Memorial Celebration
for the
Life and Work of

Vicki Ama Garvin
December 18, 1915 -
June 11, 2007
GREATNESS AMONG US

Victoria H. Garvin was born in Richmond, Virginia on December 18, 1915, and grew up in Harlem. Her mother was a domestic worker in rich white homes, her father a plasterer who was often unemployed due to racism in construction unions. Vicki, as she preferred to be called, spent summers working in the garment industry to supplement her family's income. In high school, she became active in Black protest politics, supporting efforts by Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. to obtain better paying jobs for African-Americans and creating Black history clubs. After earning her B.A. in political science from Hunter College, she was the first African-American woman to earn a Master's degree in Economics from Smith College. During World War II she worked for the National War Labor Board in New York, organizing a union there and becoming its President. After the war, she became National Research Director of the United Office and Professional Workers of America and co-chair of its Fair Employment Practices Committee. During the postwar purges of the Left in the CIO, she was a strong voice of protest and a sharp critic of the CIO's failure to organize in the South.

She married Arthur Garvin, a trade union organizer, and although they divorced, she kept his last name. In 1951 she was a founder of the National Negro Labor Council (NNLC), and became a national Vice President and Executive Secretary of its New York City chapter. With the NNLC, she worked with Coleman Young, later Mayor of Detroit, and organized cultural programs featuring Paul Robeson, then under persecution. He was a close friend until his death. In 1955, under pressure from the House Un-American Activities Committee and other repression, the NNLC disbanded.

In 1960, in the wake of McCarthyism, Vicki traveled to Africa. She lived first in Nigeria and then in Ghana, where she worked with Dr. W.E.B. DuBois and Shirley Graham DuBois, Alphæus and Dorothy Hunton, and others on the African Encyclopedia and anti-colonialist efforts. In Ghana she lived with Maya Angelou and Alice Windom. When Malcolm X, who Vicki had known in Harlem, visited Ghana, she introduced him to the ambassadors from China, Cuba, and Algeria and, using her French language skills, interpreted for his meeting with the Algerians.

In 1964 Vicki was invited to China by the Chinese ambassador in Ghana. She taught English for six years in Shanghai. She became friends with many of her young students and kept in touch with them. She also became close to then-political exiles Robert F. and Mabel Williams. When Mao Tse-Tung issued a proclamation in support of the Afro-American movement in 1968, Vicki made a speech to a rally of millions. In China she met and married Leibel Bergman and became a loving stepmother to his daughter Miranda and two sons, Christopher and Lincoln.

On their return to the U.S., Vicki and Leibel first lived in Newark, where she was Director of the Tri-City Citizen's Union, a community organization for children and teenagers. In Manhattan Vicki worked as Area Leader for Community Interaction at the Center for Community Health Systems of the Faculty of Medicine of Columbia University. Later they moved to Chicago. When the marriage ended Vicki returned to her parent's home and cared for them until their deaths.

Vickie remained active in political and international circles, traveling back to China several times and making many trips to Africa and the Caribbean, often with her dear friend, Adelaide Simms. She was an active supporter of many organizations, including Sisters Against South African Apartheid (S.A.S.A.A. ki-Swahili – Now)/Sisters Assisting South Africans (S.A.S.A) the Committee to Eliminate Media Offensive to African People (CEMOTAP), Black Workers for Justice and the Center for Constitutional Rights. She spoke at events honoring Malcolm and at rallies in support of Mumia Abu Jamal and other political prisoners. Kwame Ture gave her the African name of “Ama”. She was recognized as an “honored elder” for her many contributions and unwavering commitment to African liberation and internationalism as well as her shining example of positive energy, dedication and self discipline.

In speeches before her serious health decline, Vicki urged younger generations onward. She said: “Of course there will be twists and turns, but victory in the race belongs to the long distance runners, not sprinters… Everywhere the just slogan is reverberating...no justice, no peace!” She joined the ancestors on June 11, 2007 in New York City, at the age of 91.
***PROGRAMME***

WORDS OF WELCOME  Dr. Karen S. Daughtry, Founder/Chairperson
Sisters Assisting South Africans (S.A.S.A)

VICKI'S MESSAGE FOR HER MEMORIAL  Adelaide Simms

INTRODUCTION OF MASTER OF CEREMONIES  Karen S. Daughtry

MASTER OF CEREMONIES  Elombe Brath
The Patrice Lumumba Coalition

VIDEO OF VICKI GARVIN
(1977 at 81 years old)  Shabazz Productions

MUSICAL SELECTION  Judith Casselberry

REMARKS  Sybil Williams Clarke
Betty Dopson, CEMOTAP

SLIDE SHOW VICKI'S LIFE AND TRAVELS

REMARKS  Representative of Black Workers for Justice
Herman Ferguson

VIDEO MESSAGE  Yuri Kochiyama

MUSICAL SELECTION  Fred Ho

REMARKS  Miranda Bergman and Lincoln Bergman

SELECTION  Peggy Iman Washington

CLOSING REMARKS  Rev. Herbert Daughtry, Pastor
The House of the Lord Church
Acknowledgments and Grateful Appreciations to:
The House of the Lord Pentecostal Church, Rev. Dr. Herbert Daughtry and Dr. Karen S. Daughtry for generously hosting this event and much else to help make it happen. And, in the spirit of Vicki, our grateful appreciation to all those at the church who helped in some way—the sound technician and custodians.

Adelaide Simms, longtime friend of Vicki’s, for being there all the way through.

Mary Yearwood, Curator of the Photographs and Prints Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, for her generous assistance in providing and scanning many of the historical photographs used in the slide show.

Julius Lazarus, for his permission for the use in the slide show of two of his fine photographs, which reside in his extensive photographic archives in the Special Collections and University Archives of Rutgers University.

Peggy Washington, Judith Casselberry, and Fred Ho for lending their cultural artistry to this event.

Felix Shafer, for his encouragement, assistance, and loving support.

Dawn Reel, for much-needed technical assistance and expertise.

Isaac Ontiveros, for video editing assistance.

All who attended and all who sent messages of condolence and solidarity but were unable to attend.

Our many fond memories of our dear friend, Vicki, are helpful in dealing with her passing. She was a wonderful giant of a woman, an extraordinary freedom fighter and a dedicated friend. It is our prayer that her revolutionary spirit will kindle the fires of continuing struggle in future generations when they learn of her legacy from the volumes of documented history which she leaves. We celebrate her life with the joy of having known her and recognizing a job well done.

Love and blessings,

Mabel Williams and John C. Williams

Uhuru! Amandla! Chee Lai!
Lift Every Voice! No Justice—No Peace!