

Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton through the eyes of WE WIN students

Written by Tiffany McGowen, Monikah Marshall, and Tahzenay Tesemma Sharon Sayles Belton is a great leader.
Monday, 17 June 2013 10:22



Even though Sharon Sayles Belton has made tremendous contributions to the city of Minneapolis and to the African-American community, many of our children have no idea who she is.

WE WIN Institute decided to remedy this problem by teaching students in its Rites of Passage programs about the accomplishments of this great African-American icon.

WE WIN is a non-profit dedicated to the academic and social successes of children. WE WIN students studied the life and accomplishments of Sayles Belton and learned how she grew up in Minnesota, how she went to Central High School in Minneapolis and how she was even a nurse's aide and probation officer. The students were taught that this African-American giant was the 8th Ward city council person and then became the first African-American and first woman mayor of the city of Minneapolis.

The children were honored to present her life to Sayles Belton in person at a program presented at WE WIN Institute. After, students played drums and danced and the former mayor did a few steps and told the children that when she was in high school she used to do African dance. Sayles Belton also told the audience, which was full of parents and community members, that programs like WE WIN were important to help guide the direction of children of color.

"In this room, there are children who will be doctors, lawyers, teachers, and of course mayors of our cities," said Sayles Belton. She looked at the poster that was created by the children about

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her life, and said, "This picture looks just like me."



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She grew up in Minnesota. She was an African-American administrator and politician. Ms. Belton was the first African-American and first woman to be mayor of Minneapolis. Her hard work has earned her the honor of a bridge being named after her.

Sharon Sayles Belton was born on May 13, 1951 in St. Paul. Her parents are Bill and Ethel Sayles. Mrs. Sayles Belton volunteered at Mt. Sinai Hospital in Minneapolis as a nurse's aide. She attended Central High School in Minneapolis. After graduating high school she attended Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Mrs. Sayles Belton was elected to the Minneapolis City Council in 1983. She represented the state of Minnesota at the 1984 Democratic Convention. Mrs. Sayles Belton was elected to be the city council president in 1990. She was elected the first African-American and the first female mayor of the city of Minneapolis. She served two terms.

In 2010, she joined Thomas Reuters, which is based in Eagan as vice president of community relations and government affairs.

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