

**Remarks by Cynthia Brock-Smith at Memorial Service for Clarence Davis
Howard University Rankin Chapel
Saturday, June 25, 2016**

First let me extend condolences to the family, friends and colleagues who are here today.

Family. Make no mistake. Your pain is our pain. I know your hearts are heavy. So is mine! Words are not adequate to express this sense of loss that we feel today. What we are left with are the memories. We have the memories of the special moments shared, lives he touched, and friendships forged.

Clarence Davis was my colleague in the Office of the Secretary of the District of Columbia and fellow warrior to save the city's historical records. We worked hand in hand with our colleagues to improve the Office of Public Records and fought hard to secure resources to find a proper home for the DC Archives. I hope that one day that dream becomes a reality, and Clarence receives just recognition for his tenacity in advocating for upgrading the District's historical depository and a new home for the DC Archives. I hope that one day that dream will be realized.

Collecting and documenting African American History was his thing. He dedicated his life to service, and to preserving the history of African Americans - from DC, Florida, Detroit and other places around the country. He lived, breathed and personified history, especially Black History. However, he ventured into other history. He is well regarded in Sunderland, England, the District's sister city and home of George Washington's ancestors. He donated his personal documents on George Washington for display during the U. S. bicentennial celebration in Sunderland's Old Washington Hall. They were forever grateful.

It is hard for me to talk about Clarence Davis in the past. He was my colleague, but he also became my friend and younger brother from another mother. He was one of a kind.

Many people did not realize just how funny he was. He made us laugh, but he was also that quiet, unassuming, gentle guy who would do anything for you without a second thought. He was always there for me. Friends and coworkers remarked this week about his intellectual brilliance, love of history, graciousness, deceptive sense of humor, and that smile.

He was a great friend to many. He cared about people. He cherished his friends and familial relationships. To his friends and family, he was supportive, protective, and generous. He possessed that selfless generosity that is unique in this day and time. He would do anything for you. You tell him something, he would act to make sure you had what you needed. If I told him I needed something, he took care of it. He really cared about other people.

One of our colleagues told me that when Clarence found out that a business associate had never had a birthday celebration in over 70 years, Clarence helped to organize something special. I am sure that the honoree will never forget that act of kindness and generosity.

Again, if he found one of us wanting for something, he would try to provide it.

When I think of Clarence, I also think community leader, activist, and protector of the legacy of DC Emancipation Day and those seemingly endless series of lectures and events he sponsored to showcase the District's history and the struggle for freedom, justice and equality. Clarence kept the legacy of Loretta Carter Haines and the commemoration of DC Emancipation Day alive by going into churches, recreation centers, and a variety of other venues hosting events to tell our story. I learned of the Pearl Incident, the Snow incident and other significant moments in history from these lectures. Clarence and Bill Branch annually organized the lecture series and other events to tell the story of the struggle for freedom, justice and equality. And when the Secretary's budget was cut, and no funds were available to keep the programs going, Mr. Davis used his own money to continue spreading the word of DC history and DC Emancipation.

I believe that God put Clarence and me together in the District government because we shared a love for history – for DC history and for family history.

Clarence and I had a lot in common. We loved history. He was the expert and I was a novice -- just someone interested in my own family history and the history of the District of Columbia, my hometown.

We shared a love for searching the stacks for that piece of information that helped tell a story, our story. Clarence did it around the country and around the world, exposing many to their history. Few people loved roaming through the stacks of a library or an Archives trying to solve a puzzle that no one else had, or cataloguing records so those who came behind us would have access in an organized way. Clarence Davis did and people are grateful for his work.

Clarence Davis always wore a suit. Some days he looked like Dapper Dan and on other days like that absent minded professor with papers spilling from every pocket. No matter the occasion, he always wore a suit. We had an office outing – the attire was business casual. Clarence wore his suit. Once he found out that I always longed to go fishing since my father and his brothers were anglers. But I cannot swim and certainly did not know how to fish. He and Bill Branch arranged the fishing trip. I told Clarence that I could not swim. He told me “I got you, we got this!” Needless to say that we had a great time fishing and I learned a lot that day. Like Clarence did not swim well either so I really needed my life jacket close at hand. But the memorable thing about that fishing trip is that Clarence wore a business suit. Only Clarence Davis would be out on the Chesapeake Bay fishing in a business suit.

Clarence Davis was a brilliant, hardworking, highly intelligent, and all around nice guy. He was not the brash type. He refused to be undervalued, underestimated and marginalized. It is hard to lose someone like that. He never forgot where he came from – Port St. Joe, Florida. I never even heard of that town before I met Clarence, but during the course of our friendship, I learned its history.

I will remember a warm and brilliant historian. There could be little doubt in this room that Clarence loved history, and loved his adopted home -- the District of Columbia. He has taken his place in the history of this city. The history of his family and in my heart forever.

Clarence Davis had an impact on my life. He cared about people. He cared about our history and telling the story right. He cared about the DC Archives having a proper home. He worked to ensure that Emancipation Day and Loretta Carter Hanes who resurrected the recognition of that day would not be forgotten.

I will remember this man with a heart that was so big, and the love he had for people, especially, black people. He was cool. He was a diplomat, community leader, archivist, and a warrior for justice. This may not be the image that some of you had of Clarence, but these are my memories.

You never know how much impact you have on the lives of other people. Clarence had an impact on my life. I thank God for the opportunity. I ask his friends and family to join me and dry our tears and suspend our sorrows. It is hard to say goodbye, but we must remember that he left an amazing legacy. We will miss him.

A quote reminds me of how I will remember Clarence Davis -- as the one who "soared with wit, conquered with dignity and handled us all with care." And never stopped fighting for freedom, justice and equality. Goodbye my friend!