

Cecil B. Moore forever transformed Philadelphia through his dedicated work as an attorney, civil and human rights leader, and elected official. Cecil B. Moore's lifelong quest for freedom, justice, and equality benefitted the City of Philadelphia where he made his home from 1947 until his death in 1979. He successfully led mass movements to desegregate city institutions and organizations, defended innumerable low-income and minority Philadelphians in court, and built an unshakeable relationship with so many of the City's residents.

EARLY YEARS OF CECIL B. MOORE

EVENTS DATING FROM 1915 TO EARLY 1950s

1915:

Born in Dry Fork Hollow, West Virginia, on April 2, where in Moore's own words, "A Negro had his choice of occupations: he could go to college and teach school, or stay out of college and load coal"

1942:

Enlisted in the United States Marine Corps at Montford Point, North Carolina - the first group of African American Marines to engage in combat

1944:

Served as First Sergeant of the 19th Depot in overseas combat during World War II

1947:

Transferred to Fort Mifflin, a Marine base near Philadelphia

1946:

Returned to Montford Point Marine Base as a Sergeant Major of the 52nd Defense Battalion

Married Theresa Lee, a North Carolina biology teacher

1949:

Enrolled in Temple University's School of Law

1951:

Discharged from the Marines and supported his young family—which included his wife Theresa and three daughters, Cecily, Alexis and Melba—as one of the first black liquor salesman for Publicker Distillers

1953:

Graduated from Temple University School of Law and passed the Pennsylvania Bar exam

1952:

Became a Republican committeeman and co-founded the "Philadelphia Citizens Committee Against Juvenile Delinquency and Its Causes" with Reverend Leon Sullivan, Pastor of Zion Baptist Church and founder of the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC)



Cecil's family including his wife Theresa and daughters (left to right) Melba, Cecily and Alexis.



Attorney Cecil B. Moore in his law office in 1960.



Barristers' Association of Philadelphia representing African American Attorneys include Cecil B. Moore, Curtis Carson, Isaiah Crippen, Samuel Dashiell, Hardy Williams, Ragan Henry, William T. Coleman, and Leslie Pinkney Hill.

BECOMING PHILADELPHIA'S ATTORNEY FOR THE POWERLESS

Cecil B. Moore arrived at Philadelphia's Fort Mifflin as a sergeant major in 1947, and served another four years until his discharge in 1951. During that time, he enrolled in Temple University's School of Law and took night classes, while also renewing his membership in the NAACP. Judge Lisa Richette, Court of Common Pleas, then a fellow bar applicant, described Moore:

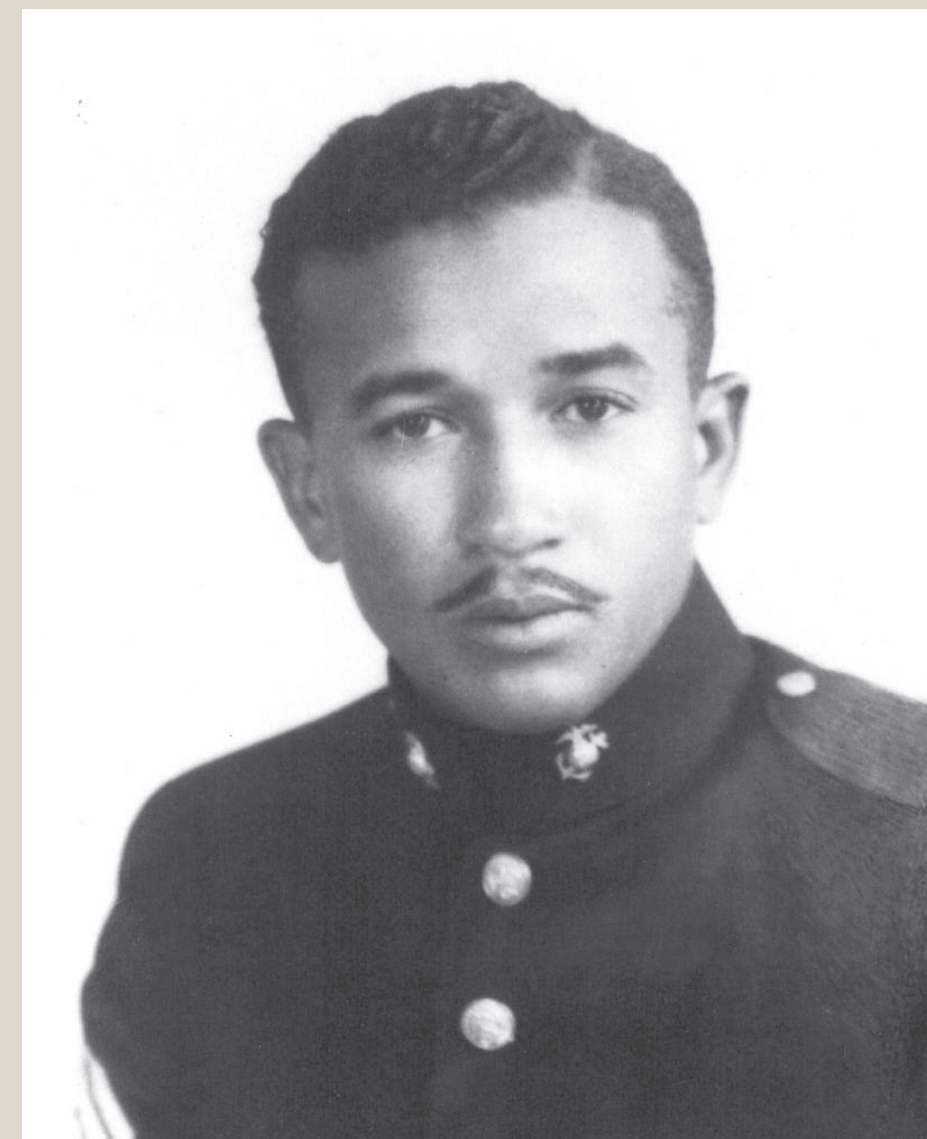
“ Probably the only bar candidate who sat through the six-week Levin cram course without once taking a note. Cecil was not posing, he was an extraordinary listener, his mind an ever-expanding treasure palace into which fact, perception, and feeling were permanently sorted, classified and stored. Of course, he passed and went on to a meteoric career in courtrooms high and ordinary. ”

He quickly built a reputation for providing highly competent legal defense even if his clients could not afford the costly billing hours. Chief Justice Robert N. C. Nix Jr. provides a unique perspective on Cecil B. Moore as a lawyer:

“ Cecil was a caring individual, no matter what his blistery Marine Corps Sergeant's exterior indicated to the contrary. I saw him work in preparation of cases for hours on behalf of clients who could not afford the cost of his services. In fact, he took great pride in saying he was the original public defender.” Nix went on to say, “He was a skilled advocate. His persuasiveness before a jury, his effectiveness on cross examination and his precise, logical and compelling presentation to an appellate tribunal are important aspects of this great man which should never be forgotten. ”



Montford Point Marine Cecil B. Moore with Judge Herbert E. Millen, first African American Municipal Court Judge in Philadelphia and unidentified woman at ceremony in Atlantic City in the mid 1940s.



Cecil B. Moore, First Sergeant of the 19th Depot.

THE UNITED STATES MARINES

Cecil B. Moore enlisted in the United States Marines in 1942 when African American leaders were pushing for desegregation, part of a broader "Double V" Campaign to fight for victory abroad and at home. He joined the segregated Montford Point Marines at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

He served nine years in the United States Marines, spending two and a half years overseas as First Sergeant of the 19th Depot. The 19th Depot included the first Black Marines engaged in combat operations in Saipan, Tinian, Okinawa, and China. During his tenure, he was an effective leader on and off the battlefield, leading both Black and white men into battle. He recalled, "During combat, all those damn color lines broke down, anyway ... I had 80 white boys under me!"

In the face of persistent racism and discrimination, Cecil B. Moore often provided information to reporters at Black newspapers with a national audience to bring attention to the injustices he and other Black soldiers experienced. His dynamic and strategic leadership style during his tenure as a United States Marine prepared him to become a powerful and effective Civil Rights leader.

CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL

In 2011, Congress unanimously authorized the Congressional Gold Medal to be awarded to each of the 20,000 Montford Point Marines or their families in recognition of the accomplishments and sacrifices made during a time of segregation. On November 23, 2011, President Barack Obama signed the bill into law to honor these heroes with the highest civilian award.



In memorial to Melvin "Mel" Dorn Shamlin, founder of the Cecil B. Moore Philadelphia Freedom Fighters and its members; Karen Asper-Jordan, Kenneth Abdus Salaam "Freedom Smitty", Bernyce Mills-DeVaughn, Jibril Abdul Jaleel "Butch", Eugene Dawkins "Tree", Henry Reddy, Richard Watson, Lester Green, Gary Adams, Vivienne Crawford and Cecil's People. A special thanks to Cecily Moore Banks.

The highest accolades to historian Dr. James G. Spady. Most of the information presented is based on his 1985 work, Cecil B. Moore "A Soldier For Justice ©."

Contributors include Charles L. Blockson Afro American Collection, Temple University Special Collections Research Center, African American Museum of Philadelphia, Montford Point Marines Association Philadelphia Chapter #1

Cecil B. Moore was one of Philadelphia’s most effective and well-known civil rights leaders, an American patriot, a tireless defender of justice, and a firebrand Philadelphia politician. Cecil B. Moore fought for social justice and played a major role in dismantling segregation and racial discrimination practices in Philadelphia.

Cecil B. Moore, a Montford Point Marine, once said, “I was determined when I got back from World War II that what rights I didn’t have I was going to take, using every weapon in the arsenal of democracy.” He received his law degree from Temple University in 1953, and built a reputation as a superb defense attorney on behalf of the working class and the poor in North Philadelphia. He demanded that Blacks be fully integrated into society; an idea centered on access to education, equal employment opportunities (especially upward mobility), representation and decision making in government, and equal access to the City’s resources. Throughout his life, he was courageous and never accepted solutions that compromised rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution.

GIRARD COLLEGE

Conceived from funds of the estate of Stephen Girard, a wealthy merchant and banker, Girard College was an educational institution for poor, white, male orphans in 1848. Philadelphia City Councilman Raymond Pace Alexander introduced a resolution to City Council to end discrimination at Girard College in 1953, which was denied by an overwhelmingly white majority.

Cecil B. Moore supported the argument that the college was a public accommodation and an educational institution under state supervision, and within the meaning of Public Accommodation Provisions Pennsylvania Human Relations Act of 1955, prohibiting racial discrimination. In 1965, Cecil B. Moore galvanized a coalition of desegregation advocates who tirelessly worked to integrate Girard College through protest, picketing, and advocacy. His work led to the successful desegregation of the College in 1968.

If there is one single achievement most frequently mentioned by scholars and those who knew Cecil B. Moore, it is his fight for desegregation of Girard College. Stanley Branche of the Chester Committee for Freedom Now, known for ending segregation in Chester, Pennsylvania public schools, along with the Young Militants of Philadelphia, joined Cecil B. Moore in support of this cause. Together, they achieved a major victory at “The Wall,” as the exterior of Girard College was often called.



Civil rights leaders, including Philadelphia NAACP President Cecil B. Moore (right), led a picket at Girard College in protest of the school’s segregationist admissions policy in 1965.



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Cecil B. Moore shake hands at Bellevue-Stratford Hotel in 1965 as radio disc jockey and activist Georgie Woods watches.



Girard College rally includes Christine Coard, Maude Roberts, Pauline Pitts, Gertrude Barnes, Deborah Mills, Freedom George Brower, Walter Rosenbaum, Dwight Campbell, Freedom Frank Haley, Paul Vance, Stanley Vaughn, Robert Braswell, Barry Dawson, Leroy Brown, Reverend M. Lorenzo Shepard Jr., and George Sellers in 1965.



Civil rights leaders at Girard College. (Right to left) Cecil B. Moore, Attorney and President of the local chapter of the NAACP; Reverend Joshua E. Licorish, Pastor of Zion United Methodist Church; and Reverend William H. Gray, Jr., Pastor of Bright Hope Baptist Church in 1965.

CIVIL & HUMAN RIGHTS LEADER CECIL B. MOORE

1954-1979:
Defended a range of low-income, minority Philadelphians who often were denied due process and justice in the court system

1962:
Elected President of the Philadelphia Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

1965:
Re-elected president of the Philadelphia NAACP Chapter, defeating Reverend Henry Nichols by a 5-to-1 margin

Under the leadership of Cecil B. Moore, the NAACP began demonstrations on May 1 to desegregate Girard College, a private boarding school in North Philadelphia for white, male orphans lasting 7 months and 17 days.

1967:
Opened campaign headquarters in his bid to become mayor of Philadelphia

1968:
Desegregation of Girard College with the enrollment of four African American students on September 11

In North Philadelphia for white (add COMMA) male orphans.

1972:
Married Helen Golden Boyer, after the 1970 death of his first wife, Theresa

1975:
Elected City Councilman of the Fifth District, North Philadelphia

1979:
Passed away at the age of 64 on February 13

1987:
Renamed Columbia Avenue, Cecil B. Moore Avenue, a historic thoroughfare in North Philadelphia

EVENTS DATING FROM
EARLY 1950s TO 1987



CECIL B. MOORE, THE ACTIVIST

Cecil B. Moore became president of the Philadelphia Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in October 1962 after campaigning on a bold and inclusive platform. The main tenets of his platform appealed to a broad base of Philadelphians. His platform focused on fair housing policy, labor and employment, police brutality, and education.

He was the architect of the “Philadelphia Plan” that required federal contractors to practice nondiscrimination, challenging unions and businesses that did not adhere to fair hiring and employment practices. He notified the United States Post

Office, and Greyhound and Trailway Bus Companies, that each discriminated against Blacks in hiring and promotions. When these groups refused to negotiate with the NAACP, he called for the formation of protest picket lines.



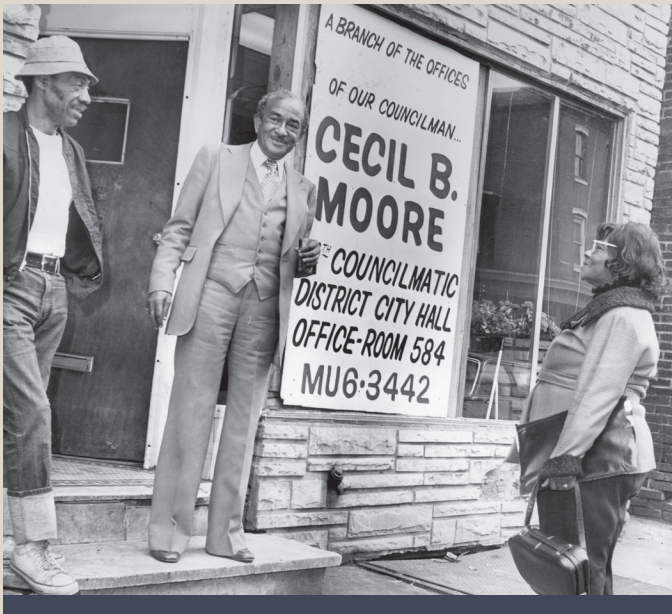
NAACP National Executive Director, Roy Wilkins (left) with Cecil B. Moore, President of the local chapter of the NAACP at the Girard College Protest in 1965.



Cecil B. Moore speaks at a Girard College rally, seated are litigants Charles and Theodore Hicks, 1965.

CECILY MOORE BANKS, CECIL B. MOORE’S DAUGHTER, DESCRIBES HER FATHER THE ACTIVIST.

“Although controversial, his methods—which often but not always included meticulously planned picket lines and demonstrations, comprehensive searches for Blacks who qualified for the jobs and consistent follow-ups with employers to ensure they complied with the negotiated agreements—achieved concrete results. His efforts were responsible for breaking down major barriers for Blacks both entering and advancing in the job market in fields as varied as construction trades, school administration, bus transportation, postal service, downtown retail, and many others.”



Cecil B. Moore, Philadelphia City Councilman

PHILADELPHIA CITY COUNCIL

Cecil B. Moore ran for mayor of Philadelphia in 1967, coming in third behind re-elected Mayor James Tate and Arlen Specter. Under the banner of the Committee of Political Freedom and Equality, Cecil B. Moore and others, including Lenerte Roberts, John Gay, Reverend Lorenzo Shepard, Jr., Amos Harris, and Louis Slade, organized a third party political convention that launched the “Black Independent Alliance” political movement in Philadelphia. Although he did not win the election, this political movement paved the way for the election of the first African American mayor of Philadelphia, W. Wilson Goode in 1984.

Elected City Councilman of Philadelphia’s 5th District in 1975, Cecil B. Moore’s agenda included ensuring constituents received the city services they were entitled to receive. During his tenure at City Council, his health was in decline. After serving for five years he passed away on February 13, 1979.