



## NEW JERSEY STATE CONFERENCE OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

[www.njnaacp.org](http://www.njnaacp.org)

### NEW JERSEY NAACP CONDOLENCES TO THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF IRENE HILL-SMITH

March 30, 2011

The Officers and Members of the Executive Committee of the New Jersey State Conference of the NAACP are deeply saddened by the passing of Irene Hill-Smith. From 1966 to 1984, Ms. Hill-Smith served as President of the New Jersey State Conference of the NAACP (New Jersey NAACP). Joining the NAACP in 1957, Irene Hill Smith was elected President of the Gloucester County Branch in 1963. She served as NAACP National Vice President from 1967 to 1979. She was one of New Jersey's most highly esteemed 20th Century civil rights activists, as she served in the movement with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other prominent leaders.

In 1966, the leadership of Irene Hill-Smith was recognized by then President Lyndon Baines Johnson who invited her to participate in a White House Conference on Civil Rights. She was twice invited to President Jimmy Carter's White House. Irene Hill-Smith also served as chair of the Gloucester County Office for the Disabled and was a former Commissioner on the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority in Atlantic City. In 1983, NAACP State Conference President Hill-Smith led our unit of America's oldest and largest civil rights organization to become one of the Founding member-organizations of the New Jersey Black Issues Convention (NJ BIC). In 1994, Mary Frances Berry, appointed Irene Hill-Smith to head the New Jersey Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

Irene Hill-Smith's legendary community-strengthening leadership was often not comfortable or laudatory. This South Jersey born and bred leader, a longtime resident of Deptford Township and Wenonah, has been dragged by the Klan, threatened by law enforcement, tossed in jail, and she has been undercover in a migrant workers' camp to expose the living conditions of laborers. She led the New Jersey NAACP through some of its most challenging civil rights ordeals.

Myrtle Smith Counts, long time President of the Roselle NAACP Branch, served as Vice President of the New Jersey NAACP with Irene Hill-Smith. The two women also represented the NAACP on the New Jersey Black Issues Convention Board of Directors. Ms. Counts remembers how Irene Hill-Smith led the New Jersey NAACP through the Mount Laurel decision and the New Jersey NAACP Fair Share Employment agreement with major corporations in the state. Ms. Counts reminisced about the terror New Jersey NAACP officials faced in those days as they were often threatened by the South Jersey Ku Klux Klan.

The Officers and Members of the Executive Committee of the New Jersey State Conference send prayers of comfort and share memories that celebrate the great humanitarian life of Irene Hill-Smith with her children -- Bishop S. Terri Smith-Little (Charles) of Sugar Land, Texas, and H. Michael Smith (Toni) of Paulsboro, New Jersey; seven grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren and one great-great grandchild.

Members, friends and supporters of the New Jersey NAACP are encouraged to join the family of Irene Hill-Smith at a viewing which will be held at Second Baptist Church, 1540 Swedesboro Avenue, Paulsboro, New Jersey, from 10am to 6pm on Thursday, March 31, 2011. Services will be Friday, April 1 at 11am at Second Baptist Church with the burial at Gates of Heaven Cemetery, East Greenwich Township.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to a scholarship fund established through D.I.V.A International in Dr. Hill-Smith's honor. ([www.diva1.org](http://www.diva1.org)) Written condolences can be sent to the family through the funeral home website [www.edwardsandsonfuneralhome.com](http://www.edwardsandsonfuneralhome.com). Services are entrusted to EDWARDS AND SON FUNERAL HOME INC., Bridgeton and Salem, N.J.

