

EVELYN REID SYPHAX

LIFE AND EDUCATION

Evelyn Reid Syphax devoted a lifetime of service to the Arlington community. Born in Lynchburg, Virginia, she earned a bachelor's degree in English and Language Arts from Virginia Union University (VUU) in 1948. She moved to Arlington in 1951 and received a master's degree in Early Childhood Education from New York University in 1954. She was a language arts and reading specialist within the Arlington Public Schools system for over 20 years at several schools including Hoffman-Boston in Penrose.



Evelyn Reid ca. 1945.

While teaching at Langston Elementary School, she met Archie Douglas Syphax, one of Arlington County's first paid African American firefighters. Evelyn and Archie married in 1956 and raised two sons, Archie Douglas ("Doug") Syphax, Jr., and Craig Custis Syphax.

The building in front of you at 2110 Washington Boulevard is the Syphax Education Center. It contains the administrative offices of Arlington Public Schools and is named in memory of Arlington educator and activist Evelyn Reid Syphax (1926-2000).

CHAMPION FOR EDUCATION

As an educator Evelyn Syphax advocated for learning experiences that go beyond what is possible in the traditional school classroom. She launched the Syphax Child Care Center in 1963 to provide preschool for African American children. She also operated the first Montessori School in Arlington from 1966 to 1987.



Evelyn Reid Syphax and VUU classmate Governor Douglas Wilder meet President Bill Clinton in 1994.

Evelyn Syphax championed children's rights through her appointment to the Arlington School Board (1980-1984) and her service as Vice Chairman (1981) and Chairman (1983). She was instrumental in overhauling the County's 1971 busing desegregation plan to reduce long bus rides for non-white students and showed that the plan itself was discriminatory.

CIVIC LEADERSHIP

Evelyn Syphax served as Chairman of the Arlington Child Care Advisory Committee, Chairman and Vice Chairman of the State Advisory Council on Vocational Education, and sat on the Board of Directors of the Northern Virginia Private Schools Association.



Evelyn Reid Syphax being sworn into her term on the Arlington School Board c.1983.

Syphax was the Founder and first President of the Northern Virginia chapter of the Coalition of 100 Black Women. In 1956 she founded the local Zeta Chi Omega chapter of her beloved Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated (AKA), becoming its President, and then Director of the Mid-Atlantic region of AKA from 1978 to 1982.

CHARITY AND HONORS

Evelyn Syphax was devoted to local history serving as President of the Arlington Historical Society (1988-1989). She fought to recognize Freedman's Village, a community of emancipated African Americans that lived on the grounds of Arlington House, with a state marker. In 1999, she donated \$25,000 to establish the Black Heritage Museum of Arlington.



Dr. Syphax receiving her honorary doctorate in May 1991 from Virginia Union University with her sons Rev. A.D. Syphax Jr. (left) and Craig Syphax (right).

Evelyn Syphax received many honors throughout her life. The Arlington County Commission on the Status of Women recognized her as a 'Notable Woman of Arlington' in 1992. She received honorary doctorates from St. Paul's College, Lynchburg College, and VUU.

Evelyn Reid Syphax died on March 14, 2000. Her undergraduate alma mater VUU named its School of Education after her in 2010.



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