



NEWS RELEASE

City Hall
1565 First Street
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SARASOTA CITY COMMISSION HONORS THE LIFE OF JOHN RIVERS

The City Commission of the City of Sarasota will be honoring the life of John Rivers at its regular meeting of February 17, 2015. Mr. Rivers was known as a local legend, hero, civil rights activist, loving husband, father and friend to the community.

Mr. Rivers was born on December 16, 1930 in Suggsville, Alabama and moved to Sarasota in 1951. Upon his arrival, Mr. Rivers found two distinct and separate communities in Sarasota, the white community residents with unlimited freedom to go anywhere and the African-American community residents who were not allowed the freedoms and kept segregated, inspiring a life-long campaign and crusade to change Sarasota's voice of power and decision-making. He set about changing the culture of Sarasota and the inequalities he witnessed between black and white citizens. Mr. Rivers took a clear and outspoken stance to defend the rights of people of all color if the issues presented were unfair, including use of the Lido Beach, the insurance and banking industries, schools and restaurants. In 1985, he was part of a Federal lawsuit which changed Sarasota's election system to the current system, in which two commissioners are elected at-large and the remaining three commissioners are elected through single-member districts.

Mr. Rivers was a former President of the Sarasota Branch of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), a former Director of the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), organized Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity (SURE) to bring together all races to work on common causes, and served on the City's Police Complaint Committee until his resignation at the age of 80.

Mr. Rivers was known as a man of great character, integrity and strength with a humility displayed in the compassion he shared with everyone. His positive influence is a beacon for many who now lead the charge for continuing to insure civil rights and being treated with dignity and respect.

Join the City of Sarasota in honoring the life of this great man on February 17, 2015 at 6:00 P.M in the Commissioner Chambers at City Hall, 1565 1st Street.

For more information contact City Auditor and Clerk [Pamela Nadalini](#): 941-954-4169.