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Conyers Black History Month Essay Competition

Dame Lois Brown Evans

Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere". This quote by King was likely the motivating factor for a number of great men and women to enter the legal system - to challenge injustices that were oppressing people. In my research, I discovered that Mrs. Dame Lois Brown Evans was not afraid to take on unpopular cases - in spite of what anyone thought. She had an unwavering view of justice and took on some of the toughest cases to fight against injustices, such as harsh death penalties being given to some of the men and women of Bermuda. As a woman and a lawyer, she made a personal commitment to fight against some of the racial and discrimination injustices which Dr. King spoke of; she would dig deep to protect the people of Bermuda by challenging unfair rulings of law. She was the pillar of strength as she empowered her clients and colleagues in the legal system; she was a soldier who would fight tooth and nail to stand against the injustice in Bermuda.

Some may ask, who is this great legal practitioner that I am speaking of? Well, Dame Lois Brown Evans was born in Parsons Road, Pembroke, Bermuda on June 1, 1927. She was one of four children, which helped her to develop a strong appreciation for family and the importance of sacrifice. Evans was an educated lawyer and political figure who made a number of recognizable and positive contributions to Bermuda's legal system, which citizens of Bermuda continue to benefit from several years later. She was educated at the King's College in London, and after graduating, she was nationally recognized when she became the first Bermudian female to be called to the Bermuda Bar. In that same year, Evans rose to become Bermuda's first female barrister in the year 1953 - which is a truly amazing accomplishment for Black Bermudian women.

Furthermore, Dame Lois Brown Evans stood at the forefront of a movement to eliminate racial discriminations in Bermuda - refusing to stand by and watch innocent men and women suffer and struggle. She worked herself to the bone to create what is now a fair and impartial Bermudian society that not only benefits its residents, but also visitors from all across the globe. She has made Bermuda a place that is safe for all people, especially people like me - young black men. She had a belief that as a lawyer she should be able to communicate in a more

formal or more comprehensive way that every person could understand - raising the bar and setting standards in and outside of the courtroom. Ten years after being named Bermuda's first Barrister she became one of the country's Members of Parliament (MP) which back then was called Member of colonial Parliament. After all of her hard work, it only took nine hard working years for her to become recognized and honored as Bermuda's first black female Parliamentarian. In her years of politics she made huge strides locally and globally, being recognized by the entire British Commonwealth for being a trailblazer for black, Bermudian women. On the local stage, she became the first female Opposition leader in Bermuda and the British Common Research shows that her victory was decisive, meaning it was of definite certainty. This shows that she made such a profoundly, empowering impact on Bermudians that her opponent didn't stand a chance. She retained her seat in every subsequent general election for the next 20 years until she decided to resign in the year 2003.

Lois Browne Evans was an outstanding leader that made it a goal in life to break barriers that deprived young blacks from achieving any goals that they sought after. For example, she set the example for black Bermudians by becoming the first ever black female barrister for both Bermuda and also the entire British Commonwealth. Seeing her achieve this made black little girls and women feel like they could achieve something great as well, if they pushed themselves like she did. Although she was no longer in politics as of the year 2003, she still played a powerful role in the Progressive Labour Party. She was even invited to speak at the renaming of Bermuda's airport, Fredrick Wade, in 2007. One of her dreams was to make Bermuda independent because many citizens were still under the rule of the British Government, and I am certain that many politicians continue to draw on her strength to make this come true if it is in the best interest of Bermuda.

Even after her death, her name and legacy continued to be honoured and recognized by Bermuda's legal community and the British Commonwealth. The new courthouse in Bermuda was named after Dame Lois Browne Evans, which symbolizes that she left such a positive impact on the legal community in Bermuda that they equate her with the court of law. Furthermore, she was given one of the most prestigious honours in Bermuda by being recognised as one of our National Heroes. Earl Warren once said, "it is the spirit and not the form of law that keeps justice alive". The unwavering spirit of Dame Lois Brown Evans continues to live on in the people of Bermuda and the young people who aspire to become judges, lawyers and politicians. Her impact has been felt in the courtrooms and hearts of many Bermudians, and her spirit will live on forever in our legal system.