1965 Award Winner

Leon H. Sullivan (1922-2001): Known as the "Lion of Zion" (a nod to both his first name and Zion Baptist Church, where he was pastor), the Revered Leon Sullivan was a formidable man: six-foot five, athletic, and determined. He is remembered for many things, not the least being the creation of the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC), which won him the Philadelphia Award. The early success of this endeavor led him to adapt the OIC nationwide and then internationally.

Sullivan grew up poor in West Virginia, reared by his devoutly Christian grandmother. He graduated from West Virginia State College, and earned a degree from Union Theological Seminary in New York City. In 1950 Sullivan became pastor of Zion Baptist Church in North Philadelphia. Shortly afterwards, Sullivan founded the Citizens Committee Against Juvenile Delinquency and its Causes, which organized people in low-income black neighborhoods to clean up their blocks, supervise teenagers, and protest nuisance bars.

In 1960 Sullivan and other black ministers founded 400 Ministers, to combat job discrimination. He estimated that in Philadelphia less than 1 per cent of private sector jobs involving contact with customers were held by African Americans; these jobs included clerks, bank tellers, and sales people. Few blacks held skilled factory jobs. 400 Ministers organized boycotts of Tastykake, Sun Oil Company, and five other businesses, forcing those companies to change their practices. "After the Tasty victory," Sullivan recalled, "black people were walking ten feet tall in the streets of Philadelphia." Numerous companies avoided boycotts by reaching agreements with the group.

In 1964 Sullivan opened the Opportunities Industrialization Center to provide vocational training for black youths. The center soon featured eight training programs, including sheet metal working, electronics assembly, and restaurant services. With corporate, foundation, and federal funding, the OIC grew into a national job training organization, operating in 150 cities by 1970.

Sullivan devised the 10-36 Plan, where parishioners would donate $10 every month for 36 months (for 16 of those months the money would go to a community nonprofit, the last 20 months to start a black-owned business). After their contributions, the parishioners were voting shareholders in the business. The largest enterprise the plan launched was Progress Plaza, a shopping complex near Temple University.

Later, he gave his name to an early driving force against the Apartheid regime in South Africa, the Sullivan Principles. These principles required international companies doing business in South Africa to ignore the race segregation laws, provide equal pay for equal work, set up training programs, and promote non-whites to supervisory positions. While

companies such as Ford and GM (where Sullivan was a board member) were quick to sign on, the principles themselves had mixed success and were abandoned in 1987, when Sullivan endorsed a full economic boycott of South Africa. In 1999 Sullivan adapted the principles internationally as the Global Sullivan Principles of Corporate Social Responsibility.

In 1988 Sullivan retired as pastor of Zion Baptist, in order to devote himself to international work. He organized summits that brought together Africans and African-Americans. At the Millennium Summit in Ghana, over 3,500 attended, including the leaders of 19 African nations.

Sullivan was a tireless proponent of self-help. He inspired and assisted thousands of African-Americans in starting up businesses and learning skills to improve their economic well being. As Sullivan explained, "I long to see the kingdom of God a reality in the everyday lives of men. Some people look for milk and honey in heaven, while I look for ham and eggs on earth."

Sullivan received honorary doctorates from over 50 institutions. President Bush awarded him the Medal of Freedom in 1992. Bill Clinton presented him with the Eleanor Roosevelt Award in 1999.

Lee Arnold

Sources: Ron Goldwyn, "The Lion's Legacy," *Philadelphia Daily News,* April 26, 2001; William R. Macklin, "The Rev. Leon H Sullivan: 1922-2001," *Philadelphia Inquirer,* April 26, 2001; Andrew Maykuth, "Recalling the Effect of Sullivan Principles," *Philadelphia Inquirer,* April 29, 2001; "Rev. Sullivan, 'Big as City,' Wins Philadelphia Award," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 13, 1966; "Rev. Leon Sullivan Wins Philadelphia Award for Job training Center," *Philadelphia Inquirer,* January 10, 1966; "Philadelphia Award Goes to Rev. Sullivan," *Philadelphia Dailey News*, January 10, 1966; Matthew J. Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Phila., 2006); Denise Dennis, *A Century of Greatness: The Urban League of Philadelphia's Tribute to the Outstanding African-American Philadelphians of the Twentieth Century* (Phila., 2002); "Biography," Leon S. Sullivan Foundation, www.thesullivanfoundation.org/foundation/rev/; "Leon Sullivan," www.answers.com/topic/leon-sullivan. The following are collected in Philadelphia Award Records, Series 2 (Recipients & Nominees), Box 7, folders 1-2: invite lists, newspaper clippings; Series 3 (Award Ceremony), Box 19, folder 10: Record of Proceedings, Philadelphia Award, April 12,1966. **Photo:** Philadelphia Award Records, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. **Comment:** On North Board Street, the OIC and Progress Plaza (the oldest African-American owned and developed shopping complex) were initial success stories. Unfortunately that area of Philadelphia, teetering economically even in good times, declined with the economy, taking some the shine off both of Sullivan's creations. Both now are bouncing back: OIC with plans to incorporate gaming jobs in its hospitality training courses and Progress Plaza undergoing a 16-million dollar renovation.