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National Museum of African American History and Culture

Delegate Magazine 1984

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A SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING

FOR

Oliver C. Sutton
September 18th, 1916 — July 15th, 1983

The 12th of 15 children of the late Samuel Johnson Sutton, a San Antonio, Texas school principal and businessman, and Lillian Smith Sutton, Judge Sutton was Group Chairman in charge of all operations and development for the six Inner City Broadcasting Corporation radio stations located outside New York City, since his retirement from the bench.

His brother, former Manhattan Borough President, the Hon. Percy E. Sutton, Chairman of the eight-station Inner City Broadcasting chain, and the youngest of the family, said "He was a first-class radio and communications expert, with a unique ability to turn businesses around."

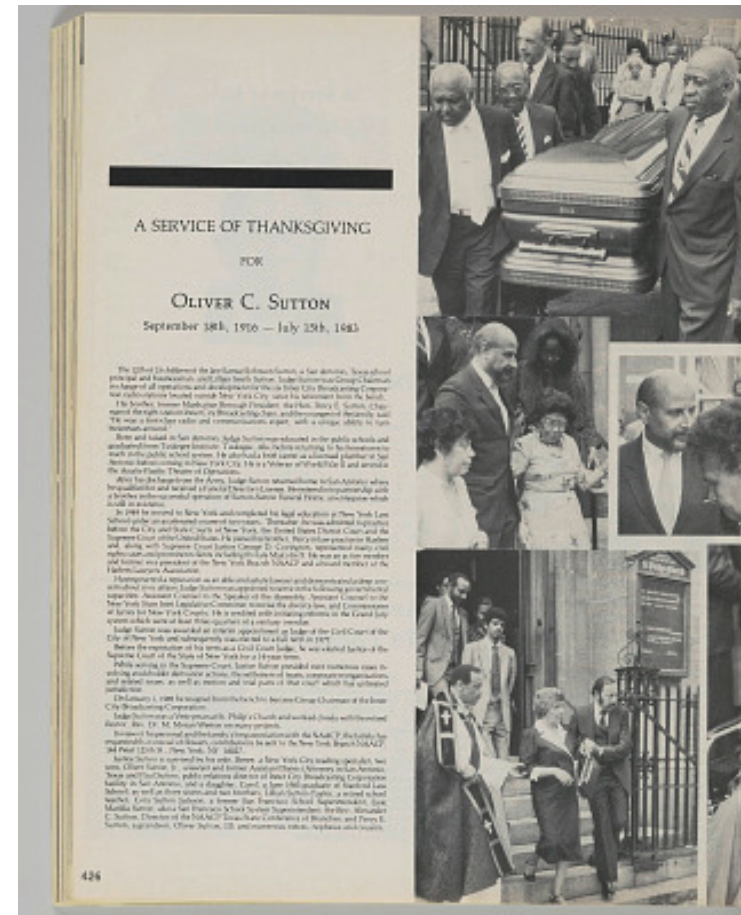
Born and raised in San Antonio, Judge Sutton was educated in the public schools and graduated from Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, Ala. before returning to his hometown to teach in the public school system. He also had a brief career as a licensed plumber in San Antonio before coming to New York City. He is a Veteran of World War II and served in the Asiatic-Pacific Theater of Operations.

After his discharge from the Army, Judge Sutton returned home to San Antonio where he qualified for and received a Funeral Director's License. He entered into partnership with a brother in the successful operation of Sutton-Sutton Funeral Home, an enterprise which is still in existence.

In 1949 he moved to New York and completed his legal education at New York Law School under an accelerated course of two years. Thereafter, he was admitted to practice before the City and State Courts of New York, the United States District Court and the Supreme Court of the United States. He joined his brother, Percy in law practice in Harlem and, along with Supreme Court Justice Goerge D. Covington, represented many civil rights cases and prominent clients including the late Malcolm X. He was an active member and former vice president of the New York Branch NAACP and a board member of the Harlem Lawyers Association.

Having earned a reputation as an able and astute lawyer and demonstrated a deep concern about civic affairs, Judge Sutton was appointed to serve in the following governmental capacities: Assistant Counsel to the Speaker of the Assembly; Assistant Counsel to the New York State Joint Legislative Committee to revise the divorce law; and Commissioner of Jurors for New York County. He is credited with initiating reforms in the Grand Jury system which were at least three-quarters of a century overdue.

Judge Sutton was awarded an interim appointment as a Judge of the Civil Court of the City of New York and subsequently was elected to a full term in July 1977.



Before the expiration of his term as a Civil Court Judge, he was elected Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New York for a 14-year term.

While serving in the Supreme Court, Justice Sutton presided over numerous cases involving stockholder derivation actions, the settlement of trusts, corporate reorganizations and related issues, as well as motion and trial parts of that court which has unlimited jurisdiction.

On January 1, 1981 he resigned from the bench to become Group Chairman of the Inner City Broadcasting Corporation.

Judge Sutton was a Vestryman at St. Philip's Church and worked closely with the retired Rector, Rev. Dr. M. Moran Weston on many projects.

In view of his personal and the family's long association with the NAACP, the family has requested that instead of flowers, contributions be sent to the New York Branch NAACP, 144 West 125th St., New York, NY 10027.

Justice Sutton is survived by his wife, Renee, a New York City reading specialist; two sons, Oliver Sutton, Jr., a lawyer and former Assistant District Attorney in San Antonio, Texas and Paul Sutton, public relations director of Inner City Broadcasting Corporation facility in San Antonio; and a daughter, Carol, a June 1983 graduate of Stanford Law School; as well as three sisters and two brothers, Lillian Sutton-Taylor, a retired school teacher; Cora Sutton Jackson, a former San Francisco School Superintendent; Essie Matilda Sutton, also a San Francisco School System Superintendent; the Rev. Alexander C. Sutton, Director of the NAACP Texas State Conference of Branches; and Percy E. Sutton; a grandson, Oliver Sutton, III; and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins.

[[4 images of funeral]]

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