

Often referred to as the "Sewickley Eight" by local historians, the three surviving honorees include brothers Mitchell Higginbotham and Robert Higginbotham, of California, and William Johnston of Ohio. Jim Addison, Curtis Branch, William Curtis Jr., William Gilliam and Frank Hailstock will be honored posthumously for their unprecedented service by the society as well.

These distinguished men continued their successes after the war. In a period of extreme racism, these men overcame immense professional challenges. Mitchell Higginbotham, commissioned as a Second Lieutenant and pilot, now serves as an itinerant Ambassador of Goodwill for the Tuskegee Airmen. After serving as an expert in multi-engine aircrafts, Robert Higginbotham went on to become the first African-American intern and resident at the Sewickley Valley Hospital. William Johnston, commissioned as a Second Lieutenant, serving as a Tuskegee pilot, went on to become a corporate pilot.

The "Sewickley Eight" and their families will be honored on Thursday August 4th by the Daniel B. Matthew Society's first annual Founders Luncheon at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church Sewickley, Pennsylvania. This event will take place on the opening day of the 39th annual Come-On-Home Weekend in Sewickley.

I ask my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives to join me in honoring the brave Sewickley natives of the WWII Tuskegee Airmen of the all African-American. 99th Pursuit Squadron. It is an honor to represent the Fourth Congressional District of Pennsylvania and a pleasure to salute such citizens as the Tuskegee Airmen who embody the spirit of patriotism.

TRIBUTE TO KENYA AJANAKU, A
MULTIFACETED CULTURAL
LEADER

HON. WM. LACY CLAY

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 28, 2005

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to an article that appeared in the July 15th edition of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, which pays tribute to a man of abundant and diverse talents, Mr. Kenya Ajanaku. Not only has Mr. Ajanaku played an important part in my personal life as an admired relative, he has been a huge asset to the city of St. Louis. As the executive director of the Harambee Institute, and a professional jewelry maker, drummer, singer, dancer, storyteller and educator, Mr. Ajanaku has proven that pursuing one's passions can be personally rewarding as well as beneficial to one's community. The article, aptly entitled "Multifaceted", delivers Mr. Ajanaku the proper recognition he deserves.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the entire text of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch article be placed in the RECORD.

[From the St. Louis Dispatch, July 15, 2005]

MULTIFACETED

(By Kathie Sutin)

Some of the best things in life happen by serendipity, that accidental, happy discovery that comes when you're looking for something else.

Take Kenya Ajanaku, a multi-talented man—a professional jewelry-maker, drummer, singer, dancer, storyteller and educator.

Ajanaku, 57, is executive director of the Harambee Institute, a nonprofit organization he created in 1994 to pass on to others what he has learned about making jewelry and the performing arts. He also performs a 45-minute interactive program incorporating drum-playing and the storytelling of African folk tales to groups around St. Louis and the country.

Except for singing, which he has done most of his life, he came upon each of his other professions by chance.

"I became a jeweler at 25, I became a dancer and drummer at 31, and I became a professional storyteller at 41," says Ajanaku (pronounced ah JAHN ah koo).

"It has enabled me to have heaven right here on Earth: he says. "I do this for a living, and it's really a blessing. I can't call it a job because a job is something you hate to do. I have to call this a profession because it's something I love to do."

Not that the path was easy. In the '70s, when Ajanaku started, it was almost unheard-of for an African-American to make a living selling jewelry.

"Most people said, 'He has gone crazy talking about he gon' make a living making jewelry,'" he said with a laugh.

Ajanaku understands the skepticism of those days.

"Our people hadn't seen anyone making a living doing this," he says. "And then I got involved with the drumming, and my mother—bless her soul—says, 'Bi-State is hiring. You're 31 years old. What are you going to do with a drum?'"

He credits his wife of 38 years, Weyni, who learned jewelry-making with him and who does the paperwork and teaches at the institute, for believing in him. The couple sell necklaces, bracelets and rings they handcraft from copper, brass, silver and 14-karat gold. They also set semiprecious stones from around the world such as obsidian, turquoise, malachite, black onyx and tiger's eye. Ajanaku also fashions antique sterling silverware he finds at auctions into bracelets and rings.

After graduating from Vashon High School in 1966, Ajanaku headed to Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, N.C., on a swimming scholarship. Shortly thereafter, he married Weyni. Then, three years into college, he moved back to St. Louis to become a barber.

A few years later, he and his wife decided to sell their possessions and the barbershop to move to Panama with friends to open a business.

But there, their plans were stymied when they learned that to open a business, they needed a Panamanian partner. They decided to go back to Charlotte, where they opened a small variety store across from the university Ajanaku had attended.

After going to a movie one day, the couple encountered two African-American men near the theater. They had big boards shaped like Africa, and they had black velvet on them, and they had their jewelry pinned on the front, Ajanaku says. One of them said, "Hey, would you be interested in some handcrafted jewelry?"

Ajanaku was amazed.

"It was the first time I had seen handcrafted jewelry, especially made by someone who looks like me," he said. "Up to then, I had never conceived that I could become a jeweler. You see, when I was growing up in my community, you didn't see any professional jewelers."

He was also impressed by the jewelry.

"I was just flabbergasted at the beauty and the time and effort that went into these pieces that they made," he said.

The couple learned that the men, part of a communal group called the Ajanakus, made their living traveling from city to city and selling jewelry. They bought some jewelry and invited the men to dinner. Later they would change their last name to Ajanaku, a Nigerian term meaning "strong-willed person."

After dinner, the men brought out their tools and materials and showed the couple how they made jewelry. That night, Kenya Ajanaku made his first piece of jewelry—a pair of earrings.

Ajanaku and his wife were captivated by the lifestyle, as well as the jewelry.

So they sold their business and eventually headed for Washington, where he met a man who taught him how to solder and set stones in silver.

"I remember our first piece of sterling silver we bought in Philadelphia," he says. "It was 1 foot of 16-gauge round sterling silver wire. Man, you would have thought that was gold to us because we had never worked with sterling before."

The family returned to St. Louis in 1979 and began to sell jewelry at craft shows.

Here, Someone told him about renowned dancer Katherine Dunham and a Senegalese man she brought to East St. Louis to teach African drumming. Ajanaku signed up for the class.

"I became a pretty good drummer, and fortunately Miss Dunham hired me as one of the drummers for the Katherine Dunham Dancers. That was really a help because when I first moved back to St. Louis, the only way I had to make money was through the jewelry. When I got involved in the performing arts, it helped me to diversify."

Ajanaku later played percussion behind St. Louisan Bobby Norfolk, one of the first African-American professional storytellers, who was on the roster of Young Audiences. When Norfolk went on to national and international gigs, the group asked Ajanaku to come up with a storytelling presentation.

Though the Ajanakus spend a lot of time teaching children and adults at the Harambee Institute and at classes they teach through the St. Louis Parks and Recreation Department, the Ferguson-Florissant School District and at Mark Twain Elementary School in St. Louis, they still sell their jewelry at festivals. That includes such events as the Festival of Nations, which will be held July 23-24 in Tower Grove Park, and the Best of Missouri Market at the Missouri Botanical Garden and Ottobrofest at the St. Louis Zoo, both in October.

Ajanaku sees the institute as a way to enlighten the African-American community about professions in the arts and others about African culture.

"Nowadays, I tell people, 'The cotton has been picked; automation is here, so the need for unskilled laborers nowadays is zero,'" he says. "Nowadays you need some type of skill or some type of service you can provide."

The Harambee Institute is at 5223 Raymond Avenue. To learn more about it or to make an appointment to visit the gift shop, which features items from Africa and the Ajanakus' jewelry, call 314-454-6584.

ON THE OCCASION OF GLADYS
BAISA'S 65TH BIRTHDAY

HON. ED CASE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 28, 2005

Mr. CASE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor one of my most distinguished constituents on the occasion of her 65th birthday.

Gladys Coelho Baisa was born on August 13, 1940 on the Island of Maui, Hawaii. She grew up in the plantation camps and can remember a time when no door was locked and no one was a stranger. She lost her father at an early age was raised by her mother alone. Gladys graduated from Maui High School in 1958, where she was class valedictorian and a member of the National Honor Society. Two years later she graduated as a Practical Licensed Nurse from the St. Francis School of Nursing and began her illustrious career as a Licensed Practical Nurse and then a private duty nurse.

In 1967, having taken additional education at Maui Technical School in the accounting program, she began at the Maui Memorial Medical Center in the billing department. Within two years, Gladys was recruited to join the Maui Economic Opportunity (MEO) Inc., where she has been in a leadership position for 36 years and Executive Director for 21 years.

Gladys has demonstrated the highest qualities of leadership since taking the reins of MEO in 1984. When she became Executive Director, MEO had a budget of \$1.9 million and operated 17 programs under three major categories: the Community Services Block Grants, Head Start, and County of Maui Grants. There were eight key staff members and seven supervisors. Today, MEO expects to serve over 20,000 unduplicated clients through its programs and community partnerships and has 272 employees and a budget of \$14.5 million.

Additionally, in 2003, the National Community Action Partnership presented Gladys and MEO with its inaugural "Award of Excellence in Community Action", one of only four agencies to be so honored out of over 1,100 community action agencies in the nation.

Today, under Gladys' vision and enthusiasm, MEO offers job training, microenterprise business development, family development programs, housing assistance, welfare to work opportunities, Head Start, senior citizen programs, medical and life sustaining transportation, farmworker employment and training programs, immigrant acculturation, food distribution to those in need, youth programs, reintegration of inmates back into the community, and many other innovative and far reaching programs that have been incorporated into government operations and continue to serve the community.

Gladys wasn't content with just building up MEO. She saw a need to develop the not for profit sector on Maui and took an active role in the creation of the Maui Non-Profit Directors Association. This organization of over 50 dues paying members has become an important force in public policy discussions affecting Maui County, and a forum for training and information designed to strengthen each agency in their mission.

For almost four decades Gladys has selflessly given her passion, energy, and unending desire to assist the people of Maui and Hawaii. She has long been a leading source of "best practices" management and her colleagues honored her with their very first "Executive Director of the Year" award.

Gladys will soon retire from MEO for well-deserved rest and time with her family. I know this will be merely an informal retirement and she will continue to stay involved in assisting the Maui community and will continue to live by MEO's motto: "Helping People. Changing Lives."

Hauoli La Hanau, Gladys, and many many more!

MEMORANDUM OF FORT WORTH CITY COUNCIL MEMBER CHUCK SILCOX

HON. KAY GRANGER

OF TEXAS

Thursday, July 28, 2005

Ms. GRANGER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to enter into the RECORD the following memorandum from Fort Worth City Council Member Chuck Silcox to the Mayor of Fort Worth and Council Members dated July 5, 2005. In the memorandum, Councilman Silcox indicates his desire for the successful implementation of the Trinity River Vision project in Fort Worth, Texas.

MEMO

JULY 5, 2005.

To: Mayor & Council Members,

From: Chuck Silcox,

Re: Trip to Washington, DC, June 21-23.

On June 21, I flew to Washington, DC for a series of meetings regarding the Trinity River and Highway 121 projects. Initially, let me report that the meetings went quite well. My appreciation to Congresswoman Kay Granger and her staff for all they did to arrange the schedule for me. I was accompanied with Reid Rector, Robert Head (Ms. Granger's Deputy Chief of Staff) and Pete Rose.

Wednesday, June 22, began with a meeting with Congresswoman Granger to discuss the agenda and key issues relative to the Trinity River and Highway 121 projects. This meeting went well, and I left there very comfortable that in the sense that Congresswoman Granger's office will continue to work very closely with us in support of our federal legislative agenda, to include the successful implementation of the Trinity River Plan and the Highway 121 projects. In addition, we also discussed, in general terms, the importance of maintaining the Wright Amendment and the current status of the B-36 project as affected by a lack of funding to retain the B-36 in Fort Worth.

Following the above meeting, we met with senior staff at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps was represented by Steve Stockton, Deputy Director of Civil Works, Gary Leow, Director of Civil Works Program Integration Division and John Meador, Civil Works Deputy, Southwestern Division. Several key points were discussed during this meeting:

1. The Corps staff stressed that while the key underlying need for the TRV was and remains flood control and repair of the levees in the area, this type of project is becoming more and more common in the Corps' work, i.e., combining economic development and flood control issues. In the terms of flood control, Corps staff emphasized that upstream development has significantly affected downstream drainage and flooding issues. In addition, the existing levees have "settled," a condition that also contributes to the flooding potential. The Trinity River project, with its bypass channel, would appropriately address these issues.

2. Regarding environmental issues associated with the Trinity River development, Corps staff indicated that the initial environmental impact statement is in line and that their initial review does not reveal any significant environmental problems. However, they stated that approximately \$25 million has been allocated for dealing with any issues that might arise.

3. Regarding the location of businesses within the Trinity River project area, Corps staff stated that the only property that would be obtained would be that property necessary for the bypass channel and that no other property would be sought.

4. Regarding increases in project costs (\$360 million to \$435 million), it was explained that this is primarily due to "contingency" costs being added to insure that unanticipated costs are adequately covered.

5. These issues and any other relevant issues will be addressed at public meetings currently scheduled for July 26 and 27. It is my intent to see that these meetings are publicized so that the public can attend, learn about this project and raise any relevant questions they may have.

We then met with staff from the Federal Highway Administration to discuss the SH-121 project. Attending for the FHWA were Charles Nottingham, Associate Administrator for Policy and Government Affairs, Sal Deocampo of the Texas Division (by telephone), Ruth Rentch of the Office of Environmental Planning, Jennifer Southwick, a Special Assistant for Policy and Governmental Affairs and Marc Ott (by telephone). As in the case of the meeting with the Corps of Engineers, several key issues were discussed:

1. The plan for groundbreaking in late 2005 was discussed and it was emphasized that City intended to stay on schedule.

2. With the revised cost estimates, as all parties investigate opportunities for refinement of the cost estimates, it is the City's strong intent not to compromise the quality of the project.

3. It was noted that NTTA should, within 90 days, be able to better understand the cost increases for the project. In this regard, it was noted that the City should be in close contact with the NTTA to urge favorable action relative to dealing with any cost increases. Marc Ott indicated that a letter from the Mayor was being forwarded to the NTTA addressing the cost issue.

4. Relative to these costs issues, FHWA staff indicated that costs cannot be finalized until the Record of Decision has been issued as the Record will play a significant role in final cost determinations. Now that the ROD has been issued, FHWA staff felt that the cost related issues would be resolved as design work progresses.

These meetings with Congresswoman Granger, the Corps and the FHWA were very informative. As a result of attending these meetings, I am confident that we can successfully address the relevant issues affecting the Trinity River and SH-121 projects.

INTRODUCTION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION ACT OF 2005

HON. TIM MURPHY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 28, 2005

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to introduce the Environmental Restoration Act of 2005. I am joined in the introduction by Representatives MURTHA, ENGLISH, HART and PETERSON of Pennsylvania.

It is fitting that this bill be introduced on the same day that the House will pass comprehensive energy policy legislation. This bill has the dual benefit of cleaning up a terrible environmental and health situation at the same time that it increases our energy independence.