



TEAMSTERS JOINT COUNCIL 25

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NEWS >>

IN MEMORIAM: CLARA DAY, TEAMSTER HERO **Union Remembers Longtime Activist and Teamsters Local 743 Member**

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters is saddened to announce the death of longtime member and union activist Clara Day.

Day's contributions to Teamster history are truly memorable. She battled both race and gender stereotypes on her way to attaining a leadership positions with Teamsters Local 743 in Chicago and in the community.

She was born in Tuscaloosa, Ala. in 1924 and was the middle child of George and Belle Taylor. Day came from a large family with 11 children, including three sets of twins. Coming from a large family would be a benefit for Day years later as it gave her important skills as a coalition builder during her time as a Teamster.

She married young and moved to Chicago with her new husband. Taking a job as information clerk at Montgomery Ward in 1947, she began noticing a variety of injustices to workers — including the strict segregation of white and black employees.

She decided to change the workplace. She became active in an organizing campaign with the Teamsters. She and another co-worker, Robi Jubiter, became a force to reckon with in that campaign.

She joined Local 743 in 1955 after successfully helping to organizing more than 3,000 Montgomery Ward employees. Shortly thereafter, she was brought onto the staff of Local 743 to represent the same workers she had helped bring to the union.

In 1976 she was elected to the Local 743 Executive Board and served as Trustee and Recording Secretary for more than 20 years.

While a business agent, Day served as the local's Director of Community Services. She was a liaison to members and their families providing information on a broad range of public and private services, as well as educational opportunities in the community.

“Clara Day took her vision for community service, civil rights and women's rights and made them the union's vision. She was strength, she was action, she was gentility and she was class. Best of all, she was a Teamster,” said Jim Hoffa, Teamsters General President.

She was a powerful voice in support of the civil rights movement. Day served with distinction on numerous boards, committees and commissions, both public and private, with the mission of making equal rights and justice a reality for women and minorities.

She was appointed to serve on Chicago's Human Rights Commission and soon was a leading member of the group. When she tried to resign at one point, citing duties at the local, her request was denied by then Chicago Mayor



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Richard Daly. “I can appoint a new member to a commission anytime if needed, but where would I ever find another Clara Day? That’s the question,” he said.

Day’s proudest achievements included serving as a founding member of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) in 1974 and leading a delegation of union members in the historic March on Washington in the company of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1963.

Day was very active in the battle to pass the Equal Rights Amendment for women and was named as a spokesperson for women’s issues and other topics related to social justice. “Call Clara Day — that’s what you do if you want to get involved and make a difference,” said Gloria Steinem, Women’s Rights Activist and Co-Founder of CLUW, during an interview on the Phil Donahue Show in 1979.

Day loved working to improve people’s lives and had great compassion for those around her. She did not seek the limelight for herself, in fact often was uncomfortable when attention fell on her. She preferred to use her skills, her heart and her strong bonds with the Teamsters, the community and leaders of the day to raise others up and shed light on the darkness of injustice.

She was a founding member of the Teamsters National Black Caucus in 1976 and was honored for her contributions in August 2000. In 2008, the Teamsters Union published “Clara Day: A Teamster’s Life” as part of the Teamster History Collection.

Teamsters Local 743 is an affiliate of Teamsters Joint Council 25, America’s premier labor union for Chicago, Illinois and northwest Indiana.