

George E. Shinhoster – Dream Keeper

George E. Shinhoster came of age in the civil turbulence of the 1960s. A native of Savannah, Ga., he was one of the first African Americans to desegregate a high school and college there. He worked with the Chatham County Crusade for Voters to register black citizens to become voters. In the heat of the civil rights struggle, Mr. Shinhoster worked with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference as a field organizer in Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and South Carolina.

Today, he is president of The George Shinhoster Experience, an enterprise that highlights Mr. Shinhoster's exploits through speaking, storytelling and facilitation. He also is a principal of the Earl T. Shinhoster Youth Leadership Institute, where he prepares middle and high school students to become leaders in their schools and communities.

He worked with the YMCA for 42 years as an executive in Georgia, South Carolina, Washington state and North Carolina, before retiring as president and CEO of the Newark YMCA in New Jersey in 2011. He also was a national trainer and facilitator for the YMCA

Throughout his travels across the country, in Africa and in Canada, Mr. Shinhoster energized audiences with lessons he learned from the early civil rights movement. He is a keeper of the dream of Dr. King and believes that while much has been accomplished, much more remains to be done.

As a teenager in Savannah, where he grew up the third of six children with parents who stressed education and faith in God, Mr. Shinhoster distinguished himself. He was one of seven courageous young people who endured taunts and threats to desegregate Groves High School. He also was one of the first African Americans to attend Armstrong State College.

After joining the SCLC, he endured being arrested 19 times in pursuit of voting rights and equal access to public accommodations for black people throughout the South. He marched with Dr. King, experiencing first hand his leadership, commitment and drive in the midst of the struggle.

Mr. Shinhoster is a sought-after guide on the Evelyn G. Lowery Civil Rights Heritage Educational Tour, which traces the steps of the Civil Rights Movement throughout Alabama each March to commemorate "Bloody Sunday".