

Wharlest & Exerlena Jackson Legacy Project and Cold Case Justice Initiative Announce Inaugural Recipients of the Jackson Legacy Project Scholarship

The Wharlest and Exerlena Jackson Legacy Project (Jackson Legacy Project) and the Cold Case Justice Initiative (CCJI) of Syracuse University College of Law have announced the inaugural recipients of the Jackson Legacy Project Scholarship. Khari Anderson and Henry Davis III, both Natchez High School Class of 2023 graduates, are the 2023 recipients of scholarships.

Anderson and Davis submitted statements that addressed the Jackson Legacy Project's motto (Justice, Empowerment, Legacy), personal experience or interest in racial or social justice activities, and how will receiving the Jackson Legacy Project Scholarship assist your long-term goals to contribute to movements for justice and social change.

Announced at the Jackson Legacy Project Seminar in 2022, the Jackson Legacy Project Scholarship awards \$500 scholarships to two current senior high school students. This scholarship honors the legacy of Wharlest, Sr. and Exerlena Jackson, for their selfless courage and sacrifice in the cause of racial and social justice for all. The story of Wharlest and Exerlena Jackson was told on the PBS Frontline film ["American Reckoning."](#)

"Love is the only force capable of transforming enemies into friends," says Wharlest Jackson Jr.

"I am so pleased that CCJI has helped the Jackson family realize this goal to memorialize their parents' legacy through the Wharlest and Exerlena Jackson Legacy Scholarship. The Jackson Legacy Scholarship will support deserving students who will continue the work of racial and social justice for which the Jacksons devoted their lives. We look forward to future events to commemorate the Jackson family's legacy and contributions to a just and inclusive American society," says Paula Johnson, Professor and Director of the Cold Case Justice Initiative.

Tamika Ford, Wharlest and Exerlena Jackson's granddaughter quotes Rosa Parks: "Memories of our lives, of our works, and our deeds will continue in others."

Wharlest and Exerlena Jackson's daughter, Denise Jackson Ford says, "For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. Jeremiah 29:11."

Anderson writes, "Being awarded the Jackson Legacy Project scholarship could jump-start my career as a cosmetologist and social advocate for every hair type and every little girl and lady globally. This long-term goal of mine could very well positively affect so many lives just by them trusting me to enlighten them on the importance of their strands. I hope to change the outlook of hair care companies as well as the cosmetology field. The impact that this social change can have on this country and the world can change for the better. I plan to help every person find the true beauty in themselves and the ones around them by guiding each other through the thick and thin of this very controversial topic."

As part of his statement, Davis writes, “We must empower one another instead of pulling down or killing one another. We must stand together to do things that uplift our community and race. The people who participated in and led the Civil Rights movement did it so there could be a better place and environment for future generations. We must do the same. It is my belief that every generation should get better. When we see our brothers and sisters doing things that are not productive and cause harm, we must be that voice to lead them to do better and to be wiser. I strive to be an example for other young Black youth.”

About Wharlest Jackson

During the Civil Rights Movement, Wharlest and Exerlena were active in Natchez, Adams County, MS to assist people of color to register to vote, have a voice in their community, and increase educational and employment opportunities. Wharlest became the Treasurer of the local NAACP Chapter, in Natchez. Exerlena was also active in the movement for voter registration and civil rights. Wharlest had the qualifications that earned him a promotion within Armstrong Tire and Rubber Company for a job that previously had been held only by Whites. The Ku Klux Klan was very active in the area, and Wharlest was constantly threatened for his activism and his employment position. He was murdered on February 27, 1967, when a bomb was detonated under his truck when he left work.

No one has been held accountable for Wharlest Jackson’s death. However, Wharlest and Exerlena’s work was not in vain. They were courageous and their actions galvanized the community to insist on the equal rights and civic participation that they fought for. The Jackson Legacy Project will carry on their legacy by providing the annual two-day program to inspire others to continue to fight for voting rights, education, and employment opportunities for all people.

About the Cold Case Justice Initiative

The Cold Case Justice Initiative (CCJI) at Syracuse University College of Law was co-founded by Professor Paula C. Johnson and Professor Emerita Janis L. McDonald. Professor Johnson continues to direct the Initiative. CCJI investigates unsolved racially motivated homicides and disappearances, such as the Wharlest Jackson case, which occurred during the Civil Rights Era and contemporary times. CCJI works to hold responsible parties accountable and conducts relevant research, academic education, professional training, public awareness, and memorial legacies of victims of racial crimes who fought for the rights and freedoms of present and future generations. For more information, visit [CCJI](#).