

# Mullikin honored for civil rights work

*Attorney, retired military officer  
recognized by Briggs family, other civil  
rights leaders*

CAMDEN, SOUTH CAROLINA, USA, February 19, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Dr. Tom Mullikin, a Camden, S.C.-based attorney and retired two-star commander of the S.C. State Guard who today chairs the state's floodwater commission, was singularly honored by the Briggs family (the case of Briggs vs Elliot) and other civil rights leaders for "exemplary courage and service to mankind." The award was presented Feb. 1, 2024 at the historic Scotts Branch High School in Summerton, S.C.

The award recognizes Mullikin's "tireless work" in shedding light on the little-known Briggs vs Elliot decision, which was the all-important precursor to Brown vs Board of Education, the landmark decision widely recognized as the key legal victory in the fight for school desegregation.

## BRIGGS WAS FIRST

The S.C. case of Briggs vs Elliot was the first case filed in federal district court. That first case appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court and was argued by the Honorable Thurgood Marshall. The dissenting opinion was written by U.S. District Court Judge Waites Waring in South Carolina, and it became the basis of the ultimate decision of the court in the case of Brown vs Board of Education.

"Like so many other unsung particulars of Palmetto State history, Briggs vs Elliot was the first and the catalyst for the ultimate victory," said Mullikin. "For some, signing was tantamount to a death sentence. This courageous act would ignite a flame that would lead the civil rights movement



Pictured (L-R) the Honorable James L. Felder, former S.C. Representative and national Civil Rights champion; Mr. Cecil J. Williams; Dr. Thomas S. Mullikin; and Mr. Nathaniel Briggs.

across the country and cost these courageous families their physical, emotional, and economic security.”

Famed civil rights documentarian Cecil Williams has high praise for Mullikin.

“Dr. Mullikin is a true man of God,” said Williams, whose namesake is The Cecil Williams South Carolina Civil Rights Museum in Orangeburg. “Mullikin agreed to filing a case to the United States Supreme Court for the Briggs petitioners – an uphill marathon task that over 300 other attorneys dared not to attempt.”

According to Williams: “For over five years, hundreds, of hours, numerous text messaging, and more than ten Zoom meetings, Mullikin, Nathan Briggs and I labored over this magnificent obsession to return the Briggs petitioners their rightful place in history as the lead and title case instead of Brown v. Board of Education.”

Williams added: “Mullikin contributed over \$300,000 in billable hours towards mounting a petition to the court—pro bono. Even the petition was mammoth—hundreds of pages, 44 copies, and a digital link were filed. The award honors Mullikin’s contribution toward a noble cause—a cause not to change history—but to correct history.”

Mullikin said: “I don’t know if I’ve ever received more meaningful recognition.”

The award presentation was part of an event hosted by the Summerton Community Action Committee and funded by the S.C. Humanities. The event, which included roundtable discussions, was organized to commemorate both the 70th anniversary of Brown vs. Board of Education and the Briggs vs Elliott decision for marking the start of school desegregation.

In November 2023, Mullikin, Williams, the Briggs family, and a throng of supporters gathered at the Mullikin Law Firm complex in Camden to formally announce Mullikin’s petition to the U.S. Supreme Court to rename the historic Brown vs. Board of Education case.

Together, we will continue in this effort,” said Williams. “No matter how hard, and no matter how long.”

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