

## Saddened by Death of Leader Julian Bond

The news this weekend that Julian Bond passed away at 75 saddened me deeply. America has lost a true, and still vital, champion for justice. President Obama, hailing Bond as a hero and a friend, noted that “Julian Bond helped change this country for the better. And what better way to be remembered than that.”

At a very young age, Bond helped forge the emerging Civil Rights Movement, and was in many ways a founding father of the New South we now see still in formation. In 1957, as a student at Morehouse, son of a college president, varsity swimmer, head of the literary magazine, intern for *Time* magazine, he was on the path to success.

But the success he chose was to make history, not money. He was arrested after organizing some of the first student demonstrations to desegregate Atlanta’s lunch counters, parks and theaters. Realizing that young people could take risks too costly for adults with families, at 20, he helped found SNCC, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. He became its secretary and head of its communications; he was seen as organized, level headed and eloquent.

Julian was ahead of most in the movement for understanding the big picture. He realized that civil rights could not be achieved without economic rights, and that economic rights would not advance if America kept throwing resources and lives into war abroad. He became an early outspoken critic of the Vietnam war.

After the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, Julian led voter registration drives. At the remarkable age of 25, he was elected to the Georgia State House. The sitting legislators demanded that he repudiate his opposition to the Vietnam



**Jesse Jackson**  
Rainbow PUSH Coalition

War. When he refused, they refused to seat him. Three times his constituents reelected him, three times the House denied him his seat. Finally, the Supreme Court ruled their actions unconstitutional. In January 1967, Bond took his seat, and served in the House and Senate for the next two decades.

By that time he was a national hero for having stood on principle at the cost of his political career. In the embittered 1968 Chicago Democratic Presidential Convention, Bond led an insurgent Georgia delegation and was stood to second the nomination of Eugene McCarthy for president.

With the convention floor in bedlam and demonstrations raging outside the hall, Bond was nominated as vice president, a symbolic nomination (he was only 27 and the constitutionally required age is 35) “about the wave of the future.”

Bond served as legislator, scholar, teacher and leader. He was a founder and first president of the Southern Poverty Law Center. He taught at the University of Virginia and lectured widely, receiving more than 30 honorary degrees. He chaired the NAACP for 11 years.

He experienced first hand the slight and shackles of segregation – and organized to end them. He knew first hand the suppression of the right to vote and helped build a movement to challenge that.

## The Legacy of Julian Bond

There is an old African proverb that says, “The spirit of a freedom warrior will never die in the enduring life of the village, yet that valued spirit will be passed on to future generations.”

Julian Bond was a freedom fighter.

He was a gallant leader-warrior for freedom, justice and equality. And his spirit will never die.

The National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) family pauses to mourn the passing of civil rights leader Julian Bond. But we also know that it is important to highlight those lasting lessons from Bond’s legacy that apply to today’s struggle for freedom.

Brother Bond was a personal friend and colleague in the Civil Rights Movement during the past 50 or more



**Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.**  
NNPA President and CEO

were central to Bond’s sense of youth leadership development.

SNCC was militant and outspoken, but SNCC was well-structured. It was not a spontaneous, loosely-organized, student-run organization. One of the reasons why Bond and SNCC were effective in the 1960s is because of their internal discipline and national organizational structure.

Of course, today — with the Internet and social media being the preferred

ident Barack Obama stated, “Justice and equality was the mission that spanned his life – from his leadership of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, to his founding role with the Southern Poverty Law Center, to his pioneering service in the Georgia legislature and his steady hand at the helm of the N.A.A.C.P. .... Julian Bond helped change this country for the better. And what better way to be remembered than that?”

Denise Rolark Barnes, Chairperson of the NNPA and publisher of *The Washington Informer*, observed that Bond’s “lifelong dedication and commitment to political and economic empowerment, journalistic diversity and integrity, and educational equality served as a beacon for others to fol-

He used his pen to stir the consciousness of millions of people about the plight of Black America and others who cried out for equal justice

years. He was not only a skillful and articulate orator, Bond was also a great writer not unlike W.E. B DuBois and James Baldwin. Julian was a penetrating columnist for the NNPA as he used his pen to stir the consciousness of millions of people about the plight of Black America and others who cried out for equal justice.

Bond was one of the early leaders and cofounders of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and worked tirelessly to lead young African American student leaders across the nation to the forefront of the civil rights movement. He was a Morehouse College student activist who helped ignite the Atlanta Student Movement. SNCC successfully shaped how Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) saw the value of African American college students in the vanguard of the freedom movement.

“I tell young people to prepare themselves as best they can for a world that grows more challenging every day – get the best education they can and couple that education with real-life experience in social justice work,” said Bond, the son of a famous educator, Horace Mann Bond.

The question for today’s generation of African American youth is: What can be learned from Julian Bond’s living legacy and applied to the Black Lives Matter movement? The importance of having structure, stated principles and organization

means of communication among young leaders today in the Black Lives Matter movement — one challenge is how to build a sustainable student- and youth-led movement for justice, one with an effective structure and infrastructure. I am confident in and admire the progress that the Black Lives Matters movement has already achieved. Learning from the past helps to avoid difficulties of the past.

On Bond’s passing, Pres-

low. His presence and voice will be sorely missed, but his words remain true for the NNPA: “Good things don’t come to those who wait. They come to those who agitate!”

We will all strive to keep the living spirit of Julian Bond’s legacy alive in our current and continuing struggle for justice, equality and empowerment. May his valued and respected spirit be passed on to future generations of freedom fighters.

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