



Press Statement

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MMTC Mourns the Loss of Co-Founder, Board Member, and Civil Rights Activist Everett C. Parker

WASHINGTON, D.C. (September 17, 2015): This morning, MMTC co-founder Dr. Rev. Everett C. Parker passed away after a lifetime of work advocating for America's voiceless and serving as a pioneer in communications policy reform that ensured those voices were included. Dr. Parker developed the public interest standard in broadcast media and laid a foundation to make the nation's communications industry more diverse and inclusive at a time when considering the interests of minorities was unpopular.

Dr. Parker blazed a trail in the 1950s when he founded the United Church of Christ's Office of Communication, focusing the Office's efforts on ensuring that broadcasters did not suppress the voices and images of minorities on the air and provided news coverage and programming that served their communities of license. Today, thanks to Dr. Parker's work, the Federal Communications Commission requires all broadcast stations to serve the needs and interests of the communities to which they are licensed.

In a 2012 interview, Dr. Parker stated, "If you want to put a mark on me, WLBT is an answer." WLBT-TV was a Jackson, MS, station that frequently aired venomously racist broadcasts. Dr. Parker, along with attorney Earle K. Moore, successfully challenged the station's broadcasting license, and set the precedent that gave the public standing to challenge a license and bring about denial of its renewal due to intentional discrimination.

In 1986, Dr. Parker joined eight other civil rights activists and communications attorneys to create the Minority Media and Telecommunications Council – now the Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council – as a result of the FCC's decision to repeal its distress sale and comparative hearing policies, ultimately leading to the policies' restoration in 1989.

Parker also helped found the Emma L. Bowen Foundation for Minority Interests in Media, an organization that has helped to introduce numerous minority youths to the communications industry.

Dr. Parker maintained a tremendous influence upon countless other advocates who worked in the niche space at the nexus of communications law and civil rights. Their fond reflections upon Dr. Parker's life and legacy are attached.

For more information on Dr. Parker's life and legacy, including personal reflections on the FCC, civil rights, and social justice from Dr. Parker himself, please see MMTC's Broadband and Social Justice article, "Dr. Rev. Everett C. Parker: The Communication Industry's Quintessential Fighter for Diversity," available [here](#).

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About MMTC:

The Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council (MMTC) is a non-partisan, national nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and preserving equal opportunity and civil rights in the mass media, telecommunications and broadband industries, and closing the digital divide. MMTC is generally recognized as the nation's leading advocate for minority advancement in communications.

Attachment: Reflections on the Life and Legacy of Dr. Everett C. Parker

“A truly great man has passed. We who were blessed to know him will never be the same. He was a man of God and a man of the people. His never-ending quest to end discrimination and promote the interests of the minority population is an example to all Americans. Rest in peace, Everett. We shall always miss you and keep a place in our hearts for you.”

— Hon. Henry Rivera, Chair Emeritus, MMTC Board of Directors; Partner, Wiley Rein

“I am deeply grateful for the work and momentous achievements Dr. Parker accomplished in his long life. Were it not for his efforts, I, and millions of others, would not be where we are today. Dr. Parker laid the groundwork and set the foundation for opportunities for minorities and women in communications. I am proud and humbled to share in carrying on his legacy.”

— Hon. Julia L. Johnson, Chair, MMTC Board of Directors; Founder and President, NetCommunications

“Dr. Parker’s legacy looms large as we continue the fight for inclusion in media, telecom, and tech. Dr. Parker used his brilliance to ensure full participation in these industries for women and people of color. We must each carry more water to make up for this great loss.”

— Kim M. Keenan, President and CEO, MMTC

“Everett invented civil rights advocacy before the FCC: the first case he brought challenging racial discrimination at a radio station was filed in 1934, the year the FCC was founded. He trained virtually all of today’s generation of civil rights and public interest media and telecom advocates. The nation is so deeply enriched by Everett’s high integrity, perseverance, and vision from high on the mountaintop.”

— David Honig, Co-Founder, President Emeritus, and Senior Advisor, MMTC

“I am deeply saddened by the death of Everett Parker. A champion of minorities, women, and the poor, his contributions to the cause of social justice will stand for many generations. His deep convictions and resolute moral compass served as a role model for me and my MMTC colleagues.”

— Erwin Krasnow, Vice Chair, MMTC Board of Directors; Partner, Garvey Schubert Barer

“Everett was David Honig’s heart and MMTC’s heart. A man of tremendous intellectual capacity, amazing technical skills, deep humility and quiet strength. He was a great steward of our mission and a civil rights pioneer in every sense, dedicating his time to a cause that was barely understood or appreciated in the early days. Unlike many great men, he never lost his way, always anchored by a drive to uplift the underserved and the vulnerable. In his last days, I was inspired by his efforts on behalf of undocumented refugees to whom he would even open up his home. And should I ever be blessed to receive, even for a minute, the limitless love that Everett bestowed on his wife, reading to her every day even after she was beyond understanding him, I shall consider myself truly fulfilled.”

— Nicolaine Lazarre, Member, MMTC Board of Directors; Chair, MMTC Broadcasting, LLC; Senior Vice President and General Counsel, National Urban League

“Everett brought an ethical framework to a regulatory system that sorely needed it. He was a giant.”

— Andrew Schwartzman, Member, MMTC Board of Directors; Benton Senior Counselor, Georgetown Law
Communications and Technology Law Clinic

“Dr. Parker's decision to challenge the license of WLBT changed the course of history. His courage and dedication has been a great source of inspiration to me as well as my law students.”

— Angela Campbell, Member, MMTC Board of Advisors; Co-Director, Institute for Public Representation,
Georgetown Law

“Dr. Everett Parker was a man of principle *and* action. He was the Ghandi of the citizen movement in broadcasting. It was an honor to work with him in those early days of representing citizens’ interests in the communications field. He inspired us throughout his long and productive professional life, and will serve as a beacon for doing what is right for generations to come,”

— Charlie Firestone, Member, MMTC Board of Advisors; Executive Director, Communications and Society
Program, The Aspen Institute

“Everett Parker's name became synonymous with the public interest in media. He inspired generations of people inside and outside of industry to work for greater diversity and inclusion. He will be remembered for his passionate, principled, and dedicated advocacy and for effecting real change.”

— Joseph Waz, Jr., Member, MMTC Board of Advisors; Senior Counselor, Creative Content Protection,
NBCUniversal