

The
Sacramento Bee

Obituary: Clyde Rainwater, 70, activist and life member of NAACP.

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Byline: Stephen Magagnini

Sep. 23--Clyde **Rainwater**, a veteran African American activist in Sacramento, died Wednesday after a long illness.

A life member of the Sacramento NAACP branch, **Rainwater**, 70, served as legal redress chairman and first vice president.

"He always stood up for the underdog," said his wife, Helen **Rainwater**. "If someone came to him with a problem or was treated badly, he'd often go out of his way to help them."

Rainwater served two terms on the Sacramento City-County Human Rights Commission, worked with victims of hate crimes and for nearly a decade was chairman of the sheriff's Citizens Advisory Board, addressing community issues.

Though some African American community leaders said **Rainwater** was too sympathetic to law enforcement, his wife noted, "He brought something to the department when there hadn't been anything -- there was no outreach to the community and Clyde facilitated that, and he did the same thing for the police department."

"He may have taken the baby steps" that resulted in the hiring of an inspector general to provide some public oversight over the Sheriff's Department, Helen **Rainwater** said.

"Yes, he was controversial," said Betty Williams, Sacramento NAACP branch president, who first met **Rainwater** when community leaders confronted him about his favorable assessment of the job the Sheriff's Department was doing in regard to African Americans.

"The community totally disagreed," Williams said, "but he took it and explained it to the best of his ability -- I respected him for showing up and responding, because he didn't have to."

Williams, who defeated **Rainwater** for branch president in a close race in 2004, remembered him "as someone who never stopped fighting, an activist to his last breath."

Clyde Welton **Rainwater** was born in Slaton, Texas, but had lived in Sacramento since he was 4 years old, graduating from Grant High School, American River College and UC Berkeley.

He worked as a counselor for the California Youth Authority and later was appointed the first chief of affirmative action and special employment for Sacramento County, his wife said.

In that role, he persuaded the county Board of Supervisors to sue the district attorney for unfair hiring practices, which led to the hiring of African American attorneys, his wife said.

Rainwater also served as political columnist for the Sacramento Observer Newspapers and helped organize the Second Thousand Man March in Sacramento in March 1997, his wife said.

Nate White, a longtime Sacramento NAACP president who worked with **Rainwater** for years, said, "When it comes to civil rights in this town, he was in the forefront."

One of **Rainwater's** most recent accomplishments was the Sacramento Montessori School, dedicated to provide quality education for low-income and minority children, said Helen **Rainwater**.

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