of great depth and integrity, whose gentle and generous soul was as abundant as his reverence for championing the causes of the "little people." I first came to know Congressman Mitchell at MDBELDEF in the late 19080s. He was a class act, who appreciated and consistently demonstrated giving back to and mentoring others. I, and the rest of the Lee Family, will always hold our memories of Congressman Mitchell in high regard, and we extend out deepest sympathies to the Mitchell Family. May Parren's new wings comfort and guide you through this difficult time. With Our Love, Thoughts, & Prayers, The Lee Family###imported-begin##Rayna Lee###imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ Parren J. Mitchell will always be remembered as the greatest public servant and humanitarian of all times....and he will live in the hearts of everyone because we truly loved him ! May the family be comforted by the glorious memories ! God Bless You....###imported-begin##Debra Friend Carter###imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ Thank you for making my journey possible. May Allah forgive you for all your sins and grant you a place in paradise. Amen....###imported-begin##Ellen M. Abdul-Rabb###imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ Please accept my condolences for your loss. As the days go by, please be comforted by Almighty God words which says at Isaiah 25:8, 'He will swallow up death forever...for Jehovah himself has spoken it.' Yes, Almighty God will eradicate death forever and will make it possible for our dead love ones such as Mr. Mitchell to be resurrected under peaceful conditions. (Acts 24:15) Please be comforted by these encouraging words.##imported-begin##V Adams##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ Words can not tell how much appreciation and gratitude I have to Parin. He inspired me to fight for social, economic and political justice. He truly served and fought, in a true sense, for the welfare and health of the Black Community while defining the moral political highground for how all American's should be treated with equality. He helped breath life into the the words - With Liberty & Justice for All. I only pray that the Cause of Justice for All will not be abandoned by the leaders of today for 30 silver peices. Dr. Ward##imported-begin##Dr. Francisco Ward##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ We mourn the loss of this giant and the passing of another member of this great generation##imported-begin##Judge William Quarles##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ My heart go out to the family. For he was a great man .And one of the kind he will be miss.God bless your family for right now he is carrying the whole family. my prayer are with you all.##imported-begin##Renee Washington##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ To the Mitchell Family: You are in our prayers.##imported-begin##The Brown Family##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ To all of the Mitchell Family you have my sincere sympathy on the passing of Congressman Parren J. Mitchell.##imported-begin##Arelletta L. Stewart##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ PARREN WAS A GREAT HUMAN BEING ! WHENEVER I HEAR THE WORD " GREAT " I WILL INSTANTLY THINK OF PARREN , A DEAR AND OLD FAMILY FRIEND.##imported-begin##Lance Walker##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ My Deepest Sympathy to the Mitchell Family.We love You PJ!! Peace...##imported-begin##Denise McNeil##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ My condolences to the Mitchell family. Congressman Mitchell was a special person who helped me in a time of my mothers illness. I was sorry to see him retire and to hear of his illness. My thoughts are with you.##imported-begin##Carole Hull##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ DEAR MITCHELL FAMILY, WE WISH TO EXTEND OUR DEEPEST SYMPHATHY TO YOUR FAMILY @ THIS TIME. YOU ALL ARE IN OUR PRAYERS.MAY THE PEACE OF GOD REST UPON YOUR HEARTS! WITH LOVE, ELDER CHARLES RHODES & THE GRACE & MERCY MINISTRIES FAMILY##imported-begin##PASTOR & LADY CHARLES RHODES##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ Growing up in Baltimore I knew of Congressman Mitchell but never had any encounter with him because the politicians usually did not walk through the streets of Division, Laurens, Etting, Brunt, and Robert. It wasn't until I was attending the University of Colorado Graduate School of Public Affairs that I had an opportunity to meet Congressman Mitchell. He attended a class of mine with Marshall Kaplan a former cabinet member in the Carter administration and then dean of the graduate school. After the lecture I introduced myself and told him I lived on Robert Street. Congressman Mitchell shooked my hand gave me a great hug and told me he was so proud to meet me and offered words of encouragement. For a kid from 527 Robert Street that gesture alone inspired me. Two days later my mother calls me in a panic barely catching her breath anticipating the worst my mom tells me "Parren Mitchell just stopped by and spoke to me about you!" My mother said Congressman Mitchell told her he was proud of her and I was doing great! I never in my wildest of dreams would have thought Mr. Mitchell with his schedule would have taken the time to stop in the "hood" to see my mom. This simple gesture was an act that profoundly affected my mom because she only had a 5th grade education and cleaned houses in the county for a living. We would often recall that day with great fondness. This simple act touched me and added to my intestinal fortitude to succeed no matter what. I often thought of Congressman's Mitchell simple act and used it in my own approach in helping others. Somehow I managed to become a Kellogg Fellow in Washington D.C. and obtained my masters' degree from the University of Pennsylvania and I credit him for helping me simply by this one simple act. God Bless Congressman Parren Mitchell. Wendell Evans Bronx, New York.##imported-begin##Wendell Evans##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ To the family, I offer my sincere sympathy. At times like these it may seem that there is no source of comfort. No source of relief from your sorrow. I have been able to find comfort in God's Word, The Bible. I have found comfort from the wonderful hope expressed at Acts 24:15 and the promise made at John 5:28,29. May these serve as a source of comfort for you also.##imported-begin##Gwen Winston##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ Somehow we always say the least to those we love and respect and hope our thoughts are understood. That's why in the labor movement if it had not been for Congressman Parren J. Mitchell, there wouldn't be the presence of African Americans, particular women in leadership positions. The Unions will forever be in his debt. May the remembrance of our Great Leader live on forever.##imported-begin##Lena Redmon##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ We have indeed lost a valuable member who made tremendous contributions to all mankind. He is to be honored and remembered in all of the schools, colleges and universities. His history should be made known to all in this state and country. His contributions should be long remembered and his presence will always be with us. It was such a blessing to see the honors given to him by members of Congress, the mayor, governor, speaker of the house, elected officials, clergy, voices of the people and his dear family. The younger Mitchells have followed the example of Mr. Clarence Mitchell, Jr., Mrs. Juanita Jackson Mitchell, Dr. Lily Mae Jackson, and the Honorable Parren J. Mitchell. They showed they also are a force to be reckoned with as well. Parren knew and understood the Scripture, “Be bold, be strong for the Lord your God is with you.” Long will his numerous contributions and deeds of unselfish love, mercy and kindness to those who needed him most, giving much, asking for nothing in return be cherished. His life indeed spoke for him. Long will he be remembered. It was a pleasure to have worked with him in the Human Relations Commission and drink in his wisdom and firm, noble strength. What a friend he was to all. The depth and breath of his deeds to others will only be known when we reach the kingdom how many he truly helped. He was honored by his nephew Michael Mitchell and other members of this great family. Oh how wonderful to see the family give a well deserved tribute to Michael as well. This is a family like no other. They have long set the standard for justice, zeal and zest for justice. A “never give up” spirit, no matter what! Let us strive to follow the principles that have been set down by the Honorable Parren J. Mitchell and the Mitchell family. Baltimore and our state is richer and blessed because God put this great family here for us, and the family will continue to bless this State I thought I knew Brother Parren, yet when I heard the tributes from so many, I found there was so much more of him that could only be shared by those who he assisted, and whose aid he had come to, and those who loved and knew him best. May God continue to richly bless the great Mitchell family. I love all of you and will continue to keep you in my prayers. Shalom, peace be unto you.##imported-begin##Woody and Janice

Grant###imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ *I was greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Mr. Mitchell. When he became chairman of the House Small Business Committee, he kept me in the position of the general counsel of the Committee. During the 6 years I served him, I came to know and respect him as a gentleman and a scholar. The Small Business Committee lost one of its best chairmen when he decided to retire from Congress. I extend my deepest sympathy to his family. Thomas G. Powers Indian Harbor Beach, Fl###imported-begin##Tom Powers###imported-end##*

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ Dear family, I am so sorry to hear of your loss. Mr. Mitchell achieved a lot during his time on this earth, but unfortunately, no matter what we accomplish in life we can not overcome the enemies of sickness, old-age, and death. One day soon though there is going to be a miraculous change on this earth. The peace that Mr. Mitchell and others fought so hard for will become a reality, and even sickness and death will be no more. It will not come through the governments of men, for God has set up his own kingdom, which will rule in righteousness over mankind; and will bring about the beautiful peaceful conditions we all long for. This is the kingdom we pray for in the Lord's prayer when we pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. When that prayer is answered then we will experience what is bought out at Revelation 21:4; "And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. "The former things have passed away. Then Parren and millions of others who have died will experience what is said at John 5:28,29, "the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out." I pray that you put your hope and trust in the God of the bible, Jehovah, Psalms 83:18; who is the God of all salvation, and by means of his son Jesus will undo all the hurt that has happened on this earth since the dawn of time. Please believe in his promises, because according to Isaiah 55:10,11; they will without fail all come true. May your precious memories sustain you.##imported-begin##R Johnson##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ To the Family and Extended Families of Parren Mitchell: My deepest sympathy and condolences on your loss. Parren: You and Joe will always be with me. Thanks for teaching me that the other side is always outnumbered when you're in the right.##imported-begin##Tom Trimboli##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ To the Mitchell Family: My sincere sympathy to the family during this time of loss. I had the distinguished pleasure of knowing the Congressman through work at UMBC where he helped us celebrate the creation of the Office of Minority Recruitment, as a resident of the 7th Congressional District and through our St. Katherine's family. A man of greater integrity has not been found. He will always be MY CONGRESSMAN. This is truly one man who deserves to REST IN PEACE. Gloria E. Jackson

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ although i didn't know Mr. Mitchell personally, his face is a familiar one through the media. Mr. Mitchell seems to have been well liked by many therefore I know he is sorely missed. as many of us know it is a very depressing situation to have those we love die and not be there in our company anymore. considering that thought I would like to give you the hope that I have from God's word the Bible, that of the resurrection of our dear ones who have died. the Bible promises that at that time the earth will have been transformed into a beautiful paradise with no more wickednes or anything else to make us sad or unhappy. please read these reassuring verses from your Bible:Psalms72:12-14, John5:28,29, Revelation21:3,4, Psalms37:9-11,29 if, after considering these thoughts from the Bible you decide you would like to be comforted further, please contact me at my e-mail address:kic2@verizon.net

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ Sorry to hear of the loss of Mr. Mitchell. He truly was a hard-working dedicated man who cared about his neighbor. May you receive much comfort and hope from Acts 24:15 which assures us- "There is going to be a resurrection." May you draw close to the maker of this promise Jehovah God and his Son Jesus Christ. (Psalm 83:18, Luke 1:32)##imported-begin##Sharon Hill##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ To the family of Congressman Parren J. Mitchell I just read about the recent death of your love one. I am deeply concerned about the sorrow and distress that you must be experiencing. I have some GOOD NEWS to share with your regarding loss. The Bible promises us that we will have the opportunity to see our dear love ones again. At John 5:28, 29 Jesus Christ assures us that “everyone in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out”. The promise of a resurrection is held out to all those falling asleep in death (Acts 24:15). Jehovah God has promised obedient mankind at Revelation 21:1-4 that very soon pain, sickness and yes even death will be no more, because according to 1John 4:8 “God is love”. I sincerely hope these words brought your family comfort##imported-begin##Louise Hibbler##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ I would like to send condolences to you all. Time goes by, it has been a little over a year since Mr. Mitchell circle of life was broken. It is wonderful to know that a better future for mankind is in the making for mankind to have ever thing we desires, Ps.145:16, living forever, no more sickness, old age, pain , death. Our creator cares for you all, 1 Peter 5:7. We wil be free to enjoy life to the full. I hope these few thoughts will be uplifting. May all the many cherished memories of Mr. Mitchell keep supporting you all in life journey.##imported-begin##Lillian Crosby##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM