The Brown Quarterly

Quarterly Newsletter for Classroom Teachers

Special Introductory Edition

Volume 1 No. 1 August 1996

The Brown Foundation is pleased to publish this newsletter for classroom teachers through which we will share our discovery of the rich and accessible curricular resources available from national parks. Our organization was established to maintain the legacy of the Brown decision and we play an exciting role as a park partner. In 1990 we were instrumental in developing a new national park in Topeka, Kansas, the Brown vs Board of Education National Historic Site. We hope you enjoy the *Brown Quarterly* and eagerly anticipate your comments. We welcome your participation in this educational endeavor, particularly in the teacher innovations section, which is a forum for educators to discuss ideas on how to motivate, guide, instruct and aid children. Be sure not to miss *Free Stuff*, on p. 11 for free materials for educators from the nation's parks.

Education, Science, Innovation

Lana Henry

In a small, rural setting in the Missouri foothills stands a national memorial to one of our nation's greatest educators, scientists, and innovators. George Washington Carver National Monument, located in Diamond, Missouri highlights Dr. Carver's life from a tumultuous childhood to an innovative scientist and chemist. The Monument is located at the birthplace and childhood home of George Washington Carver, who spent the first 10-12 years of his life on the Carver Farm.

The George Washington Carver National Monument includes a visitor center and museum, a variety of educational films on Dr. Carver's life, and a 3/4 mile Carver Trail including an 1881 historic home and other historic sites, and a beautiful nature walk through woodlands, streams, and tall grass prairie. Guided tours of the park are available to school groups and visitors (reservations are requested).

An African American Traveling Trunk is available for loan, featuring the life of George Washington Carver as well as other African Americans of the 19th and 20th centuries. The trunk is equipped with educational materials and hands-on tools, videos, curriculum guides, toys, posters, and a tabletop display. The trunk is an ideal educational tool for grades 3-8. A variety of educational programs are presented by Park Rangers, and can be adapted to different grade levels. Available programs include the life of George Washington Carver; slavery and the post-Civil War era; 19th century cultural demonstrations such as candle dipping, Dutch oven cooking and other programs; nature programs such as wildflowers, birds, prairies, and environmental education; and other programs such as recycling and National Park Service careers. A 30-minute dramatic interpretation of the boyhood of George Washington Carver is available for grades 3-8. Through sharing the life of George Washington Carver, children are inspired to believe in their abilities and say "I CAN!" Arrangements can be made for programs to be presented at the park or at schools.

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George Washington Carver

Free educational materials are available to students and teachers, including a 4th grade curriculum package for educators. Videos and films are available for loan at no cost. The park also offers a book store with one of the best selections of African American history available in the four-state area.

George Washington Carver National Monument is a tribute to a young enslaved African American boy who, from a humble beginning, overcame great odds to become an outstanding scientist and humanitarian. George and his mother Mary were kidnapped when he was just an infant. George was returned to the white landowners, Moses and Susan Carver, who raised him as their own child. His education began with a spelling book provided by Susan Carver.

At about the age of 10, he left the Carver farm to attend the Lincoln School in Neosho, Missouri, where he lived with Andrew and Mariah Watkins. Mariah, a mid-wife, taught him about medicinal plant uses and introduced him to Christianity. His pursuit of a high school education lasted 10 years and took him to several schools in Kansas. In his first attempt to attend college, he was denied admission because of his color.

After a few years of homesteading, George went to school in Iowa, working toward an art degree. At the urging of a concerned teacher, he transferred to Iowa State Agricultural College (now Iowa State at Ames). Here he completed a Master of Arts degree in agriculture. During his last year at Iowa, George accepted an offer from Booker T. Washington to head up the Agriculture Department at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.

Life at Tuskegee was a challenge, yet fulfilling for Carver. He committed his life to service and once said, "It is not the style of clothes one wears, neither the kind of automobiles one drives, nor the amount of money one has in the bank that counts. These things mean nothing. It is simply service that measures success." He later added, "I want to be of the greatest good to the greatest number of my people."

His innovative mind created over 300 uses from the peanut and over 100 discoveries for the sweet potato, most designed to help the poor farmer make a decent living. Some of his products, including a successful peanut massage oil for polio patients, had medicinal values. George Washington Carver credited his inventions to Divine inspiration.

Carver's sincerity and genuine concern won him the love of his students. He took a fatherly role with many of the young men on the Tuskegee campus, always helping, giving his time, offering assistance, and providing humanitarian service to the community. His humble attitude toward the world won him recognition in many quarters.

For over 40 years, George Washington Carver dedicated his life to the education of African Americans and poor farmers. He was recognized internationally for his creative work and genuine caring for humanity. He is one of the first Americans to have his likeness on a foreign postage stamp [Ghana, 1964] and the first African American to have a National Park Service site named for him. Several annual events are hosted by the park each year, including: Art and Essay Contest for Fourth Graders (February); March for Parks Earth Day Event (April); Airing of the Quilts Show (June); Carver Day Celebration and Art Show (July); Prairie Day (September).

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Mary McLeod Bethune: Visionary Activist

Tammy Lynn Pertillar

During an era when *de facto* segregation in the North and Jim Crow laws in the South kept many African Americans from recognizing their full potential as citizens of the United States, a remarkable woman rose to prominence on the socio-political scene. Born in the cotton-growing region of Mayesville, South Carolina, Mary McLeod Bethune spearheaded changes that helped to bolster the African American community against institutionalized racism. Her numerous achievements include: founding the Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute in 1904, which became Bethune-Cookman College in 1923; working as the Director of Negro Affairs for the National Youth Administration (NYA) for the Roosevelt administration during the 1930's; and founding the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) in 1935. Underlying this impressive list of accomplishments, however, was a fundamental belief that the quality of life for African Americans could be improved on social, economic, and political levels.

Bethune envisioned a better world for African Americans, one in which blacks would rightfully garner respect from white American and international communities while simultaneously engendering respect for themselves.

Bethune envisioned a better world for African Americans, one in which blacks would rightfully garner respect from white American and international communities while simultaneously engendering respect for themselves. This was an important concept for Bethune who fought against widespread negative stereotypes of African American traditions and culture propagated by films such as "The Birth of a Nation" (1915), largely based on the anti-black writings of Thomas Dixon. Popular culture as well as some so-called historical writings imaged African Americans as ineducable, incapable of self-governance, and best suited for menial jobs that would keep them in a subservient position relative to whites.

Carter G. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) and its accompanying publication, *The Journal of Negro History* between 1915 and 1916 to delegitimize negative historical stereotypes regarding African Americans. He organized the ASNLH Council to address administrative and funding concerns for the organization and appointed Bethune to serve in 1930. She retained this position until 1933, thus helping to ensure that the ASNLH would continue its mission to recognize African Americans as historical actors who had participated fully in the shaping

of American society.[1] Bethune served as president of the ASNLH from 1936-1951 during which time she encouraged Woodson to publish the *Negro History Bulletin*, a journal designed to make black history accessible to the community at large.[2]

"I am interested in women and believe in their possibilities . . . We need a vision for larger things . . . We need a united organization to open doors for women so that when it speaks, its power will be felt."

Mary McLeod Bethune, Principal and Founder of Daytona Educational and Industrial School for Negro Girls, circa 1912. Photograph courtesy of the National Archives for Black Women's History, The Bethune Museum and Archives, Washington, D.C.

Bethune focused her energies upon creating employment and educational opportunities for blacks particularly after the stock market crash of 1929. When President Franklin Delano Roosevelt announced his New Deal program, he also formed a committee to deal directly with black economic issues especially those of the rural south.

Roosevelt recognized Bethune as the exceptional educator who had inaugurated Bethune-Cookman College in 1923, and appointed her Director of the Negro Division of the NYA in 1935. According to John Hope Franklin, Bethune became a member of the "black brain trust" of academicians, attorneys and other highly trained professionals who were assigned to specific projects under the New Deal.[3]

Bethune's principle responsibility was to provide jobs for youth between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four, a few of whom were graduate students. Bethune helped put more than 64,000 black youth to work in both work study and out-of-school programs designed to assist the reforestation and soil conservation efforts so popular during the World War II era.[4] Until the close of the NYA division in 1944, Bethune also provided more than $600,000 in funding for black students enrolled in college and graduate school programs.[5]

The council, later dubbed the "Black Cabinet" was limited in its powers by what one historian describes as Roosevelt's inherent "pragmatism" in refusing to completely eliminate *de jure* segregation. Bethune, however, remained an optimist. She was able to skillfully balance the concerns of African Americans while simultaneously opening doors for women across racial lines. This was because, unlike many of her colleagues within the Black Cabinet, Bethune had achieved access to the Executive Office through developing a confidante in the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, and through her activities in the women's club movement.

When Bethune founded the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) in 1935, it was after years of dedicated service to women's organizations on a national level. After opening the Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute, a single-sex school for girls in 1904, Bethune joined the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) in 1912 in order to solicit support for the school that she believed only a national women's organization could provide. Following that effort, Bethune also served as president of the Florida Federation of Colored Women's Clubs between 1917 and 1924, became the eighth president of the NACW between 1924 and 1928, and headed the leadership of the Southeastern Association of Colored Women from 1920 to 1925.

Like their white counterparts, many black women's clubs had begun to focus more on the social and political needs of the middle and upper classes often leaving poor working women absent

from their agendas. To address this and many other issues, Bethune established the NCNW in 1935, which soon set the standard for women's clubs across the country. She also wanted women to have more of a voice the political realm of social action and thought that a national organization such as the NCNW would meet that objective:

"I am interested in women and believe in their possibilities . . . We need a vision for larger things . . . We need a united organization to open doors for women so that when it speaks, its power will be felt."[6]

The Bethune Museum and Archives, Inc (BMA)*, commemorates her legacy and is located inside the victorian town house that she purchased in 1943 to serve as the headquarters of the NCNW. BMA interprets the history and culture of African American women through public programs, exhibitions, and a quarterly newsletter, *Legacy*. The Archives is the country's largest repository for research on African American women in the U.S. and is open to researchers by appointment.
*(see *Free Stuff!* for address)

Tammy Lynn Pertillar, scholar of African American and Brazilian history, is Program Assistant at the Bethune Museum and Archives, Inc. in Washington, D.C.

[1]August Meier and Eliot Rudwick, *Black History and the Historical Profession, 1915-1980* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 60-61.
[2]Bettye J. Gardner, "Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History," in Darlene Clark Hine, Elsa Barkley Brown and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, eds., *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia* vol. 2 A-L (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 46-48.
[3]John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*. 6th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1988), 349.
[4]Ibid., 353.
[5]Moira Davison Reynolds, *Women Champions of Human Rights: Eleven U.S. Leaders of the Twentieth Century* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 1991), 51.
[6]Elaine M. Smith, "Mary McLeod Bethune and the National Youth Administration," in *Clio Was a Woman: Studies in the History of American Women* by Mabel E. Deutrich and Virginia C. Purdy, eds. (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1980), 158.

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Women's Rights National Historical Park

Terry Roth

What is Women's Rights National Historical Park? Where is Women's Rights National Historical Park? These are the usual questions that most people ask when they first hear about this unique national park

Located in central New York, the park tends to elicit emotion and controversy just based on its name, Women's Rights. The concept behind it is also new ground for the National Park Service. It is not a historic site dedicated to the memory and achievements of a great woman, although there are great women associated with the Park. The interpretive story for the park revolves around a document fashioned after the Declaration of Independence. It is these broad ranging social and political changes stated in the Declaration of Sentiments that serve as the focal point for the park.


Statues in the Visitors Center

The story actually begins in 1840 when two of the organizers of the First Women's Rights Convention, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, met at an Anti-Slavery Convention in London. Both swore to change the lot of women but their personal and political lives interfered.

While on a tour of upstate New York for the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Mott met Stanton on July 9, 1848 in the adjoining town of Waterloo for a tea party hosted by Jane Hunt. Also attending the tea party were Waterloo Quaker Mary Ann M'Clintock and Auburn Quaker Martha Wright, the sister of Lucretia Mott. Finding herself among friends, Stanton poured out her discontent with her life to a sympathetic audience.

That day the five women decided to hold a convention to discuss what was wrong with society from a woman's point of view, and they drafted the notice of the Convention which would appear in the local paper a few days later.

A week later, around a table in the front parlor of the M'Clintock House, Stanton, Mary Ann, her husband Thomas, and probably their daughters and some of the household servants who were treated as part of the family, drafted the Declaration of Sentiments. This far reaching document was modeled after the Declaration of Independence and contains the words "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men and women are created equal . . ."

The Declaration went on to outline the grievances that women had against society in the mid-1800s including the legal inability of a woman, if married, to own property or to retain her own wages; laws which gave custody of her children

to her husband if they divorced, even if he was a drunkard and/or beat her; exclusion from the running of churches; and policies and practices that prohibited her from attending college and from most employment opportunities, especially the most lucrative.

Stanton proposed the most controversial of the articles of the Declaration—the right of women to vote. Even Mott considered it an idea too far ahead of its time.

A week later on Wednesday and Thursday, July 19 and 20, 1848 the First Women's Rights Convention was held in the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Seneca Falls, New York.

Despite the short notice and at the height of hay harvesting season in an agricultural community, 300 people attended. Included in this number was Frederick Douglass, a life-long supporter of women's rights, who had traveled from Rochester, New York for the event.

During the Convention each of the resolutions in the Declaration was read and voted on. The only one which proved controversial was the resolution of suffrage, but after much debate that too was passed. After the Convention, people were invited to sign the Declaration of Sentiments. One hundred people signed—68 women and 32 men.

The Convention sparked controversy and many derogatory newspaper articles but the issues raised there and outlined in the Declaration of Sentiments caught the imagination and hearts of the general public. Two weeks later another convention was held in Rochester. Soon meetings to discuss women's rights were happening in many places.

One of the things that makes the Park so exciting is that the concerns identified in the Declaration of Sentiments have not been resolved. Using the framework of the historic event, the Park is able to talk about these issues in the present. Seneca Falls continues to be a focal point for women's issues. People continue to come here to speak on issues or introduce new ideas. Alice Paul came here in 1923 for the first reading of the Equal Rights Amendment from the steps of the Presbyterian Church; a large group gathered in 1948 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Convention; the National Organization for Women visited here in 1988; and each year people from across the country gather in Seneca Falls to celebrate Women's Equality Day.

The park features a wealth of interactive exhibits which focus on issues raised in the Declaration of Sentiments, including the thematic areas of "Inauguration of a Rebellion," "True Womanhood," "Women at Work," "Fashioning Women," "Women and Political Action," and "School Matters." Using hands-on exhibits, computers, laser-disc technology, photographs, artifacts and thought provoking questions, visitors will examine the world of 1848 and decide for themselves how much things have or have not changed. The exhibit emphasizes the role each of us plays in shaping society.

Women's Rights National Historical Park has something for everyone. You can view the Park story as an historic event in the past with no connection to your life; as a place to voice your opinions no matter what they may be; as a place to gauge your perceptions against others; as a place to be inspired; as a place to learn. Each person discovers something different. All you have to do is be open enough to walk through the door.

Writing Women Back Into History

Mary Ruthsdotter

There is a pervasive, yet totally incorrect assumption inculcated into students, that women have played no vital roles in the political, economic and social development of our culture. Few teachers, during the course of their own training, have been introduced to the personalities, events and issues of women's history. Combine this lack of a teacher information base with the paucity of multicultural information about women in most of the new textbooks and the consequences for developing minds are grim.

Certain notable women do make guest appearances in discussions and textbooks, of course. Harriet Tubman, Civil War nurse, spy and scout for the Union Army and fearless conductor on the Underground Railroad is one.

1989 National Women's History Month Poster

Sojourner Truth, a fiery speaker for abolition and women's rights during the same period is another popular figure. Eleanor Roosevelt is beginning to receive recognition for her influence as First Lady and her later, international humanitarian work. But there is little mention of two of Roosevelt's powerful contemporaries. Mary McLeod Bethune, a pioneering African-American educator, was also a very influential advisor to President Roosevelt, as a member of his unofficial "Black Cabinet." Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins was instrumental in the passage of Social Security and unemployment insurance, and argued forcefully for universal health care. Oversights like these, when they become the norm, negatively affect the developing attitudes of both sexes. They deal an especially severe blow to the self-esteem of girls who are being taught by omission that women, people like themselves, do not achieve in the society. As a nation, we cannot afford to continue omitting the stories of half our citizens from our history lessons.

Introducing Women

The National Women's History Project (NWHP) is at the forefront of the effort to introduce more women into the telling of our national story. The NWHP was established in 1980 as a nonprofit educational organization. Using a variety of approaches, they have proceeded to successfully promote multicultural women's history in elementary and secondary schools, colleges, workplaces, and communities nationwide.

From the outset it was clear to the NWHP founders that many classroom teachers felt a sincere desire to integrate women into their curricula but lacked information. The NWHP addressed this impediment directly, conducting training programs through which they introduced teachers at all grade levels to a wide variety of women's history information, effective teaching strategies, and multicultural resources. The response continues to be extremely positive.

To supply teachers with the materials they need, in 1981 the NWHP undertook a systematic review of virtually every nonfiction book, poster set and educational film about women's historic experiences in the United States that was being commercially distributed. They instituted a mail-order resource service the following year to provide the best of what they found to teachers wherever they lived. Over the ensuing 15 years their Women's History Catalog has grown to include over three-hundred of the best of these items within its 48 pages; 250,000 copies of the catalog are distributed annually.

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These resources can help every teacher quickly become familiar with individuals like pioneer Congress-woman and pacifist Jeannette Rankin, Indian rights advocate Sarah Winnemucca, woman suffrage organizer Elizabeth Cady Stanton, folklorist Zora Neale Hurston, or inventor Gertrude Elion. They can also bring attention to women's pivotal roles in the Revolutionary War, the westward movement, the Progressive era and all other major social/political events in U.S. history.

Women's History Month

One of the first activities of the National Women's History Project was to propose that the week including March 8 (International Women's Day) be designated Women's History Week on school calendars. During those five school days, teachers could begin exploring women's history with their students, working together toward a solution for the history mystery, "What have *women* done?" Then, since 1987, the entire month of March was proclaimed National Women's History Month by the U.S. Congress, citing the fact that "the role of American women in history has been consistently overlooked and undervalued in the literature, teaching and study of American history." Activities in schools, organizations, and worksites have been undertaken in all states in annually increasing numbers ever since.

Programs take every form imaginable. Along with book reports and research papers about individual women, skits are performed, poster and essay competitions and parades are held, display cases and exhibits of all kinds are assembled.

National History Day competitions have reflected the growth in interest in women's history very directly. Entries focusing on the lives of women have multiplied radically during the past five years as more students have become aware of the expanded range of topics women's history provides. The NWHP encourages competitors and their advisors through research assistance and cash prizes for women's history topics both in California and at the national level.

The Next Steps?

Excellent, multicultural materials for bringing women's contributions to the fore are available now, major teaching and learning tools just waiting to be tapped. Isn't it time all of our schools begin to do just that?

Remember: For students the equation is straightforward: if you're seen and discussed in class, you're important. If you're not, you're unimportant. For social scientists, the outcome seems clear: When the contributions and perspectives of women are taught along with those of men, girls gain greater self-esteem and boys gain more respect for girls and women.

If women's history is little-known territory for you, contact the National Women's History Project. They will send you a free, 48-page Women's History Catalog, brimming with information!*

*(see *Free Stuff!*)

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The Buffalo Soldier Monument: Its Meaning and Significance

". . . since 1641 there has never been a time in this country when Blacks were unwilling to serve and sacrifice for America."

General Colin Powell, Buffalo Soldier Monument Ground-breaking ceremony, July 28, 1990.

Commander Carlton Philpot

Buffalo Soldier Monument
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

Despite a record of uninterrupted courage, valor, patriotism and bravery, historians and this country had never fully recognized or acknowledged the honorable and selfless military service of African Americans. Dedication of the Buffalo Soldier Monument at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas on July 25, 1992, was a major step in changing this. However, as popular as the monument is, it does not mean the same thing to everyone. Most people think it is great, but a few do not think it is deserved.

To the remaining Buffalo Soldiers and their families, it is a symbol of immediate recognition and gratitude for a job well done, as well as a daily source of pride, satisfaction and inspiration. To the older Buffalo Soldiers like 110 year old Jones Morgan of Richmond, Virginia and 98 year old Sergeant William Harrington of Salina, Kansas, it gave them their flowers to smell while they were alive. To all, it is a beauty to see. Trooper Elmer Robinson of Leavenworth, Kansas said it best one cold February night in 1989 as we looked over the vacant spot where the monument would be erected, "after all these years I didn't think anyone cared, now I feel like a hero."

To General Colin Powell, the originator of the idea for the monument, it is the realization of a modest ten year dream. The idea came to him one day in 1981 as he was jogging around Fort Leavenworth, During the jog he noticed there was little to show the Buffalo Soldiers had been there. The 10th Cavalry was formed and activated at Fort Leavenworth in 1867, and some contingent of the Buffalo Soldiers was always there through WWII. However, only their graves and two alleys next to the cemetery (9th and 10th Cavalry roads) bore their names. The General felt there should be more.

To the sculptor, Mr. Eddie Dixon, the monument is a source of inspiration for future generations. He knew that history denied to one group is history denied to all groups. He also wanted young people, especially Black youth, to understand that all Black heroes are not athletes and musicians. Both Jackie Robinson and Joe Louis served in Black units at Fort Riley, Kansas.

To the committee members and the thousands of people who helped build the monument, it means several things. First it is a symbol to stimulate and enhance public interest and awareness. Both young and old need to know they were the best in spite of having the worst. With hand me down horses, clothing and equipment they earned more Congressional Medals of Honor (20) and had the lowest desertion rate of any unit in the army. Against prejudice in and out of the military, they were the essence of excellence!

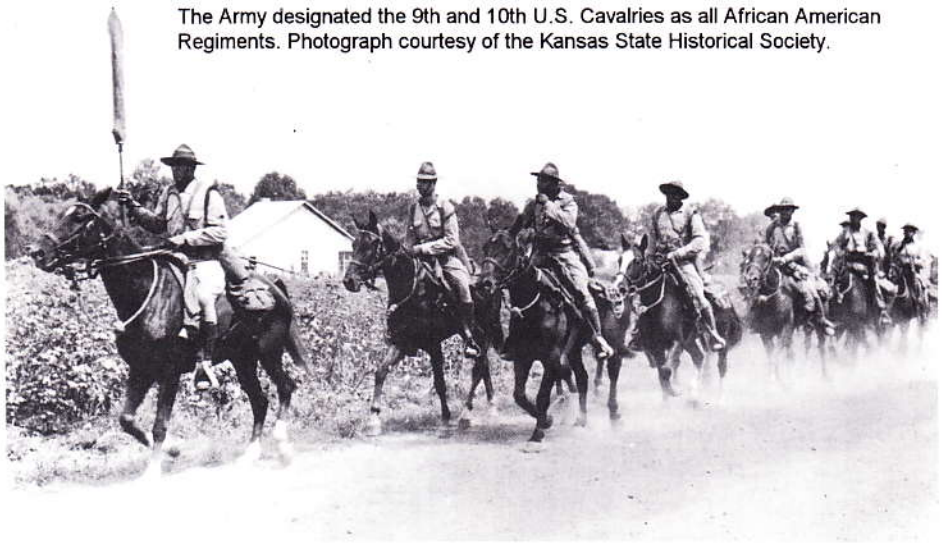
Second and most important, it is a symbol to motivate and encourage historians, authors, publishers, movie makers and teachers to include the exploits of the Buffalo Soldiers in books, movies and lesson plans. When historians

NOTES ON THE BUFFALO SOLDIERS

African Americans, by law, were not permitted to serve in the Regular U.S. Peacetime Army until 28 July 1866. Congress then authorized the formation of six black regiments--four infantry and two cavalry. Prior to that time, they were permitted to serve only in the state militias.

Operating under the harshest conditions and with the worst horses and equipment in the military, the Buffalo Soldiers had the lowest desertion rate of any unit in the U.S. Army and at least 20 men earned the Congressional Medal of Honor. In addition, they received four campaign citations in the Indian Wars; campaign citations for action in the Spanish-American War, the Philippine Insurrection and the Mexican Expedition; the French Campaign World War I Citation; five unit citations from World War II; 10 unit citations from the Korean Conflict; three Presidential Unit Citations; a Navy Unit Commendation; a Philippine Presidential Citation; and two Republic of Korea Presidential citations.
Reference: *Military Review* August 1990

The Army designated the 9th and 10th U.S. Cavalries as all African American Regiments. Photograph courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society.



The Buffalo Soldiers delivered the mail and protected the wagon trains, cattle drives, stage coaches, railroads, and settlers. . . the trails and roads surveyed and blazed by the Buffalo Soldiers were just as critical as those by Lewis and Clark.

write about Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders in the Spanish American War, they must write that the Buffalo Soldiers rescued the future president in the Battle of Kettle Hill and were the first to reach the top of San Juan Hill.

The next time movies are made about the great Apache Chiefs Geronimo and Victorio, the Buffalo Soldiers must not be omitted. And when television series like *Little Indiana Jones* portray Mexico during the days of Pancho Villa, the prominent role of the Buffalo Soldiers and Lieutenant Colonel Charles Young (the third black graduate of West Point) must be represented.

In their lesson plans about western expansion, teachers should include how the Buffalo Soldiers delivered the mail and protected the wagon trains, cattle drives, stage coaches, railroads, and settlers. Additionally they should note that the trails and roads surveyed and blazed by the Buffalo Soldiers were just as critical as those by Lewis and Clark. Next March, during Women's History Month, classroom bulletin boards should mention the only known female Buffalo Soldier, Cathy Williams. She served in the infantry under the name of William Cathy from 1866-1868.

For the small group of African Americans who say the Buffalo Soldiers are not deserving of recognition, the monument should be a source of healthy debate. Their opinion is that the fame of these Black knights of courage is a result on one minority (Blacks) killing another minority (Native Americans). To this group, I say the Buffalo Soldiers are not great because they killed Indians. They are great and deserving of recognition because they changed the face of the military forever.

They were the first African Americans to serve in the military during peace-time. On July 28, 1866, nearly sixteen months after the Civil War, the 39the Congress approved the formation of six Black regiments: the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 38th, 39th 40th and 41st Infantry. In 1869 the military down sized and the four infantry units were combine into two, the 24th and 25th. In about 1867 the Indians gave them the name Buffalo Soldiers.

There are various views of how the name originated. One, the Black man's hair resembled the mane of the buffalo. Two, like the buffalo, when wounded or cornered, the Black soldiers fought ferociously and courageously. Three, they wore buffalo hide to keep warm; and finally, like stampeding buffalos, the Black soldiers charged into battle with their sabers forward and their heads down. However, regardless of the origin, they wore the name proudly and as a badge of honor.

Because the Buffalo Soldiers were first and very successful at what they did, other firsts followed. These included: General Colin Powell, the first Black Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Tuskegee Airmen, the first Black aviation unit; the 761st, the first Black tank battalion; the 555th (Triple Nickel), the first Black Parachute unit; and the Golden Thirteen, the first Black Navy Officers. As General Powell so often states, ". . . they are the wind beneath my wings." When these true American heroes find their proper place in the history books, they will be the wind beneath the wings of many generations to come.

Reference: *The Legacy of the Buffalo Soldiers*, by Colonel Rick Swain, USA (Ret.), Buffalo Soldier Monument Dedication Souvenir Book. For copies write the Buffalo Soldier Educational and Historical Committee at P.O. Box 3372, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 33027. Cost $20.00 (includes taxes, s/h).

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Phillis Wheatley: A Life Of Triumph Over Obstacles

Omofolabo Ajayi

Omofolabo Ajayi-Soyinka, Associate Professor in the Department of Theatre and Film and in the Women's Studies Program at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas, presented "A Conversation with Phillis Wheatley" during the Brown Foundation's National Symposium entitled "American History Unmasked: Remembering Plessy vs. Ferguson" May 16-18, 1996. The following selection reproduces her article which was published in the Kansas Humanities Council's *History Alive! Study Guide* (1995) pp. 3-5.

Phillis Wheatley defied all expectations of her class, race, and gender to become an internationally celebrated poet. She wrote herself from the obscurity of slavery into the annals of the American literary scene. Even though she later died in near obscurity, the words she wove in her lifetime immortalize her memory. Today, her works continue to generate interest from scholars and to inspire the student of life's struggles and achievements.

When Phillis Wheatley landed in America on July 11, 1761, a frail West African girl barely 8 years old, she could not guess the extraordinary life that awaited her. As she stood on the auction block in Boston, she must have been terrified and no doubt confused by the strange faces and the strange language spoken around her. Brutally snatched from her homeland, she was now homeless, without a country, without a family, without identity. Based on the horrors she had experienced on the slave ship during the "middle passage," she could scarcely have imagined anything better awaiting her—that is provided she had strength left to do any imagining.

However, it seemed that the heavens decided she had had enough suffering. She was purchased by the Wheatley family who, conscious of her tender age and sympathetic to her poor health, treated her with kindness. She served as the personal attendant of Mrs. Susanna Wheatley and was given household duties. She was named after the ship that brought her from Africa, taking the last name of her owners as was the custom in those slave-owning days. Mary, the daughter of the family, befriended her and tutored her in Latin, religion, English language, and literature. Apparently brilliant and with an aptitude for learning, Phillis soon acquired an education that any free young woman from a well-off family of that time would envy. She became an avid student of the Bible and especially admired the works of Alexander Pope (1688-1744), the British neoclassical writer. Through Pope's translation of Homer, she also developed a taste for Greek mythology. Thus was launched a remarkable career as a poet and a life of deep religious piety for young Phillis.

On December 21, 1767, the fourteen year old Wheatley published her first poem in the *Newport* (Rhode Island) *Mercury*. This achievement came just six years after her arrival in America, without any prior knowledge of the English language. The poem that really launched Wheatley to prominence was an elegy, "On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield, 1770." The elegy became Phillis' poetic trademark. Twenty of the 46 poems published in her lifetime are about death.

Whitefield was a well known minister and evangelist in America and Britain. He was also chaplain to the Countess of Huntingdon in England. Wheatley boldly sent a copy of the poem to the Countess along with a letter of condolence, even though she had never met her. The Countess helped get the first edition of Wheatley's book of poems published in England in 1773, after publishers in America had rejected her work. Entitled *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*, the book is dedicated to the Countess of Huntingdon.

There is no doubt that Wheatley's poetry commanded a respectable place among the eighteenth-century poets of America. An anonymous critic wrote that her poems "are quite equal to a great number of the verses that appear under the

names of Halifax, Dorset, and others of 'the mob of gentlemen who write with ease.'" Critics then and now recognize that although she may not be a great poet, she represents an important development in American history, politics, and the world of letters. Certainly, she commands a significant chapter in African American literary analysis. Her 1773 work was the first book of poetry and probably the first book to be published by an African American.

As a young slave woman in eighteenth-century America, Phillis was a phenomenon that could not be ignored. She generated as much controversy and acclaim for who she was as for what she achieved. Editors frequently prefaced her poems with information about her race and status. The *Boston Censor* (Feb. 29, 1772) advertised a proposal for printing a collection of her poems in part as ". . . a Negro Girl, from the Strength of her own Genius, it being but a few years since she came to this Town an uncultivated Barbarian from Africa." The negative reference to Africa indicates some of the prejudices Wheatley had to overcome.

Indeed, Phillis achieved success through her intelligence, hard work, and perseverance. Her genius notwithstanding, Phillis would be the first to give all glory to God and claim none for herself. There is no doubt that religion exerted a strong influence on her life. Her Christian piety and humility probably earned her the respect and endearment of the distinguished people she met. They readily bestowed upon her their good will and patronage. Despite her humility, Wheatley was far from timid. She took several bold initiatives in contacting famous people who could help her publish her poems. She talked knowledgeably about the merits of education to college students and thought nothing of penning poems of letters to British aristocrats, American politicians and generals.

In spite of her privileged position, there is no evidence that Wheatley felt superior to other slaves. She apparently maintained a cordial relationship with the black community in Boston. She dedicated a poem "To S.M., A young African Painter, On Seeing His Works." In turn, she received a poetic tribute from another slave poet, Jupiter Hammond. Her only known friend was a fellow black domestic, Obour Tanner, who also acted as her literary agent from the late 1770s on.

On May 8, 1773, Wheatley sailed to England. Fresh sea air had been prescribed for her chronic respiratory problems, but she also used the opportunity to pursue the publication of her poems. She was accompanied by Nathaniel Wheatley, the twin brother of Mary, who went to England to look after the family business.

The trip was a success. Phillis met with several distinguished people, including Lord Lincoln, Lady Cavendish, and Mrs. Palmer, a poet. Among the gifts she received was the sum of five guineas from Lord Dartmouth for the purchase of the complete works of Pope. Unfortunately, she did not have time to meet with the Countess of Huntingdon nor King George III, both of whom had extended invitations to her. Her mistress, Susanna Wheatley, was gravely ill, and Phillis rushed home to be by her side. She arrived in Boston in September 1773. By October, Phillis was a free woman. Her master had released her from bondage.

When the War of Independence broke out in 1776, Phillis Wheatley fully identified with the struggle of the American colonies. During the British occupation of Boston, she joined John Wheatley, her former master, as a refugee at Mary's Rhode Island home. It was from here she wrote a letter and a poem to George Washington in October 1775, regarding the impending war. She received a reply and an invitation to visit. Wheatley did visit General Washington prior to Boston's evacuation by the British, and her poem was later published in the *Virginia Gazette*.

On April 1, 1778, Phillis married John Peters, a free black man. They had three children, but apparently none survived Phillis.

The was proved a trying time for everybody but especially for Wheatley, who had no skills other than her writing. No longer financially dependent on the Wheatley family, and deprived of the English patronage she had enjoyed before the hostilities, Wheatley was relentless in seeking publication of and subscription to her works in America. She was not discouraged when she was unsuccessful.

Amidst her own personal troubles—a financially strapped marriage, the death of her children, and increasingly failing health—Phillis struggled to write poems in memory of her friends. Her work from this period includes an elegy to Dr. Samuel Cooper, who had baptized her in 1771, and a poem to a couple, "On the Death of their Infant Son." Till the end, she remained loyal to her benefactors and continued to show concern for those in situations less fortunate than hers.

Wheatley's poems say little about her origins in Africa or her status as a slave. The neoclassic style in which she was tutored, and after which she closely modeled her style is very impersonal. And

An Hymn to the Evening

Phillis Wheatley

Soon as the sun forsook the eastern main
The pealing thunder shook the heav'nly plain;
Majestic grandeur! From the zephyr's wing,
Exhales the incense of the blooming spring,
Soft purl the streams, the birds renew their notes,
And through the air their mingled music floats.
Through all the heav'ns what beauteous dyes are spread!
But the west glories in the deepest red;
So may our breasts with every virtue glow,
The living temples of our God Below!
Fill'd with the praise of him who gives the light,
And draws the sable curtains of the night,
Let placid slumbers soothe each weary mind,
At morn to wake more heav'nly, more refin'd;
So shall the labors of the day begin
More pure, more guarded from the snares of sin.
Night's leaden sceptre seals my drowsy eyes,
Then cease, my song, till fair Aurora rise.

it should be remembered that Phillis left Africa too young to retain clear memories—or perhaps the violence of the slave ship caused amnesia. Later in America, there were no cultural contacts to help revive her memory. However, Wheatley did not deny her roots. There are several references to Africa in a number of her works and she claimed heritage with Terence, the African writer of ancient Rome.

In the 1960s, black activists both in America and Africa faulted her for not vigorously espousing the cause of freedom for slaves. However, this criticism fails to take into account the time period in which she lived. Phillis was astute and diplomatic enough to realize the delicacy of her position. In the 1700s, people like the Wheatleys and Reverend Whitefield were very sympathetic to the plight of slaves, yet saw nothing wrong in owning them. Any protest on Phillis' part might have alienated her benefactors.

Nonetheless, Wheatley loved freedom and condemned slavery indirectly in her poetry by writing about freedom and tyranny in more general terms. Such poems include "To the King's Most Excellent Majesty" (1768), "America" (1768), and the poem and letter to General Washington (1775). In her letters and private communication Wheatley was more specific in her criticism of slavery. She revealed more of her "inner self," particularly in her communications with her friend and literary agent, Tanner.

For Wheatley, religion was the real key to freedom. The Bible became her favorite book and the Christian religion her succor and fortress. Her faith, it appears, gave her the ultimate sense of freedom even while still in bondage. She was truly "set free in Jesus Christ." It is through this Christian lens that she rationalized her capture and sale into slavery. In the poem "On Being Brought From Africa to America," Wheatley wrote:

> "TWAS mercy brought me from my Pagan land,
> Taught my benighted soul to understand
> That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too."

Her belief in Christianity as the ultimate triumph probably explains why she wrote so many elegies. To her, death was not defeat, but the Christian's triumph over world problems and the key to eternal freedom.

Phillis Wheatley passed into eternity of December 5, 1784. She was about 31 years old. Befittingly, she received an elegy from a fellow poet, who wrote under the pen name of "Horatio." The poem, "Elegy on the Death of a Late Celebrated Poetess" appeared in *Boston Magazine* and said in part:

> "As if by heaven inspir'd, did she relate,
> The souls grand entrance at the sacred gate!. . .
> But O! how vain the wish that friendship pays,
> Since her own volumes are her greatest praise."

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BOOK NOOK

Book Review of Multicultural Texts to Bring Diversity to Your Classroom Reading List

LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING

By James Weldon Johnson
Illustrated By
Jan Spivey Gilchrist

This song is considered the African-American National Anthem. It has been cherished by generations of African-Americans. It is a moving testimonial to the struggles and achievements of the African-American people—past, present, and future.

The lyrics were written by James Weldon Johnson, and set to music by his brother, composer L. Rosamond Johnson. The song relates specifically to the history of Africans in America. Mr. Johnson's poem interprets a period of American History with a message for readers and singers, young and old, of all colors.

For Jan Spivey Gilchrist, singing "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing" was an integral part of her childhood. Today, her stunning illustrations illuminate the hope and strength of these moving lyrics for a new generation of children.

This book is a "must read" by every African American boy and girl in America. This book should appear in every library for children from coast to coast. "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing" gives children the opportunity to peer into the very depth and soul of the black experience through the lyrics. It also takes children on a magical journey, further enlightening them to the wonder and awe of the experience through the illustrations.

The Brown Foundation Reading Program makes this book a priority in their multicultural library, and so should you!

Free Stuff!

Send for free educational materials from the George Washington Carver National Monument, P.O. Box 38, Diamond, Missouri, 64840 or (417) 325-4151.

Contact the gift shop at the Bethune Museum and Archives National Historic Site, 1318 Vermont Ave. N.W. Washington D.C. 20005 or (202) 332-1233 for materials available for purchase including Teacher's Kits.

Request a copy of the free 48 page Women's History Catalog of multi-cultural materials from the National Women's History Project, 7738 Bell Road, Windsor, CA 95492 or (800) 691-8888

Teachers Talk

Teaching Tolerance is an excellent magazine, but the name alone makes me sad. The fact that society needs to "teach tolerance," let alone have a publication named that, makes me question how well people embrace our multicultural world.

We, as parents and educators, must look at ways to bring an understanding to each other's cultures. We must look to our community organizations for help. In Topeka, one such organization with which I work is Delta Sigma Theta Sorority.

Delta Sigma Theta is an international sorority with over 175,000 members. It is a sisterhood of predominantly black college educated women committed to public service. Each year they hold an essay contest as part of a scholastic competition which was started in response to limited information on black history offered in public schools.

Initially, the contest was opened to black youths; however, students from other ethnic groups expressed interest, so the competition was expanded to allow everyone to participate. This is only one organization that is willing to offer support.

As parents and educators, it is up to us to instill "the spirit" in our children to explore different cultures. We can make this learning fun and rewarding by showing our own interest in the world.

Time spent together with our children talking and researching famous African Americans is a great way to open the multicultural window. This also helps improve library and writing skills, and increases knowledge on history, besides opening up communication between parent, teacher and child.

As educators, we need to show our students that the challenge need not be an impossible task. Make the learning exciting. My classroom had "working lunches" once a week. We met in the library, had lunch, discussed our research, and reflected on what else needed to be discovered. Little unknown facts became exciting "found treasures." Group cooperation skills were enhanced when everyone was working together to find information. How exciting, as a teacher, to watch a young person struggle to find just the right words to put the finishing touches on that giant triumph!

When, finally, the books are closed and the essays are put into the mail, we celebrate. We are all winners at this point! Whether or not we receive that elusive letter saying our essays were the "chosen ones," we celebrate US.

So, let us as educators, parents, students, and communities demonstrate harmony and continue to grow, learn, and embrace our multicultural family.

As Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Submitted by:
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