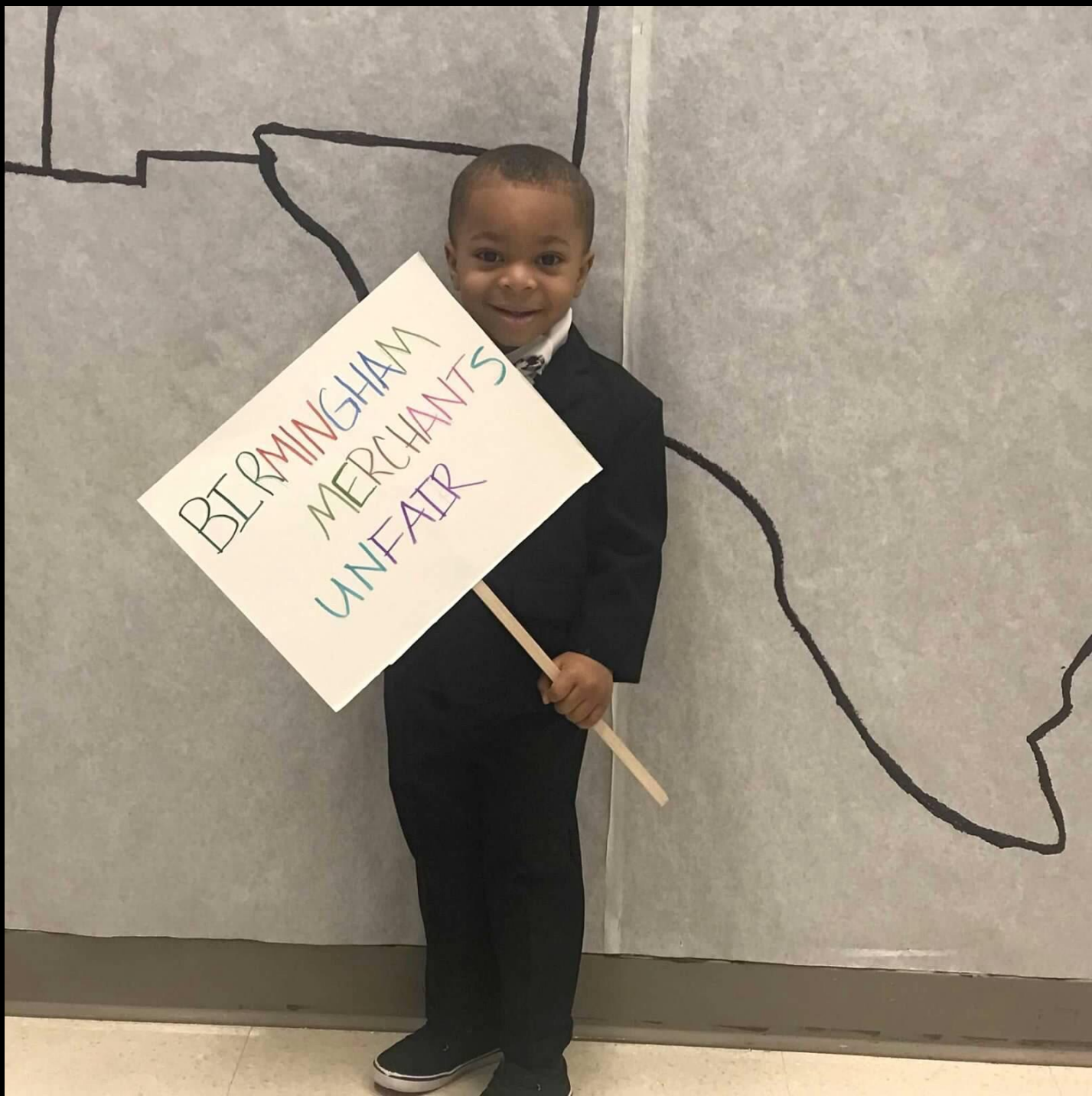


Black History Month Reflections



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WELCOME TO THE KENNETH B. CLARK AUDITORIUM

DR. KENNETH B. CLARK

1914–2005

Psychologist • Educator • Social Reformer
New York State Regent 1966–1986



Photograph © The Estate of Raimondo Borea



New York State Regent Dr. Kenneth B. Clark was a groundbreaking educator, author, psychologist, and advocate for racial integration. Over a distinguished career spanning more than 70 years, Kenneth Clark's work, together with his wife, Dr. Mamie Phipps Clark, advanced our understanding of developmental psychology and particularly the impact of race-based stereotypes on children's mental health.

A champion of opportunities for the poor and disenfranchised, Kenneth Clark lived a life of "firsts." He was the first African American to earn a doctorate in psychology from Columbia University and the first to gain tenure at the City College of New York. Clark was also the first African American to serve on the New York State Board of Regents and the first black president of the American Psychological Association.

Among his many honors were the NAACP's prestigious Spingarn Medal in 1961, the Four Freedoms Award in 1985, and the National Alliance of Black School Educators' Living Legend Award in 1995.

This theater was dedicated to Dr. Kenneth B. Clark in recognition of his lifetime of service to the people of New York State and the nation. May we continue to draw wisdom and inspiration from his example.



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“Now show me the doll that’s most like you.”

An Experiment in Racial Stereotypes and Children’s Self Esteem

In the 1940s Drs. Kenneth and Mamie Clark devised an experiment to explore the psychological impact of racial segregation on children. In the test, the Clarks showed black and white dolls to black children and asked them what they thought of each doll. The children who attended racially segregated schools were more likely than their integrated peers to answer that the black doll looked “bad” and the white doll looked “nice.” When instructed, “Now show me the doll that’s most like you,” many of the black children showed preference for the white doll.

While the test’s methodology has been questioned, the results showed indisputably that many black children in segregated schools struggled with their identities to the point of rejection of their blackness and even self-hatred. “These children see themselves as inferior,” Kenneth Clark concluded, “and they accepted the inferiority as part of reality.”

The Clarks’ doll test was just one facet of their complex social work, but it would prove pivotal in reversing entrenched racist policies in the United States. In 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court cited the Clarks’ findings and testimony in its decision of *Brown vs. Board of Education*, the landmark case that ended legal racial segregation in American public schools.



Photograph by Gordon Parks

NORTHSIDE CENTER FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT HARLEM, NEW YORK

In 1946 Drs. Kenneth and Mamie Phipps Clark founded the Northside Center for Child Development in Harlem in response to the community’s need for mental health services for low-income African American children. Mamie Clark served as Northside’s director until three

years before her death, in 1983. The innovative not-for-profit continues to thrive today in service of all children in need, providing expert mental health, education, and enrichment programs for thousands of families each year.

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