

# Ernest C. Dillard Sr. Endowed Scholarship

Linda Oubre, Dean of the College of Business at San Francisco State University, her husband, Nathaniel, and sons Nathan and Alex, established the Ernest C. Dillard Sr. Endowed Scholarship Fund. The Fund will be used for the benefit of students in the Labor Studies Department of the College of Business at San Francisco State University. The fund was established in recognition of Dean Oubre's grandfather, Ernest C. Dillard Senior, in celebration of his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday and significant contributions to society.

Mr. Dillard was an unsung hero and historic figure in the civil rights and labor movements. Before the spotlight shined on civil rights leaders, Mr. Dillard fought relentlessly in his pursuit of improving the rights of workers with diverse backgrounds without recognition. A trailblazer, he was ahead of his time in fighting for the rights of all people.

Born the fourth of seven children of an impoverished family in Montgomery, Alabama in January 1915, Ernie Dillard had to quit school in the sixth grade to help take care of the family when his father died. After working for a number of years as a driver for a wealthy family, Dillard met Jessie Mae Dawson. They were married Christmas night, 1934; they had two children; Marilyn and Ernest, Jr.

Dillard moved to Detroit in 1937, got a job at the Gotham Hotel, and eleven months later was able to send for his wife and children. In 1942 he was hired as an ARC Welder at GM Fisher Body Fleetwood Plant. He became a UAW activist and was also a leader in the successful NAACP sit-in effort in the 1940's to integrate downtown Detroit restaurants that refused to serve Blacks. At the time, Dillard was a member of the Board of Directors of the Detroit branch of the NAACP.

After holding numerous elected and appointed positions in UAW Local 15, including plant shop chairman and editor of the Local's newspaper, Dillard served as Educational Director of the trade Union Leadership Council (TULC) and

Editor of its official publication, The Vanguard. Additionally, Ernie served on the UAW's GM Department Umpire Staff, Citizenship Department Representative, Assistant Director of the Education Department, and was Assistant Director of the UAW National Community Action Program Department when he retired in 1980.

Upon his retirement, Dillard served as Instructor in leadership development training classes for the Detroit Association of Black Organizations (DABO) and the UAW Educational Department; President of the Michigan A. Philip Randolph Institute (a voter education program); Head of DemPEC (Democratic Political Education Committee) of the 13<sup>th</sup> Congressional District; and as the Executive Vice Chairman of the 13<sup>th</sup> Congressional District.

A voracious reader and prolific writer, many of Dillard's articles, commentary and letters have been published in the news and commercial media. Mr. Dillard's wife, Jessie Mae, passed away in October 1990 from breast cancer. Mr. Dillard passed away in July 2016 at the age of 101 ½. He is survived by his two children, Marilyn and Ernest Jr., and his numerous grandchildren, including Dean Oubre, great-grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren. In his last years, Mr. Dillard's greatest

pride was that although he and his wife did not have the opportunity to complete formal university education, his children, grandchildren, and great-children include numerous college graduates from institutions such as UCLA, CSU Northridge, UC Santa Barbara, Pepperdine, Loyola Marymount, NYU, Michigan State, San Jose State, the University of Michigan, the University of Pennsylvania, and Harvard. One of his great-grandchildren is currently a student in the College of Business at San Francisco State.

The Ernest C. Dillard Sr. Endowed Scholarship in Labor Studies will signify and present an opportunity for students to build upon a legacy of monumental contributions to society that will improve the lives of workers for generations to come.

