

NALC celebrates 50th anniversary of historic March on Washington

As part of the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, NALC held two events at NALC Headquarters for letter carriers who traveled to the nation's capital to be part of the remembrance.

On Saturday, Aug. 24, NALC opened the Vincent R. Sombrotto Building in downtown Washington to letter carriers and their families who came from as far away as Chicago and Minneapolis to attend the day's events. Attendees ate breakfast while writing slogans on NALC signs and putting on NALC T-shirts to prepare for the day.

Brian Renfroe, special assistant to President Rolando; Ron Watson, director of retired members; and Mack Julion, Chicago Branch 11 president, addressed the crowd of about 150, speaking of the importance of combining the civil rights movement and the labor movement to advance the rights of all working Americans, no matter their race.

"That iconic event set the wheels in motion for significant progress in our country for civil rights, not just for African-Americans, but for other groups



Above: Author Calvin A. Ramsey (l) talks with NALC President Fredric Rolando before the Green Book reception.

as well," Watson said. "The NALC is committed to working for justice in American society. That battle for justice, and in making America a better society, goes on."

"We're not just here to commemorate what happened 50 years ago, we're here because the dream Dr. King spoke about

Below left: NALC members and their families at a breakfast event before setting out to take part of the anniversary of the March on Washington.

is a vision we're still fighting for today," Julion told the crowd. "It is something we're still fighting for as we see there's an ongoing attack on working families. We see it in Chicago, with the fight to have and maintain a job that pays a living wage. We see it across this country where freedom and justice are not realized by everyone.

"I am so proud of our union for everything we do. Because if there's one thing we know as letter carriers, the fight is not over."

On the evening of Monday, Aug. 26, NALC held a reception with author and playwright Calvin A. Ramsey on the history and importance of Victor Green and the Green Book.

Back in the 1930s, Green, a member of Hackensack, NJ Branch 425, heard many stories of African-Americans having difficulty locating places that would allow them to stay or eat while traveling. These tales inspired him to create



what became known as the Green Book, a guidebook for places where African-Americans could safely stay and where their business was welcome.

Green used his extensive contacts to gather information, including using his NALC connections, and printed the first edition of the Green Book in 1936, covering only New York City. Demand grew for the book so much that the following year's edition expanded to become a national guide.

To this day, people who used the guide during its three decades of publication speak about its important role in providing information and reassurance to African-Americans far from home. It likely was used by many people traveling to the historic march on Washington in 1963 as they looked for places to stay and eat.

Ramsey wrote a play, *The Green Book*, and a children's book, *Ruth and the Green Book*, to help preserve its legacy. He discussed his work—and Green's—to a small but engaged crowd of carriers, NALC resident national officers, Headquarters staff and others.

“NALC is proud to honor the legacy of Victor Green and his life's work,” NALC President Rolando said in introducing Ramsey. “We believe that letter carriers are integral in caring for and looking after their communities. Green's story is just one extraordinary example of how letter carriers always have and always will honor that commitment.”

A *Washington Post* article on Wed., Aug. 28—the actual 50th anniversary of the March on Washington—told the Victor Green story. NALC worked closely with *The Washington Post* on this story, putting the reporter in touch with Ramsey and with Professor Phil Rubio, author of *There's Always Work at the Post Office*.



Also on Aug. 28, *Washington Post* columnist Courtland Milloy wrote about the unsung heroes of the civil rights movement. The second person Milloy mentioned is William Lewis Moore, a white letter carrier from Baltimore who undertook in April 1963 a one-man march from Tennessee to Mississippi, where he planned to deliver to Mississippi Gov. Russ Barnett a letter asking him to stop racial segregation. He was shot and killed, allegedly by a member of the Ku Klux Klan, who never was charged. National Public Radio put together a longer piece on Moore that ran Aug. 14.

For more about Victor Green and the Green Book, see the cover story of the September *Postal Record* available on nalc.org. **PR**



Top: Carriers from Illinois went to the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial as part of their trip. **Above:** At the urging of NALC, *The Washington Post* ran an article on Victor Green and letter carriers' roles in the historic march.