

Labor, Rights Activist's Memorial Set

A memorial service will be held for political activist and labor militant Simon Peter Owens at 3:30 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 6, at the Unitarian Church, 4605 Cass Ave.

Mr. Owens, 75, died Oct. 10 after a long battle with cancer. His funeral was held Saturday, at Greater St. Stephen Missionary Baptist Church.

Known to many as Charles Denby, author of "Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal," he was active in UAW Local 212 during the turbulent '60s. Owens was the leader of numerous labor struggles on the shop floors of the old Briggs and later Chrysler Mack Stamping plant.

In the midst of the civil rights movement, when Black farmers in his hometown Lowndes County, Ala., were evicted from their land, he helped form the Michigan - Alabama Lowndes County Association for Human Rights. He headed the Association from 1965 to 1963 and got the UAW to sponsor a trip by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to Detroit, where he spoke at Cobo Hall to

raise money to help buy back Black-owned land and aid Black farmers and their families.



SIMON OWENS

He was president of the Lowndes County Christian Movement for Human Rights for 18 years, an organization still active today. Under his leadership 225 acres of land were purchased to provide homes for persons thrown off plantations and thousands of dollars were sent to help the civil rights cause in Alabama.

When Owens returned to Alabama in 1956 at the time of the Montgomery bus boycott, it was as the author of his autobiographical "Indignant Heart" written in 1952, and as the worker-edition of the Detroit publication, "News and Letters."

Writing under the pen name Denby, he became known nationally and internationally in the labor and civil rights movements through his monthly column, "Worker's Journal."

Recognized as a labor classic, a second edition of Owens' book was published in 1978 with an additional "Part Two" covering his life and thoughts as a news editor. In 1981, a German edition was released entitled "In the Richest Land in the World: A Black Worker Tells His Life Story."

Mr. Owens is survived by his wife, Effie, who contributed two chapters to his book, three sons, Simon Jr., Henry and Sam, and seven grandchildren.

Telegrams to the family included condolences from Rosa Parks, Coretta Scott King and John Hullett, first Black sheriff of Lowndes County.

Obituaries

Simon P. Owens

Labor, civil rights militant

Longtime Detroit labor militant, civil rights activist and author Simon Peter Owens is dead at 75.

Mr. Owens was a leader of early efforts by the UAW to organize the Briggs Manufacturing Co. and Chrysler Corp. He participated in the Montgomery, Ala., bus boycott of the mid-1950s and helped persuade the UAW to co-sponsor a 1963 Detroit visit by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that resulted in a parade of thousands of marchers down Woodward to Cobo Hall for a civil rights rally.

He also wrote an autobiographical book, *Indignant Heart*, in 1952 under the name of Charles Denby about a black worker's life in the Detroit auto plants.

Mr. Owens, who died Monday, is survived by his wife, Effie; three sons, Simon Jr., Henry and Sam; and seven grandchildren. Services will be held at 1 p.m. Saturday in the Greater St. Stephen Missionary Baptist Church, Detroit.

16060

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activist Denby, 75; editor

6C DET FREE PRESS/Thur., Oct. 13, 1983



**dateline
Michigan**

him speak. I was looking for a worker to be the editor instead of the intellectuals always being the editors. He said, 'I welcome this opportunity because (the newspaper) will help me create a forum for workers to speak their thoughts for themselves,' she said.

MR. DENBY was editor of News & Letters from 1955 until his death. He also authored a monthly column, "Worker's Journal," for the paper.

In the 1960s, black farmers in his native Lowndes County were evicted from their land. Mr. Denby in 1965 helped organize the Michigan-Alabama Lowndes County Association for Human Rights.

The first edition of his autobiography was published in 1952; he used the name Denby in an attempt to disguise his identity during the McCarthy era. The second edition appeared in 1978.

Mr. Denby described his story in the closing paragraphs of his autobiography as "part of the worldwide struggle for freedom."

"As a Black from South U.S.A. and a Black auto production worker in Detroit, my experience has proved to me that history is the record of the fight of all oppressed people in everything they have thought and done to try to get human freedom in this world."

Survivors include his wife, Effie; three sons, Simon Jr., Henry and Sam; and seven grandchildren.

Services will be Saturday at the Greater St. Stephen Missionary Baptist Church, 3952 Dickerson at Mack, Detroit. Visitation will be Friday from 7 to 9 p.m. at Swanson Funeral Home, 806 E. Grand Blvd., Detroit.

A memorial service will be at 3:30 p.m., Nov. 6, at the First Unitarian Universalist Church, 4605 Cass, Detroit.

South in the 1920s, he said goodby to the awful and said goodby to his wife, Raya Dunayevskaya.

He said to himself, 'What is going to heaven, and I'm going to heaven,' Dunayevskaya said.

for writing the labor column, "Indignant Heart: Black Worker's Journal," died Monday at Harper Hospital in Detroit.

Mr. Denby was born Simon Owens in Lowndes County, Ala. He came to Detroit in 1927 and soon became involved in labor organizing efforts in the factories.

As a rank-and-file labor militant in UAW Local 100, Simon Owens was the leader of numerous labor struggles on the shop floor at the Briggs Manufacturing plant and later the Walter Mack Stamping plant since 1975.

Denby during a strike contacted him when he was contacted in 1955 for a new civil rights paper.

It was the first time I heard

16061

NEWS & LETTERS

2832 East Grand Boulevard • Detroit, Michigan 48211 • Phone: 873-8969.

Oct. 17, 1983

Dear Friends:

On Saturday the family held the funeral for Simon. There were 300 in attendance, including all the members of News and Letters Committees in Michigan. The family had asked Raya to be the one to say a few words about Simon "as a friend", which she did in a most moving and profound way, never leaving Si's life and illuminating each of the forces of revolution. Raya's words are enclosed as she spoke them.

Last night the Detroit local met to hear Eugene's presentation on Perspectives. Raya became the special chairwoman for the evening, and Lou acted as secretary. We felt that the minutes were so important that Lou will be sending them out to you today.

Tonight the REB will hear Andy's presentation on his draft of the 1949-50 miners' strike pamphlet, and Raya's outline of the appendix to it. We are of course wanting to hear your thoughts at this time, in local minutes, in articles for N&L, in letters.

Yours,

Mike

16062

Eulogistical

Services

For

The

Late

Simon Owens, Sr.

Saturday, October 15, 1983
1:00 p.m.

Greater St. Stephen Missionary Baptist Church
3952 Dickerson
Detroit, Michigan

Rev. Robinson
Officiating
Mr. Lou Turner
Master of Ceremonies

16063

When I Must Leave You

*When I must leave you for a little while,
Please do not grieve and shed wild tears,
And hug your sorrows to you through the years.
But start out bravely with a gallant smile;
And for my sake and in my name,
Live on and do all things the same.
Feed not your loneliness on empty ways,
Reach out your hand in comfort and in cheer,
And, I in turn will comfort you and hold you near;
And never, never be afraid to die,
For I am waiting for you in the sky.*

The Obituary

The late Mr. Simon Owens, Sr., son of the late Mr. William Owens and Patty Owens, was born in Lowndes County, Alabama on August 25, 1906. He confessed a belief in Christ at an early age, and joined the Mount Lilly Baptist Church. There, he served faithfully until he went to Montgomery, Alabama.

He moved to Detroit, Michigan in 1941, where he was employed at Chrysler Motor Company. He retired in 1973, after thirty years of employment. He was very active in the UAW and a good union member. He also served as president of the Lowndes County Christian Movement for Human Rights as well as editor of News and Letters. He was very concerned about Human Rights and worked very hard at it during the period of the Civil Rights Movement. He worked on the Voter Registration Drive for Civil Rights in Lowndes County. He departed this life on October 10, 1983 at Harper-Grace Hospital in Detroit, Michigan.

He leaves to mourn, a devoted wife, Effie Owens, three sons: Sam Owens, Henry Owens and Simon Owens, Jr., all of Detroit, Michigan, a beloved sister, Mary Francis Owens of Hayneville, Alabama, a host of grandchildren, nieces, nephews, daughters-in-law, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, and a mass of other relatives and friends.

16064

Kindness During Life

I would rather have one little rose
From the Garden of a Friend.
Than to have the choicest flowers
When my Story on Earth must end.
I would rather have a pleasant word
In kindness said to me.
Than flattery when my heart is still
And life has ceased to be.



The Order Of Service

Organ Prelude

Processional

Selection *Choir*

Scripture *Rev. Larry Robinson*

Prayer *Rev. Larry Robinson*

Selection *Choir*

Remarks *As a Friend*
Raya Dunayevskaya

Acknowledgement Of Cards, Telegrams
And Obituary

Eulogy *Rev. Larry Robinson*

Recessional

Organ Postlude

Pallbearers

Richard Gilliam
Willie Cone
Michael Flug

Hosie Murphy
Mack Lovan
Frank Pierce

Reserved Pallbearers

Brazil Webb

Willie White

Julius Gilliam

Flower Bearers
Friends of the Family

Interment

Woodlawn Cemetery
19975 Woodward
Detroit, Michigan

Acknowledgement

The family of the late Simon Owens, Sr. wishes to express their sincere appreciation for all acts of kindness shown during our bereavement. May God bless each of you.

Arrangements Entrusted To



Swanson Funeral Home
806 E. Grand Boulevard
Detroit, Michigan
(313) 923-1122

Northstar Communications (313) 962-7070

16066

Nov. 7, 1983

To all News and Letters Committees, British Marxist-Humanists, and
many friends of Charles Denby

Dear Friends:

Yesterday we held "Indignant Heart: A Memorial Meeting for Charles Denby". The room we had rented was filled to overflowing as 100 came out, and we had to set up extra chairs in the foyer. The size of the audience, and the multi-dimensionality of the participation left a deep impression on all of us even before a single word was said. Every chapter in Denby's life was represented in that room, from Alabama struggles over 50 years and more, through Denby's three decades in the shops, as well as the many university classes he addressed, to the political tendencies he had an impact on, even those who are today very far from Marxist-Humanism. And there was ourselves, comrades of Denby's from California and Chicago and New York who travelled to the meeting, and all of us from Detroit, Flint and Ann Arbor. Over half the audience was Black, and far from the majority being of Denby's generation, his impact on youth was evident from the many who came.

As each person entered the hall they found the most magnificent exhibition of Denby's life-story in the displays created for the meeting. Michael P's photographic work was so beautiful, and so fully did it re-create Denby's life from 1939 in Montgomery to a portrait of Denby and Effie at the meeting exactly a year ago, when we celebrated the publication of Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution, that many stayed after the meeting to study the displays. One labor history professor who had taught Indignant Heart in his classes was nevertheless surprised by the exhibition, saying that he didn't know there was so much behind IHBWJ, and how taken he was with what it showed of our organization. There were reviews of IHBWJ, and letters to Denby from its readers; there were leaflets from shop struggles at Chrysler Mack and from civil rights protests in Alabama and Detroit. There were selections from Denby's "Worker's Journal" columns and from "Workers Battle Automation". And there was the international dimension -- the letters and reviews from Britain and Germany, the Caribbean and Africa. All of those whose labor of the heart created the displays -- Mike Pearn, Jim Mills, Mary Jo Grey, Eugene Walker -- deserve the most deeply felt thanks. The exhibition will accompany John Alan to his meetings in California, and Lou Turner when he speaks in New York, and we may offer it to the Afro-American Museum here for a special showing.

All this was yet prologue to the program itself. A copy of the brochure is enclosed, and by itself gives an indication of the unique kind of meeting it was. But it was a special privilege to be there to hear and see it as it unfolded. It was the farthest thing from anything funereal. The room was alive with Denby's presence, and the presence of the whole history of Marxist-Humanism, in the remembrances and the music, in the readings from IHBWJ and in Raya's closing presentation on "Charles Denby -- Worker-Editor, Marxist-Humanist".

16067

We heard of his experiences in the shops from John Miller and John Bryant, from Hank Wilson and from Andy Phillips, each with their own remembrances to tell. So vivid were they that it almost felt like an editing session for the next issue of News & Letters, as we heard about Denby taking the floor in a contract fight with Irv Bluestone, leading a walkout against smoke in the shop, creating a rank-and-file paper-- the Stinger-- and smuggling it into the plant. They spoke of his impact on the newest workers, 18-year-olds facing production for the first time. And when John Miller, with his own 32 years at Chrysler, told of how discussions with Denby on the shops always ended up viewing civil rights, women's rights, the whole of society with his "philosophy of liberation", a murmur of recognition swept the room.

Interwoven with the remembrances were the readings from IHBWJ, beginning with "I was born in Alabama..." and ending with Denby's last paragraph on his "life story as part of the worldwide struggle for freedom". In fact, so beautifully did the readings connect with the remembrances that it was often hard to tell where one stopped and the other began. We heard Rosa Parks tell of her meetings with Denby about the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and of reading how he re-told the story in IHBWJ. And then suddenly Denby's words came from Indignant Heart speaking of his journey to Alabama in 1956.

There were also the messages, from those who could not attend, from Gwen Patton in Alabama, from Genora Johnson Dollinger, from Harry McShane and from Felix Martin. You felt the world dimension of labor. From Britain we heard also from the young London Marxist-Humanists, as well as from a young Black British woman who had written to Denby about IHBWJ, and from Germany came a message from those who had been inspired by the German edition.

But nowhere was the international dimension of Denby's life better expressed than when we heard the passage from IHBWJ on Steve Biko and the two-way road between Africa and America, followed by Sandra Hines' wonderful performance of "Biko". Her voice filled the room, and the words showed how inseparable were Capetown and Wilmington, North Carolina.

As was fitting, the program was permeated also with the battle of ideas, whether that was John Alan contrasting Denby's autobiography and vision to Nkrumah's, or Black labor historian Richard Thomas demonstrating how powerfully IHBWJ destroyed the standard formulations of both Black history and labor history as taught in the university. We listened to Diane Lee arguing with those intellectuals who don't understand the difference between Part I and Part II of IHBWJ, because they don't understand Individual/Universal; they don't see that in Chapter 1 there is an individual born in Lowndes County, in a particular place and time, and by the last chapter that individual has fully expressed the world universal of freedom. And we heard Lou Turner speak of Denby as editor, as journalist, who expressed the continuity of freedom's Idea so fully that you saw the link back to Frederick Douglass, who insisted on sub-titling his Narrative, "as written by himself".

page 3

After Lou spoke, came Denby's own contribution to the battle of ideas-- his last statement to the Constitutional Convention. It was as well a perfect way to introduce the 35-year-long, deep, philosophic relationship between Denby and Raya.

Raya's presentation, "Charles Denby-- Worker-Editor, Marxist-Humanist", traced her relationship to Denby, and the relationship of worker to the fullness of a philosophy of freedom. All the speakers, and the audience, she said, proved that Denby's legacy does live on in us. And in a short space of time, it was shown philosophically as well, as Raya traced the history she has developed in the November N&L, copies of which were in each one's hands. The story of how Denby came to be editor of N&L, moved from Raya's first meeting with him through his writing of the first part of IHBWJ to the discussions on Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks and the events following the death of Stalin, when Raya's discussions with Denby became a part of her essay, "Then and Now". It was at this point that Raya, in speaking of the new in the world at the birth of News and Letters Committees, with the struggles against automation, and the East European revolts, spoke directly to Rosa Parks on the Montgomery Bus Boycott and its place in the "Automation and the New Humanism" chapter that concludes Marxism and Freedom. Ms. Parks was fascinated, she said, by the way Raya presented it, and asked to read a copy of M&F.

The role of women in the freedom movement was underlined also when Raya spoke both of Effie's authoring two chapters in IHBWJ, and of Denby's interest in women students at Alabama State who were sitting-in and defying cops and their own administrators. And by the time we reached the end of the 1960s, we returned to philosophy when Raya presented the first draft of part of Philosophy and Revolution to the "Black/Red Conference", where Denby spoke of Hegel's quotation on how the "goods of the Here and Now" upset all the "household arrangements in the house of faith".

Denby and the "trilogy of revolution" was what all of us were feeling by the time Raya concluded with his last letter to her on Marx and the Black World as he had seen it in Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution, and as he wanted it expressed in the new edition of ACOT. I, for one, was glad that quite a few of those who go around saying that Denby's life stopped with the 1952 edition of IH were there to hear the story of how profound had been the unfoldment of his writing and activity over the last three decades, as editor of N&L. No one could miss that to fully carry on Denby's legacy means to live this "trilogy of revolution" which he labored so long to help create.

After Raya spoke, we all linked hands and sang "We Shall Overcome".

Yours,
Mike

16069

A Memorial Meeting honoring

**SIMON PETER OWENS
(CHARLES DENBY)**

*will be held on Sunday, November 6, at
3:30 p.m. at the Unitarian Church
4605 Cass at Forest, Detroit, Michigan*

You are respectfully invited to attend.

News & Letters

16070

INDIGNANT HEART

A memorial meeting for Charles Denby (Simon Owens)

Editor of *News & Letters*, 1955-1983

Author of *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*

"... whether his voice cheered the starving Hindoo crushed beneath British selfishness, or Hungary battling against treason and the Czar; whether he pleaded at home for bread and the ballot, or held up with his sympathy the ever-hopeful enthusiasm of Ireland, — every true word spoken for suffering man, is so much done for the Negro bending beneath the weight of American bondage. It is said that the earthquake of Lisbon tossed the sea in billows on the coast of Cuba; so no Indignant Heart is beating anywhere whose pulses are not felt on the walls of our American bastille."

— Wendell Phillips, November 28, 1850

Sunday
November 6, 1983

Unitarian Church
Detroit

17081

16071

Charles Denby, 1907-1983

"I consider my story as part of the worldwide struggle for freedom. As a Black from South U.S.A. and a Black auto-production worker in Detroit, my experience has proved to me that history is the record of the fight of all oppressed people in everything they have thought and done to try to get human freedom in this world. I'm looking forward to that new world, and I firmly believe it is within reach, because so many others all over the world are reaching so hard with me."



16072

MEMORIAL MEETING FOR CHARLES DENBY

Chairpersons

Olga Domanski, Lou Turner

Remembrances

John Alan	John Miller	Richard Thomas
Rosa Parks	John Bryant	Hank Wilson
Andy Phillips	Julius Gilliam	Lou Turner
	Diana Lee	

Selections from

Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal

Kevin Anderson	Angela Terrano	Steve Fletcher
Mark Jones	Mariam C. Drew	Bob McGuire
Rickie Rae	Robert Ellery	Ray McKay
Susan Van Gelder	Tommie Hope	Anne Jaclard
Terry Moon	Suzanne Casey	Mary Simpson

"CHARLES DENBY--WORKER-EDITOR, MARXIST-HUMANIST"

RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

Charles Denby's Last Statement to the
News, and Letters Constitutional Convention
Michael Connolly

Music

Leadbelly

Sweet Honey in the Rock

Paul Robeson

Songs from the Civil Rights Movement

Beethoven

Sandra Hines, soloist

Preparation of photographs, displays, program

Michael Pearn Jim Mills

Mary Jo Grey Neda Azad

Eugene Walker

16073