

June 7, 2020

Councilwoman Donna Purvis and Associates:

I am Maya White. Granddaughter of Benetha Ellis. Resident of District 5, West Louisville Kentucky.

Benetha Ellis has been a resident and home owner of District 5, West Louisville Kentucky for over 45 years. Benetha Ellis has raised three children, six grandchildren, and three great grandchildren at 100 South 45th Street, on the corner of Main and 45th Street in the Shawnee Neighborhood.

Benetha Ellis is a well-rounded community woman known for her activism in the 60's, specifically organizing and confronting the racialized busing integration in Louisville, KY. Her work and efforts have been documented in the University of Louisville Anne Braden Archives and cited in oral history projects that highlight busing activists in 1975. Her response to the racial harassment and abuse of Black students led Benetha to co-organize the group United Black Protective Parents. American Radio Works quotes Benetha saying, "If we had to burst into a classroom, that's what we did. If we had to burst into a principal's office, that's what we did. If we had to burst onto a bus, that's what we did." ¹

Benetha's activism has been cited and recognized in many historical and scholarly projects of her work that addressed social problems in public housing projects with Black communities in the 60's and 70's. For example, Aletia Robey (2014) shares:

"With the help of activists-minded women such as Georgia Eugene and Benetha Ellis and Lula Hodges, all paid community organizers through CAC, Southwick and Cotter Homes residents began a larger project to establish new offices in the Park DuValle Neighborhood Service Center. This center already provided low-income community members with a few social service programs, but the expansion of the center was aimed at assisting with increasing rent payments, eliminating the lack of access to healthcare, and providing opportunities to attend job training programs." ²

Benetha Ellis was a woman with grassroot initiatives for the betterment of Black Louisville. She was on the frontlines of desegregation deep and haunting racist veil. She organized with the people of Louisville to gather resources, while simultaneously building community power. Her activism continued over time, as I got to witness and protest along side with her in the past over her beliefs for the upliftment of her community.

This year, my Mema is turning 84 years old on June 26th. As an African-American Studies Master of Arts scholar, cultural worker, and UofL Pan African Studies alumna, I feel indebted to commemorate my Grandmother by applying for her name to appear above the street our family calls home. Her activism is not just a memory but a monument to our community. Countless leaders and community members frequently check in on my grandmother as she lays in hospice comfortably in her home on 45th Street.

She deserves a physical commemoration.

I want to be sure that her legacy and passion for selfless service continues to shine in West Louisville, especially the place we all call home. I want her to see the impact her voice made on generations and how that impact will always be with us.

On behalf of the Ellis family, I am applying for Main Street, within the geographical distance of 45th Street and Shawnee Terrace to be honored in the name of Benetha Ellis.

With deep and sincere interest,

Maya White
Resident, District 5
Email: mmwhit13@gmail.com

Cited

- 1 <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/deseg/al.html>
- 2 Robey, Aletia M., "The bricks in action : women's public housing activism in Louisville, Kentucky, 1958-1970." (2014). Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Paper 1215. <https://doi.org/10.18297/etd/1215>

Other References to Benetha Ellis' activism

- Small interview clip <https://soundcloud.com/sohp/ellis-benetha>
- FULL interview here with transcription <https://gate.sc/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fdc.lib.unc.edu%2Fcdm%2Fcompoundobject%2Fcollection%2Fsohp%2Fid%2F7355%2Frec%2F1&token=ff4c0-1-1580835828596>
- Legal case in UofL Archives, you will have to go to the UofL Library to see this information. https://archivescatalog.library.louisville.edu/repositories/2/archival_objects/4697

Appendix: Archival Political Campaign Materials

Benetha

"Harvey"

Ellis

About Our Candidate:

Lifetime Resident of
Louisville, Kentucky

Central High School
Graduate Class of 1954

Mother of three children

Member of New Zion
Baptist Church

Six brothers & two sisters

Presently A Volunteer
Probation Officer

Community Involved

Experience:

Head Start Aide

Neighborhood Worker

Office Manager

Center Supervisor

Inspector For The
City's Sanitation Dept.

Commissioner At Park
DuValle Service Center

Community Action Board

Plymouth Urban Center
Board

"I have no other
self interest or
political aspiration
other than serving
my community
honestly and
effectively."

Platform:

- Employment
- Health Care
- Housing • Youth
- Senior Citizens
- Economic & Community Development

Paid for by the
Benetha Ellis Campaign Fund
Loretta Jefferson, Treasurer

VOTE

Tuesday, May 24th

for "A Voice —
Instead of
An Echo!"

Pull Lever #2
Benetha "Harvey"

Ellis

12th Ward Alderman

