

# Readings & Research Database

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## Topics / The American Revolution, 1763-1787 / Phillis Wheatley / Phillis Wheatley

One of the earliest Revolutionary era poets in the American colonies, Phillis Wheatley was the first African American to be published and only the second woman to publish a collection of poetry.



Little is known about Wheatley's early upbringing; however, she was probably born in Gambia around 1753. In 1761, she arrived in Boston as a slave after enduring the hardships of the Middle Passage aboard a schooner named *Phillis*. Though a frail child, Wheatley was purchased by John and Susanna Wheatley as a house slave. The Wheatleys named her after the ship that had transported her into a life of bondage. Though initially speaking no English, she was taught to read and write English by one of the Wheatleys' children. Later, Wheatley was instructed in Latin and she showed much erudition at translating Ovid's *Metamorphoses* into English.

By the mid-1760s, Wheatley displayed great talent for writing. In 1765, she wrote a letter to Mohegan Christian minister Samson Occom, who was also an accomplished writer. Two years later, her first poem titled "On Messrs. Hussey and Coffin," which detailed the harrowing experience of two men who had survived a hurricane off Cape Cod, appeared in the *Newport Mercury*, a Rhode Island newspaper. (She also wrote frequently to an African American friend, Obour Tanner, who resided in Newport.)

By late 1760s-early 1770s, Wheatley frequently wrote poems with patriotic themes. In 1770, she released "On the Death of Mr. George Whitefield," a eulogy to the well-known itinerant preacher George Whitefield. The elegy appeared as a broadside both in the colonies and in England. The piece gained great notoriety in England, however.

A wave of skepticism followed the release of Wheatley's early poems. As a result, on October 8, 1772, an interrogation was convened in order for the author to prove the authenticity of her work. A panel gathered to question Wheatley consisting of many Boston luminaries, including royal governor Thomas Hutchinson, John Hancock, several Harvard-educated ministers, and three poets. After countless questions, the panel concluded that Wheatley had indeed written the poems; they endorsed her work, providing a written testament that was affixed inside the volume of poems.

A wealthy Londoner, Selina Hastings became Wheatley's benefactor, enabling her to publish a collection of poems. However, the original volume of poetry that Wheatley suggested was vastly different than the volume that she published titled *Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral* (1773), which included many religiously themed pieces. She had wide support in London and owing to that response, her slavemaster granted her freedom in 1773, though she continued to live with the Wheatley family.

With the American Revolution in full swing, in October 1775, Wheatley penned a poem titled "His Excellency George Washington," which she subsequently sent to Gen. George Washington. The future-president received the poem warmly, inviting Wheatley to his home. That poem was used frequently to bolster support for the colonial cause during the Revolutionary War.

In 1778, Wheatley married John Peters, a free black. The couple had three children but all died in infancy. After most of the John Wheatley family died, Phillis struggled to make ends meet, working as a domestic servant and as a part-time school teacher. Though Wheatley continued writing poetry, she struggled to get her work published. Wheatley died on December 5, 1784 during childbirth. Her third child died shortly after birth and was buried along with Wheatley in an unmarked grave in Boston.

Wheatley's poems have been the subject of much literary debate since the colonial era. Despite the validation she received from the Boston community and other notables, including Washington, some considered Wheatley's work derivative. In the mid-20th century with the advent of the burgeoning field of African American studies, many scholars began denouncing Wheatley's work as culturally inauthentic. More recent scholarship, however, has focussed on understanding her work within the context of the late 18th century. For example, renowned African American scholar and literary critic Henry Louis Gates notes that Wheatley was "the progenitor of the black literary tradition."

## Marian Perales

## Further Reading

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## Topics / The American Revolution, 1763-1787 / Black Loyalists / Crispus Attucks

A runaway slave turned sailor and ropemaker, Crispus Attucks is the best-known victim of the Boston Massacre and is generally regarded as the first casualty of the American Revolution.

Little is known about Attucks's life prior to the massacre. He probably was part African American and part Native American and was likely born near Framingham, Massachusetts, in Mashpee, a Natick Native American community. Attucks is presumed descended from a community of Natick that converted to Christianity in the 17th century. New Englanders economically and socially marginalized Native peoples in the 18th century, and New England's Christian Natives intermarried frequently with the comparatively small African American population. Local Native Americans were also frequently in some form of bondage, either as long-term indentured servants or as slaves. Attucks seems to have belonged to the latter category, and some accounts indicate that he was skilled in cattle trading. He escaped from slavery sometime before 1750; a bulletin was published that year, offering a physical description and seeking his return. From the description on the poster, we know that Attucks was unusually tall for a man of his time, described as 6'2".

Men such as Attucks had any number of possible grievances against the British, most connected with their livelihood, although, given that he left no written record, his motivations for participating in the mob on March 5 can only be surmised. As a sailor, Attucks was constantly in danger of being impressed, or forcibly conscripted, into the Royal Navy. Because his livelihood depended on trade, any British regulations that limited trade necessarily limited his chances to obtain employment, a situation compounded by the Boston radicals' non-importation attempts. Attucks was also a part-time ropemaker, performing this labor in between voyages, which made him a part of a laboring class in Boston that was directly affected by the presence of the soldiers garrisoned in the city. Soldiers competed with locals for work along the waterfront and in workshops, offering their labor when off-duty in order to supplement their income. In the days before the Boston Massacre, locals and soldiers clashed along the waterfront over this employment conflict. An altercation between soldiers and laborers on March 2 exacerbated an already tense situation, and that conflict was revived three nights later.

The preponderance of witness accounts places Attucks at the front of the mob and the first to be killed by the soldiers, although his precise role in the mob is unclear. Some accounts hold that Attucks was a leader of the mob, brandishing his cordwood staff above his head, exhorting townspeople to rally behind him, and alternately assaulting soldiers and striking at their muskets with his staff before he was shot. Other accounts maintain that Attucks was leaning on his staff when he was struck in the chest by two lead balls.

During the trial of the soldiers in November 1770, Attucks was presented by the defense as the soldiers' chief antagonist. John Adams, future president and lead defense counsel, relied on racial stereotypes in his attempt to justify the soldiers' actions as legitimate responses to provocation. Reminding the court of Attucks's unusual size, Adams took care to portray Attucks's behavior as irrational and threatening. Casting most of the blame for the event on Attucks, Adams claimed that the combination of the man's size and his behavior was enough to frighten the soldiers sufficiently that they needed to use force to defend themselves. At the same time that John Adams was making his case in court, however, his second cousin, Samuel Adams, was busily trying to lionize Attucks in the pages of the *Boston Gazette*. Samuel Adams had an agenda of his own in trying to discredit the witness testimony

that Attucks provoked or attacked the soldiers. Choosing to emphasize the reports in the *Gazette* that held that Attucks was resting on his staff when he was shot, Samuel Adams was using Attucks to try to debunk the argument that the soldiers had any justification for firing and was trying to keep the passions of Boston's citizenry inflamed against the occupying British regiments.

The fact that Attucks was the first to fall in the Boston Massacre made him a martyr in the minds of many of his contemporaries, and he was remembered as such. Until the signing of the Declaration of Independence six years later, March 5 was known in Boston as Crispus Attucks Day, and in 1858, a group of black abolitionists reestablished Crispus Attucks Day as a celebratory occasion. Despite laws regarding burial of African Americans, Attucks was interred in Park Street cemetery, on March 8, 1770, alongside three of the others killed that evening. In 1888, a monument to Attucks and the other victims of the massacre was erected on Boston Common. The first fatality of the American Revolution, Crispus Attucks is remembered both as a martyr to the cause of liberty and as the first in a long line of African Americans who died in the name of liberties they themselves did not equally enjoy.

## Anthony Santoro

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## Topics / Abolitionism, 1816-1846 / Abolition / Sarah Parker Remond

Sarah Remond, a freeborn antislavery lecturer, writer, and medical doctor, was the first black woman to tour and lecture across Great Britain on behalf of the American Anti-Slavery Society. She was a rarity on the international lecturing circuit: educated, passionate, articulate, and black; consequently, her presence generated excitement and attention and inspired numerous press articles, pamphlets, and financial contributions. The devoutly moral antislavery message that she delivered was one that she had been learning ever since she was a young child growing up in Salem, Massachusetts.

Born on June 6, 1826, in Salem, Sarah Parker Remond was one of eight children born to John Remond, an immigrant from the Dutch Island of Curacao, and Nancy Lenox, a freeborn fancy cake maker whose father had fought in the Continental Army. In addition to owning a successful catering, provisioning, and hairdressing business, the Remonds were part of an elite group of middle-class, educated, freeborn antislavery activists: Sarah's father was a life member of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society and was active in local politics and school desegregation; her mother and sisters were active members of the Massachusetts and Salem female antislavery societies; and her older brother, Charles Lenox Remond, was the first black lecturer for the American Anti-Slavery Society and was considered to be the nation's leading black abolitionist up until around 1842 (coincidentally, this is the same year that Frederick Douglass first appeared on the lecturing circuit). That same year, he became the first person of color to testify before the Massachusetts legislature on behalf of the abolitionists against segregated seating on public conveyances. In addition, three of her sisters, Maritcha, Caroline, and Cecilia, co-owned the successful Ladies Hair Work Salon in Salem. Her family was involved in a tight network of abolitionists that included the Philadelphia-based Forten family (Charlotte Forten Grimke lived with Charles and his wife while attending high school), the New York-based Lyons family (conductors on the Underground Railroad who temporarily relocated to Salem when their home was attacked during the New York Draft Riots), William Lloyd Garrison, and Wendell Phillips.

Although her family was prosperous and successful, life in the antebellum North included frequent exposure to racism and segregation. In 1835, Remond and her sister passed the qualifying examination and entered Salem High School. Less than a week later, they were forced to withdraw because of a decision by the segregationist school committee. Her father responded in two ways: first, by relocating the family to Rhode Island so that the girls could attend a private school for African Americans, and second, by mounting a successful six-year campaign to desegregate the Salem school system. When Remond and her family finally returned to Salem in 1841, she decided to continue her education through less-structured means, which included reading books, newspapers, and pamphlets and attending antislavery lectures and cultural events.

In 1853, at Boston's Howard Athenaeum, she participated in her first act of documented civil disobedience when she was forcibly ejected after refusing to sit in the segregated gallery. In the midst of the ejection, she was injured by the police and later successfully sued the owners of the theater for \$500 in damages. Three years later, with Abby Kelly Foster's encouragement, she joined her brother and Foster and began lecturing with the American Anti-Slavery Society. Although she was inexperienced, she quickly became one of their most persuasive and effective speakers, and though she had never experienced slavery, she passionately spoke out against the inhumane treatment of slaves and the sexual exploitation of enslaved women. Her passion and commitment to the cause was able to motivate and persuade audiences to financially support the abolitionist movement.

In 1848, Remond's brother Charles became the first black man to travel to Great Britain on behalf of the American Anti-Slavery Society; 10 years later, they invited Remond to take their message abroad. She arrived in 1859 and began a speaking tour that included more than 45 lectures in 18 cities and towns. As a result of the tour, her popularity, and her success, she was one of the few people primarily responsible for generating British support for the abolitionist movement. In addition, she began pursuing her degree and attended the Bedford College for Ladies (now part of the University of London).

At the height of the Civil War, she began lecturing to raise money to support the Union Army, and when the war ended, she changed her message and began speaking out on the behalf of the Freedmen's Aid Association. One year later, she moved to Florence, Italy, and began studying medicine at the Santa Maria Nuova Hospital. When she received her medical diploma in 1871, she began a second career practicing medicine in Italy that lasted for close to 20 years. Six years later, she married Lazzaro Pinter, a native of Sardinia. She died on December 13, 1894. Although Remond never returned to the United States, her life and experiences provide a model of how the free black community trained, nurtured, and supported those few women who chose to speak up and out.

## **Karsonya Wise Whitehead**

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Whitehead, Karsonya Wise. "Sarah Parker Remond." *The American Mosaic: The African American Experience*. ABC-CLIO, 2016. Web. 30 Jan. 2016.

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## Topics / The Expansion of Slavery, 1816-1846 / Slave Resistance and Rebellion / Toussaint Louverture

Toussaint Louverture was a former slave and planter who played a leading role in the Haitian Revolution, fought in the armies of Spain and France, became governor of Saint-Domingue (Haiti), and then died in exile in France.



François-Dominique Toussaint L'Ouverture

Louverture was born near Cap Français in Saint-Domingue on May 20, 1743. A slave on a plantation owned by the Comte de Noé, Louverture was put in charge of the plantation's cattle and horses and served as veterinarian and coachman. Louverture was eventually freed prior to 1776. Thereafter, Louverture established himself as a planter and bought slaves of his own.

Saint-Domingue's slaves remained relatively subservient until the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 upset the colony's delicate racial and social balance. After 1789, some conservative whites prepared to break away from France so that they could distance themselves from its revolutionary agenda and escape its trade restrictions. Free people of color lobbied the French National Assembly for an end to the racial discrimination prevalent in Saint-Domingue and led a short-lived revolt in 1790. In August 1791, the slaves themselves, who represented the majority of the colony's population, revolted throughout the northern plain of Cap.

Louverture joined the rebellion by late 1791, when he proposed colonial authorities bring the revolt to an end in exchange for limited concessions. Louverture served under the rebel leaders Jean-François Papillon and Georges Biassou, first as doctor, then as secretary, and then as aide-de-camp. The planters' intransigence doomed Louverture's attempt at negotiation and forced the rebels to continue fighting. In July 1792, they announced that their demands now included general emancipation for all of Saint-Domingue's slaves.

In 1793, the French Revolution's more radical turn, led to a general European war. Britain and Spain viewed the war as an opportunity to attack Saint-Domingue, which had become the leading world exporter of sugar and coffee and France's most valuable colony in the 1780s. British troops seized many ports along the western coast, including the colonial capital of Port-au-Prince, while Spain attacked from the neighboring colony of Santo Domingo in the East.

Louverture, along with his superiors Papillon and Biassou, enlisted in the Spanish army after the declaration of war. However, Louverture abandoned Spanish ranks in May or June 1794 and defected to the French army.

After joining the French, Louverture played a leading role fighting the British occupation troops in Saint-Domingue's north and west and the Spanish invasion in the east. Spain sued for peace by 1795; the British evacuated their last troops in 1798. Louverture also helped diffuse a revolt in March 1796. Subsequently, Louverture was promoted to division general.

Louverture maneuvered to force French commissioners to leave the island. Louverture did not overtly oppose France's envoys. Instead, he had rivals appointed as deputies to the French parliament. He also engineered "spontaneous" popular demonstrations and then encouraged envoys to sail away for their own safety. The ploy allowed him to eliminate obstacles to his rule while officially remaining loyal to France. By late 1798, he was the dominant military and political figure in western and northern Saint-Domingue.

During his tenure as governor of Saint-Domingue, Louverture's primary concern was to revive the plantation economy that had underpinned the colony's immense wealth. Continued exports were vital if Louverture wished to obtain revenue for his regime, finance his army, and revive Saint-Domingue's economy. Sugar cultivation relied on heavy capital investments and, as such, could flourish only on large estates. Former slaves, however, associated plantation labor with slavery and dreamed of carving out the large estates into small plots and living off small-scale subsistence agriculture.

To solve this dilemma, earlier French agents as well as governors of other French colonies invented an intermediate laborer status dubbed *cultivateur*. Cultivators were not slaves, could not be whipped, and were paid a portion of the crop. They were not, however, free to leave the plantations and were locked into obligatory, long-term contracts to ensure that plantations had access to a stable labor pool. Eager to revive production, Louverture preserved the cultivator system, even instituting lifelong contracts and reducing the laborers' salary from one-third to one-fourth of the crop. The system was enforced by Louverture's subordinate, Gen. Jean-Jacques Dessalines, and led to popular dissatisfaction with Louverture's rule.

Louverture also incited some white planters to return from exile because he needed their expertise and capital to revive sugar plantations. He made sure, however, that many plantations were leased out to fellow officers of color and that white planters never regained the prominent social status they had once occupied. Louverture also hired many whites as secretaries, confessors, diplomats, legists, and administrators. The army, on the other hand, was dominated by officers and soldiers of color.

In 1798, tensions between France and the United States led to an undeclared Quasi-War. The hostilities impacted Louverture directly because French privateers soon began to seize U.S. merchants along the coast of Saint-Domingue, and the U.S. Congress retaliated by imposing an embargo on all trade to France and its colonies. Saint-Domingue, a major exporter of tropical crops and importer of foodstuffs, had always been heavily reliant on foreign trade. When U.S. merchants stopped visiting Saint-Domingue's ports, just as French merchants themselves were absent because of the naval war with Britain and the United States, Louverture feared that trade disruptions would lead to financial ruin and starvation. In November 1798, Louverture thus wrote to U.S. president John Adams and offered to halt all French privateering out of Saint-Domingue in exchange for a lifting of the U.S. embargo. A convention along these lines was signed in April 1799, and trade resumed the following summer.

Britain, which had been at war with France continuously since 1793, represented another threat to Saint-Domingue's revival. In 1798, Louverture negotiated with Brig. Gen. Thomas Maitland to obtain the departure of the last British troops from Port-au-Prince and Môle St. Nicolas. A year later, he signed another convention with Maitland under which he promised not to attack British colonies, such as Jamaica, in exchange for British protection of his commerce. Louverture subsequently canceled a planned invasion of Jamaica and sent diplomatic envoys to Jamaica and Britain.

Louverture's closeness to the British served as the reason for the conflict that erupted in the summer of 1799 with Louverture's southern rival André Rigaud. Rigaud accused Louverture of disloyalty for dealing with the enemy; of plotting to declare independence; and of planning to restore slavery. The war was also caused by Rigaud and Louverture's competing ambitions and racial enmity between mulattoes and blacks. Known as the War of the South (or War of the Knives), the conflict lasted until July 1800, devastating the south in the process. Louverture's army was on the defensive at first and then captured the strategic port of Jacmel and overwhelmed Rigaud's forces.

Following his victory against Rigaud, Louverture pressured the French agent Philippe Roume to allow him to take over Santo Domingo, which had been ceded to France in 1795 but remained under Spanish rule. Officially,

Louverture explained that the invasion would put an end to Spanish kidnapping of black citizens of Saint-Domingue. Pressured by Louverture, Roume authorized the takeover and then rescinded his order. Louverture imprisoned Roume and eventually exiled him to the United States; in the meantime, he sent his army to take Santo Domingo by force in January 1801.

Now in control of all of Hispaniola, Louverture summoned 10 delegates to draft a constitution for the colony. Presented to the public in July 1801, the constitution made Louverture governor general for life with the power to appoint his successor. Louverture informed France of the constitution only after it had been promulgated.

After he took over in a 1799 coup d'état, First Consul Napoléon Bonaparte hesitated on the proper policy to adopt toward Louverture. He initially considered keeping Louverture as an ally, whose troops could be used for offensive operations against the British. In 1801, however, after hearing of the invasion of Santo Domingo, Roume's imprisonment, and Louverture's constitution, Bonaparte prepared a vast expedition intended to remove Louverture from power.

The London peace protocols of October 1801, which began a short period of peace with Britain, allowed a massive French fleet to cross the Atlantic. The initial expedition left for Saint-Domingue in 1801–1803, led by Gen. Victoire Emmanuel Leclerc. When Leclerc landed in Cap in February 1802, he insisted that he had come merely to reinforce Louverture's army, not restore slavery, while acting in an aggressive manner. Louverture replied that he had always been loyal to France, while ordering his army to burn various cities, including Cap, to the ground. Leclerc attempted desultory negotiations by sending Louverture's sons in an attempt to mollify their father, but all-out fighting soon began as a result of both sides' intransigence.

The campaign lasted throughout the spring of 1802. Per Louverture's orders, his subordinates, such as Dessalines, burned towns, massacred white planters, and retreated to the island's mountainous interior to wage a guerilla war. Louverture himself fought a delaying action at Ravine-à-Couleuvres, while Dessalines forced the bulk of the French army into a costly siege at Crête-à-Pierrot. By May 1802, Leclerc's forces were ravaged by the costly campaign. Louverture, meanwhile, was abandoned by many of his own generals. Exhausted, both sides agreed to a ceasefire, under which Louverture surrendered his command but was allowed to retire on his plantation at Ennery.

Dessalines, who harbored ambitions for the overall command of the black army, privately informed Leclerc that Louverture was planning to renew the fighting as soon as yellow fever had decimated French ranks. Leclerc, who was under orders from Bonaparte to deport Saint-Domingue's leading officers of color, arranged to capture Louverture by surprise. Louverture and his family were put on the frigate *Créole*, then the ship-of-the-line *Héros*, and sent to France in June 1802. The rebellion continued, becoming general by the fall of 1802 as black troops became convinced that the French had come to exterminate the black population or re-enslave it. The rebellion eventually succeeded and led to Haiti's independence in 1804.

Louverture was transported to the prison of Fort de Joux, France. Louverture died in his cell in April 1803.

**Philippe R. Girard**

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## Topics / The Expansion of Slavery, 1816-1846 / Slave Resistance and Rebellion / Denmark Vesey

Denmark Vesey was the alleged leader of one of the largest slave conspiracies in the history of North American slavery. On May 25, 1822, the uncovering of the Vesey plot sent led to mass panic associated with the potentially of large-scale slave revolts throughout the slaveholding South, leading to repressive legislation regarding slave movements and other relative levels of autonomy possessed by free blacks.

A great deal regarding his early life was revealed to court officials during trial testimony. At the age of 14, Vesey was one of 390 slaves whom Captain Joseph Vesey transported onboard a Massachusetts brig named the *Prospect* from St. Thomas to Cape Francois, Saint-Domingue (Haiti), in October or September 1781. During the passage to Saint-Domingue, Vesey—nicknamed Telemaque by the crew—was distinguished for his "beauty, alertness, and intelligence" and became a "pet" onboard the ship. Once the ship arrived at Cape Francois, Captain Vesey sold him and returned to St. Thomas. Allegedly subject to periodic epileptic fits, Vesey was judged unsound by the French sugar planter who purchased him, and he was returned to Captain Vesey sometime after April 23, 1782.

Vesey likely lived with Captain Vesey in Norfolk, Virginia, until the British completed their evacuation of Charleston in 1782 late in the American Revolution. Having mastered French, Creole, Danish, and English, Vesey proved useful as a shipmate on Captain Vesey's voyages. Vesey traveled extensively and may have visited West Africa on more than one occasion. By 1783, Captain Vesey had settled in Charleston, and Vesey remained his slave until 1799. In that year, Vesey won a \$1,500 prize in the East Bay Street lottery. On December 31, 1799, the 33-year-old Vesey petitioned for his freedom. He paid Captain Vesey \$600 to be released from service and used the rest of his lottery earnings to open a carpentry shop in downtown Charleston. As a carpenter, Vesey entered a sizable class of free black skilled professionals in Charleston. He utilized his considerable talents as a carpenter to amass a great deal of wealth. It was reported that by 1822, he owned property worth about \$8,000. Though contemporary accounts note that Vesey owned as many as three houses in Charleston, no proof exists to confirm this claim. He did, however, rent a house from a Dr. Trezevant on 20 Bull Street according to an 1821 city directory.

After being implicated in the conspiracy by a house servant, three slaves—William Paul, Mingo Harth, and Peter Poyas—were arrested by city authorities on May 31, 1822. Because they maintained their composure, both Mingo Harth and Peter Poyas were released the same day after questioning. William Paul, however, remained in custody as late as June 8. Fearing what he believed to be his imminent execution at the gallows, Paul made additional revelations about the plot. He claimed in his confession to have been aware of the conspiracy for some time and claimed that it was extensive, involving the massacre of all whites in Charleston. In addition, Paul made mention of a conjure man, Gullah Jack Pritchard, who had created charms that would render the conspirators immune to the weapons wielded by whites. This testimony was the first hint of the central role that African cultural factors had played in the formation of the planned rebellion. Even after this initial admission, it was not until June 14 that the information provided by Paul was confirmed by Charleston city officials. On that date, Major John Wilson—commander of a local militia company—visited Charleston city intendant James Hamilton and presented him with additional proof of the existence of a large-scale slave conspiracy. His wife's slave, George, had told Wilson that a plot to rise and burn the city was to commence on June 16 at midnight. George voluntarily served as a spy, and the intelligence he relayed to his master was particularly damaging for the conspirators' plans.

The plot reportedly included between 6,600 and 9,000 slaves divided into six attack units. According to the confession of John Enslow—an enslaved African-born cooper involved in the plot—the original plan called for five of these groups to storm Charleston, capturing weapons caches and killing all whites they found. After the main guard houses, the arsenals, a naval store, and the city magazine were taken, the rest of Charleston would be set on fire to create an additional distraction. The sixth unit of rebels would patrol the city's streets on horseback initially and would later be used to recruit more slaves from the surrounding countryside. By mid-June, some 500 weapons had been crafted, bought, or stolen, and access to a local militia company's arsenal was made available by a slave who had a copy of the key. The conspirators reportedly made note of every store and house in Charleston containing weapons, while hundreds of slaves who were expert horse handlers and riders were actively recruited. They even made use of a barber who had volunteered to craft wigs and mustaches to conceal the identities of the conspirators. Once the city was completely captured, the rebels planned to plunder Charleston's banks of all available gold and silver specie and set sail for Haiti, where they hoped to receive political asylum. The revelations made by Paul completely undermined these plans, along with the arrests of key figures in this conspiracy on June 18. The trials of the captured conspirators began on June 19. Arrested soon after was Vesey, leader of the insurgent army.

Pan-African elements influenced this conspiracy and illustrate a level of intercultural collaboration. Along with Jack Pritchard's Gullah Company, Vesey also relied on aid from the "French band" in formulating his plot. This band, which had apparently been prepared for some time before June 1822, was composed of about 300 slaves who had fled Saint-Domingue with their masters in the wake of the 1791 uprising led by Toussaint Louverture. Once the rebellion was to begin, they were to raid a Mr. Duqueron's store near the Inspection and procure weapons and ammunition. Similar to the members of the Gullah society, the Saint-Domingue slaves also used a subversive language, in this case Creole French, to help plan the revolt while maintaining a high level of secrecy. The Haitian Revolution influenced other crucial areas of the conspiracy. Vesey was reported to have read passages in the newspapers that related to the revolt on the former French Caribbean island as a means of encouraging his fellow conspirators and enlistees. One particular newspaper article used by Vesey related the story of the Haitian defeat over an invading Spanish army. Having spent some time earlier in his life in Saint-Domingue, Vesey had learned French and used this ability as a tool to facilitate resistance. During the planning of the rebellion, two letters requesting military aid from Haiti were reportedly drafted by Vesey. One of the letters was to be carried by a ship's steward whose brother was allegedly a general in the Haitian military. The other, addressed directly to President Jean-Pierre Boyer of Haiti, was to be conveyed via a ship's cook. Despite the fact that he was not in direct contact with Haitian officials, Vesey and other leaders frequently claimed that armies from both Santo Domingo and Africa were to provide assistance as a means to further inspire fellow conspirators.

In addition to Gullah and Domingan elements, African elements were present in the conspiracy. Monday Gell led a company of "Ibos," and Africans from Senegambia and Sierra Leone were another segment of South Carolina's slave population playing an integral role in the events unfolding in 1822. Imported in large numbers because of their expertise in rice cultivation, Africans from the western Sudan were to have a profound impact on cultural developments throughout the region. Identified by his first name as possibly a Gambian-born Mande-speaker, Mingo eventually became one of the most important figures in the conspiracy. Perault, according to his brief biography detailed in the court proceedings, was a Mande-speaker born in the western Sudanic region near Gorée. Both men were expert horse handlers and had the responsibility of either recruiting for or leading the slave cavalries. Monday Gell testified that Mingo was to take his master's horse and fight on horseback during the revolt. In the trial of Mingo's younger brother, Isaac Harth, Monday further claimed that he also belonged to a cavalry company and was an accomplished horse rider. Perault was to lead a horse company and, like Mingo and Isaac, was a noted horse rider. During the outbreak of violence, the various horse companies were to patrol the streets and prevent whites from assembling. Understanding the strategic importance represented by having use of a cavalry, Vesey actively recruited men with some experience with horses. In this manner, Vesey ultimately recruited about 100 draymen to serve in the slave cavalry during the revolt.

On June 14, 1822, Intendant Hamilton communicated the plans for the revolt to the governor, who immediately acted to ensure the security of Charleston. Five military companies under the command of Colonel Robert Hayne were ordered to patrol city streets and guard against insurrection. On the night of the planned rebellion, the rebels discovered Colonel Hayne's troops and a sizable contingent of volunteers patrolling the area surrounding the city. The rebel leaders—Vesey, Gell, and Poyas—decided to delay the revolt, but after a number of slaves were arrested on June 18, the plot was effectively over. With these arrests, full disclosure of the conspiracy soon followed.

After the conspiracy trials, 35 men were executed, 32 were banished from the state, and 53 were either acquitted or discharged. Vesey, the principal leader of the conspiracy, was hanged on July 2, 1822, along with five of his followers. In the aftermath of the conspiracy trials, South Carolina lawmakers worked diligently to pass a harsher slave code and to cut off any dangerous influences from Haiti. The Negro-Seamen's Acts, passed in December 1822, banned free black sailors from entering Charleston and forced them to stay aboard their ships. This specific law was meant to prevent any form of communication—and thus inspiration—from reaching slaves in South Carolina from Haiti, as a direct response to the plan initiated by Vesey and its implications.

**Walter C. Rucker**

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## Topics / The Expansion of Slavery, 1816-1846 / Slave Resistance and Rebellion / Gabriel Prosser

Gabriel Prosser, a slave blacksmith from Henrico County, Virginia, became a leader and organizer of an attempted rebellion that sought to end slavery in 1800.

Born to enslaved parents in 1776—the same year that fellow Virginian Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence—Gabriel Prosser grew up on his master Thomas Prosser's rural Brookfield plantation located about six miles outside the state capital of Richmond. Prosser was the youngest son in a religious slave family and followed his father into a skilled trade, receiving training as a blacksmith. By age 20, Gabriel had become an exceptional slave. He stood well over six feet tall, and thanks to his blacksmithing skills, his ability to read (and perhaps write), and his intelligence and self-confidence, he was becoming a respected figure in the slave community. Prosser's owner had already begun to acknowledge his skill and ability by giving him wide latitude to move freely about the surrounding area to hire his labor out.

By the 1790s, Prosser managed a blacksmith's shop and trained other Prosser slaves in metalworking. Largely free from direct white supervision, he regularly hired out his time in the area around Brookfield and within Richmond city limits. Richmond at that time had become a rapidly urbanizing trading center in which wealthy planters, businessmen, white workers, free blacks, and slaves routinely mingled. Living in such close proximity to the city and often participating in the interracial working-class culture of Richmond, Prosser became familiar with American revolutionary rhetoric and impassioned politics, the slave revolution in Saint Domingue, and the Quasi-War with France. Also influenced by egalitarian Christian millennialism, Prosser came to abhor the inequality of Virginia society and to detest slavery and white slaveholders in particular.

His growing anger with white privilege burst into public view in September 1799. Former Brookfield overseer Absalom Johnson caught Gabriel, his brother Solomon, and slave Jupiter stealing a pig from the farm Johnson rented in Henrico County. Confronted by Johnson, Prosser attacked him, biting off a portion of Johnson's ear. All three slaves were arrested. On October 7, Prosser was found guilty of maiming and was sentenced to 39 lashes at the public whipping post and a branding of his left thumb. This brush with the law of slavery did not crush Prosser's desire to fight slavery and white privilege.

Sometime in the spring of 1800, Prosser and other skilled and literate slaves in Richmond City and Henrico County (including his brother Solomon) began to plan the violent overthrow of white slaveholders. They were informed by overheated campaigning in the tumultuous election of 1800 and by news of successful black liberation on Hispaniola. These skilled slaves used their unsupervised time in Richmond to scout the locations of armories. The conspirators sought recruits at Sunday slave gatherings, including religious services, funerals, and afternoon picnics. They sought to harness the energies of evangelical Christian slaves in the rural countryside, but to serve a secular egalitarian revolution. With the movements of skilled slaves hiring their own time, free and slave river men working local waterways, and weekly gatherings of slaves in the counties surrounding Richmond, the conspiracy grew as the summer progressed. Slaves from as far away as Caroline County, Petersburg, and Norfolk joined the conspiracy.

The rebels spent the summer fashioning swords out of scythes and planning their attack on white slaveholders. All rebels were to meet in Henrico on the evening of Saturday, August 30, 1800. The rebels would split into three

columns, one marching on the capitol building and taking Governor (and future president) James Monroe hostage. Others would set fire to Richmond's riverside warehouse district, seize weapons and ammunition, and blockade Mayo's Bridge. The rebels would kill whites in Richmond and demand the end of slavery. Tremendous thunderstorms and flooding on the evening of August 30 washed out bridges and prevented the slaves from gathering, so the attack was postponed until the next day.

By that time, vague rumors of the revolt were circulating among whites, but little attention was paid to them. On that Saturday, however, two Henrico slaves mentioned the plot to Mosby Sheppard, who sent an urgent message to the governor. Monroe ordered patrols for Saturday and Sunday. On Sunday, a white patroller received another warning about the revolt. Monroe was again notified and sent out Henrico magistrates to Thomas Prosser's plantation. Prosser had disappeared, but they questioned a young slave named Ben, who revealed the details of the plot. Monroe mobilized the militia while magistrates continued with the investigation. At least 70 slaves were tried, and 44 were convicted, 26 were publicly hanged, and the remainder were pardoned or transported out of the United States.

Meanwhile, Prosser remained at large. On September 14, downriver from Richmond, Prosser boarded a schooner headed to Norfolk. On September 23, the ship arrived in Norfolk, and two slaves reported Prosser's presence on the schooner to authorities. The next day, he was arrested and transported to Richmond. Within three weeks, Prosser had been convicted and sentenced to death. He was publicly hanged on Friday, October 10, bringing to a close what may have been the largest attempted slave revolt on U.S. soil.

## Kirt von Daacke

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## Topics / The Expansion of Slavery, 1816-1846 / Expansion of Slavery / Solomon Northup

Solomon Northup, a free African American native of New York, was kidnapped into slavery in 1841 and spent 12 years in captivity. His autobiographical memoir, *Twelve Years a Slave*, recounts his capture, transportation, and life as a slave. Long recognized for its comprehensive detail and accuracy, Northup's remarkable chronicle of his experience is an unusually candid portrait of slave life in the antebellum American South.

Solomon Northup was born in Essex County, New York, in 1808. The freeborn son of former slave Mintus Northup, young Solomon was raised on a farm in Sandy Hill, Washington County, where his father worked as a laborer. Crediting his father with instilling virtues of industry and integrity, Northup later drew upon these values to critique slavery. Upon Mintus's death in 1829, Northup married Anne Hampton, a quadroon domestic worker from Sandy Hill. In order to support their new household, Northup cut and repaired canals, chopped wood, worked the railroad, and cultivated a small farm. Eager to distinguish himself, he also gained notoriety as a skilled fiddle player. Using money earned through Solomon's musical engagements and Anne's work as a cook, the couple moved to Saratoga Springs, New York, where they resided with their three children until Northup's capture in 1841.

Northup's harrowing journey into slavery began in March 1841, when he accepted employment as a musician in a traveling circus based in Washington, D.C. Believing he was protected by recently acquired free papers and his close association with his white employers, he arrived ready for work with only mild apprehensions. During his second night in the capital, however, the promise of his journey abruptly ended. He found himself drugged and chained in a dark room, which he soon discovered was the cell of a Washington slave pen. From the pen, he was taken via steamboat to Virginia and then Louisiana, where he would spend the duration of his captivity.

The intimate account of his kidnapping and transportation, especially his detailed portrait of bondsmen and women spirited away from their homes and families, demonstrates the physical and psychological strain that accompanied forced migration from plantations along the East Coast to the cotton and sugar fields of the Southwest. Slaves such as Eliza, a slave mother divided from her two children, and Lethe, a bondswoman separated from her husband, shared their horrific stories as they collectively prayed to be freed from suffering. In speaking as a free man who described the slave experience from within, Northup's observations provide an unusually objective, yet personal view of the internal slave trade.

Northup's experiences as a newly enslaved man along the low and marshy lands of the Red River offer similar insight. Like his fellow bondsmen and women, Northup participated in various occupations, ranging from "sunup to sundown" cotton picking to the skilled occupations of carpentry and music. During the early years, he experienced kindness from fellow slaves, who shared the joys of holiday and community and the sorrows of servitude. But he also maintained his distance, never confiding in his fellow bondsmen and women that he was a free man, fearing that they would betray his secret, and he would be sold further west.

His relationships with white superiors were similarly complex. Whether operating under a kind or unjust master, he constantly sounded a similar note: the system of slavery was corrupt. Indeed, as a slave he worked under masters and overseers across the bayou, some of whom he remembered fondly, others with abhorrence. The tension between slave and free came to a climax for Northup when he struck his master during an attempted whipping. The

altercation would have resulted in Northup's death by hanging, if local whites had not interceded.

With the help of friends from Saratoga, Solomon Northup regained his freedom in 1853 after 12 years a slave. Upon his return he made a living off the publication of his memoirs in Glenn Falls, New York. He is believed to have died in 1863.

## Erica Ann Bruchko

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## Topics / The Emergence of Free Black Communities, 1800-1816 / Rise of the Black Churches / Absalom Jones

Absalom Jones was an African American activist and abolitionist in Philadelphia who helped found the African Episcopal Church. As part of the free black community in the north, Jones was imbued with the rhetoric of the American Revolution and sought to advocate for African Americans through the organization offered by the church.

Jones was born enslaved, sometime in 1746, in Sussex County, Delaware, where at an early age he taught himself to read. At 16 years of age, he was taken to Philadelphia and put to work as a clerk and handyman in a retail store. Through arrangement with his owner, Jones was allowed to work additional hours in the evenings and to keep the additional earned wages as his own. By the 1780s, he had earned his freedom, married and bought his wife's freedom, and purchased property in Philadelphia.

As a lay minister and teacher at St. George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia, Jones met and joined forces with another lay minister there, Richard Allen. In their role at St. George's, they ministered to the African Americans attending the established church for the white community. Together they formed the Free African Society in 1787. Like other mutual aid societies, the Free African Society was established to provide services to its members not available to even wealthy free blacks through traditional white establishments, such as life insurance and burial provisions, but it also served both secular and sacred purposes through nondenominational prayer meetings and other gatherings. The organization sought to provide services for members as well as to improve the character and social actions of its associates. Although the Free African Society and the African American members of St. George's Methodist Church flourished under Allen and Jones, increasing racial tensions and incidents led to concerns that the African American members of St. George's would separate from the church's main congregation. In 1792, an official split did occur when the white trustees of St. George's tried to prevent Jones from praying in what they perceived as the "white" section of the church. Grievously insulted, the African American congregants left the church as a whole.

With this break in the congregation of St. George's Methodist Church, Jones began to organize "the African Church." Although a number of the white members of St. George's fought the division—the established African American congregants had brought a solid economic base to the church—many white abolitionists supported Jones's efforts to establish an independent church. When Jones began construction on his new facility in 1793, donations from these same abolitionists aided the building fund. Another divide in the former St. George's congregation took place in 1794 when Jones and Allen disagreed on the denomination of the new church. Whereas Allen and a few of the African American congregants believed the new church should be Methodist and be a truly independent African American church, the majority of African American congregants sided with Jones, who applied to the Episcopal Church for membership. The African Church was accepted into the white-led Episcopal Diocese of Philadelphia, and the church was named the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, with Jones ordained as deacon. In 1802, Jones was ordained an Episcopal priest, the first Episcopal priest of African American descent. Allen went on to establish Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in the Methodist tradition in Philadelphia and became the first American Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church bishop.

Jones, like other African American religious and social leaders in the post-Revolutionary period, continued to strive for the egalitarian principals of the American Revolution, believing that African Americans could prevail if they continued to insist on those liberties promised to those who supported the new nation. Jones believed the African

Americans had the opportunity to help establish their position in the new society. As an active abolitionist, Jones petitioned the U.S. Congress—the first African American to do so—in 1797 on behalf of four men who were facing the possibility of being re-enslaved. Having been manumitted in North Carolina, the men went to Philadelphia for fear of being sold back into slavery. In a document full of revolutionary rhetoric, Jones petitioned that slavery violated the spirit of the U.S. Constitution, and as a result, the Congress had the ability to abolish it. Congress refused to accept his petition.

Jones died on February 13, 1818 at the age of 72.

## Jane M. Aldrich

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## Topics / Abolitionism, 1816-1846 / Abolition / Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861)

Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) is considered a landmark in abolitionist writing, one of the most important slave narratives, and a key early work of black feminist literature. The autobiographical novel tells the story of Jacobs's escape from a sexually abusive and tyrannical master. Due to literary historian Jean Fagan Yellin's research, it is known that Linda Brent, the heroine of *Incidents*, is a pseudonym for Jacobs herself. Also, the identities of the other major characters in her book are also known through Yellin's findings. Far different in tone and specifics than the more well-known slave narratives written by men, Jacobs's story highlights the particular problems of female slaves within the system of slavery. Although the mores of the time, along with Jacobs's own shame about her sexual history, prevented her from openly detailing much of her abuse, she expertly combined the genres of the (male) slave narrative with the (female) domestic novel in order to create a sympathetic and unique chronicle of one woman's resistance to slavery.

The particulars of Linda Brent's/Harriet Jacobs's life are steeped with a daily philosophy of resistance put into practice. Linda first shows her anger at the unfair slave system through her surprise and dismay when she was not set free by her mistress, but left to her mistress's niece. Losing her mother and then father while still a child, she rails even against God as he continues to allow the system of slavery and cruel death to limit her happiness and freedom so severely. Anger, though, is not a trait that women were able to express directly in domestic fiction, and so this anger is often voiced through men who are allowed to feel and express such emotions. In the often-anthologized chapter, "The Slave Who Dared to Feel Like a Man," Jacobs seems to be expressing her own anger at both the system of slavery and an unbending Christian doctrine that preaches contentment, through the voice of her brother and uncle. But she is able to show defiance herself, as when she reflects upon never feeling so "strong" as when her master tried to make her bend to his will in "every thing"

In addition to her displays of anger, which is a sure sign of her resistance to her lot as a slave, she takes action frequently to subvert the system of slavery, and, specifically, to thwart the efforts of her master, Dr. Flint. First, she allows herself to fall in love with a free man—an industrious and caring gentleman who wants to marry her. Fearing that her slave status will cause him too much grief, she ends the relationship, but not before she asserts her free will to her master, a man who is actively pursuing her, and trying to force her into concubinage. Later, when she realizes that she cannot both follow her grandmother's Christian teachings and assure her own self-preservation, Linda takes a white lover who she feels will be able to protect her and their children. Though she is ultimately disappointed in Mr. Sands's promises for her young family, she makes clear to her licentious master that she *will* take control in matters related to her sexuality and her children.

Linda's most obvious rebellion comes in the form of her escape. After continually refusing to follow Flint's plan of keeping her in a cottage for himself, she is shipped to Flint's son's plantation. When she learns of plans to introduce her children to field slavery, she plans her escape, helped by sympathetic whites and other rebellious slaves. She is able to hide within her own community, in a swamp, and, eventually, in her grandmother's garret. For almost seven years she hid in plain sight, surviving extremes of heat and cold, feeling her muscles atrophy, but all the while taking great pleasure in Flint's consternation.

Her literacy, a gift from her previous mistress, is often used to great advantage in her rebellions. One of her most

interesting stratagems is to send letters home from New York City, making Dr. Flint sure she has escaped to the North. Her language in these tomes is often witty and sarcastic—but this is lost on the greedy Dr. Flint who *thinks* Linda has been foolish enough to give away her location. She also uses her own literacy to help others. For instance, she teaches Uncle Fred to read the Bible. While religion is often used by masters within the slave community as a salve for rebellion, Linda sees this hypocrisy, and perhaps hopes that if Uncle Fred can read the Bible for himself, he will see this as well.

Throughout *Incidents* there are two voices—that of the younger and less experienced Linda, and that of the older and wiser narrator, Jacobs. Consistently throughout the narrative, both voices show their resistance. Linda's dialogue expresses the actions of rebellion, and Jacobs's narration consistently shows the necessity and righteousness of that rebellion. The resistance to slavery eventually expands into a search for justice in the North as well, where Jacobs is ultimately unimpressed by the extreme racism she experiences in the supposedly "free" North. Her most acerbic vituperations are spent on the Fugitive Slave Law (1850), which threatens to make Linda a slave once again. Convinced she should *never* be another's property again, she escapes the heir of Dr. Flint who has come seeking property for a quick sale, only to be saved by her secret purchase from her current employer. The injustice of her need to continue to escape in the "land of the free" is one of the most palpable criticisms in the narrative. Furthermore, her inability to raise the funds to have her own home in the North further speaks to the deep-seated prejudice she must continue to fight.

Portions of *Incidents* were serialized in the *New York Tribune* until Jacob's descriptions of sexual violence proved too controversial for newspaper readers. The manuscript was sent to several different printing houses until finally finding a publisher in 1861.

**Nicole L. Willey**

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## Topics / Abolitionism, 1816-1846 / Slave Narratives / Georgia: Georgia Smith Narrative

*From 1936 to 1938, the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) conducted interviews with more than 2,000 ex-slaves. These interviews are known collectively as the Slave Narrative Collection of the Federal Writers' Project of the WPA. The interviews were conducted with individuals from 17 states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. In the interviews, former slaves recall living and working conditions for themselves and their families.*

*The following primary source document provides valuable first-hand information to better understand slavery in Georgia.*

GEORGIA SMITH  
286 Augusta Ave.  
Athens, Georgia

### PLANTATION LIFE, AS VIEWED BY AN EX-SLAVE

Written by:  
Miss Grace McCune  
Research Worker  
Federal Writers' Project  
Athens, Georgia

Edited by:  
Mrs. Sarah H. Hall  
Editor  
Federal Writers' Project  
Athens, Georgia

WPA Residency No. 6  
April 6, 1938

GEORGIA SMITH  
Ex-Slave, Age 87.  
286 Augusta Ave.  
Athens, Georgia

The cold, rainy, and altogether disagreeable weather on the outside was soon forgotten when the interviewer was admitted to the neat little home of Aunt Georgia Smith and found the old woman enjoying the cheerful warmth of her blazing fire.

Aunt Georgia appeared to be quite feeble. She was not only willing, but eager to talk of her experiences, and

explained that her slow and rather indistinct articulation is one of the several bad after effects of her recent stroke of paralysis.

"My pappy was Blackstone Smith, and he b'longed to Marse Jeb Smith. My mammy was Nancy Chappell, owned by Mistus Peggie Chappell.

"I stayed wid my mammy on Mistus Chappell's plantation in Oglethorpe County, near old Antioch Church. W'en I was 'bout five or six years ole my mammy died. Den my pappy done come an' got me, an' I was to stay wid '[illegible text]' on Marster Smith's place. Day was good to me dar, but I warn't satisfied, an' I cried for Old Mistus.

"I'd jes' go 'roun' sniffin', an' not eatin' nuffin', an' one day w'en us was pickin' peaches, Marster Smith tole my pappy he better take dat chile back to her old mistus, 'fo' she done git sick for sho'.

"Hit was de next day w'en doy ax me did I want to see Old Mistus an' I jes' cry an' say, 'yassum.' Don Marster say: 'Blackstone, hitch a mule to dat wagon, an' take dat chile right back to her Old Mistus.' I tell '[illegible text]' I can walk, but dey made me ride in de wagon, an' I sho' was glad I was goin' back home.

"I seed Old Mistus 'fo' I got dar, an' jumped out of de wagon an' run to 'er. W'en she seed me, she jes' grabbed me, an' I thought she was a laughin', but when I seed dat she was cryin', I tole 'er not to cry, dat I warn't goin' to leave 'er no mo'.

"Mistus sho' was good to me, but she was good to all 'er niggers, an' dey all loved 'er. Us allus had plenny of evvything, she made us wear plenny of good warm clo'es, an' us wo'e flannel petticoats when hit was cole weather. Chillun don't wear 'nuff clo'es dese days to keep 'em warm, an' nuffin' on deir legs. Hits a wonder dey doan' freeze.

"I didn't stay at de quarters with de udder niggers. Mistus kep' me in de big 'ouse wid 'er, an' I slep' on a cotton mattress on de floor by de side of 'er bed. She had a stick dat she used to punch me wid when she wannid [illegible text]eping in de night, an' effen I was hard to wake, she sho' could punch wid dat stick.

"Mistus didn't ever have us niggers whipped 'lessen it jes' had to be done. An' if us chilluns was bad, fussin' an' fightin', Mistus would git 'er a stick, but us would jes' run an' hide, an' Mistus would forgit all 'bout it in jes' a little w'ile.

"Marster was dead, an' us had a overseer, but he was good to us jes' lak' Mistus was. Hit was a big old plantation, wid lots of niggers. W'en de overseer would try to larn de chilluns to plow an' dey didn't want to larn, dey would jes' play 'roun'. Sometimes dey snuck off to de udder side of de fiel' an' hunnid for lizards. Dey would hold a lizard's head wid a stick, an' spit 'bacco j[illegible text]ice in 'is mouf an' turn 'im loose. De 'bacco juice would make de lizard drunk, and he would run 'roun' an' 'roun'. Dey would cotch snakes, kill dem an' hang de skins on trees so hit would rain an' dey wouldn't have to wuk in de fiel'.

"De quarters was built away f'um de big 'ouse. Dey was cabins made of logs an' dey all had dey own gardens whar dey raised all kinds of vegetables an' allus had plenny of hog meat. De cookin' was done on a big fireplace an' in brick ovens. 'Taters was baked in de ashes, an' dey sho' was good.

"Dey had big times huntin' an' fishin' w'en de wuk was over. Dey cotch lots of 'possums, an' had big 'possum suppers. De 'possums was roasted with plenny of 'taters, butter an' red pepper. Us would eat an' dance most of de night w'en us had a 'possum supper.

"De rabbits was so bad in de gardens dat dey tuk white rags an' tied 'em on sticks stuck up in de ground. Rabbits

woulden' come 'roun' den, cyaze dey was 'fraid of dem white rags flyin' on de sticks.

"Mistus b'lieved in lookin' atter her niggers w'en dey was sick. She would give 'em medicine at home. Candy an' tea, made wid ho'e houn' an' butterfly root tea was good for worms; dewberry wine, lak'wise dewberry root tea was good for de stomach ache; samson snake root an' poplar bark tea was good medicine for coles an' so'e th'oats, an' w'en you was in pain, de red pepper bag would sho' help lots sometimes. If de homemade medicine didn' cyore 'em, den Mistus sont for de doctor.

"Slaves went to de white folkses chu'ch an' sot up in de gallery. Dey stayed all day at chu'ch, an' had big dinners on de groun'. Dem was sho' 'nough good dinners. Us had big times on meetin' days.

"Our slaves had prayer meetin' twict a week in deir quarters, 'til dey got 'roun' to all de cabins den dey would start over again. Dey prayed an' sung all de old songs, and some of 'em as I 'member are: 'Roll Jordan Roll,' - 'Better Mind How you Step on de Cross,' - 'Cause You ain' Gon'er be Here Long,' - 'Tell de Story Bye an' Bye.' - 'All God's Chilluns are a Gatherin' Home, 'an' 'We'll Understand Better Bye an' Bye.' Dey really could sing dem old songs. Mistus would let me go to dem cabin prayer meetin's an' I sho' did enjoy 'em.

"W'en slaves died dey jes' tuk 'em off an buried 'em. I doan' 'member 'em ever havin' a funeral, 'til way atter freedom done come an' niggers got dey own chu'ches.

"I 'member one night dey had a quiltin' in de quarters. De quilt was up in de frame, an' dey was all jes' quiltin' an' singin', 'All God's Chilluns are a Gatherin' Home,' w'en a drunk man wannid to preach, an' he jumped up on de quilt. Hit all fell down on de flo', an' dey all got fightin' mad at 'im. Dey locked 'im in de smokehouse 'til mornin', but dey didn' nobody tell Mistus nuffin' 'bout it.

"Us chilluns had to pick peas; two baskets full 'fo' dinner an' two 'fo' night, an' dey was big baskets too. I 'member dere was a white widow 'oman what lived near our place, an' she had two boys. Mistus let dem boys pick 'em some peas w'en us would be pickin', an' us would run 'e[illegible text] off, cause us didn' lak' po' white trash. But Mistus made us let 'em pick all dey wannid.

"I was 'bout twelve years old w'en freedom come, an' was big 'nough to wait on Mistus good den. I 'member how I used to run to de spring wid a little tin bucket w'en she wannid a fresh drink of water.

"Mos' of de slaves stayed with Mistus atter freedom come, 'cause dey all loved her, an' dey didn' have no place to go. Mistus fed 'em jes' lak' she had allus done and paid 'em a little money too. Us didn' never have no fussin' an' fightin' on our place, an' de Ku Klux Klan never come 'roun' dar, but de niggers had to have a ticket if dey lef' de place on Sunday. Dat was so de paddyrollers woulden' whip 'em if dey cotch 'em.

"All de niggers on de udder places, called us free niggers long 'fo' freedom come, 'cause we didn' have no whippin' post, an' if any of us jes' had to be whipped, Mistus would see dat dey warn't beat bad 'nough to leave no stripes.

"My pappy left de old Smith plantation, soon atter he got 'is freedom, an' went to Augusta, Georgia whar he died in jes' 'bout two years.

"I waked up one mornin' an' he[illegible text]red Mistus makin' a funny fuss. She was tryin' to git up an' pullin' at her gown. I was plum skeert an' I runned atter some of de udder folkses. Dey come a runnin' but she never did speak no mo', an' didn' live but jes' a few hours longer. De white folkses made me go to 'er funeral. Dere sho' was a big crowd of folkses dar, 'cause evvybody loved Mistus; she was so good to evvybody. Dey didn' preach long, mos'ly jes'

prayed an' sung Mistus' favorite songs: 'All God's Chillun are a Gatherin' Home,' an', 'We'll Understand Bye an' Bye.'

"I lef' de old place not long atter Mistus died, 'cause hit was too lonesome dar an' I missed her so much. I come to town an' jes' wukked for white folkses. I doan' 'member all of 'em. But I cain' wuk no mo' now, an' hit woan' be so long 'til I see my old Mistus again, an' den I can still wait on her, an' we woan' have to part no mo'."

### Disclaimer

*When reading the narratives, it is important to remember their context. Although some of the language used may be offensive to the modern reader, we have not edited or expurgated the texts in order that they remain an accurate reflection of the attitudes of their time and place.*

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## Topics / Abolitionism, 1816-1846 / Abolition / Henry Highland Garnet

Rev. Henry Highland Garnet was one of the most militant African American abolitionists of the antebellum period. Known for his oratory skills and strength of character, Garnet's greatest period of activity and accomplishment was from 1840 to 1865. He continued his activism after 1865, as many other abolitionists did, in advocating for equal rights for African American after the Civil War.



Garnet was born on December 23, 1815, in New Market, Kent County, Maryland. He and his parents were the slaves of Colonel William Spencer. In 1824, Garnet's family and his extended relatives escaped from Kent County. After reaching Wilmington, Delaware, the runaway party separated; Garnet and his family went to New Hope, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, where Garnet began school at the age of nine. After a few months, in 1825, they moved to New York City. It was here that Garnet's father, George, changed their family name to Garnet, and the name of Henry was given to him.

Garnet was sent in 1826 to the New York African Free School No.1 on Mulberry Street, which was founded by the New York Society for the Manumission of Slaves, where as 1 of 300 students, he received elementary education until 1828. When he was 13, Garnet served as a cabin boy for two voyages to Cuba. After returning from sea, Garnet discovered that his family had narrowly escaped being returned to slavery. His father was almost recaptured by slave hunters, and his sister was arrested and then released based on a fake alibi stating that she was a New York resident when she was said to have been a slave in Maryland. Garnet's mother had been hidden by neighbors. Everything the family owned had been either stolen or destroyed by the slave hunters. Eventually, he became indentured to a Captain Epenetus Smith in Smithtown, Long Island, for over two years. Captain Smith's son, Samuel, who was 10 years Garnet's senior, tutored Garnet while he was indentured. It was at this time Garnet lost the use of his right leg from an injury, whereupon he returned to his family in New York.

In 1831, Garnet entered the new High School for Colored Youth in New York City, where he studied classics, Greek, and Latin. Encouraged and mentored by Theodore Sedgwick Wright, pastor of the First Colored Presbyterian Church of New York, Garnet soon prepared himself for the ministry. Wright would become his lifelong friend; he baptized Garnet and, in 1841, married him to his wife Julia Williams. In 1835, Garnet entered Noyes Academy in Canaan, New Hampshire, a new high school formed by abolitionists who vowed to admit African Americans on equal terms with white students. Garnet, who was 19 at the time, traveled with two classmates, Alexander Crummell and Thomas S. Sydney. Their trip to Canaan, however, foreshadowed the state of race relations in New Hampshire. They were not allowed cabins on the steamboat that took them from New York to Providence, Rhode Island, and when they transferred to the stagecoach that was to take them to Canaan, they were not allowed to ride inside but rather had to ride on top. Garnet, because of his infirmed leg and asthma, suffered greatly from the exposure to the elements, as did his companions Crummell and Sydney, who remained without food and board despite their middle-class appearance. Approximately a month later, Garnet and his fellow African American students left Noyes and New Hampshire, with a mob at the outskirts of Canaan making sure that they did. This was the same mob of local white farmers that had torn down and then burned the Noyes Academy school buildings a few weeks earlier.

The following year, Garnet, Crummell, and Sydney entered Oneida Institute in Whitesboro, New York, which was

under the leadership of Reverend Beriah Green, a white professor of intellectual and moral philosophy and president of the institution. This was where Garnet was exposed to the moral suasionist views that he used when he returned to New York in 1840 and gave his first speech at the American Anti-Slavery Society. In that same year, he graduated with honors from the Oneida Institute.

Garnet began his early career teaching youth in the African American school district of Troy, New York. While teaching, he also conducted religious meetings at the First Presbyterian Church and was ordained in 1841 as a ruling elder. In 1842, he became licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Troy, and the following year, he was ordained and installed as pastor of the Liberty Street Presbyterian Church of Troy, a position he held until 1848. This church was important to the Underground Railroad in helping slaves escape and was used frequently to hold state and national African American convention meetings.

Garnet had been forced to amputate his injured leg in 1840. Despite the loss of his leg, he was one of the leaders and organizers of the New York and national conventions and was a pioneer of the radical African American abolitionist sentiment espoused in the 1840s. For one year, Garnet sustained a weekly publication titled the *Clarion*, which discussed the oppression of African Americans. He was an advocate of the temperance movement and frequently spoke on it. Additionally, Garnet was at the forefront of uniting abolitionism with party politics.

Perhaps Garnet's most famous speech was his "Address to the Slaves of the United States" given at the National Colored Convention held in Buffalo, New York, in 1843. Although Garnet did not specifically call for insurrection, he urged the slaves to fight for their liberty and argued that if they were to die in the effort that would be better than enslavement. He urged them to remember their forefathers from Africa who certainly would have fought enslavement and the brutal treatment at the hands of slave owners. Garnet told them to remember that they were among four million slaves living in the South, so they should not be afraid. Yet if it was to end in a violent confrontation where whites would have as their goal to put everyone to death, the possibility of liberty would be worth it.

The 1843 convention was a high point in Garnet's leadership within the African American abolitionist movement. Although he did not specifically champion insurrection, the convention leaders were still uncomfortable advocating that slaves use violence. Prominent African American abolitionist Frederick Douglass predicted that an insurrection of the slaves would result in their death, which would be inappropriate for the convention to sanction. The "Address" was submitted for a vote of ratification at the Buffalo convention and for approval for mass distribution. Garnet's pamphlet was circumvented from publication, however, by one vote, but five years later, it was published along with David Walker's "Appeal" by white abolitionist John Brown at his own expense.

Garnet's most significant contribution was his willingness to try different strategies or renew old ones in order to achieve emancipation and civil rights. By the 1840s, a shift from the ideas of moral suasion to political action was evident. Garnet was one of the first to endorse the Liberty Party, a third-party movement founded in 1840 by abolitionists who were supportive of political action, by giving a noteworthy speech at the Liberty Party Convention. He played a leading role in the efforts to obtain suffrage in New York in the early 1840s. By 1841, Garnet had presented 17 petitions for African American suffrage to the New York state legislature, 15 of which came from and were signed exclusively by African Americans.

In 1850, Garnet was invited to lecture for the Free Labor Movement in Britain, where he lived for over two years with his wife and family. While in Europe, he traveled through Bavaria, Prussia, and France, lecturing on behalf of the antislavery movement. The United Presbyterian Church of Scotland was so impressed by Garnet that they hired him as their first black missionary to work in Sterling Grange Hill, Jamaica, in 1852, but after three years of missionary work, he contracted a fever and was ordered by his doctors to return to the United States.

Back in New York, Garnet began a ministry at the Shiloh Church on Prince Street, where he succeeded his longtime friend Wright. Garnet was able to build an effective ministry, and his church was soon overflowing with patrons. His sermons on various political events, such as the Dred Scott decision (1857), the death of John Brown (1859), and the Emancipation Proclamation (1863), were reprinted at length in the daily press.

The increase in racial hatred that emerged by the middle of the 19th century, expressed through laws, limited economic opportunities, and race riots, impelled Garnet to proclaim the necessity of the doctrine of Black Nationalism, and out of these ideas grew the African Civilization Society in 1858, an organization primarily funded by white philanthropists. Garnet defended its mission to bring Christianity to Africa and argued that through the use of free labor in cotton and sugar production, it would destroy the American plantation system. In 1861, Garnet was president of this society. But the Civil War ended his emigration efforts and his Black Nationalist perspective.

Upon the outbreak of the Civil War, Garnet called on African American men to serve, and upon government authorization, African American men enlisted in significant numbers. Garnet signed up as chaplain to the African American troops on Rikers Island. He established a hospital on Rikers Island and organized a Ladies Committee for the Aid of Sick Soldiers. In 1864, Garnet received a call to pastor at the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. On the first anniversary of the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment, Garnet preached to the House of Representatives, the first African American to speak in Congress. In his speech, Garnet urged Congress to not let slavery be reinstated, but rather remain firmly condemned by law.

During Reconstruction, Garnet was an active Republican Party member and worked briefly for the Freedmen's Bureau. He pressed the federal government to give greater assistance to the freedmen and to distribute land to African Americans for them to begin their lives as free people. In January 1882, Garnet became the U.S. ambassador to Liberia. He was not in good health, however, and died in Africa one month later. He was given a state funeral by the Liberian government, and Edward Wilmot Blyden, founder of West African nationalism, preached at his funeral.

## Kay Wright Lewis

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## Topics / Abolitionism, 1816-1846 / Underground Railroad / Henry Walton Bibb

African American activist, editor, and lecturer Henry Walton Bibb was noted during the abolitionist movement for his lectures and slave narrative, the *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb*. Bibb also founded the first black newspaper in Canada, the *Voice of the Fugitive*. He was separated at a young age from his slave mother, and his father was rumored to be a Kentucky state senator, James Bibb. Bibb's youth was filled with disruption and pain. He was sold at least six times before 1840, and as he was moved throughout the South, he developed an early desire to escape slavery.

Bibb was born on a Kentucky plantation on May 10, 1814, to a slave mother. He married a slave in 1833, and the following year a daughter was born. Bibb escaped in 1837 and attempted to rescue his wife and child the next year but was captured and nearly sold in Louisville, Kentucky. He repeated his escape and rescue attempt in 1839, but this time Bibb, his wife, and daughter were sold to a Louisiana slaveholder. Bibb repeatedly attempted to escape and finally, in late 1840, the slaveholder separated the Bibb family and sold Bibb to a pair of gamblers who took him through Texas and Arkansas before finally selling him to a Cherokee slaveholder. After his Cherokee owner died, Bibb once again escaped—this time, for good.

Eventually Bibb settled in Detroit, Michigan, and in 1844 began lecturing against slavery. In 1845, Bibb again attempted to rescue his family, but found that his wife "was living in a state of adultery with her master" and gave up hope of ever reuniting the family. Bibb's narrative, in the language of the time, hints at his great personal conflict over this discovery and suggests both that his wife was likely forced into this role and that, given the evil of slavery, she may have reconciled herself to it. Bibb returned north and never saw his wife or daughter again. In 1847, Bibb met a African American Bostonian woman, and they were married the following year.

Bibb's speeches, often given under the patronage of the Michigan Liberty Party, proved both popular and effective—so much so that the Detroit Liberty Association appointed a committee to verify the details of his life. The committee's positive conclusions were eventually printed as a preface to Bibb's *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb* (1849). Stunning in its descriptions of slaveholders' cruelty, Bibb's narrative became quite popular.

The passage of the Compromise of 1850 and the controversial Fugitive Slave Law that was part of the legislative act, drove Bibb and his wife to Canada in 1850. Here, Bibb advocated for African American emigration to Canada and continued his fight against slavery. In January 1851, the couple began a biweekly journal, *Voice of the Fugitive*, which published—among other items—narratives of fugitives. Eventually, the paper became the official journal of the Refugee Home Society, a corporation Bibb set up to purchase Canadian land for African American emigrants. Bibb became a leader among Ontario blacks who favored self-segregating and his ideas on this topic brought him into conflict with Mary Shadd Cary, an African American who supported racial integration. The Refugee Home Society floundered, the newspaper's circulation was a constant worry, and Bibb's health suffered after years of abuse, but he did live to see three of his brothers escape slavery and emigrate to Canada. Bibb died August 1, 1854 in Windsor, Canada.

**Eric Gardner**

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## Topics / Reform Movements, 1816-1846 / Frederick Douglass / Anna Murray Douglass

Anna Murray Douglass was the first wife of world-renowned black abolitionist Frederick Douglass. Anna, considered a loving, selfless giver, spent most of her adult life willingly in the large shadow of her heroic husband. While running the household as Frederick traveled, she, rather than Frederick, is also thought to have served as a Station Master in the Underground Railroad.

Anna was born around 1813 near the town of Denton, Caroline County, on Maryland's Eastern Shore, where her ancestors had lived as slaves, presumably for generations. Shifting economic considerations in the early 19th century ushered in an era of slave manumissions in the state. In fact, Anna's parents, Mary and Bambarra Murray, became free mere weeks before their daughter's birth. Anna was the first in her family born free, the eighth of twelve children. Although little is known of her childhood and adolescence on the Eastern Shore, at least some members of the Murray family had moved to Baltimore by 1830.

Anna came of age in antebellum Baltimore, a place reflecting the growing division sweeping the nation over slavery. In Baltimore, antislavery philosophy and abolitionist sentiment existed side-by-side with the practical realities of bondage and an ever-expanding domestic slave trade, which saw tens of thousands sold south from the Port of Baltimore. Free blacks outnumbered slaves three to one in 1830 and five to one in 1840. Yet Baltimore was unlike other Southern cities in that free blacks did not hold themselves as a separate caste; they maintained little space—social or physical—between themselves and the enslaved. Indeed, at age 25 while working as a domestic, Anna became engaged to an enslaved man, Frederick Bailey, age 20, in 1838.

Anna represented the most important of the free blacks who formed Frederick's immediate peer circle. Indeed, his sense of this newfound love's vulnerability to the whims of the domestic slave trade convinced him to break for freedom. On September 3, 1838, wearing a sailor's outfit fashioned by Anna, with a ticket purchased with Anna's meager earnings, Frederick stole away from Baltimore, reinventing himself, ultimately, into Frederick Douglass, free man. Packing all she owned—a feather bed and linens, dishes and flatware, and a trunk full of clothing—Anna joined Frederick in exile. Wearing a plum dress for a bridal gown, she married Frederick in New York on September 15, 1838. Shortly thereafter, fearing slave catchers lurked at every turn, the couple moved on, settling in New Bedford, Massachusetts.

Frederick, the fugitive-turned-abolitionist orator, burst on the national stage within two years of coming to New Bedford, remaining active and generally away from home. On occasion, Anna joined her husband on the abolitionist lecture circuit, but only to events nearby. Early on, it seems, Anna developed a sense that her most valuable contribution to the antislavery cause was behind the scenes, in support of her husband.

The Douglasses relocated to Lynn, Massachusetts, in the mid-1840s. Frederick's frequent absences—in Europe during most of 1845 and 1846, for example—caused Anna to reach out to antislavery women in Lynn and nearby Boston. Such support was appreciated, given that her family had grown quickly, with four children born during the first six years of their marriage. As the need grew, Anna's energies increased. At the urgings of her acquaintances, she regularly attended local antislavery gatherings. In fact, friends would often help Anna with her domestic duties to ensure her ability to attend, although she would never stay away from her home and children too long.

In 1848, the Douglass family relocated yet again, this time to Rochester, New York. Because Rochester had a much different social climate from that in Lynn or New Bedford, or even Baltimore, this move was hardest on Anna. Frederick's schedule still kept him away for long stretches. Even when he was "at home," the demands of a newspaper he began publishing, *The North Star*, kept him unavailable to Anna.

It is thought that the Douglass home in Rochester was an oft-used stop on the Underground Railroad. If so, then Anna rather than Frederick likely handled the practical details of accommodating wayward strangers on a moment's notice. Yet the legend of Frederick portrays him as the "Station Master."

After the Civil War, with slavery abolished, Frederick kept up his activism; the pursuit of freedom was replaced by the struggle for equality. His hard work and commitment in the antebellum years brought some reward after the war, as he began to receive appointments and positions that eased the family's financial burdens, although it did little to keep him home more.

In the 1870s, the Douglasses returned to the South, moving to Washington, D.C. The family had probably hoped the change in scenery would be beneficial for Anna, who had been in poor health and spirits since her youngest child, Annie, died before the age of 12. After a few years in a handsome house on Capitol Hill, the family moved into a home on a beautiful tract of land in Anacostia, a rural section of the city separated by the Anacostia River. The homestead was dubbed Cedar Hill. Rejuvenated somewhat for a time, Anna's years at Cedar Hill were marked by her continued support of her famous husband's activism, welcoming people of all walks of life into her parlor and drawing room. Yet Anna's illnesses proved chronic and her health continued to deteriorate. She died at Cedar Hill after a stroke during the summer of 1882.

## David Taft Terry

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## Topics / Reform Movements, 1816-1846 / Frederick Douglass / Frederick Douglass Publishes The North Star (1847)

*Abolitionist Frederick Douglass's experiences as a former slave and his eloquence as a writer and speaker led to his desire to publish a black-owned antislavery newspaper. In 1845, after writing the first edition of The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass while still an escaped slave (in which he revealed the name of his former owner), Douglass avoided recapture by leaving for a speaking tour of Great Britain and Ireland. After two years, Douglass had earned enough money to purchase his freedom and launch his own newspaper, The North Star, which he published from 1847 to 1860 in Rochester, New York. Following are Douglass's remarks in The North Star's debut edition of December 3, 1847.*

We are now about to assume the management of the editorial department of a newspaper, devoted to the cause of Liberty, Humanity and Progress. The position is one which, with the purest motives, we have long desired to occupy. It has long been our anxious wish to see, in this slave-holding, slave-trading, and Negro-hating land, a printing-press and paper, permanently established, under the complete control and direction of the immediate victims of slavery and oppression.

Animated by this intense desire, we have pursued our object, till on the threshold of obtaining it. Our press and printing materials are bought, and paid for. Our office secured, and is well situated, in the centre of business, in this enterprising city. Our office Agent, an industrious and amiable young man, thoroughly devoted to the interests of humanity, has already entered upon his duties. Printers well recommended have offered their services, and are ready to work as soon as we are prepared for the regular publication of our paper. Kind friends are rallying round us, with words and deeds of encouragement. Subscribers are steadily, if not rapidly coming in, and some of the best minds in the country are generously offering to lend us the powerful aid of their pens. The sincere wish of our heart, so long and so devoutly cherished seems now upon the eve of complete realization.

It is scarcely necessary for us to say that our desire to occupy our present position at the head of an Antislavery Journal, has resulted from no unworthy distrust or ungrateful want of appreciation of the zeal, integrity, or ability of the noble band of white laborers, in this department of our cause; but, from a sincere and settled conviction that such a Journal, if conducted with only moderate skill and ability, would do a most important and indispensable work, which it would be wholly impossible for our white friends to do for us.

It is neither a reflection on the fidelity, nor a disparagement of the ability of our friends and fellow-laborers, to assert what "common sense affirms and only folly denies," that the man who has suffered the wrong is the man to demand redress,—that the man STRUCK is the man to CRY OUT—and that he who has endured the cruel pangs of Slavery is the man to advocate Liberty. It is evident we must be our own representatives and advocates, not exclusively, but peculiarly—not distinct from, but in connection with our white friends. In the grand struggle for liberty and equality now waging, it is meet, right and essential that there should arise in our ranks authors and editors, as well as orators, for it is in these capacities that the most permanent good can be rendered to our cause.

Hitherto the immediate victims of slavery and prejudice, owing to various causes, have had little share in this department of effort: they have frequently undertaken, and almost as frequently failed. This latter fact has often been

urged by our friends against our engaging in the present enterprise; but, so far from convincing us of the impolicy of our course, it serves to confirm us in the necessity, if not the wisdom of our undertaking. That others have failed, is a reason for OUR earnestly endeavoring to succeed. Our race must be vindicated from the embarrassing imputations resulting from former non-success. We believe that what ought to be done, can be done. We say this, in no self-confident or boastful spirit, but with a full sense of our weakness and unworthiness, relying upon the Most High for wisdom and strength to support us in our righteous undertaking. We are not wholly unaware of the duties, hardships and responsibilities of our position. We have easily imagined some, and friends have not hesitated to inform us of others. Many doubtless are yet to be revealed by that infallible teacher, experience. A view of them solemnize, but do not appal us. We have counted the cost. Our mind is made up, and we are resolved to go forward.

In aspiring to our present position, the aid of circumstances has been so strikingly apparent as to almost stamp our humble aspirations with the solemn sanctions of a Divine Providence. Nine years ago, as most of our readers are aware, we were held as a slave, shrouded in the midnight ignorance of that infernal system—sunken in the depths of senility and degradation—registered with four footed beasts and creeping things—regarded as property—compelled to toil without wages—with a heart swollen with bitter anguish—and a spirit crushed and broken. By a singular combination of circumstances we finally succeeded in escaping from the grasp of the man who claimed us as his property, and succeeded in safely reaching New Bedford, Mass. In this town we worked three years as a daily laborer on the wharves. Six years ago we became a Lecturer on Slavery. Under the apprehension of being re-taken into bondage, two years ago we embarked for England. During our stay in that country, kind friends, anxious for our safety, ransomed us from slavery, by the payment of a large sum. The same friends, as unexpectedly as generously, placed in our hands the necessary means of purchasing a printing press and printing materials. Finding ourself now in a favorable position for aiming an important blow at slavery and prejudice, we feel urged on in our enterprise by a sense of duty to God and man, firmly believing that our effort will be crowned with entire success.

Source: *The North Star*, December 3, 1847.

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"Frederick Douglass Publishes *The North Star* (1847)." *The American Mosaic: The African American Experience*. ABC-CLIO, 2016. Web. 30 Jan. 2016.

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## Topics / Prelude to War, 1846-1861 / Dred Scott Decision / Dred Scott

A slave who had moved with his owner to territory where slavery was prohibited, Dred Scott sued for his freedom in 1846, starting an 11-year court battle that resulted in the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Scott v. Sandford* (1857). Scott argued that his residence in the free jurisdictions made him a free man, but the Supreme Court ruled that Scott was not entitled to freedom. The decision helped hurry the nation along toward civil war.

Scott was born into slavery in Virginia around 1800. Little is known about his early life, but in his childhood or early youth, he became the property of planter Peter Blow. Blow moved his wife, family, and Scott to St. Louis, where Blow became the owner and operator of a boarding house. Around the time of Blow's death in 1832, Scott was sold to Dr. John Emerson, an assistant surgeon in the U.S. Army.

In 1833, Scott moved to Fort Armstrong with his new master Emerson. The fort was located 200 miles north of St. Louis in the free state of Illinois (near present-day Rock Island). In 1836, Scott traveled with Emerson to Fort Snelling (near the site of present-day St. Paul, Minnesota). Fort Snelling, a part of the Wisconsin Territory in 1836, was shifted to Iowa Territory in 1838. Under the Missouri Compromise, slavery was prohibited in the Iowa Territory. Scott later moved to Louisiana with Emerson. After Emerson's death in 1843, Scott, while on loan to Mrs. Emerson's brother-in-law, was taken to Florida and later to Texas before returning to Mrs. Emerson (and his own wife) in St. Louis in March 1846. (Scott and Emerson had each married during their tenure together.)

On April 6, 1846, shortly after returning to St. Louis, Scott and his wife Harriet sued for their freedom. In 1847, the case went to trial as *Scott v. Emerson*, but Scott lost on technical grounds. In 1848, the Missouri Supreme Court granted Scott the right to appeal, and in 1850, a St. Louis court awarded Scott, his wife Harriet, and daughters Eliza and Lizzie their freedom. In 1852, the Missouri Supreme Court reversed the decision. Soon thereafter, Eliza Emerson apparently sold the Scotts to her brother, John F. A. Sanford (his name was misspelled "Sandford" in the court papers). Scott continued his fight for freedom in the federal courts by suing Sanford. In 1854, the U.S. Circuit Court of Missouri heard the case of *Dred Scott v. Sandford* and found in favor of John Sanford; Scott remained a slave.

Scott appealed the decision, and in 1856, the Supreme Court heard his case. On March 6, 1857, the court put forth a seven to two decision ruling that Scott was not entitled to freedom. Although no majority opinion was offered, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney's opinion carried enormous influence. Taney, a Southern Democrat, ruled that no African American could be a U.S. citizen and thus could not sue in federal courts. Taney could have ended his ruling there but decided to expand his opinion to make two broader points. Although the ruling that denied African Americans citizenship infuriated abolitionists, it was these two additional points that had the most profound effect on the sectional conflict and propelled the nation toward civil war.

First, Taney ruled that the Fifth Amendment's prohibition on taking property without due process of law meant that Congress did not have the power to prohibit slavery in the federal territories. Property, slaves included, could be taken legally into the territories. According to Taney's opinion, the Missouri Compromise had been unconstitutional, along with all other restrictions on slavery in the territories. Second, Congress could not grant territories any powers that it did not possess itself, hence, territorial governments could not be granted the power to prohibit slavery. Taney's opinion and the Court's ruling outraged Republicans on all counts and exacerbated sectional tensions.

Following the Supreme Court's decision, Taylor Blow, Scott's childhood friend and the son of Scott's former owner Peter Blow, assumed ownership of Scott and his family, purchasing them from Sanford. Blow immediately freed the family, and the Scotts continued to live and work in St. Louis. Scott's life as a free man, however, was short. After his 11-year battle in the courts, the former slave lived only 16 months as a free man. Scott died of tuberculosis on September 17, 1858.

## Alicia Rodriquez

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## Topics / The Civil War, 1861-1865 / African Americans in the Civil War / Robert Smalls

African American politician Robert Smalls is remembered as for his heroic exploits during the Civil War, as a prominent member of Congress, and for being a staunch advocate of African American rights during Reconstruction. As a representative of the State of South Carolina during Reconstruction, he was among the first African Americans to be elected for the U.S. Congress.



Smalls was born into slavery on April 5, 1839, in Beaufort, South Carolina, the son of Lydia Small, a slave, and a white man whose name is unknown. At the age of 12, Smalls was taken by his master, Henry McKee, to Charleston and hired out to earn money for his owner.

Smalls initially worked on the city docks as a stevedore, foreman, and then sailmaker. As he grew older he became more knowledgeable about ships and was hired out to work on the various steamboats sailing out of Charleston's harbor, first as a deckhand, and finally as a "wheelman." Smalls and other black steamer pilots were called wheelmen because the title of pilot was reserved for whites. He married Hannah Jones, a hotel maid who also was a slave, and their first child, Elizabeth Lydia Smalls, was born on February 12, 1858.

Although Smalls had no formal education, he quickly mastered the skills and knowledge necessary to be an expert pilot and, later in his life, he sought further education. During the Civil War, while his ship underwent repairs in Philadelphia, Smalls spent the time studying with hired tutors. Similarly, after the war, when Smalls settled again in Beaufort, he hired a teacher to come to his home and give him lessons.

Soon after his first daughter was born in 1858, Smalls made arrangements with his wife's owner to pay for her freedom and the freedom of his child. He hoped that they all, himself included, would be free eventually. With the outbreak of the Civil War, however, Smalls was impressed into service as a wheelman on the Confederate steamship *Planter* and, on May 13, 1862, seized freedom for himself and his family. On May 12, guns and other supplies were loaded onto the *Planter* for the Confederate troops, and the ship was to sail the next day. In the evening, the white officers went ashore, leaving Smalls and seven other African American men to guard the *Planter*. Early on the morning of May 13, Smalls took the wheel of the ship and slipped out of Charleston harbor, stopping briefly only at the North Atlantic wharf where Smalls's wife, children, and eight other African Americans awaited the ship. Smalls then steered the *Planter* northward, hauling up a white flag of surrender as the ship neared a Union stronghold. In addition to gaining his own freedom and that of his family and friends, Smalls was able to turn over to the Union a valuable prize of war, a ship with its entire cargo. At that time, the value of the ship was approximately \$60,000. Later, Smalls received a reward from the federal government for the capture of the *Planter*, but his share was only a pittance. The navy had set the value of the *Planter* at \$9,000, vastly underestimating its actual worth; Congress later criticized the navy for this fact.

Smalls was appointed pilot by President Abraham Lincoln and spent the remainder of the Civil War on a number of Union ships, finishing as he had begun, on the *Planter*, which was being used to transport troops. But this time Smalls commanded the ship as its captain, and it was Smalls who, in 1866, steered it to Baltimore where it was decommissioned.

After the war, Smalls and his wife and children returned to his birthplace, Beaufort, South Carolina. Smalls was able to purchase the property at 511 Prince Street that had belonged to his former owner, Henry McKee. Smalls settled into Beaufort life as a storekeeper and as an active participant in both local and state politics. In 1868, he attended the South Carolina State Constitutional Convention as a delegate and, in April of that same year, was elected to the state house of representatives, a position he held until 1870. From 1870 to 1874, he served in the South Carolina state senate.

Smalls worked in the Reconstruction government to assist the newly freed citizens of South Carolina. He promoted suffrage and unsuccessfully urged the state to support free public education. At the same time, Smalls actively supported Republicans both nationally and within his state. In 1874, he was elected to Congress.

Smalls joined the 44th Congress on March 4, 1875, and was appointed to the Agricultural Committee. Even though he was a freshman representative, Smalls joined actively in the debates before Congress. During his first term in office, he was successful in having Port Royale, South Carolina, designated a naval port and in eliciting funds for its improvement. He also pushed for progressive legislation aimed at promoting African American equality and the protection of newly freed African Americans. One bill before Congress that Smalls adamantly campaigned against proposed transferring federal troops from the South to the Texas frontier. This, he pointed out, would give groups such as the Ku Klux Klan free license to further terrorize African American citizens, who were already being harassed in the South.

During his first campaign for Congress, Smalls met with enthusiasm and support from voters. His record in state government spoke positively for him. By the time he campaigned for reelection in 1876, South Carolina, like most southern states, was in the midst of change. White conservative groups were intimidating blacks from voting and running for public office. As a consequence, Smalls's run for reelection was unduly influenced, and the results were challenged by his Democratic opponent, George D. Tillman. Although Congress upheld Smalls's victory, the Democrats, who had regained control of the South Carolina state legislature in 1877, charged Smalls with accepting a bribe of \$5,000 while he was in the state senate. A jury convicted and sentenced him to three years of hard labor despite a lack of evidence. However, while Smalls awaited the decision of an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, Gov. William D. Simpson, a Democrat, issued him a pardon. Although pardoned, the charges brought against Smalls, coupled with the continued pressure by white groups on black voters, doomed Smalls's bid for reelection in 1878. Undeterred, Smalls ran again in 1880, and, although defeated, he successfully contested the election results and regained his seat in Congress in 1882.

Smalls was again appointed to the Committee on Agriculture and was newly appointed to the Committee on the Militia. However, Smalls's time in Congress was brief. The deliberations on the election results were lengthy, and Smalls was not seated until July 19, 1882, just in time to run for reelection. In September of that same year, he was defeated for the Republican nomination by Edmund W.M. Mackey. But, when Mackey died in January, 1884, Smalls was elected to finish his term of office, and later that year he was reelected to a full term. Smalls tried to promote racial equality in the resolutions he proposed. With other African American members of Congress, he proposed that restaurants in Washington, D.C., be required to serve everyone, regardless of color. Discrimination in restaurants was a hardship for African American legislators; even the dining room at the Capitol refused to serve them. Smalls also supported legislation to provide equal accommodations for all people, regardless of race.

In 1886, Smalls again ran for reelection to Congress, but by this time, conservative Democrats were fully in charge in South Carolina. Smalls was the one remaining Republican in office, and the Democrats were determined to be rid of him. He ran against William Elliott, a staunch Democrat and former Confederate. When Elliott was declared the victor, Smalls once again challenged the election results, but this time without the support of the House. Congress refused to unseat Elliott, and Smalls's political career was over.

In 1883, Smalls's wife, Hannah, had died. After his defeat in Congress, Smalls returned to Beaufort and, in 1891, married Annie Wigg. In 1889, President Benjamin Harrison appointed him collector of revenues for the port of Beaufort. Although he was no longer in office, Smalls remained active in politics and attended South Carolina's constitutional convention of 1895 and the Republican National Conventions. Smalls died in his sleep at his Beaufort home on February 22, 1915.

## James Haskins

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## Topics / Reconstruction, 1865-1877 / Historically Black Colleges & Universities / Booker T. Washington

Booker T. Washington, founder of Tuskegee Institute, is known for his approach to improving race relations in the South, insisting that African Americans must begin forging their own pathway to equality through work, determination, skills development, and education. For Washington, self-sufficiency was the key attribute that would facilitate legal and social reform. However, his policy of accommodationism advocating collaboration with southern whites, publicized through the Atlanta Compromise speech (1896), has made him a controversial figure in African American history.

Booker Taliaferro Washington was born into slavery near Hale's Ford, in Franklin County, Virginia on April 5, 1856. He lived the earliest part of his life toiling in slave labor. Just as he was unable to control the conditions into which he was born, he was also unable to control the conditions of his freedom, a life that included: poverty, white supremacists, and lack of opportunity for educational and social improvement. As a young man he recalled only two siblings and his mother. He never met his father. At a very early age he developed an appetite for knowledge. His mother helped him the only way she could by giving him a "blue-back" speller; he used the book to teach himself the alphabet. His family later moved to West Virginia, where he worked in a coal mine to earn a meager living for his family. Whenever possible, although not very often, he attended the segregated and newly formed school for African Americans. The majority of his time, however, was spent in the coal mine shafts of West Virginia.

One day while working in the mines, he overheard two of his coworkers discussing an educational facility for African Americans called Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute located near the tidewater region of eastern Virginia. He immediately made up his mind to attend. Upon completing the 500-mile journey to Hampton, he was given an admissions test that consisted of sweeping a room. He was aware his future depended on how well he performed the task assigned to him. He set out to make the room spotless; upon finishing, the room was inspected, and he was promptly admitted to the school.

Hampton Institute was founded in 1868 by Gen. Samuel Chapman Armstrong, who quickly became a mentor and inspiration to Washington. After completing his training at Hampton Institute, Washington devoted his time to teaching, eventually returning to Hampton Institute to teach Native Americans. It was during this time that Armstrong recommended that he oversee the development of a normal school for African Americans in Tuskegee, Alabama. In June 1881 he arrived in the heart of the Black Belt with no place to hold classes except an old horse stable and a hen house.

Soon after his arrival in Tuskegee, Washington set out to observe the culture of the local community. After careful evaluation, he realized the enormity of his task. With this in mind Washington set an educational agenda for Tuskegee Institute that included the basic practice of personal hygiene, the development of social manners, farming, and craftsmanship skills. The permanent site of Tuskegee Institute would be located on an abandoned plantation, about a mile outside the town. The lot was purchased for \$500. Washington was innovative when it came to the construction of the buildings—the students built them. They made bricks, dug the holes, laid the foundations, all while attending classes in make-shift buildings. In his writings, Washington reported an agreeable perception of his white neighbors. He found the citizens of Tuskegee as helpful and enthusiastic as any he had met throughout the South. He realized the importance of making the best of a difficult situation. Given that both white and black people had no

choice except to live together in the South, every effort should be made to live in harmony. Washington often cited the advantages of making every effort to become respectfully acquainted with one's white neighbors rather than resting their hopes on white integrationists who lived hundreds of miles to the North. Washington, however, did not overlook the help that northerners could provide; he spent a considerable amount of time in the North fundraising for the school, as he traveled extensively throughout northern states in an effort to secure funds from philanthropists. During this time he was often invited to speak at engagements, an area he greatly excelled in.

Washington believed that regardless of race, if an individual performed with a high degree of skill in his or her profession then that individual would eventually become recognized and given an equal place in society. He publicly elaborated this creed in an address delivered at the 1895 Cotton States International Exposition in Atlanta, Georgia. In what would become known as the Atlanta Compromise, Washington told African Americans to "cast down your bucket where you are," as he urged them to learn useful skills and perform them so well that they would become invaluable partners with their white neighbors. The address greatly increased his popularity among white southerners; however, he received considerable opposition from many of his African American colleagues, most notably African American intellectual and civil rights activist W. E. B. Du Bois.

In his speech, he noted that African Americans accounted for one-third of the southern population, and that it would be unwise to ignore such a dominant constituency. He also recognized the importance of the Exposition in bridging the social gap between the races. Only three decades had passed since ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment that ended slavery. Washington believed that following the Civil War, not only did the southern white men need time to adapt to the newly reconstructed South, but the former slaves needed time to adapt to free life. Washington largely ignored the social and legal oppression African Americans had suffered since 1865 under Jim Crow. He viewed the Atlanta Exposition as the beginning of a lasting friendship between the races for two reasons. First, the event planners had dedicated an entire section of the Exposition to showcase African American achievement. Second, his invitation to address a white audience on the same platform with white members was evidence that the times had drastically changed. Less than 30 years earlier, he could have been their legal property. He viewed that day as the beginning of the future as he urged members of his race to look forward instead of dwelling on the past. In his Atlanta speech, Washington made a resounding case for the white citizens of the South to accept and embrace the education of African Americans. By working together, either they could advance the nation as a whole, or, alternatively, one-third of the South's citizens could contribute to ignorance and crime. He was not urging African Americans to accept an inferior position.

Washington's autobiographical account, *Up from Slavery*, published in 1901, quickly became an important and influential piece of American nonfiction literature. In clear and concise prose, he recounts episodes from his early life through his ascendance into historical prominence. In the book, Washington recalls how his character and political philosophy were shaped by his experiences and firsthand observations. He offers considerable commentary on building the school and curriculum at Tuskegee Institute.

Washington's popularity greatly increased after his speech, and he became a major, but controversial, figure. His legacy has centered on his Atlanta Compromise speech, while critics largely overlook his personal achievements or his work at Tuskegee Institute. Many viewed the compromise as accommodating white supremacy.

Washington died on November 5, 1915 at age 59 at Tuskegee. He was buried on the grounds of Tuskegee University.

**Bobby R. Holt**

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## Buffalo Soldiers

From the end of the U.S. Civil War to World War I, black regiments, known as buffalo soldiers, served in the U.S. Army. In 1866, just after the Civil War, in which about 200,000 African Americans, mostly former slaves, had served with distinction in the Union Army, Congress authorized two segregated regiments of black cavalry, the Ninth U.S. Cavalry and the Tenth U.S. Cavalry, as well as six segregated infantry regiments: the 24th, 25th, 38th, 39th, 40th, and 41st. All of the black regiments were commanded by white officers. These regiments were all posted to the west, where their principal duty was fighting Native Americans, who were continually pushed off their lands in favor of white settlers. The Native Americans gave the African American soldiers the name buffalo soldiers. The exact origin is not clear as some accounts attribute the name to the soldiers' coarse hair while others say that it was derived from the long coats made of buffalo hides that the soldiers wore in the winter.



While much of the duty of the buffalo soldiers involved protecting the white settlers from attacks by Native Americans, from 1866 to 1877, buffalo soldiers served in west Texas as part of the Union forces' occupation of the former Confederate states. Because of racial prejudice, no African American troops were stationed in the more populated eastern part of Texas. The buffalo soldiers were stationed in and fought in most of the states and territories of the west. One woman, Cathy Williams, is known to have served with the buffalo soldiers. A former slave who was disguised as a man and using the name William Cathay, she soldiered for two years from 1865 to 1867 with the 38th U.S. Infantry.

While the conduct and importance of the buffalo soldiers in the American West remained mostly unheralded at the time, the buffalo soldiers did get immediate recognition for their valor and participation in winning the Spanish-American War. Theodore Roosevelt became president largely because of his charge up Cuba's San Juan Hill during the Spanish-American War in 1898. Charging alongside him were several hundred buffalo soldiers. Color Sergeant George Berry of the 10th Cavalry carried the colors of both the white Third Cavalry and his own regiment up the hill at the same time and was an inspiration to all the troops, black and white.

General John J. "Black Jack" Pershing commanded all U.S. troops in World War I. He obtained that command because of his experience in combat and earned the nickname Black Jack because, as a young lieutenant, he had commanded buffalo soldier units in Cuba during the Spanish-American War. He also commanded the "punitive expedition" in Mexico during the Mexican Revolution in 1916 just before he was given command of the U.S. forces in France in 1917, when the United States entered World War I. The 10th Cavalry fought a fierce and crucial battle, which helped bring an end to the "intervention".

Between 1866 and 1917 about 25,000 African Americans served in the U.S. Army in the two cavalry and six infantry regiments. In the western campaigns between 1866 and the turn of the century, 23 African Americans received the Medal of Honor for heroism.



The story of these "buffalo soldiers" and their significant contribution to the settlement of the American West was largely ignored by historians and the public until the civil rights movement began in earnest in the 1960s. Since then their stories have been told many times in print (*Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Negro Cavalry in the West* by William H. Leckie), song ("Buffalo Soldiers" by Bob Marley), and on the screen. On July 28, 1990, the buffalo soldiers were finally acknowledged officially with a monument.

**George O. Tamblyn**

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## Fritz Pollard

Coach, Athlete, Football Player (1894–1986)

American football pioneer Fritz Pollard was one of the professional sport's first African-American players and its first African-American coach.

### Synopsis

Born on January 27, 1894, in Chicago, Illinois, Fritz Pollard broke racial barriers while achieving distinction on the football gridiron. He was the first African-American to play in the Rose Bowl, and later he became the first black coach and quarterback in the formative days of the NFL. Pollard also was a prominent businessman with a consulting firm and a newspaper, among his many ventures. He died in 1986, and was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2005.

### Early Years and College

Frederick Douglass "Fritz" Pollard was born on January 27, 1894, in Chicago, Illinois. He felt the sting of racism as an African-American child growing up in the predominantly white neighborhood of Rogers Park, but he won admirers with his athletic accomplishments at Lane Tech High, where he was a three-time county track champion, a gifted baseball player and star on the football gridiron.

Pollard received a Rockefeller scholarship to attend Brown University in 1915, and he became a college football standout despite his modest 5'9", 165-pound stature. He was the first African-American to play in the Rose Bowl at the end of the 1915 season, and in 1916, he led Brown to back-to-back wins over Ivy League powerhouses Harvard and Yale en route to an 8-1 overall record. For his efforts, he was honored as the first African-American running back named to Walter Camp's All-

American team.

### Pro Football Pioneer

After leaving Brown, Pollard briefly pursued a degree in dentistry before joining the military and serving as a director of an Army YMCA. He was employed as the football coach at Lincoln University in 1919 when he was recruited to play for the Akron Pros, a professional football team in Ohio.

The Pros joined the American Professional Football Association in 1920. One of just two African-American players in the league, along with Bobby Marshall, Pollard led his team to an 8-0-3 record and the APFA's first title. The following year, he again proved a dominant player while doubling as the first African-American coach in the league.

The APFA was renamed the National Football League in 1922, and Pollard served as one of its primary gate attractions over the next few years. He played the 1922 season with the Milwaukee Badgers and the following year signed with the Hammond Pros, for whom he become the first black quarterback in NFL history. Pollard also spent parts of the 1923 and '24 seasons with the independent Gilberton Cadamounts in the Pennsylvania Coal League.

<b>NAME</b>	Fritz Pollard
<b>OCCUPATION</b>	Coach, Athlete, Football Player
<b>BIRTH DATE</b>	January 27, 1894
<b>DEATH DATE</b>	May 11, 1986
<b>EDUCATION</b>	Brown University
<b>PLACE OF BIRTH</b>	Chicago, Illinois
<b>PLACE OF DEATH</b>	Silver Spring, Maryland
<b>AKA</b>	Frederick Pollard Sr. Frederick Douglass Pollard Frederick Pollard Fritz Pollard
<b>FULL NAME</b>	Frederick Douglass Pollard Sr.

Pollard returned to the NFL in 1925 to play for Hammond Pros, the Providence Steam Roller and

In 1928, Pollard organized the Chicago Black Hawks, an all-African-American professional team. Seeking to demonstrate that blacks and whites could compete without incident on the field, Pollard arranged exhibition games with teams throughout the city and brought the Black Hawks to warmer West Coast climates during the winter. During their three-year run from 1929-32, they were among the most popular draws in the sport.

A "gentlemen's agreement" struck by NFL owners in 1933 prevented the signing of more black players. In response, Pollard served as the coach of another high-profile African-American team, the Harlem-based Brown Bombers, from 1935-38.

## Other Ventures and Legacy

Fritz was involved in several business enterprises during and after his professional football career. He founded the F.D. Pollard and Co. investment firm in 1922 to serve the African-American community, and in 1935 he founded *the New York Independent News*, the first black tabloid. Pollard also worked as a casting agent, studio manager and producer in the entertainment industry, as well as a tax consultant.

In 1954, Pollard was the first African-American elected to the National College Football Hall of Fame. He was elected to the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame in 1967, and in 1981 he received an Honorary Doctor of Letters from Brown University. Pollard died on May 11, 1986, at age 92.

In 2005, the football pioneer received a long-overdue honor with his election to the Pro Football Hall of Fame. His name lives on through the Fritz Pollard Alliance, which was founded in 2003 to help promote the hiring of minorities in the NFL.

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## Topics / The Great Migration, 1910-1917 / Jazz / Jelly Roll Morton

Jelly Roll Morton, the first great jazz artist, may not have invented jazz, as he was to claim late in his career, but his "King Porter Stomp" and "Wolverine Blues" are jazz standards. The way he blended the discipline of composition with his exuberance and improvisation pointed the way for later jazz innovators.



Morton was born in either 1885 or 1890 into a Creole family in New Orleans, Louisiana. He said that he learned to play the guitar at the age of seven and began the piano at 10. Morton's name has been given variously as Ferdinand Joseph La Menthe, LaMothe, or Lemott. Research undertaken in the 1980s has brought general acceptance of Lemott as correct, a name the artist changed to Morton sometime early on. By 1902, he was performing in the bordellos of Storyville, gambling, and playing pool. On the outs with his respectable family, scratching to earn his way, and captive to the music that was to make his name, he soon moved from Louisiana cities to Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida.

With New Orleans as his base, Morton traveled to Memphis, St. Louis, and Kansas City to perform in minstrel shows. In 1911, pianist James P. Johnson heard him play his striking "Jelly Roll Blues" in New York. He arrived in Los Angeles in 1917 and stayed there five years, thanks to a string of successes. Drawn to the Chicago of the early 1920s, he made his first recordings in 1923, two with a group, "Big Foot Ham" and "Muddy Water Blues," others solo performances of his own work. The recordings reveal an established, mature sophistication, a style that melded ragtime, blues, and African American elements into what was becoming known as jazz.

Three years later, Morton was working with his Red Hot Peppers, a small New Orleans-style ensemble. The group gathered only for recording. The results are a wonderful blend of freedom and discipline; many feature each instrumentalist in solos. "Black Bottom Stomp" and "The Pearls" display Morton's own skills as piano soloist and as composer/arranger. These pieces showcase a dazzling range of textures but nevertheless preserve formal clarity. The sensitive countermelodies that run throughout some of the best solos are unique and are not heard again until developed by Earl Hines and Art Tatum years later.

When Morton moved to New York in 1928, he continued to record and to emphasize solo improvisations. He never moved on to take up the new big band styles of Don Redman, Fletcher Henderson, or John Nesbitt, and by 1930, his New Orleans-style arrangements and performances were thought old hat. Some of his compositions survived in performances of others. For example, the Benny Goodman 1935 rendering of "King Porter Stomp," in Henderson's big band arrangement, was central to introducing the swing era.

Morton's fortune failed in the 1930s. Always colorful and innovative, he was given to ostentation—he wore a diamond filling in a front tooth—and sometimes to outrageous and boastful talk. He moved to Washington, D.C., managed a jazz club, and played only occasionally. In 1938, his admirer Alan Lomax, later his biographer, recorded a remarkable series of interviews with Morton for the Library of Congress in which Morton recalls, with fact and fancy, his early days in New Orleans and recreates musically the styles of his contemporaries there. Morton as historian is invaluable, and he comes across in this series in a surprising way as an astute theorist and analyst of the music he knew so well.

The Library of Congress series spurred interest in Morton—an interest that coincided with the revival of New Orleans music—and led to additional recordings in 1939 and 1940. Morton's death on July 10, 1941, brought this late flowering of his career to an abrupt end.

**Justin Harmon et al.**

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## Topics / Political Agitation, 1901-1915 / W. E. B. Du Bois / W. E. B. Du Bois

W. E. B. Du Bois was an African American leading sociologist, writer, historian, critic, and civil rights activist at the turn of the 20th century. He was also a highly influential intellectual of the Harlem Renaissance, publishing work by some of the most important writers, including Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen. Regarded as the founder of black studies in academia, his writings cover an impressive range of subjects, and his pioneering ideas continue to be a source of debate and inspiration for African American and other ethnic intellectuals.

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was born on February 23, 1868, in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, an integrated community where he grew up with his mother and her family, as his father had left them when he was a child. His education was outstanding for the time. After graduating with honors from the local high school, he earned his first bachelor's degree in sociology from Fisk University in 1888, where he also encountered Southern racism for the first time. He proceeded to earn a second bachelor's degree in philosophy from Harvard University in 1890. He also received a master's degree in history from that university a year later. In his graduate years he had the opportunity to work with important professors such as George Santayana, William James, Josiah Royce, and Albert Bushnell Hart, who greatly influenced his thought. He then spent two years at the University of Berlin studying social science methodology. In 1895 he earned his doctorate in history from Harvard University and his dissertation, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States*, was published in 1896 as the first volume of *Harvard Historical Studies*.

He became a teacher at Wilberforce University, a black Methodist college in Ohio (1894-96), where he met his wife, Nina Gormer, who was a student there. He then moved to the University of Pennsylvania to work on *The Philadelphia Negro*, which was the first sociological treatise on an African American community (1899). He worked for Atlanta University for the next 13 years, where his contributions in *The Atlanta University Publications* were instrumental in establishing the bases for African American sociology in the 20th century.

As a result of his increasing social and political awareness, he cofounded with William Monroe Trotter the Niagara Movement in 1905, in opposition to Booker T. Washington's accommodationist philosophy. He was one of the organizers of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the most important civil rights organization of the 20th century. In 1910 he founded *The Crisis*, the NAACP's publication that became the leading African American magazine of those years. In it he promoted the work of many Harlem Renaissance figures and he contributed significant editorials that testified to the evolution of his own political thought, from advocating integration and full participation in World War I to claiming self-segregation as an effective strategy during the Great Depression years. He also edited other publications, including *The Moon* (1906), *The Horizon* (1907-10), and *The Brownies' Book*, a magazine for African American children (1920).

His contributions from that period were highly influential, starting with his articles in magazines such as *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The Dial*, where he defended the importance of African American cultural and communal values against the wave of racism and segregation that swept the country at the time. Out of his commitment to these issues, he published in 1903 what was undoubtedly to become his best-known work, *The Souls of Black Folk*. In this book he proclaimed that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line," a statement that was a clear premonition of what was to come in that century. Moreover, he reflected upon the racial and political scene of the beginning of the 20th century, positioning himself against the "separate-but-equal" doctrines propounded by

Washington. Concerning education, he championed a liberal type as key for the progress of the race versus the more conservative stance represented by Washington, who defended "industrial education" or education oriented to certain kinds of jobs available to African Americans.

In *Souls* he also delineated his social and political theory in a twofold basis: the "Talented Tenth" and "double consciousness." First, the concept of the Talented Tenth referred to a black intelligentsia, an elite of highly educated members who could guide the destiny of the African American community, mainly achieving intellectual parity with whites to demonstrate their right to complete integration in American society as first-class citizens. Second, he proposed the notion of double consciousness--one black and one white--as crucial to understand African Americans' divided psychology and inheritance. He regarded double consciousness as both positive and negative. On one hand, he considered double consciousness as an asset in the sense that both consciousnesses were rated equally to the point that they could unite to create a "better and truer self," also known as "third self." This concept of third self debunked any notion of black inferiority, placing the emphasis on African spirituality as a unique gift. But on the other hand, the duplicity inherent in double consciousness could also lead to a schizophrenic sense of self, quite damaging from a psychological and social point of view. This second reading of double consciousness was related to his depiction of African American life as "within the veil." Using the Paulinian image, the veil stood for the metaphor of black life, whereby a racist ideology determined the internalization of an inferiority complex on the part of African Americans that resulted in self-hatred and shame.

Besides this fundamental publication, his interest in global race relations and what was later called the African diaspora is already present. As early as 1915 he published *The Negro*, a pioneering study on people of African descent worldwide. He helped to organize the second Pan-African Congress in 1919, and he also visited Africa. In addition, he published several of his best-known books in the 1920s. Among these publications, the collection of essays included in *Darkwater: Voices within the Veil* (1920) is worth mentioning, especially for the feminist ideas in his famous "The Damnation of Women." His first two novels also appeared then: *Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911), about the Southern cotton industry, and *Dark Princess* (1928), a depiction of an early Pan-African community.

After a visit to the Soviet Union in 1926, his political viewpoint acquired a more socialist orientation in the 1930s, a fact that created tension with his NAACP colleagues, especially with the secretary, Walter White. He decided to resign from his post in 1934 and went back to Atlanta University. His controversial opinions continued to feature in weekly newspapers, especially in *Phylon*, a radical journal devoted to race issues that he founded in 1939. After having been forced to retire from Atlanta University for his left-wing politics, he returned once more to the NAACP in 1944, in this case as Director of Special Research, but was finally fired in 1948 due to his involvement in the presidential campaign of Henry Wallace.

He devoted the remaining part of his life to international affairs and what he called his "fight against imperialism," especially concerned with the Pan-African and the peace movements, which further isolated him from the civil rights black activists. He helped reorganize the Pan-African Congress and was elected its president in 1945. He was indicted in 1951 for his participation in the Peace Information Center, which promoted the prohibition of atomic weapons, but was acquitted later that year. Nevertheless, he was denied a passport until 1958 when he started traveling extensively with his second wife, the writer Shirley Graham Du Bois, both in Europe and Asia. In 1959 he was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize in the Soviet Union. In 1963 he renounced his U.S. citizenship and accepted the invitation of his friend Kwame Nkrumah, first president of Ghana, to become a Ghanaian citizen. He died on August 27, 1963 in Accra, Ghana, without having completed the *Encyclopaedia Africana*.

From the 1930s to his death he continued to be a very prolific writer publishing poetry, novels, history books, and numerous essays devoted to racial issues. Among them are *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935), a rewriting of the history of Reconstruction; *Black Folk: Then and Now* (1939), focusing on cultural issues; *Color and Democracy: Colonies and Peace* (1945), on colonialism and the peace movement; a trilogy of novels, *The Black Flame* (1957),

*Mansart Builds a School* (1959), and *Worlds of Color* (1961); and his two autobiographies that reveal him as an exceptional witness of his age: *Dusk of Dawn: An Autobiography of a Concept of Race* (1940), where he portrayed himself as representative of the black intelligentsia, and *The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois*, posthumously published in 1968.

## Mar Gallego

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## Topics / The Harlem Renaissance, 1920-1939 / Harlem Renaissance / Zora Neale Hurston

Novelist, short story writer, playwright, folklorist, and anthropologist, Zora Neale Hurston is best known for novels and short stories that make use of the vernacular and display a rich, complex sense of rural African American life, particularly in the South. Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is her most prominent work.



Hurston was born in Notasulga, Alabama, on January 7, 1891, to John Hurston, a preacher and carpenter, and Lucy Potts Hurston, a retired schoolteacher. Hurston was the fifth of eight children. Shortly after her birth, the Hurstons moved to Eatonville, Florida, the first incorporated African American city in the United States. She attended the Robert Hungerford Normal and Industrial School, modeled after Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute. Along with her formal education, Hurston learned the craft of storytelling by listening to stories told by local African American men. Hurston used many of these stories in her later writings, particularly in her 1937 novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*; in short stories, such as those collected in *Spunk and Sweat*; and in *Mule-Bone*, the play she wrote with Langston Hughes.

Hurston's mother died on September 18, 1904, when Hurston was 13 years old. Her father sent Hurston to Florida Baptist Academy in Jacksonville, Florida. However, he stopped making the tuition payments at Florida Baptist, and as a result, Hurston was forced to scrub floors and perform other menial tasks to pay her way. Moreover, he put Hurston up for adoption, but there were no takers. While she excelled academically her first year at Florida Baptist Academy, she returned home after her first year. Hurston was shocked to find that her father had remarried. For his new wife, he had chosen Mattie Moge, who was younger than his oldest son, and only six years older than Zora, who never got along with her new stepmother. The tensions in the home escalated to the point that Hurston left.

In 1912, she left Florida, living first with her brother Bob and his wife in the Black Bottom section of Nashville, Tennessee, and later in a middle-class neighborhood on Scott Street in Memphis, Tennessee. In 1914, Hurston returned to Jacksonville, and lived with her brother John before landing a job with a traveling Gilbert and Sullivan theater troupe as a wardrobe assistant and a domestic worker for the lead singer. She left the group when it reached Baltimore.

In 1917, she enrolled in Morgan Academy, an elite all-black prep school associated with Morgan State College (Morgan State University since 1975) in Baltimore. To be eligible for Morgan Academy, Hurston lied about her age, making herself 10 years younger than she actually was. To pay her way through school, she worked in the home of Dr. Baldwin, a white clergyman and school trustee. In exchange for her service, Hurston had all tuition waived, received room and board, gained access to a well-stocked library, earned a stipend of \$2 a week, and was free to study during the day. At Morgan Academy, she excelled in her English and history classes and was able to teach history courses.

In June 1918, Hurston withdrew from Morgan Academy, wishing to attend Howard University. She moved to Washington, D.C., and, waiting tables at the exclusive Cosmos Club, earned the fees for Howard University. When she went to enroll, however, Hurston learned that her work at Morgan Academy was incomplete and did not qualify her for admission to Howard University. Hurston attended Howard Academy, earning her high school diploma in May

1919. In the fall of that year, she began her undergraduate studies at Howard University, studying part-time from 1919 to 1923, while waiting tables and working as a manicurist in a barbershop.

As an English major at Howard University, Hurston worked with the philosopher Alain Locke, associated with the Harlem Renaissance, and began her career as a writer. Hurston was a member of the Howard University literary club, the Stylus, and in May 1921, she published her first poem, "O Night," and her first short story, "John Redding Goes to Sea," in its literary magazine, *The Stylus*. Hurston's literary pursuits ranged off campus as well. She published two poems in Marcus Garvey's *Negro World*, the official publication for the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), and attended the salons of the African American poet Georgia Douglas Johnson. At Johnson's literary salons, visitors included W. E. B. Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson, the writers Jean Toomer and Rudolph John Chauncey Fisher, and the poets Sterling A. Brown and Angelina Weld Grimké. During the fall of 1923, Hurston's last term at Howard University, she excelled in what interested her and failed courses that did not. After the holiday break, she did not enroll for the spring term of 1924.

That year she published two short stories, "Drenched in Light" and "Spunk," in Charles S. Johnson's *Opportunity*. Hurston left Washington for New York City in 1925. In New York, she was among other writers and artists of the Harlem Renaissance. Her story "Spunk" was anthologized in Alain Locke's foundational anthology of the Harlem Renaissance, *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (1925), and in May 1925 she received two second-place prizes at the Opportunity awards dinner. At that awards dinner, among meeting prime movers of the Harlem Renaissance such as Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Fannie Hurst, and Carl Van Vechten, Hurston met Annie Nathan Meyer, a trustee of Barnard College who was impressed with Hurston to the extent that, despite Hurston's less than impressive Howard University transcript, she helped Hurston find scholarship money to attend Barnard College, beginning in the fall of 1926. During her first term at Barnard College, Hurston worked as a secretary and chauffeur for the novelist Fannie Hurst. This position earned Hurston the esteem of some of her classmates, as well as of Virginia C. Gildersleeve, the dean of Barnard College. Hurston did not keep the job, but decided to wait tables and do housework for friends of Meyer.

The only African American student at Barnard College, Hurston studied anthropology with prominent anthropologist Franz Boas and collaborated with Aaron Douglas, Wallace Thurman, and Langston Hughes on the avant-garde journal *Fire!!* Hurston believed that African American art and culture was defined through traditions such as oral history and folklore and was not necessarily obligated to respond to racist stereotypes. This belief forms one of the core principles of Hurston's body of work in which the "white" world is at the margins, never asserting a dominant influence over the humanity of her black characters. In 1927, Hurston, with the support of a fellowship from the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, published her first field report, "Cudjo's Own Story of the Last African Slaves," in the *Journal of Negro History*, on the life of Cudjo Lewis. That same year, she met Charlotte Osgood Mason, a white philanthropist whose interest had turned from the southwest Native Americans to the "New Negro" of Harlem. Mason supported a range of African American artists, writers, and intellectuals, including Hughes, and she insisted that those in her pay call her "Godmother." For this work, Hurston received a stipend of \$200 a month, with the understanding that all of the folklore she collected belonged to Mason.

In 1928, Hurston became the first African American to earn a BA from Barnard College. Subsequently, Hurston traveled the South, gathering stories and folklore that she would fashion into novels, plays, and academic papers. In 1931, she published a 100-page scholarly article, "Hoodoo in America," in the *Journal of American Folklore*. That same year she began collaborating with Hughes on a play, *Mule-Bone*, that was to move beyond the minstrel images of African Americans on stage. For a variety of reasons, including different views toward Mason, the relationship between Hughes and Hurston disintegrated and collaboration ceased on *Mule-Bone* (published posthumously in 1991).

The relationship between Hurston and Mason became increasingly conflicted as they clashed over the idea of folklore ownership; for Hurston, African American folklore was not something that could be owned, only shared. She left Mason's payroll in 1932, and began folklore concerts at which she dramatized life in railroad camps, using folk and work songs. In May 1934, Hurston published her first novel, *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, which became a Book-of-the-Month Club selection. The 1934 recipient of a Julius Rosenwald fellowship, Hurston published *Mules and Men* the following year, the first book of African American folklore written by an African American. With two solid books to her credit, Hurston was awarded a Guggenheim fellowship in March 1936 that took her to the West Indies to study obeah practices. In Haiti, she wrote *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in seven weeks. In September 1937, Hurston returned to the United States and published *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In that novel, the protagonist, Janie Mae Crawford, gains an independence of voice and attains an ideal, though short-lived, romantic love that Hurston herself never attained.

With a life filled with writing and traveling, Hurston was never married for long. Her 1927 marriage to Herbert Sheen, a medical student she met at Howard University in 1921, was annulled in 1931, although they had separated four months after their wedding vows. In 1939, Hurston married again, this time with Works Progress Administration (WPA) playground director Albert Price III, who was 15 years her junior. After eight months, divorce papers were filed, and the divorce became official in 1943.

In 1938, the fieldwork Hurston had done in Haiti while on Guggenheim fellowships was published as her second collection of folklore, *Tell My Horse*. In June 1939, Morgan State College awarded Hurston an honorary doctorate, and in November she published her second novel, *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, in which she explored the biblical figure of Moses and African oral traditions. In November 1942, Hurston published her autobiographical memoir, *Dust Tracks on a Road*, her sixth book in eight years, and her greatest commercial success.

After this flood of writing, along with a range of short stories and essays, Hurston continued to write, but not at the same pace, publishing stories and articles in the *Saturday Review*, the *American Mercury*, and the *Negro Digest*. However, her stature as a writer began to wane, partly because Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) brought protest literature into vogue. Nevertheless, Hurston continued the work that was important to her. In May 1947, she traveled to British Honduras (now Belize) to study Central American black communities. In March 1948, she returned to the United States, and in October published her last novel, *Seraph on the Suwanee*. That same year, she was falsely accused of molesting a 10-year-old boy, and the charges were dropped in March 1949 when Hurston turned over her passport, which proved she was in British Honduras at the time of the accusation.

In the winter of 1950, Hurston moved to Belle Glade, Florida, and throughout the 1950s, she worked as a substitute teacher and as a domestic worker, while contributing to local Florida newspapers. Even after a stroke in early 1959, Hurston remained independent, while her condition worsened financially and physically. In October 1959, Hurston was forced to enter the St. Lucie County Welfare Home, where she died on January 28, 1960 of hypertensive heart disease. She was working on a biography of Herod the Great at the time.

When Hurston died, none of her books was in print, although she was the most prolific African American female writer in America. Buried in an unmarked grave in Fort Pierce's African American cemetery, Hurston's body lay in obscurity until August 1973, when Alice Walker found her unmarked grave and placed a tombstone on it. On this tombstone, Walker named Hurston a "genius of the South," a phrase from one of Jean Toomer's poems in *Cane* (1923), and a phrase that situates Hurston as one of the preeminent writers of the Harlem Renaissance as well as a progenitor of African American women writers following in her wake. Since the publication of Walker's "In Search of Zora Neale Hurston" in the March 1975 issue of *Ms.* magazine, Hurston has become a significant figure in the canon of American and African American literature, and her work has been widely republished.

## Delano Greenidge-Copprue

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## Topics / World War I, 1917-1919 / World War I / 92nd Infantry Division

The 92nd Infantry Division was the only segregated African American military unit that participated in combat in Europe during World War II. The 92nd's nickname, the Buffalo Soldiers Division, revived a name traditionally given to African American soldiers since the formation of the segregated U.S. 10th Cavalry Regiment ("Buffalo Soldiers") in 1866. Although the 92nd's soldiers served with distinction in several important campaigns in Italy during World War II, many of the division's achievements were overlooked by both the military establishment and the public for many years. The 92nd's black buffalo mascot appeared on the shoulder patch of its soldiers' uniforms, and the division's motto was "Deeds, not Words."

The 92nd Infantry Division was first activated in October 1917 for service in World War I, and in July 1918 the unit was deployed overseas. The division's commanders during that conflict were Maj. Gen. Charles C. Ballou, Maj. Gen. Charles H. Martin, and Brig. Gen. James B. Erwin. In France, the 92nd saw combat in the Meuse-Argonne Campaign. Some 1,700 members of the 92nd died during operations in France. Among the many awards bestowed on the 92nd for service during World War I were the Distinguished Service Cross and the French Croix de Guerre. The division returned to the United States and was inactivated in February 1919.

The 92nd was reactivated on October 15, 1942. After combat training, most of the division was sent overseas on September 22, 1944. The division's commander for most of World War II (from October 1942 to August 1945) was Maj. Gen. Edward M. Almond. African Americans were largely excluded from active fighting at the time, and the 92nd's participation in combat was considered an experiment in African Americans' ability to perform at a level equivalent to that of white soldiers and officers. The division's commanders and most of its officers, however, were in fact white. Nevertheless, the soldiers of the 92nd played a unique role in U.S. actions in the European theater of operations, contributing to the Italy Campaign as part of the Anglo-American Fifth Army in the North Apennines and in the Po Valley. The 92nd also provided much-needed infantry support at a point when the Allies were experiencing a severe shortage of infantry troops in Italy.

The 92nd's advance detachment, the 370th Regimental Combat Team, arrived first in Naples, Italy, on August 1, 1944. Although German field marshal Albert Kesselring's forces had retreated hundreds of miles north up the Italian peninsula and the Allies had captured Rome on June 4, 1944, the Allies were continuing their pursuit of the Germans into northern Italy. As part of that pursuit, the 370th joined the operations that crossed the Arno River and occupied the city of Lucca in Tuscany. In early October, part of the 92nd attacked, but failed to take, the city of Massa on the Ligurian coast. An attempt to capture the Tuscan town of Castelnuovo in early November also ended in failure. In late December, a heavy German attack on and around the town of Sommocolonia forced the 92nd to withdraw.

In February 1945, the 92nd recaptured the town of Lama in the Serchio sector, and in April it joined the 442nd Infantry Regiment (made up largely of Japanese Americans) in attacks along the coastal sector of Liguria. The 370th, having gained control of the Serchio sector, sent the enemy into retreat and pursued them through late April. At that time, troops from the 92nd arrived in Genoa and La Spezia and also took control of other Ligurian towns. Fighting in Italy ended soon afterward with the enemy's surrender on May 2, 1945. The 92nd returned to the United States and was inactivated on November 28, 1945. During the course of the war, the division had incurred over 2,000 casualties.

Although the 92nd had successfully penetrated the Gothic Line and captured many prisoners in Italy, Almond and other high-ranking army officials criticized the division's performance and particularly the actions of its African American junior officers. None of its African American officers were made infantry battalion commanders or majors. Nevertheless, the division's members received over 12,000 decorations and citations, including a number of Distinguished Service Crosses and Legion of Merit Medals, as well as more than 100 Silver Stars. In 1993, the army requested that Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, conduct a study to determine whether the process for selecting Medal of Honor recipients was compromised by racial biases. When the study concluded that such prejudice had in fact affected past selections of Medal of Honor recipients, 10 African American World War II combatants were recommended for consideration for the award.

In 1997, President Bill Clinton conferred the Medal of Honor on seven men, the only African Americans to receive that award for World War II service. Two of the recipients were from the 92nd: First Lt. Vernon J. Baker and First Lt. John R. Fox. Baker, who was the only one of the seven recipients still living when the award was made, was honored for his heroic actions near Viareggio, Italy, in 1945, including the single-handed killing of several Germans and the destruction of an observation post and three machine-gun nests. Fox was recognized for sacrificing his life near Sommocolonia, Italy, in 1944 when he ordered that defensive fire be directed toward his own post in order to delay the advance of German forces into the town. Fox's body was afterward discovered among the bodies of about 100 German soldiers. Just as the combat service of the 92nd was a critical step toward the full involvement of African Americans in the military, the recognition of Baker, Fox, and the other Medal of Honor recipients marks an attempt to redress the long-standing neglect of African Americans' military accomplishments.

## ABC-CLIO

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## Topics / World War I, 1917-1919 / World War I / Harlem Hellfighters

As the longest serving unit in World War I, the Harlem Hellfighters were a decorated and valiant group of men whose efforts made up one of the most significant chapters in the history of the American military and racial politics. While African Americans had fought with distinction for their country from its earliest days, it was not until later in the 20th century that systematic racial segregation in the armed forces ended. The success of such units as the Harlem Hellfighters was an important step in changing the military and the country. Before departing for France, the 369th was not allowed to march with other New York regiments in the send-off parade, but after such great success in battle, no one denied them their well-deserved place in the 1919 victory parade at home. The valor of African Americans in the fields of France did not end the problem of racism in the United States, but it did help change perceptions of race, and in some ways, gave the troubles of racial politics more public attention.



Though the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand in 1914 brought the great powers of Europe into conflict, including those nations with close ties to the United States, American policies of isolationism kept its soldiers from entering the fray. President Woodrow Wilson stated U.S. intentions clearly in the Declaration of Neutrality (1914). However, German submarines sought out merchant ships, including American freighters, and eventually sunk the British passenger ship *Lusitania*, killing more than 100 Americans. Public outcry was sharp, but public and official reluctance to go to war over what many viewed as a foreign problem remained strong. American sentiment changed when a telegram, known as the Zimmerman Note, was intercepted by the British in February 1917. In the telegram, Germany sought an alliance with Mexico against the United States. That act not only unified the United States but also mobilized it for war. President Wilson instituted a draft, but many men volunteered as well, and America came to the aid of the Allied Powers. Among the units that arrived in France was the 369th Infantry.

The 369th Infantry began in 1916 as the 15th Regiment of the New York National Guard. Like many black troops, the 15th was under the command of white officers, but it did not mix with white soldiers. African Americans had served, as A. Philip Randolph, a noted civil rights advocate observed, from the American Revolution to the present but with no real advancement in establishing equality. The military maintained a policy of racial segregation that mirrored similar practices in the civilian world. Despite that racism, African American troops were significant participants in World War I. Of 380,000 African American soldiers in the military, some 200,000 men shipped out to France, 42,000 of whom saw action in the trenches and fields of that country.

Under their commander, Col. William Hayward, the 15th left their training in Spartanburg, South Carolina, for France. They arrived in January 1918 and were detailed to construction duty. Apart from a band, which entertained Europeans with the latest sounds of jazz, the 15th worked as a support force. Officers and men alike chafed under those conditions. Thanks to Jim Crow policies, which stipulated segregation of the races, the 15th had every request for combat duty denied as it would mean serving with white troops. The only alternative—the decision adopted by the commanding officers—was to serve under the French. The 369th, as the 15th became known, entered combat at a time when the pattern of war had shifted. The Russian Revolution of 1917, which in part owed much to the Germans, who had sent self-exiled Russian leader Vladimir Lenin to aid the revolutionaries, took Russia out of the war. With the collapse of the Eastern Front, German attention could be focused on the Western Front in France.

With the French 4th Army, the Harlem Hellfighters fought in a number of important engagements. For example, in April 1918, the 369th defended trenches near the Argonne Forest against the advancing Germans. Later, they traveled further north with the French into Champagne, where they were instrumental in capturing the city of Ripont. When another African American unit serving with the French was repelled after trying to take Sechault, the 369th attacked and was victorious. The Hellfighters likewise played key roles in the Battle of Belleau Wood in June 1918 and the Second Battle of the Marne in the middle of that summer.

The exceptional success and valor of the 369th did not go unrecognized. Not long after peace was declared and the armistice signed, the French presented the 369th with the Croix de Guerre, France's highest military honor, for the capture of Sechault. In addition to recognizing that pivotal military triumph, the French acknowledged the unit's bravery as 171 individuals received the award. Among those individuals were Corporal Henry Johnson and Private Needham Roberts, whose personal bravery was celebrated on both sides of the Atlantic. Wounded, the two men successfully withstood a German assault and defended their position. The 369th not only fought well, but they fought for a long time. All told, they spent 191 days in combat, the longest record of any American unit in the war. With such success, Hayward was able to guarantee his men a place in the victory parade when they returned home in 1919.

The fame of the 369th did not rest solely on their valor, however. Among their ranks was a celebrated jazz musician, James Reese Europe. When the 15th was organized, Europe enlisted. In addition to his training as a machine gunner, Europe took on another task, which suited his talents well. The commander asked him to organize a band, and once they arrived in France, it did not take long for the fame of Europe's military band to reach the ears of concert promoters. Europe entertained soldiers and civilians alike and in the process did much to further the popularity of jazz in France. Like his compatriots, when the 369th fought under the French, Europe, now an officer, saw action. Wounded in a gas attack, Europe spent many weeks recovering and the rest of the war entertaining ever-growing crowds of fans.

The 369th returned to a different America. Thanks to the efforts of their commander, the valiant Harlem Hellfighters marched down Fifth Avenue in New York to admiring crowds. Among those marching were the men in Europe's band, doubly famous now as warriors and musicians. African American troops had proven more than their ability on the battlefield; they proved that fighting alongside white units in no way damaged the war effort. White American fears that racial integration was dangerous had once again been proven false. The great need for soldiers in France after the Eastern Front fell helped make the issue of race less important—a good soldier was seen as a good soldier no matter what his background.

The extraordinary bravery, dedication, and service of African American troops is all the more impressive when one considers that their world was hemmed in by *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the Supreme Court ruling that mandated segregation in so many aspects of life. That landmark case did much to undo the few steps towards equality that had occurred during Reconstruction. In serving their country, and in doing it so well, African American units, like the 369th Infantry, helped change the policy of segregation within the military. The achievements of the Harlem Hellfighters did not spell the end of racial problems within the military or the nation. Conditions, especially in the military, continued to change for the better in the next conflict, World War II, but policies of segregation and discrimination remained deeply engrained in the United States, setting the stage for the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

## **James Emmons**

### **Further Reading**

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