

2024 Committee of 100's Vision Award

October 17, 2024

Accepting AOI's Lifetime Achievement Award, Past-President William Brown – speaking on behalf of President Dr. Cindy Gueli who was unable to attend – challenged the audience to imagine the following:

“One-hundred and fifty-nine years ago, 31 prominent Washingtonians – all White men – gathered to form the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia to “to keep alive the reminiscences of the past and the social and paternal communion of the present and the future...”

- What would those 31 founders have thought 160 years later that their work would be recognized by an esteemed organization such as the Committee of 100 on the Federal City with the award?
- What would they have thought that one of their own would father an out-of-wedlock daughter who would marry a prominent Black Washingtonian who would later establish their own organization – The AOI of DC Colored – in 1912?
- What would they have thought to learn in 1908 they would welcome the last remaining members of the Veteran Volunteer Fireman's Association, inherit their fire house at 19th and H Street, NW, distribute hundreds of historic artifacts to the Smithsonian, the Navy Museum and the Historical Society, and... later realize \$55,000 from the sale of that property?
- What would they have thought to learn that those proceeds together with a \$15,000 bequest from their longest-serving President Theodore Noyes would later fund nearly half a million dollars in support to organizations over the next 60 years?
- What would they have thought... that an unforeseen World War ending in 1918 would result in 530+ D.C. war dead and that 92 years later their organization would not only save an iconic war memorial on the National Mall from usurpation, commemorate the centennial of the end of that war

and of that memorial... commemorate and rededicate a two-mile long tree memorial dedicated to those 530 D.C. war dead?

What would they have thought? Thank you for enduring my history lesson.”

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