

Vernon Jarrett



It was 1968 that changed everything in Vernon Jarrett's life. The horrors of that year brought him to television as a voice of community spirit and pride.

Mr. Jarrett had an established career in journalism. After graduating from Knoxville College in Tennessee, he moved to Chicago to work for the *Daily Defender*. His work took him into his first round with broadcast news, in radio. He and Oscar Brown, Jr. produced the nation's first black daily radio newscast for WJJD-AM. In both print and broadcast, Mr. Jarrett had a fast-growing reputation for pushing open doors held shut by racism.

Jarrett was a visiting associate professor of history in the late 1960s. Then the world exploded. The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. left parts of the city in flames. The day of Dr. King's funeral, Jarrett went to WLS-TV with Warner Saunders and local disc jockey Daddio Daily. They proposed to air a program called *Stop and Think*--its goal-to keep people calm during the funeral broadcast. Throughout the day, Jarrett produced the program of entertainment and ideas that reminded the community of their richness in unity rather than the divisiveness of violence. Jarrett spent the next 30 years at WLS doing public service and commentary for his various programs, including, *For Blacks Only*, *Black On Black*, and *Vernon Jarrett Face to Face*. He has also been featured in documentaries, including *The Promised Land*, *Harry Truman*, and *The Life and Times of Eleanor Roosevelt*.

Jarrett has received numerous honors and honorary degrees, but he is most proud of his work with ACT-SO, which recognizes the achievements of young African-American students. He believes it is most important to recognize them as the future of his beloved community.