



GALLERY OF DISTINGUISHED CITIZENS INDUCTEE 2010

REVEREND FRED L. SHUTTLESWORTH, a driving force in America's fight for civil and human rights for more than a half century, was a native of Montgomery County, Alabama, and spent much of his childhood in Birmingham. Rev. Shuttlesworth was the first of nine children born to Alberta Robinson Shuttlesworth. His stepfather, William Nathan Shuttlesworth, was a farmer.

In 1951, Shuttlesworth earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Selma University, and the following year, he earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Alabama State Teachers College, now Alabama State University. Responding to a call from God, Shuttlesworth often relied on divine direction for his activism. He mastered the art of non-violent confrontation by organizing marches, rallies, delivering intense sermons and writing powerful letters to segregationists such as former Birmingham Police Commissioner Eugene Bull Connor. The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. once called Rev. Shuttlesworth "the most courageous civil rights fighter in the South."

In May of 1956, Shuttlesworth established the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR), the engine that propelled the civil rights movement by organizing and equipping foot soldiers for non-violent action. When the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against segregated buses in Montgomery, Alabama, Rev. Shuttlesworth rallied the membership of the ACMHR to challenge segregated buses in Birmingham. Shuttlesworth began in 1959 urging Rev. King to come to Birmingham and to focus the national challenge to segregation on Alabama's largest city. He was among a group of national leaders that had founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference along with Rev. King. Rev. Shuttlesworth held various positions of leadership in SCLC and in 2004 he briefly served as the organization's president.

Pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in Collegeville from 1953 to 1961, Rev. Shuttlesworth was often the target of attacks. On Christmas Day in 1956, his home was bombed. In 1957, he was beaten with whips and chains as he attempted to enroll his children in the segregated Phillips High School.

Rev. Shuttlesworth participated in sit-ins at segregated lunch counters in 1960, and in 1961, joined forces with the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) to organize the Freedom Rides against segregated interstate buses in the South. In 1963, Bull Connor ordered fire hoses turned on Shuttlesworth and other demonstrators, and Shuttlesworth was hospitalized after being slammed against a wall by the force of the water pressure from fire hoses.

Shuttlesworth left Bethel Baptist Church in 1961 to pastor Revelation Baptist Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, but regularly returned to Birmingham to lead the challenge to segregation in the South.

Shuttlesworth and his wife Sephira moved back to Birmingham in 2008, where he received therapy for a stroke he suffered in 2007. The Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport was renamed for him in 2008 and he attended the premiere of a documentary highlighting his work at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, where a statue honoring him stands outside. His children, Patricia Shuttlesworth Massengill, Ruby Shuttlesworth Bester, Fred L. Shuttlesworth Jr., and Carolyn Shuttlesworth, remained supportive of their father as he fulfilled his calling.