

# Being a woman is harder to 'overcome' than being black



Tribune Photo by David Nystrom

The Rev. Ms. Willie Barrow is a woman who cares about the world: "My ministry is people."

*"It's easier being black than being a woman," says the Rev. Willie Barrow, who has made a success of both. In this unusual Personal Story she tells how she grew up picking cotton in Texas, why she founded her own church, what she expects to accomplish thru Operation PUSH.*

By Carol Kleiman

**ASK THE** Rev. Ms. Willie Barrow—that's how her name reads on official communications—to describe herself.

"Well, I'm a woman first," says the vice president of Operation PUSH, number two person under the Rev. Jesse Jackson, and smiles.

"A wife, I try to be. A mother, I'm proud to be. An ordained minister, I'm called to be.

"And black, I must be."

**ANYONE** who has ever watched and heard the fiery Rev. Barrow preach to thousands at PUSH meetings might be surprised to meet her face to face. This human dynamo, tireless, articulate, compassionate, is *not* seven feet tall. She is petite, soft-spoken, a good listener. The public and the private person are the same, tho: She is a woman who cares.

"My ministry is people," she says. "That has never changed."

A lot has changed, however. She was born 50 years ago in the small, rural community of Burton, Tex. and never experienced hunger but she knew hard work.

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## Personal story

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"My Daddy was a minister and a farmer," she says. "We grew up in a typical country life. We picked our cotton and our corn, we fed the hogs and chickens, we milked the cows. There were six of us.

"My mother always worked in the fields and then came home, made our meals, went back to the fields and worked side by side with our Daddy. At night, we all rode in a wagon pulled by mules to church, where we prayed. We did this every night, as a family."

**TODAY**, the woman who says she had a sheltered childhood—"I never went anywhere alone; I was always with my parents or some adult"—is internationally known. She attends conferences thruout the world, went on a Peace Mission to North Viet Nam in 1972, and makes public appearances thruout the United States in her capacity both as a minister and leader of the largest civil rights group in the United States.

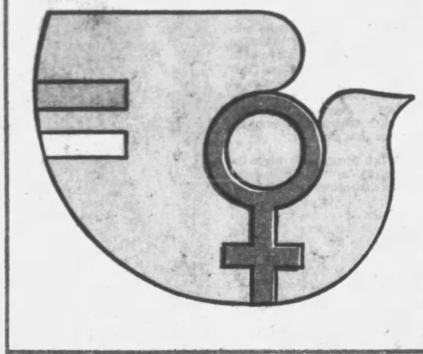
The Rev. Barrow operates out of PUSH headquarters, 950 E. 50th St., where she is in charge of programs and operations. She's also associate minister of the Vernon Park Church of God. The Rev. Barrow was state coordinator for the recent Coalition Against Hunger and led a special hunger task force into 15 Illinois cities. She has coordinated every major civil rights demonstration at

Continued on page 4

# Ringling in a new decade for women



Bella Abzug: "Role of women in this country has been neglected."



Betty Friedan: "IWY was sabotaged at every turn by the UN."



The Rev. Willie Barrow: "Black women have a greater struggle."



Patricia Hutar: "Women realize the problems are universal."



Jill Ruckelshaus: "The women's movement is an ongoing struggle."

By Mary Knoblauch

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S Year dies at the stroke of midnight Wednesday. Will anyone mourn its passing?**

Not Patricia Hutar, United States representative on the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. "You know, of course, that it's now International Women's Decade," Hutar said. "The meeting in Mexico City had a ripple effect, making women aware of IWY. I know it did in our country."

The UN voted the year into a decade so member countries could begin implementing the world plan of action adopted in Mexico City and approved by the UN Dec. 15.

Rep. Bella Abzug (D., N.Y.) isn't crying either. She and 21 cosponsors in the House got a bill passed Dec. 10 extending the national commission on IWY for three more years. It was passed by the Senate Dec. 11. The \$5 million funding authorized in the bill also will sponsor 50 state conferences on women's issues, culminating in a national women's congress — all in 1976.

"WHY WAS THIS done?" Abzug growled into her office phone one night. "Why? In this country, about to celebrate its Bicentennial, the role of women has been totally neglected! We have to find out why they have been excluded economically and politically, what significant contributions they have made, what barriers there are to women's advancement. IWY is a beginning of dealing with and thinking about civilization."

Jill Ruckelshaus, chairwomen of the national IWY commission, echoed Abzug's sentiments. "The women's movement is an ongoing struggle. It wasn't just a whimsical decision to name 1975 International Women's Year. Nor will 1976 be the culmination of our move toward a new role in America."

The task facing her staff has increased geometrically. Statewide conferences (plus six in U.S. territories) must be organized and conducted (probably in early spring) in time to name delegates to a national conference.

Recommendations from the 13 subcommittees of the commission, originally scheduled to be sent to the President next June, probably will form the agenda for the state and national conferences, a commission spokeswoman said.

**EACH STATE convention will elect delegates to the national convention.** "One suggestion has been that each state elect the same number of representatives as it sends to Congress. Another suggestion is for 10 delegates from each state," the spokeswoman said.

To many Americans, last summer's world conference in Mexico City with its well-publicized tiffs and behind-the-scenes politicking is all there was to IWY — possibly because it was the only IWY event to get worldwide coverage.

But, besides smaller UN-sponsored conferences, individual member countries pursued their own observances.

Here, the U.S. Center for IWY in Washington, which closes Wednesday, served as an information clearinghouse. Its monthly bulletin listed dozens of projects ranging from special seminars to commemorative stamps, all responding to the center's call for individual groups to observe IWY with their own projects.

**ONE OF THE MOST interesting** is the National Women's Agenda, a set of goals put together by an association of 90 women's organizations, representing more than 33 million American women. The groups range from unions and profes-

sional groups through the League of Women Voters and Hadassah to the National Gay Task Force and the Gray Panthers. It just got organized in November.

**WOMEN FROM ILLINOIS** at the Mexico City conference would find nothing unusual about that coalition. Pat Hutar, who headed the U.S. delegation, is from Illinois, and she believes Mexico City demonstrated that all kinds of women can unite to solve common problems.

"Women realize their problems are universal. We would not have a world plan of action if that were not true. And we would have had all kinds of political attacks on the plan of action if that were not true, and that didn't happen."

Hilda Frontany, executive director of the Lakeview Latin-American Coalition, agreed. "If this applied only to the middle class American woman, why were so many Latin American women involved? Women all over are saying: 'We are human beings. We have a right to survive.'"

The Rev. Willie Barrow, vice president of Operation PUSH, who also went to Mexico City, said: "You can't talk about what the year has done and break it down to white women. The only difference is that black women have two strikes against them. They have a deeper and longer struggle (for equality) than the white woman or the black man."

**BETTY FRIEDAN, however, is not so sanguine about IWY's** accomplishments.

"My feeling is enormous outrage that IWY seems to have been sabotaged at every turn by those who control the UN. It's an insult to women the world over to use IWY to slide into a declaration that equates Zionism with racism, to use IWY as a

trial balloon to set off a persecution of Jews. Aside from that, IWY has seen nothing happen but a lot of words. IWY taught me that nothing will happen for women anywhere unless women make it happen."

She charged that IWY has been used as an excuse to halt women's progress in some areas. "In Spain they shut down 23 centers where women were starting to get together. In the U.S., enormous amounts of money were spent to stop ERA. At a conference in East Berlin, resolutions involving equality, feminism, and sexism were not allowed on the floor."

**OTHERS DIRECTLY involved with IWY on a national and** international level tend to be more enthusiastic. A UN staff person ticks off the worldwide possibilities:

● A biennial review of each member nation's progress toward equality between now and 1985, the end of the International Women's Decade.

● A world conference in 1980, assessing world progress toward fulfilling the goals of the Mexico City plan, which affirms women's rights to equality.

● A permanent international institute on research and training for the advancement of women, to be established in Tehran. Empress Farah Diba, wife of the Shah, has raised the seed money. The rest is to come from contributions.

The staff of the U.S. commission is equally optimistic, especially now that Congress has extended its life.

Catherine East, deputy coordinator of the commission, has served on every presidential commission on the status of women since President John F. Kennedy's in 1961. "In all

# Airline resists black coalition's contract pressure

By Dean Baquet  
and Douglas Frantz

United Airlines has resisted pressure from a coalition of black groups seeking a role in United's selection of minority-owned firms to work on its \$400 million expansion project at O'Hare International Airport, according to an airline executive.

"We're meeting all the goals without any help," said J. Richard Street, vice president of airport affairs for United.

So far, United has awarded contracts totaling \$69.6 million at O'Hare. Minority-owned businesses have received \$20.4 million, or 29.3 percent, and women-owned businesses have received \$4.3 million, or 6.2 percent, Street said.

He said the airline's construction management firm, Turner Construction Co., has selected the minority- and women-owned firms that have received contracts.

According to United's figures, 77 percent of the contracts for minorities and women have gone to firms from the Chicago area.

The list of minority contractors includes some of Chicago's more established firms, and the subcontracts range from \$10.4 million for concrete to a few thousand dollars for survey work.

In recent weeks, black groups, including the Chicago Urban League and Operation PUSH, have been trying to persuade airlines to give them a role in selecting minority firms and monitoring compliance with affirmative-action goals on the \$1.5 billion O'Hare expansion.

On Thursday, American Airlines signed an agreement with a coalition of four black groups in which the airline promised to award 25 percent of the work on its O'Hare project to minorities and women. American also gave the organizations the right to monitor its compliance.

American already had hired a minority construction firm to help recruit minority contractors to work on its \$200 million expansion.

So far, American Airlines has awarded \$38.1 million in contracts on its O'Hare expansion project. Businesses controlled by minorities and women have received \$5.1 million, or 13.4 percent.

American spokesman Joseph



Rev. Willie Barrow

Stroop said the airline is putting the finishing touches on a new set of contracts that will push the total amount to about \$49.4 million. Of that, \$11.7 million, or about 23.7 percent, will go to firms controlled by minorities and women.

Operation PUSH was part of the black coalition that reached the new agreement with American, and PUSH's executive director, Rev. Willie Barrow, said United Airlines was the coalition's next target.

In an interview Friday, Street said he and other United officials have been approached by several black organizations and politicians, including Rev. Jesse Jackson and several aldermen.

Some minority contractors who have talked with United officials hinted that their association with the project might provide United with a "political plus," he said.

"When you are doing a \$400 million project, you've got a lot of friends out there," Street said.

But United believes there are sufficient guarantees in its contract with the city to ensure a high level of participation by minorities and women, Street said. The city contract calls for awarding 20 percent of its work to minorities and 5 percent to women.

As a result, he said, the airline sees no need for agreements with outside organizations.

"By complying with our contractual obligations to the city, we are complying with the points these groups have been making," Street said.

## City/suburbs

# Mayor seeks Bernardin's support on rights

By Cheryl Devall

Mayor Eugene Sawyer, who introduced a human-rights ordinance considered Wednesday by a Chicago City Council committee, announced his intention to meet with Joseph Cardinal Bernardin in an effort to persuade the leader of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago to support the proposal.

"I will seek to talk it out with him. I will seek to reason with him," Sawyer said at a City Hall news conference. Sawyer, as 6th Ward alderman, voted against a 1986 version of the ordinance.

Cardinal Bernardin's strong opposition to the ordinance persuaded many aldermen from heavily Catholic wards to vote against it. The ordinance was defeated 30-18.

The mayor called the present version "a civil rights measure whose time has come."

The ordinance adds to the existing prohibitions on sexual and racial discrimination in the areas of employment, housing and public accommodations to ensure equal protection regardless of sexual orientation, parental status, military discharge status and disability. Religious organizations are exempt from compliance with the hiring provisions of the ordinance.

Sawyer's announcement coincided with the first committee hearing on the new human-rights ordinance, which drew testimony from traditional friends and foes of the legislation as well as from new supporters.

The City Council Committee on



Rev. Willie Barrow

Human Rights and Consumer Protection heard witnesses from civil-rights and religious groups, gays and lesbians and disability-rights groups during a four-hour hearing in City Hall.

In the past, opponents of the ordinance seized on the gay-rights provision to help defeat it. The new ordinance includes protection for veterans, single parents and disabled people as well.

One of the strongest affirmations of the ordinance came from Rev. Willie Barrow, national executive director of Operation PUSH.

"We are all God's children, re-

gardless of race, creed, religion or sexual preference," Rev. Barrow testified. "Discrimination against any of God's children means you are criticizing God's own handiwork."

She did find "ambiguous" the veterans' protection provision, which she feared would slight women and racial minorities, and she called for tougher penalties than the \$100 to \$500 per day included in the ordinance.

"I think that every human being must have a right to eat, a right to live, a right to a job and a right to an education," Rev. Barrow, who lost a son to AIDS, said after her testimony. "It's sad that we have to pass an ordinance in order to ensure that."

An opposing view was espoused by Rev. Hiram Crawford, pastor of Israel Methodist Community Church, 7620 S. Cottage Grove Ave., who denounced the ordinance as "a law that would forbid a Christian school from segregating against a sodomite teacher."

Rev. Crawford, a longtime opponent of the ordinance in its various forms, also linked its passage to the spread of AIDS and communism.

He and members of an organization called the Christian Connection brought to the committee thousands of letters opposing the ordinance. They said the letters were written by members of more than 500 congregations in Chicago and the suburbs.

But Sister Donna Quinn, executive director of Chicago Catholic Women, diverged from the archdiocesan position on the ordinance.

"Now is the time to preach the good news—the right of every individual to have housing and employment and to be able to walk the streets of our city free from violence," she said. "Preach from every pulpit that justice must be our work in this life. Preach that the passing of this ordinance is for all people in Chicago."

Bishop Frank T. Griswold III of the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago joined those supporting the proposal.

"The bill reflects the same attitude and concern that the Episcopal Church, nationwide, had adopted as policy over the past several years," Bishop Griswold said in a statement released Wednesday.

Unitarian Church officials also announced their support for the mayor's bill earlier this week.

Many of the people directly affected by the ordinance testified about incidents in which they were discriminated against. Dennis Schreiber, president of the Disabled American Rally for Equality, told the committee that he had been denied jobs, apartments and service in restaurants because he uses a wheelchair, is blind and partly deaf.

Schreiber said he now has the financial and technical support he needs to live independently, but added, "I don't want disabled people who are coming up to go through what I went through. I want the protection of law."

The committee has scheduled a June 23 hearing, after which it will vote on the ordinance.

# New mission at PUSH

## Jackson plans building rehab

By Jerry Thomas  
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

At one time, if you were anybody in black America, or somebody trying to appeal to the African-American community, you appeared at Operation PUSH headquarters, the majestic stone and marble building at 930 E. 50th St.

From the PUSH stage, Ralph Metcalfe and other congressmen launched their bids for office. Harold Washington declared that he would become the first African-American mayor of Chicago. And Rev. Jesse Jackson, PUSH's founder, announced his run for the presidency there.

But Jackson's two bids for the White House fell short, he moved to Washington and PUSH's influence began to wane. PUSH's once-grand headquarters began to suffer from neglect too. The most obvious signs are the broken windows, the peeling wall paint, the worn carpet and the faulty sound system.

Now Jackson has pledged to spend more time in Chicago, and he has big plans for reviving PUSH and renovating its historic headquarters. The complex will be repainted and rewired, and a new sound system will be installed. He also plans to expand an annex into a new attraction—named the Jesse Jackson Civil Rights Library.

"This building is a strong monument, and it is really a place of rescue to people for these 25 years," said the 54-year-old Jackson, pointing to the 1993 visit of Nelson Mandela as one of many highlights in the building's history.

Serving as a tour guide through the huge complex last week, Jackson pronounced the building sound but said, "It takes money for upkeep."

Since returning as PUSH's president and chief executive officer last month, Jackson has organized a restoration commission to help raise \$1 million to renovate the complex, which is made up of two buildings—the temple, built in 1923, and the community house, built in 1949.

Jackson, who already has raised more than \$100,000 for repairs, said the complex would be remodeled in stages, but he hinted that he would like to see a portion of the project completed before the Democratic National Convention in August.

Last week, painters were inside the building, setting up their ladders.

During a recent PUSH/Rainbow community forum, Jackson told his audience that he had been "pricing a first-class sound system" that would cost about \$40,000.

"You want to be able to hear well?" he asked humorously. "Well, that will cost."

Cook County Board President



Tribune photos by John Kringas

Rev. Willie Barrow, chairwoman of the board, stands in front of a crumbling wall at Operation PUSH's headquarters. Rev. Jesse Jackson is trying to raise \$1 million to renovate the complex, which is made up of the temple, built in 1923, and the community house (right), built in 1949.

John Stroger led those responding to the call by handing Jackson a check for \$1,000.

Several months ago, the heating unit died and Jackson had to turn to his gift of persuasion to raise the \$6,000 down payment for a new \$96,000 boiler unit. He exceeded his goal by having three collections in one service.

The Illinois secretary of state's office has agreed to help PUSH establish the civil rights library, which officials believe would be the first of its kind in the Northern states.

Bill Scott, a spokesman for Secretary of State George Ryan, who also serves as the state librarian, said the agency had provided PUSH with \$25,000 to buy computers and hire a part-time librarian.

The agency has not determined how much it will appropriate annually for the library, Scott said.

"We are waiting to hear from them, and we will be happy to work with them any way we can," said Scott, who described PUSH as a "local tradition."

Jackson wants to make PUSH/Rainbow the most technologically advanced civil rights organization in America.

"We will be up on the super-highway, driving real fast with the Internet, CD-ROM and all those kinds of things," said Jackson, who added that the group will venture into live television, which will complement its



weekly radio program.

People United to Serve Humanity was established on Christmas Day in 1971 just days after Jackson was ousted as director of Operation Breadbasket, which was part of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's non-violent movement, an organization once led by Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

PUSH was ordered to vacate the former SCLC office, in the Capitol Theater building at 79th and Halsted Streets.

For a while, meetings were at churches and the Metropolitan Theater, formerly at King Drive and 47th Street. But on June 26, 1972, PUSH bought the temple for \$210,000 from the K.A.M. Isaiah Israel Congregation.

The next Saturday morning—even though it was chilly and rainy—about 1,000 people gathered outside the Metropolitan Theater for the 13-block march to the new PUSH headquarters at 50th Street and

Drexel Boulevard.

"It was probably one of the most joyous occasions," said Rev. Willie Barrow, PUSH's chairwoman of the board. "It felt good to get away from that cold, rat-infested theater and coming to this. This was like heaven, something we could call our own."

Lucille Loman, a PUSH volunteer and longtime member, said the building had everything PUSH wanted.

The complex, which was on the market for \$450,000, came with a 1,298-seat sanctuary, a prayer room, a community hall and stage, a kitchen, classrooms and a library and studio.

But Loman and Barrow said the structure, even though it has earned landmark status from the National Register of Historic Places, is not what makes PUSH special. PUSH is being preserved for the future, because of what has occurred inside the building.

# Civil-rights leader, NOW chief urge continued equality struggle

By BEVERLY BARTLETT  
The Courier-Journal

A famed civil-rights activist, the Rev. Willie T. Barrow, and NOW President Patricia Ireland spoke in Louisville yesterday, issuing calls for a continued struggle toward equality.

"We've got to fight," Barrow told a group of community and business leaders gathered at a luncheon for the publishers of African-American newspapers. "If you want to win, you have to fight."

The Chicago minister, who at 73 walks about 25 miles a week and reads at least five newspapers a day, peppered her talk with stories of civil-rights battles she has won over the years — including getting work for more minority contractors and getting a more diverse representation on some corporate boards.

About 150 people — most of them community and business leaders — attended the luncheon, which was held in honor of the National Newspaper Publishers Association as part of a three-day Minority Consumer Expo.

The Louisville Defender sponsors the expo each year. The association is made up of about 250 African-American newspapers, and representatives of about 30 of them are expected to attend a regional meeting in conjunction with the expo, said Yvonne Coleman, editor and director of public affairs for the Defender.

Ireland also entertained the audience with reminders of how far the struggle for women's equality has come.

In the 1960s, when she was a Pan Am "stewardess," women in those jobs were required to quit when they turned 32 or got married. Even after the marriage ban was lifted, women did not get the same family medical benefits that men did, she said.

Ireland, whose husband was a student and needed dental work, successfully contested the rule by phoning officials of the National Organization for Women, who explained the law to her employer. At first, Ireland said, she was just excited about averting a family crisis — but then another woman came up, hugged her and said "Wow, we won."

"That 'we' really got my attention," Ireland said. "That really felt good." And it was the beginning of work that eventually made her the national president of the organization that helped her.

Ireland said it's a mark of progress that even the most conservative businessmen and politicians today express support for equal pay for equal work and tough questions about sexual harassment are debated openly.



PHOTOS BY KEITH WILLIAMS, THE COURIER-JOURNAL

**The Rev. Willie Barrow, 73, a Chicago civil-rights activist, spoke of the continuing struggle toward racial equality. "If you want to win, you have to fight," she told her audience.**



**Patricia Ireland, president of the National Organization for Women, spoke yesterday in Louisville of the struggle for equality for women, telling of the progress that's been made on that front.**

At a time when airlines used ad campaigns that said things like, "We really move our tails for you," and "I'm Cheryl, fly me," Ireland said, "We didn't even have the words to describe the sexual harassment" such ads encouraged.

After the luncheon, a forum on diversity in the workplace was held. It was moderated by Joseph Madison, an NAACP board member with a talk radio show in Washington.

Madison led a discussion on how diversity is valuable with six panelists — including a Procter & Gamble

manager from Ohio, a vice president of Brown-Forman Corp., and Beverly Watts, the executive director of the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights.

## CORRECTION

Because of a reporter's error, David Blue's title was wrong in a story yesterday about the proposed Muhammad Ali Center. He is president and CEO of Louisville Scrap Material Co. Inc.

# Jackson's board gives expression of support

By Tammy Webber  
Associated Press

## CHICAGO

Board members in the Rev. Jesse Jackson's Chicago-based civil rights organization rallied around their leader Friday, making it clear that he will continue to head the group despite the embarrassment of his extramarital affair and resulting child.

"We need him," the Rev. Willie Barrow, co-founder of the Rainbow-PUSH Coalition, said at a news conference after a board meeting to discuss how to handle damage control. "We cannot afford to have Rev. Jackson on the sidelines for an undetermined time."

Board members also addressed reports of payments made to Karin Stanford, the child's mother and former head of Rainbow-PUSH's Washington office.

"We do not pay her any monthly compensation," said the Rev. James Meeks, a Chicago pastor who is second in command at Rainbow-PUSH.

Meeks did say that Rainbow-PUSH records show that the organization paid Stanford \$35,000 — which he called "severance pay" — when she



Associated Press

**Not sidelining leader:** The Rev. Willie Barrow, co-founder of the Rainbow-PUSH Coalition, expresses support for the Rev. Jesse Jackson.

moved to Los Angeles, where she now lives with her 20-month-old daughter.

Earlier in the day, Rainbow-PUSH spokesman John Scanlon said Jackson personally pays Stanford \$3,000 a month in child support. He also said Stanford received the \$35,000 in two payments from Rainbow-PUSH — \$20,000 in moving expenses and a \$15,000 advance on a contract to do consulting for the organization.

At the news conference, Meeks said the leak of the story to the

National Enquirer was an attempt to quiet Jackson's protest of election results in the Florida presidential election.

"We think that there is something awfully suspicious about the timing of this 2-year-old story," Meeks said, noting that it broke three days before Jackson was to help lead a rally today in Tallahassee, Fla. He said he did not know who was behind the alleged plot to quiet Jackson.

Rainbow-PUSH officials now say it is unlikely that Jackson will attend the rally.

You can't kill truth. The truth  
will last forever.

WILLIE BARROW, CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST

## SUNDAY Q&A



Chicago Fire Commissioner Cortez Trotter explains some fine points of his chili to the Rev. Willie Barrow at the Taste of Black History event at DuSable Museum in this 2005 photo. Barrow has been a civil rights activist since working with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and now works as co-chairman of the Rainbow/PUSH coalition and an aide to the Rev. Jesse Jackson. FILE PHOTO

# CARRYING THE DREAM

**THE REV. WILLIE BARROW** | The civil rights activist who worked with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. talks about her work with him and how his vision applies to the future

BY STAFF WRITER CASEY TONER

**S**eventeen thousand sandwiches can make a difference. The Rev. Willie Barrow, field organizer under Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during the 1950s and '60s, unearthed that anecdotal gem during her speech at Matteson's Martin Luther King Celebration held at Lincoln Mall Jan. 21.

Barrow claimed she helped make the sandwiches in Chicago for the march on Washington,

the famous event where King, before a clamoring crowd, declared his dream, his bold and enduring vision of racial harmony.

Decades after King's famous speech, Barrow is still fighting for civil rights, working as co-chairman of the Rainbow/PUSH coalition and serving as an aide to the Rev. Jesse Jackson.

After her speech, Barrow hung around the mall

for a couple hours signing autographs, exchanging hugs and posing for pictures.

Barrow also sat down with the SouthtownStar to field some questions concerning race relations in the United States, King's legacy and assassination as well as the very real possibility that a black man's name may appear on the presidential ballot.

**Q.** In your lifetime, and with everything you've seen, did you think you'd ever see a black man with a legitimate shot to win the presidency?

**A.** Never. With the world we're living in right now, the boy has the right message. It was revealed to me about eight months ago. You can't give up. A change is about to come.

**Q.** What troubles you in today's world?

**A.** There's so much violence and broken families, and they don't know what it means to marry and respect each other. We've left that.

The whole world is marred in violence. Men, women, children... We've heard stories of children killing their parents. We don't know how to love or respect anyone. The rich care nothing about the poor.

**Q.** Where were you and what was happening when King was murdered?

**A.** I was very sad. I was in the restaurant eating my lunch. Dr. King's treasurer was having lunch with us when King was assassinated. I couldn't get up for a while. Finally, we were back at the office when all hell broke out. That's when violence broke out.

The community started burning buildings and shooting each other. I called for a meeting and hundreds of hundreds of people came out to the church. We had to make an appeal to stop the shooting, stop the burning, and we stayed inside all night long.

Dr. King was sent by God, trying to bring justice to the nation. He thought there shouldn't be people without health care and that every child should have access to education. That's where we have to go, no matter what.

He said, "I'm not going to fight back." His message was nonviolence. We have to go back to it. Even the presidents of nations are violent. You have to stop the violence.

**Q.** What does it say about King, race relations and America that while he may have been killed, many of his ideas, initiatives and civil rights victories march on today?

**A.** You can't kill truth. The truth is that God's gonna raise up our nation, and it will obey. It's God's world, not man's world. That's why the seasons change. It snowed recently for the first time in Iraq, in the history of the country... What we're doing is wrong. When God speaks, we better listen.

**Q.** What is the worst thing you've ever seen during

your fight for civil rights?

**A.** The worst thing I ever saw was Dr. King's assassination. It was both ends.

He was killed, and after he was killed, the nation couldn't contain itself. They became violent, violent. That's why we celebrate his dream, his vision, and we execute what he said and did.

**Q.** What's the best thing you've seen?

**A.** I've seen many leaders produced from his movement. Many changes have been made. We have to make sure the changes still exist.





TERRENCE ANTONIO JAMES/CHICAGO TRIBUNE 2000

The Rev. Willie T. Barrow, an important member of the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, didn't just speak for racial equality; she also fought for women's and labor rights.

# 'Little Warrior' never left fight

## Longtime civil rights leader who helped found Rainbow/PUSH Coalition devoted life to cause

BY LOLLY BOWEAN | Tribune reporter

The Rev. Willie T. Barrow, the longtime civil rights leader known as "The Little Warrior" who marched with the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. at Selma and helped found the organization that became the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, died early Thursday after a long illness.

Barrow, who was 90, died at her home about 2:30 a.m., according to John Mitchell, chief of staff at Rainbow/PUSH. He did not have a cause of death, but Barrow had been in declining health for some time and had been hospitalized at the end of February for a blood clot.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson said in a statement that Barrow was "a woman of unusual courage and character" and a "freedom fighter."

"She fought in the tradition of Rosa Parks. ... She was fearless," Jackson said, adding that "death can have her frail body but not her good works and



CHICAGO TRIBUNE 1978

Barrow was the first woman to lead Operation PUSH.

not our memories of her. We love you. Rest in peace. We will never forget you."

President Barack Obama issued a statement calling Barrow a Chicago institution and a personal friend.

"Nowhere was Rev. Barrow's impact felt more than in our hometown of Chicago," Obama said. "To Michelle and me, she was a constant inspiration, a lifelong mentor and a very dear friend. I was proud to count myself

among the more than 100 men and women she called her 'Godchildren,' and worked hard to live up to her example. I still do."

Obama said he and first lady Michelle Obama were saddened by Barrow's death, "but we take comfort in the knowledge that our world is a far better place because she was a part of it."

Turn to **Barrow**, Page 9

# Civil rights movement icon, Rev. Willie Barrow, remembered

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ASSOCIATED PRESS

**CHICAGO** — The Rev. Willie Barrow, a front-line civil rights fighter for decades and a mentor to younger generations of activists, died Thursday in Chicago. She was 90.

Barrow was a field organizer for the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., marched on Washington and Selma in the 1960s, and more recently focused concern on Chicago's gun violence and changes to the Voting Rights Act.

Barrow had been hospitalized for treatment of a blood clot in her lung and died early Thursday, said fellow activist the Rev. Michael Pflieger.

"She's one of those icons in the movement we've been able to hold onto for a long time, to learn from, to be loved by, to be challenged by," Pflieger said.

Barrow helped organize sit-ins and boycotts in the South with civil rights icons including King, Rosa Parks and the Rev. Ralph Abernathy.

Alongside the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Barrow co-founded the Chicago chapter of Operation Breadbasket, which would become Operation PUSH.



AP

House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi (left) visits in 2012 with the Rev. Willie Barrow in Chicago. Barrow, a longtime civil rights activist, died Thursday. She was 90.

Around Chicago, she was known to many as "godmother" or "mother" for the care she took to advise and inform younger activists.

Known as the "little warrior," her short height belied a charismatic, tell-it-like-it-is attitude unchecked by either concern for political correctness or the stature of whomever she was addressing.

"She was a great moti-

vational speaker with the unusual gift of being able to take a scared group of people and inspire them to take militant nonviolent action to correct a wrong," Jackson said.

She took up causes ranging from women's rights to AIDS awareness. Her son, Keith, died of the disease in 1983. And she traveled widely on missions of peace and outreach, including to Viet-

nam, Russia, Nicaragua, Cuba and to South Africa when Nelson Mandela was released from prison.

Barrow was born in Burton, Texas. In 1936, as a young child, Barrow demanded to be let on her all-white school bus.

"The fight for equality she joined that day would become the cause of her life," President Barack Obama said in a written statement.