

BIOGRAPHY  
Harold K. Brown

Harold Brown was born on May 6, 1934, in a small southeastern Pennsylvania town - York, PA. York PA is located just north of the Mason-Dixon line - 50 miles from Baltimore, MD and 90 miles from Philadelphia. Raised by a mother along with four brothers and two sisters, he, as the youngest in his family, recalls a happy and loving childhood.

As a youngster Harold recalls his first taste of racism. As a student attending a legally segreated elementary school, he recalls how he and his friends were verbally attacked and spat upon by white men working at a chain factory as they passed them on their way to school. He also recalls how he and his friends would many times have to fight their way to school past gangs of white children. Hence, the Black-White confrontation in his life had begun.

During those early years Harold developed a passion for sports, as he became aware that he stood out among his peers in that area. He was also among those who were academically at the top of his class. Sports became a dominant part of Harold's life as he followed in his brother's footsteps to become the second person in his high school's history to be named to ~~an~~ <sup>the</sup> All-American ~~team~~ <sup>State</sup> team. He and his brother achieved that honor in basketball although they excelled in baseball and football as well. Harold went on to play basketball at Penn State and then at San Diego State while his brother played for Virginia State College.

While attending San Diego State College (it was not a University at that time), Harold Brown began a long road of involvement in the African American struggle. In 1958 as a member of the Wesley Foundation, a student Methodist organization, he began speaking to church groups on the race issue. He then worked with the El Cajon Open Housing Committee to open El Cajon's residential areas to "Negroes". In 1960 he helped form the Afro American Association whose purpose was to help "Negroes" understand the system of racism and its effect on the lives of Black Americans. In 1961 he and a handful of others founded The San Diego Chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) <sup>to begin</sup> ~~a~~ <sup>the</sup> civil right movement in San Diego. Harold became its chairman and later was elected by the western region of CORE to be its chairman and to represent the western region on CORE's national planning committee. Harold led the many demonstrations CORE held in the 1960's, fighting to get companies to hire minorities, and in fighting to break down segregation in housing and education. The battles became long and fierce and Harold and his comrades were charged with trespassing on several occasions, arrested, convicted and sentenced to jail. Harold as the leader, was singled out and received a sentence totaling 45 days in jail.

In 1966 as the CORE movement approached its end, Harold requested and was granted a leave of absence from his teaching duties with the San Diego Unified School District to train southeast residents in community leadership. This highly successful program motivated a number of the trainees to reach unexpected levels of achievement. Harold in 1967, was able to fulfill a very strong desire to visit Africa. He applied for the position of deputy director of the Peace Corps, in Lesotho, Southern Africa and he and his wife LaVerne were soon on their way to their "fatherland". The announcement of Harold's leaving moved his friends and compatriots to organize a Harold Brown Day to say farewell to him and LaVerne and to wish them safe passage.

Harold's year in Africa was a very happy one. But that happiness was incomplete as his burning desire to see Black people freed from the agony and oppression of racism was heightened by the face-to-face confrontation with the apartheid *System* of South Africa.

During Harold's and LaVerne's stay in Africa, they were stunned with the message from the American Embassy that Dr. King was killed by an assassin's bullet. Filled with tears and grief, Harold and LaVerne, like millions around the world, were left numb and speechless. Harold felt so far away and helpless that he knew there was only one thing to do - to have an African memorial service for Dr. King. He and LaVerne approached the minister of the local A.M.E. Church and requested to have a memorial service. The minister, without hesitation and with great sympathy, said yes. They planned the service which included a song by LaVerne and the eulogy, interpreted for the Basotho people, given by Harold. The service was a beautiful expression of love for Dr. King. The church was filled by people from all over Lesotho. Some had to travel from remote areas on foot to the capital city where the church was located. Just before the program was to begin, the church was stunned by the entrance of the King of Lesotho who was under house arrest by the Lesotho government, at that time labeled a puppet of South Africa's apartheid system. How the Basotho people, and especially the King, found out about the memorial service, Harold and LaVerne never knew. They only know it was one of the most moving experiences of their lives.

After spending a year in Africa, and after Dr. King's death, Harold decided that he must return to the U.S. and stay more directly involved with the Black struggle. The announcement that Harold and LaVerne were leaving Africa somehow circulated throughout Lesotho. On the afternoon that their flight was scheduled to leave Lesotho, the Basotho people began to fill the

airport bringing gifts and to say farewell. Harold left Lesotho accused by the South African Press of "trying to bring black power to Africa". It was easy to understand, even if in fact their accusation was true, why the South African press would consider that a negative. He and LaVerne settled in New York before returning to San Diego in 1971. Harold had accepted an administrative position with SDSU and has remained at SDSU since. He takes great pride in organizing for the University and Afro-American <sup>Studies</sup> Department and serving as its first Director for two years, and organizing the University's Computer Center and serving as its ~~first~~ Director for seven years.

Harold's work in the area of civil and human rights has continued since he began as an undergraduate student at SDSU until this day. He served at the request of Judge Louis Welsh and police chief Bill Kollender as the San Diego School Integration Task Force's vice chairman and became chairman the following year. He was one of the founders of the Study Commission on Black Affairs <sup>at SDSU</sup> (SCOBA) and has served as its co-chair since that time. He presently serves on the Board of the College of Retailing (a school to train minority persons for the retail industry) and is president of the Black Economic Development Task Force of San Diego County.

During Harold's community involvement over the past twenty seven years, he has served on many boards and has been and is a member of many community based organizations. After returning from Africa he took time out from community work to complete a masters degree in Business Administration and pursue a doctorate degree in Business Administration at the Claremont Graduate School of Business Administration <sup>in Claremont, CA.</sup>

Harold is the father of Michael, a <sup>professor at Temple Univ.</sup> ~~Certified Athletic Trainer~~ in Long Beach California, and Stephen, a <sup>business development executive</sup> ~~Marketing Representative~~ for Apple Computer in Boston, Massachusetts. He has been married to LaVerne for ~~twenty~~ years. LaVerne is <sup>Retired as</sup> a Senior Systems Engineer for IBM. Harold for the past seven years has served as the Associate Dean for External Relations in the College of Business Administration at SDSU. <sup>in the wireless communication industry.</sup>