

From: SC News from SCIWAY <sciway-news@sc-news.net>
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Subject: Liberty Hill + 2016's Euphoria Food and Wine Festival in Greenville

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{ SC's September Calendar + Our Featured SC Event }

Greenville, September 22-25 | This year's [September Calendar of Events](#) is brought to you by [euphoria Food, Wine and Music Festival](#). The four-day weekend features celebrated chefs and professionals, celebrity singers and songwriters, and a diverse offering of wines, craft beers, and more. [euphoria](#) offers over 30 all-inclusive events – from a tasting event appropriately named Feast by Fire to a food truck rodeo to multi-course dinners with wine pairings. There is something to fit every style! Drawing over 6,000 guests from 30 states and multiple countries, [euphoria](#) highlights the best of SC's culture, depth of talent, and award-winning downtown. [euphoria](#) is a 501(c)(3) organization which annually awards grants to charitable partners in the Upstate that align with its mission: providing sustenance to those in need, educating through music or performing arts, and supporting children.

[See all the other great South Carolina events coming up in September.](#)

{ Honoring Liberty Hill: Home of *Briggs v. Elliott* }

Liberty Hill is the sort of simple brick church many people might pass with no particular notice. Its facade is stark, its curbside location, however, belie a remarkable past. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, it was the place where local black parents met to discuss the inequities that confronted their children at school. In Clarendon County at that time, the school district spent four times more money on white students than it did on black students. These parents came together to fight for their children, and when they were done, they had helped eliminate legal segregation not just in South Carolina but in the United States as a whole.

We remember this story today in honor of the start of our new school year and in honor of the passing of Harry Briggs, Jr., whose family led the fight for educational equality.

(Mike Stroud of Bluffton, 2013 © Do Not Use Without Written Consent)

Liberty Hill AME Church in Summerton was founded in 1867, four years after Emancipation years after the close of the Civil War. Members originally met in a bush arbor and later a shed formal sanctuary built on this site was constructed after Thomas and Margaret Briggs sold four land to church trustees for \$1, though the date is unclear. The current church – New Liber parishioners call it – was completed in 1905 as a wood-frame building. Brick veneer was added in the 1940s.

(Mike Stroud of Bluffton, 2011 © Do Not Use Without Written Consent)

Around this time, in the late 1940s, people began meeting here to discuss desegregation. They were led by Liberty Hill's then-minister, the Reverend E.E. Richburg, and evolved into the landmark case *Briggs versus Elliott*. The case officially began in 1949 when Harry and Eliza Briggs of Summerton with more than 20 other plaintiffs – including the Briggs' eight-year-old son, Harry Briggs, Jr. – filed a petition asking Clarendon County School District #22 to provide black schools that were equal to white schools. (1) Their schools, they wrote, should also be equipped with heat, running water, adequate furniture, and books. The petition was organized by local black minister and teacher Reverend Joseph DeLaine. School superintendent Roderick Elliott denied the request.

(Mike Stroud of Bluffton, 2011 © Do Not Use Without Written Consent)

In 1950 *Briggs versus Elliott* was filed in Clarendon County. Thurgood Marshall – at the time a lawyer for the NAACP – argued that education for black students would remain inferior as long as students were segregated. In 1951 the three-judge panel ruled against the plaintiffs, with only Federal District Judge Julius Waring dissenting. In his dissent, Judge Waring wrote that separate but equal laws were "inherently unequal." The case was appealed to the United States Supreme Court, and *Briggs versus Elliott* became the first of five cases that together became *Brown versus Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. The court later stated that it chose *Brown versus Board of Education* as the case's name because it did not want the case to be seen by the nation as Southern.

(Library of Congress, 1964, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-126440)

In a stunning victory, on May 17, 1954, the court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs. While *Briggs versus Elliott* was ultimately a win for desegregation, the pioneers from Liberty Hill AME Church were persecuted by their neighbors as a result. All of the plaintiffs were fired from their jobs, and the Reverend DeLaine's home and church were burned in retribution. Many of them, including Harry and Eliza Briggs and their children, fled the state. Harry and Eliza Briggs each received a Congressional Gold Medal posthumously in 2004, along with the Reverend DeLaine. Harry Briggs, Jr. lived out his life in New York; he died on August 9, 2016. Above is a photo from 1964 featuring some of the plaintiffs in *Briggs versus Board of Education*, including Harry Briggs, Jr., pictured second from right. Below is a photo of the meeting at Liberty Hall during which Summerton parents signed their initial petition for equal education.

(Cecil Williams, National Museum of American History, 1950)

Today Liberty Hill remains an active AME church with a history rich in courage, suffering, and faith. The Judicial Annex behind the [United States Post Office](#) in [Charleston](#) was renamed Waring on October 2, 2015.

1. The evolution of *Briggs versus Elliott* began in 1947 with a petition by two brothers, Levi and Pearson, whose children had to walk from Davis Station to Summerton, where the county's only high school, Scott's Branch, was located. The distance of this journey was nine miles each way. There were many twists and turns in the road that led to Briggs versus Elliott, and this is a subject we explore more deeply in our February 2017 edition of *SCIWAY News*. Levi Pearson was also a recipient of the Congressional Gold Medal in 2004.

[Previous Issues of SCIWAY News](#)

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