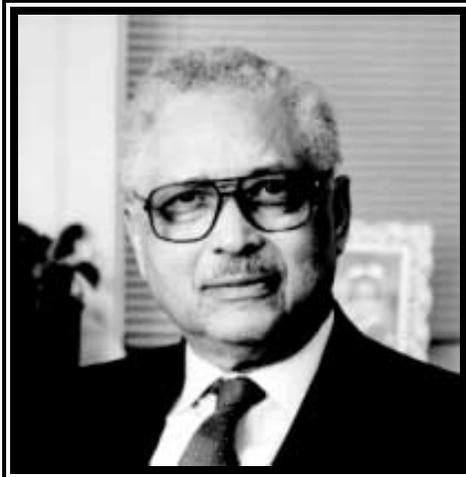


Biography of Reverend Leon H. Sullivan



Born in Charleston, West Virginia, Leon H. Sullivan became a Baptist minister at age 18 and eventually moved to Philadelphia to become pastor of the Zion Baptist Church in 1950. From the pulpit, he could clearly see the needs of his community. Thousands were unemployed and yet thousands of jobs were vacant. Reverend Sullivan believed that jobs were the key to the economic development and true empowerment of African Americans rather than a dependence upon public assistance.

Sullivan organized 400 other ministers and launched a "selective patronage" program whose main purpose was to boycott the Philadelphia-based companies that did not practice equal opportunity in employment. The boycott opened up more than 4,400 jobs to African Americans, yet many still needed to be trained and prepared for those jobs. In response, Reverend Sullivan founded the very first Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) in 1964. The OIC provided job and life skills training and matched its graduates up with the employment needs of Philadelphia businesses. The undertaking was a huge success, and the programs were replicated in cities across the United States. In 1969, OIC International was created to provide employment-training services on a global scale.

In addition to holding honorary doctorate degrees from over 50 colleges and universities, Reverend Sullivan was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1992 by President George H. W. Bush, honoring him for his "voice of reason for over forty years" and a lifetime of work in helping the economically and socially disadvantaged people in the world.

Reverend Sullivan went on to launch an international campaign to reform apartheid in South Africa, developing the Sullivan Principles, a code of conduct for human rights and equal opportunity for companies operating in South Africa. In the late 1990s, Reverend Sullivan brought world and business leaders together to expand the successful Sullivan Principles into the Global Sullivan Principles of Social Responsibility. The aim of the Global Sullivan Principles was to improve human rights, social justice and economic fairness in every country, throughout the world.

A man of courage and a servant of the people, Leon H. Sullivan devoted his life to the well being of others. Reverend Sullivan passed away on April 24, 2001.

Biography provided courtesy of the Leon H. Sullivan Foundation