

## The Courage to Hope

How I Stood Up to the Politics of Fear

By Kam Williams  
Special To *The Skanner News*

“In the summer of 2010, Shirley Sherrod was catapulted into a media storm that blew apart her life... A right-wing blogger disseminated a video clip of a speech she had given to the Georgia NAACP...

The media ramped up the outrage and, before Sherrod had a chance to defend herself, the Obama administration demanded her resignation. Then, after hearing... the entire speech, public officials and media professionals admitted to being duped and apologized for their rush to judgment...

The *Courage to Hope* addresses this regrettable episode but also tells Sherrod's own story of growing



her heartfelt remarks in that speech delivered to the NAACP were exactly the opposite. In the address, she spoke about how she had overcome the bitterness she'd felt about the South (including the murder of her own father by a white man never brought to justice) to the point that she became willing to help poor folks of any color.

Furthermore, she was summarily fired on the spot by her boss without being given an opportunity to defend herself. In the end, the truth did come out, affording the country a very-valuable teachable moment about innocence until proven guilty when the unfairly accused was ultimately exonerated.

Sherrod finally gets to set the record straight in *The Courage to Hope*, a poignant half-autobiography/half-tale of redemption. Not only does the moving memoir address the infamous incident which thrust the author into the limelight but, perhaps more importantly, it recounts a life story which reveals her to be a real role model well worthy of admiration and emulation.

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up in Georgia during the violent years of Jim Crow when her father was murdered by a white neighbor who was never brought to justice.”

— Excerpted from the *Inside Book Jacket*.

A couple of years ago, arch-conservative Andrew Breitbart (since deceased) launched a character assassination on Shirley Sherrod which almost cost the then U.S.D.A. State Director her career while temporarily ruining her reputation. For, he had posted on his website a video edited to make Ms. Sherrod appear to be an unrepentant bigot against Caucasians.

Truth be told, the tenor of

However, Breitbart's misleading video quoted Ms. Sherrod out of context, making no mention of her having made an emotional breakthrough. Instead, it was deliberately designed to leave viewers with the impression that she was an inveterate racist.

Sadly, the clip went viral and soon not only right-wing pundits but even presumably sympathetic colleagues ranging from NAACP President Ben Jealous to officials in the Obama administration began calling for the poor woman's head.

Sherrod was publicly humiliated in the national press as if the poster child for racial intolerance.

## 'Master Harold...'



JAMIE BOSWORTH PHOTOGRAPHER

Profile Theatre opens its 16th season with Athol Fugard's "Master Harold...and the Boys," running Oct. 3 – 28. The three-man tour-de-force features the talents of Garfield Wedderburn, Sam Benedict and Bobby Bermea (above, from left), and is directed by Jane Unger. Profile Theater, located at 3430 SE Belmont St., is dedicating its entire season to Fugard, a native of South Africa and one of the most respected living playwrights.

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