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PRESS RELEASE

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Plans Being Made to Commemorate Civil Rights 50th Anniversary

Mayor Cedric Glover on Tuesday will unveil plans to commemorate courageous local leaders who fought for social change in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Movement.

The Mayor will host a news conference at 10 a.m. in his large conference room at Government Plaza, 505 Travis St. He's expected to be joined by the Rev. Harry Blake and Dr. C.O. Simpkins, both honorary co-chairmen for the North Louisiana Civil Rights Coalition. The Rev. Clifford McClain is chairman.

In the 1950s and 60s, Shreveport was a hotbed for racial discrimination. September 22, 1963, was one of the city's most notorious days for racial intolerance, as armed, horseback-riding Shreveport police officers stormed into a worship service at the historic Little Union Baptist Church where citizens gathered in memory of four little girls killed the week before at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala. It was during this vicious encounter that Rev. Blake was nearly beaten to death. Only days before, students participating in a peaceful protest from Booker T. Washington High School to Little Union were placed in paddy wagons and hauled off to jail without breaking any laws.

Local dentist C.O. Simpkins was also active in the movement along with the Rev. E. Edward Jones, whose children integrated the public school system. Rev. Jones rose to become president of the National Baptist Convention of America.

“There are some of our local legends who have passed away, like the late Bernice Smith, just to name one,” Mayor Glover said. “But we are equally privileged to still have living and working with us a number of these brave civil rights giants upon whose shoulders we all get to stand, so I’m honored to be a part of this noble and necessary effort.”

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