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August 16, 2018

Dear Mr. French:

I understand that the Urban League along with several community non-profit partners (CAYA, TAF, Byrd Barr Place - formerly CAMP - and the Northwest African-American Museum) are collaborating to submit a proposal to secure the Seattle Vocational Institute (SVI) property from Seattle Central College. I also understand that the Urban League and its partners would like to rename the property to honor my father, the Rev. Dr. Samuel Berry McKinney. In addition, I understand that your proposal includes the establishment of a new Community Public Development Authority (CPDA) to whom the Urban League would ultimately transfer ownership of the property. This CPDA, that you would also like to name in honor of my father, would have as its charter the revitalization and preservation of Seattle's Central District for African Americans.

So much of African American history is disappearing from Seattle neighborhoods that have been historically African American. My father knew the history of the buildings, the communities, the industries and the relationships that supported or hampered the African American presence in every city in which he lived. He believed, as I learned from him, that while cities should and will change, change and ethnic eradication are not the same. Cities are built on the history of those who peopled faith institutions, sat on porches waving to neighbors, and owned small businesses. Those stories should not be plowed under along with the bricks rapidly toppled by gentrifying cranes.

I am honored that the Seattle Vocational Institute and Community Public Development Authority proposed that they be named to reflect the beliefs and values of my father, the Rev. Dr. Samuel Berry McKinney.

As I was taught, here is more of my father's history relevant to this project. My father was invited onto the first national board of Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America in 1964 by its founder, Rev. Leon Sullivan. OICs of America, a self-help program that began in a refurbished jail in North Philadelphia, had as its logo a skeleton key which symbolized the program's goal to "open any door" for its trainees. Rev. Sullivan also proclaimed that the vocational, education and life-skills training program was dedicated to "Helping People Help Themselves."

Rev. Dr. McKinney founded SOIC (Seattle Opportunities Industrialization Center) to provide hope for the impoverished and the hard-core unemployed. Incorporated in May 1966 as a

private, nonprofit community-based vocational training center, Dr. McKinney served as Board President. OIC Seattle was the first community-based organization to be federally classified as a Skills Center (1972). The program was popular and successful. Its rapid growth required new facilities; located on 21<sup>st</sup> and Jackson Streets, the multi-million dollar Skills Center was dedicated in 1974. That was a very busy year for Rev. Dr. McKinney. In addition to fundraising for and breaking ground to build SOIC, he maintained an active pastorate, was involved in civic social justice ventures, completed his doctoral dissertation, and designed and broke ground to build the Afrocentric sanctuary of Mount Zion Baptist Church, the design of which is so unique that the building and its campus were made historic landmark in 2018.

To ensure program continuity, Seattle OIC joined forces with Seattle's community colleges and became the Seattle Vocational Institute. Now a division of Seattle Central College, SVI is dedicated to preparing students for in-demand careers.

The Community Public Development Authority (CPDA) reflects the cooperation and collaboration between government agencies, nonprofit organizations, corporations and other community partners in which my father believed. The CPDA understands that African Americans know ourselves best and must be voices at a table that aims to help us. Interestingly, my father learned this format for community work from his father, Rev. Dr. Wade Hampton McKinney, whose work on a post-WWI version of a CPDA ensured that African American residents of Cleveland, Ohio had a hospital, pharmacy, a credit union, veterans organizations and markets.

The CPDA will engage and SVI already does essential work that is close in aim and purpose to the social gospel ministry of Rev. Dr. Samuel Berry McKinney. The Social Gospel is Christian faith practiced not just as spiritual conversion but as social reform. Changing lives is social reform. SVI changes lives. The collaborative work, institutional support and community building of the CPDA changes lives. The Samuel Berry McKinney Vocational Institute and the Samuel Berry McKinney Community Public Development Authority would honor, teach and maintain community history, the practical transition and continued success of educational, vocational and life-skills programs, historical preservation, economic development and neighborhood enhancements that make communities thrive and that would make Seattle soar.

With gratitude, I am:

Lora-Ellen McKinney, Ph.D.