



Jacksonville District  
*Celebrates*



# Black History Month

THE NATIONAL BLACK HISTORY THEME

MADAM C.J. WALKER

2010

National Urban League

the history of black economic empowerment

Opening Event ❖ February 4, 2010



## Rodney Hurst

When eleven-year old Rodney Hurst accepted his American History teacher's invitation to join the Jacksonville Youth Council NAACP, he could not have guessed at the enormous impact it would have on his life, Jacksonville history or the Civil Rights Movement. Hurst's award winning book, **It was never about a hot dog and a Coke@!**, subtitled "**A Personal Account of the 1960 Sit-in Demonstrations in Jacksonville, Florida and Ax Handle Saturday**", recounts the events leading up to, and the fallout from the bloody events of August 27, 1960.



Providing a chronicle of those pivotal events that helped make Jacksonville and America what it is today, Hurst has won numerous awards for **It was never about a hot dog and a Coke@!**, including... The 2008 *USA Book News Book Award* for Multi-Cultural Nonfiction ... the 2009 Independent Publisher Awards Silver Medal for Nonfiction ... the 2009 Florida Book Awards Bronze Medal in Nonfiction ... the Inaugural Stetson Kennedy Award presented by the Florida Historical Society ... the 2009 City of Jacksonville Historic Preservation Award... the 2008 *Sabrina Book Reviews Award* for Best General Non-Fiction... shared the 2008 *Sabrina Book Reviews Award* as the Best Book of the year... and the Nonfiction Winner in the Southeast Region of the Reader Views Literary Awards.

In addition to his involvement in the Civil Rights Movement, Hurst served two four-year terms on the Jacksonville City Council and is responsible for a number of "firsts" in the Jacksonville Community. He is one of the first thirteen national recipients of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting Television Fellowships... the first Black to co-host a television talk show in Jacksonville on PBS Channel WJCT... the first Black male hired at the Prudential South Central Home Office in Jacksonville, Florida... and the first Black to serve as the Executive Director of the State of Florida Construction Industry Licensing Board. Hurst has served on the boards of several state and national organizations, including the Arrangements Committee of the 1980 National Democratic Convention, and worked for the local Anti-Poverty program.

Hurst is a Silver Life Member of the NAACP and the recipient of numerous recognitions and awards including the 2008 Clanzel T. Brown Award given by the Jacksonville Urban League in honor of its late revered Executive Director. He gave the Keynote address at the 2010 City of Jacksonville's 23rd Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast.

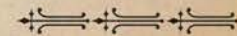
He is a member of the Bethel Baptist Institutional Church where he serves in the Fine Arts Ministry. Hurst and his wife Ann have been married for more than 43 years. They have two sons, Todd, and Rodney, and two granddaughters Marquette, and Jasmine. His hobbies are Oldies and Motown music, and he spends what he calls quality time, as an "Oldies" DJ.

# Black History Month

Opening Day Ceremony  
February 4, 2010

Theme: *The History of Black  
Economic Empowerment*

Welcome..... Lucy Soto  
Invocation ..... Veronica Taylor  
Opening Remarks..... Rebecca Griffith  
Cultural Dance..... Lisa Pugh  
Occasion..... Murika Davis  
Introduction of Speaker..... Laverne Cooper  
Speaker..... Rodney Hurst  
Presentation..... LTC Nathaniel Rainey  
Deputy District Engineer, USACE  
Closing Remarks..... Tony Smith  
Black Employment Program Manager



*Mark Your Calendars for Future Events:*

16 February: Brain Brawl

26 February: Closing Ceremony



*The History Behind...*

## Black Economic Empowerment

The need for economic development has been a central element of black life. After centuries of unrequited toil as slaves, African Americans gained their freedom and found themselves in the struggle to make a living. The chains were gone, but racism was everywhere. Black codes often prevented blacks from owning land in towns and cities, and in the countryside they were often denied the opportunity to purchase land. Organized labor shut their doors to their brethren, and even the white philanthropist who funded black schools denied them employment opportunities once educated. In the South, whites sought to insure that blacks would only be sharecroppers and day laborers, and in the North whites sought to keep them as unskilled labor.

Pushing against the odds, African Americans became landowners, skilled workers, small businessmen and women, professionals, and ministers. In the Jim Crow economy, they started insurance companies, vocational schools, teachers colleges, cosmetic firms, banks, newspapers, and hospitals. To fight exclusion from the economy, they started their own unions and professional associations. In an age in which individuals proved unable to counter industrialization alone, they preached racial or collective uplift rather than individual self-reliance. The late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed an unprecedented degree of racial solidarity and organization.

In 1910, a group of dedicated reformers, black and white, gathered to create an organization to address the needs of African Americans as they migrated to the cities of the United States. The organization that they created a century ago became what we all know as the National Urban League. For a century, they have struggled to open the doors of opportunity for successive generations, engaging the challenges of each age. Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) celebrates the centennial of the National Urban League by exploring racial uplift and black economic development in the twentieth century. You can learn more at [www.asalh.org](http://www.asalh.org).