

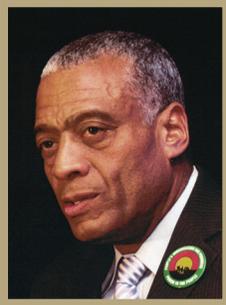
2016 NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

# Human and Civil Rights Award Winner

## *Empowering the Powerless through Direct Action*

◆ Dr. Lawrence “Larry” Hamm ◆

### Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Award



At the young age of 13, Larry Hamm witnessed the Newark Rebellion which ultimately sparked Larry's passion for social justice. Larry recalls, "We didn't talk about politics too much, but after the rebellion broke out, that all changed. It was like a political awakening, or my political awakening." Larry went on to become the president of the student government at Arts High School where he organized and led a 200 student sit-in during a lengthy teachers strike in 1971. It was this action that got the attention of the mayor who granted Larry, at age 17, the opportunity to be the youngest member ever to sit on the New Jersey Board of Education.

Larry has been at the forefront of protests and marches big and small. He has consistently made sure that the voices of those whose cries are drowned out by inequality and disenfranchisement are heard. At Princeton University, Larry organized student rallies that ultimately led to Princeton's divestment from Apartheid South Africa. Larry Hamm received his Bachelors and PhD from Princeton in Political Science. At Princeton, he was celebrated with a series of awards for his influential activist work.

After graduation Dr. Hamm continued his advocacy work by organizing the People's Energy Coalition that would later be transformed into the People's Organization for Progress (POP). POP's consistent protests and advocacy work led to the indictment of five officers who were sent to prison for the killing of Earl Saison in the hands of the New Jersey Orange Police Department. Under Dr. Larry Hamm's leadership, POP also hosts in Newark an annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. March for Racial Equality, Economic Justice and Peace.

At a march against police brutality, Dr. Larry Hamm stood before a crowd of 1,000 people and said, "We want an end to police violation of constitutional rights. We want an end to police murder and torture and terror. We won't be paralyzed by fear. We are going to fight back every day of our lives."

Looking back over his lifetime of activism, Dr. Hamm reflects, "The most important thing I've derived from my life is the knowledge that ordinary people have tremendous power when they work collectively, when they organize, mobilize and strive for a common goal."