



Stockton to Hold Fannie Lou Hamer Human and Civil Rights Symposium on Oct. 7

50th anniversary of protest at 1964 Democratic Convention in Atlantic City

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Galloway Township, NJ -The Eleventh Annual Fannie Lou Hamer Human and Civil Rights Symposium at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey will celebrate the 50th anniversary of Mrs. Hamer's historic protest at the 1964 Democratic Convention in Atlantic City.

The theme of this year's program, "Fifty Years After the Protest: The Enduring Legacy of Fannie Lou Hamer," continues Stockton's tradition of bringing informative educational programs that speak to the life and legacy of Mrs. Hamer to the college and the wider community.

Carmen Berkley, national director of Civil, Human and Women's Rights for the AFL-CIO, will give the keynote address. The program will also include a selection of freedom songs performed by vocal group Stockton's Highest Praise, video clippings and a performance by actress Mattilyn Rochester portraying Mrs. Hamer.

This will be followed by a panel discussion with Zulima V. Farber, former New Jersey attorney general, Dr. Anne Pomeroy, associate professor of Philosophy and president of the Stockton American Federation of Teachers, Dr. Patricia Reid-Merritt, Distinguished Professor of Social Work, Africana Studies and program coordinator. A brief Q & A with the audience will follow.

This year's program will be held **on Tuesday, Oct. 7, 2014** at 2:30 p.m. in the Performing Arts Center (PAC) on the main Galloway campus. The program is free and open to the public and for the past 10 years has been a sell-out event, attracting over 500 participants. The event is sponsored by the Stockton Africana Studies Program and the Unified Black Students Society.

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-continued from page 1-

Hamer was a civil rights activist who helped organize the Mississippi Freedom Summer voter registration drive for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in 1964. She also helped found the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party to oppose her state's all-white delegation at the 1964 Democratic Convention in Atlantic City. Mrs. Hamer, who died in 1977, brought Mississippi's civil rights struggle to the national stage during a televised speech at the convention.

Her speech galvanized millions of viewers, who heard how African-Americans were being denied the right to vote in various states through intimidation and illegal tests and poll taxes. As a result, two MFDP delegates were given the right to speak at the convention and the other members were seated as guests.

"Fannie Lou Hamer remains an inspirational role model for me," said Dr. Reid-Merritt. "These annual tributes to her legacy continue to educate a new generation and, hopefully, will encourage young people to work for social change and social justice."

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Carmen Berkley, a member of the millennial generation, is director of the Civil, Human & Women's Rights at the AFL-CIO and is representative of the new face of leadership in the civil rights struggle. In her current position she is leading the fight for workers' rights. Berkley's passion for uplifting people of color and the LGBTQ community has allowed her to work as the executive director of the Generational Alliance, digital strategist at American Federation of State, County Municipal Employees (AFSCME), field director of Choice USA and regional field director of the NAACP. The job that catapulted this Pittsburgh native into becoming a progressive organizer was the United States Student Association, where she served as president and vice president. She is a lead trainer for Wellstone Action and principal consultant and co-founder of Can't Stop Won't Stop.