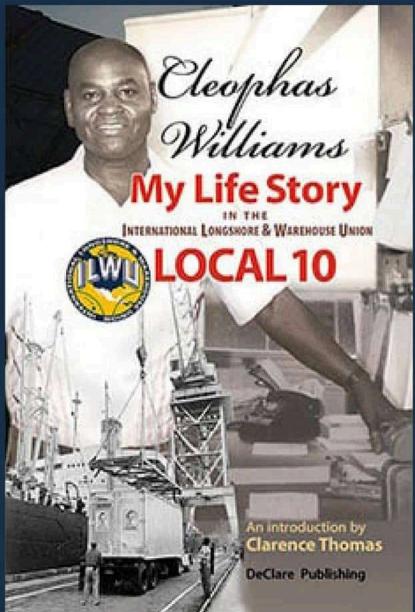




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Baltimore Book Signing: Cleophas Williams, My Life Story in ILWU Local 10, Aug. 10

written by Struggle - La Lucha
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"Cleophas Williams, My Life Story in the Int'l Longshore Union Local 10"

BALTIMORE BOOK SIGNING
Thursday, August 10, 6 pm to 8 pm at
Harriet Tubman Solidarity Center
2011 N. Charles Street, Baltimore 21218

Discussion with:
Clarence Thomas &
Delores Lemon Thomas

THURSDAY, AUGUST 10, 2023, AT 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM EDT

Book Signing: Cleophas Williams, My Life Story in ILWU Local 10
2011 N Charles St, Baltimore

Baltimore Book Signing and Discussion with Clarence Thomas and Delores Lemon Thomas

*Also update on Longshore worker struggles on the West Coast

Thursday, August 10, 6 pm to 8 pm

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Cleophas Williams' story as told by himself, will be introduced by Clarence Thomas, a leading African American radical labor and community activist:

"The history of African Americans in the Int'l Longshore & Warehouse Union (ILWU) in San Francisco is indeed worthy of documenting. Such an individual is Cleophas Williams, whose distinguished career as a member of the Local 10 spanned 38 years. "Cleophas Williams' election as president of ILWU Local 10 in 1967, made him the highest elected African American to serve as an officer in the entire ILWU.

"Born in rural Camden, Arkansas, and part of the great migration to the Bay Area, he arrived in Oakland, California, in 1942 - seeking to escape the horrors and multifaceted structures

of systemic racism and white supremacy. He was amongst the leaders who placed Local 10 into the vanguard of the labor movement by engaging in civil-rights unionism and other social movements in the 1960s and 1970s.

"Here is Cleophas Williams' historic journey - his rise in Local 10 within the greater context of the Black liberation movement.

- Clarence Thomas

Review by Sadie Williams

“My eyes were filled with tears of joy when I saw the cover of this book! Cleophas wrote every day about something from current events, trips, people, history of his church, life, and his beloved union. Many have said they found the book hard to put down, so did I. I have read it twice, and learned something new each time. Hopefully this will be your experience as well.”

- Sadie Williams is the 99 year old spouse of Cleophas Williams

Review by Gloria Verdieu

When I received this beautiful book from Delores Lemon-Thomas and Clarence Thomas, I could not wait to begin reading it.

I had the honor of meeting and talking with Sadie Williams, wife of Cleophas - Williams, on two occasions. Once in Oakland at her home at the Cleophas Williams Rose Garden dedication shortly after the book “Mobilizing in Our Own Name: Million Worker March” was published and again about a year later at the ILWU Pacific Coast Pensioners Association convention in Long Beach, Calif.

Each time she was surrounded by ILWU Local 10 members engaging and embracing her presence with love and respect. I was surprised when I went to introduce myself in Long Beach, and she said, “I remember you,” and opened her arms for a hug.

In Long Beach, Delores let me glimpse some of the scanned pages of Cleophas Williams’ handwritten journal. I held it in my hand and immediately began to read it. Delores left the journal with me for a little while.

As I examined it, I was impressed with his handwriting or, more formally, his penmanship. There are a few samples of his handwriting in the book, one on page 52 at the beginning of Chapter 2, “A Longshore Worker’s Life Story.”

Delores told me about Clarence’s intention of editing and publishing Cleophas

Williams' story. The pages would have to be scanned, which required them to keep the original transcript for a while. It was hard for Mrs. Sadie Williams to part with it, even for a short time, but she could rest assured that it was in good hands. This journal is a treasure that will be valued for generations to come.

I read through the book quickly the first time and reread it, reflecting on my own life and making connections. I was also brought up in the South, and one of the many things that resonated with me was when Williams wrote about the Booker T. Washington High School that he and his sister attended.

The school was "built by the Julius Rosenwald Fund, which builds schools for Black - Students throughout the South where there were no Black schools."

The segregated school my eight siblings and I attended, Carver School, named after George Washington Carver, was built in 1915 using the same fund. It was renamed Carver-Hill School in 1955 after Reverend Edward Hill, who fought for well-funded schools for Black students.

There is much to be learned from this biography; the history of how Cleophas Williams was elected by popular vote the first African American president of ILWU Local 10, the most militant, progressive union in the United States, if not the world.

In the book, Cleophas explains that he was discharged from the army due to a knee injury after serving three months and 19 days. He heard a fellow "telling a barber that he was a Longshoreman; pay was good, and it had peacetime possibilities." So he applied, followed the steps needed, and was hired with no idea that, in his words, "I was about to embark on a journey that not only brought me employment, but a place in the sun that I would have never dreamed of."

Williams knew nothing about the ILWU when he was hired, but he was a fast learner and followed all the rules. After the 6-month probationary period, he was promoted

to full union membership. Williams worked as a rank-and-file worker for 15 years, working out of the hall, attending union meetings, enrolling in the California Labor School, and just continuing to learn before deciding to run for president of ILWU.

Williams acknowledged the shoulders of those ancestors who paved the way and those that gave him much-needed support; apologized to people he hurt along the way. He took responsibility for his mistakes, not blaming his parents or the tragic experiences of growing up in the “Jim Crow” South.

Williams was a courageous working-class organizer, a fighter for social justice and the rights of workers nationally and internationally. He believed the struggle for social justice, equality, and dignity was a workers’ struggle.

I highly recommend employed, unemployed, organized, and unorganized workers read Cleophas Williams’ “My Life Story in the International Longshore & Warehouse Union Local 10.”

Gloria Verdieu is a journalist for Struggle-La Lucha Newspaper; editor of “Black August 1619-2019” (2029) and a co-editor of “Mobilizing in Our own Name, Million Worker March” (2021) Verdieu is a San Diego activist; member of Committee Against Police Brutality and the Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition.



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