

2015

Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and Nicholas Kristof: 2013 Recipients

Priya Walia

University of Cincinnati College of Law

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.law.uc.edu/fcj>



Part of the [Civil Rights and Discrimination Commons](#), [Human Rights Law Commons](#), [Law and Race Commons](#), and the [Law and Society Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Walia, Priya (2015) "Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and Nicholas Kristof: 2013 Recipients," *Freedom Center Journal*: Vol. 2015: Iss. 1, Article 11.

Available at: <https://scholarship.law.uc.edu/fcj/vol2015/iss1/11>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by University of Cincinnati College of Law Scholarship and Publications. It has been accepted for inclusion in Freedom Center Journal by an authorized editor of University of Cincinnati College of Law Scholarship and Publications. For more information, please contact ronald.jones@uc.edu.

REVEREND FRED SHUTTLESWORTH AND NICHOLAS KRISTOF: 2013 RECIPIENTS

Priya Walia[†]

The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center proudly presented the 2013 recipients the International Freedom Conductor Award to Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and Nicholas Kristof.

I. REVEREND FRED SHUTTLESWORTH

Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., and Rev. Ralph David Abernathy were part of the Big Three—the legendary leaders of the civil rights movement. Rev. Shuttlesworth was known as the courageous, charismatic, blunt preacher who vowed to “kill segregation or be killed by it.”¹

In 1953, Shuttlesworth moved his family to the epicenter of racial tension and violence to preach at Bethel Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. There, he inspired a generation to imagine a life free from racism and oppression. Rev. Shuttlesworth founded the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR), which sought to dismantle segregation through boycotts, lawsuits, and nonviolent direct action protests.

Three years after the United States Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation was illegal, Alabama’s segregation continued. Shuttlesworth enrolled his four children in an all-white school. As a result, he was severely beaten and hospitalized. Shuttlesworth often faced physical violence at the hand of police and citizens, but that did not stop the preacher from filing over 40 federal civil rights lawsuits and continuing to support desegregation.

[†] University of Cincinnati College of Law; J.D., expected 2016. West Virginia University, B.A. in Philosophy 2013.

¹ Andrew M. Manis, A Fire You Can't Put Out: The Civil Rights Life of Birmingham's Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth. 255 (2nd Ed.1999).

In 1961, Rev. Shuttlesworth moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, home of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. After the move, he coordinated Project C, along with Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., to bring attention to the segregation that still persisted. The project was a campaign of nonviolent direct action including sit-ins, marches, and protests meant to induce mass arrests of black citizens in order to bring national attention to the segregation that persisted. Project C was incredibly successful, and The Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed shortly after the efforts orchestrated by Shuttlesworth.

After his successes with racial desegregation, Shuttlesworth spent the rest of his life fighting for equality for impoverished people. He fiercely advocated for workers rights, rights of the homeless, and mediated racial tensions in Cincinnati.

Upon hearing of the Reverend's death, United States Congressman John Lewis stated, "[t]he Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth is the last of a kind... When others did not have the courage to stand up, speak up, and speak out, Fred Shuttlesworth put all he had on the line to end segregation in Birmingham and the state of Alabama."²

II. NICHOLAS KRISTOF

Two-time Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, Nicholas Kristof, initially discovered his love for journalism while editing his middle school newspaper. While he was still in high school, Kristof had the opportunity to write for his local town newspaper, the *McMinnville News-Register*. It was there that seasoned journalists took note of Kristof's talent for writing. After high school, Kristof made his way to Harvard where he worked for *The Crimson* and obtained an internship at *The Washington Post* between semesters.

Kristof changed the course of social justice philanthropy through his work at the *New York Times*. In 1997, Kristof's reporting on rotavirus inspired the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's interest in improving global health care for the developing world. His article, "For Third World,

² Press Release, Rep. John Lewis, Rep. John Lewis on the Death of Civil Rights Legend Fred Shuttlesworth (Oct. 5, 2011).

Water Is Still a Deadly Drink,” is prominently placed at the Foundation’s headquarters in recognition of his heroic work covering the deadly consequences of unsanitary water supplies in the third world.

Kristof’s unique style of first hand investigation into human suffering brought real stories and faces to social injustice around the globe. He has lived on four continents, visited 140 countries, and every province in China. In 2004, Kristof’s writing shed light on the previously unheard of human rights violations in Darfur, encouraging celebrities such as George Clooney to take swift action to protect the rights of refugees.

Recently in 2010, Kristof and his wife, Sheryl WuDunn, co-authored a book called *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. The book featured biographies of women from across the world that have overcome gender-based violence and oppression. The book soon became an exhibit that sought to bring the voices of marginalized women and girls to a global audience.

The National Underground Railroad Museum has a *Half the Sky* exhibit where museum patrons can learn about the biographies of women who have overcome staggering hardship to ultimately find hope. In an interview with the National Underground Railroad Museum, Kristof observed that, “Americans typically don’t care about thousands of people starving, but they can be made to care about one individual and through that person, about the larger problem.”³ Through individual personal narratives, Kristof compels the audience to delve further into seemingly remote global issues and inspires the American public to take action. For his uniquely impactful writing and bold work, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center awards Nicholas Kristof the International Freedom Conductor Award.

³ National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, *2013 International Freedom Conductor Nicholas Kristof*, YOUTUBE (May 16, 2013), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqVm_h2iYG4.

