

Unique Black Women Cont'd.

Margaret Garner carried out the threat to kill her children. As a slave in Kentucky, she and her family existed under severe conditions. During the harsh winter of 1856, the Garners, along with other slaves, fled across the Ohio River to Cincinnati. They were tracked by patrollers. Determined that her children would not be slaves, she cut the throat of one child while her captors were breaking down the door.

She was prevented from killing the others. While they were being returned to Kentucky by boat, Garner jumped overboard with her baby in arms. She was pulled from the river, but the baby drowned. Garner was sold to a cotton plantation owner in the deep South.

Records of specific acts of heroism are more limited from the South than from the North, partly because slave codes made it illegal to teach the Blacks to read or write. Those who were free and could teach, did so with the full knowledge that it could cost them their freedom. Those slaves who did learn the skills did it secretly, or were taught by the children of the master. Even those who possessed the most elemental skills felt it their responsibility to pass on this knowledge.

Milla Granson was a slave on a Mississippi plantation. A kindly master quoted that Milla was often beaten for not producing her quota, and he assigned her to the house. There, his young children taught her to read and write. Excited by her new awareness, she decided to open a school for the children of the slaves. In her small cabin behind the "Big House," they quietly came to her and stayed from 11 pm to 2 am. Each child would bring pine splinters for light.

The cabin was securely sealed and secrecy was very important. Milla was able to teach a dozen students at a time. When they learned all that she knew, the next class of twelve would begin. In this manner, she was able to teach hundreds of slaves. Some



Margaret Garner

became so proficient that they wrote their own passes to freedom.

This hunger for knowledge would lead to the establishment of schools, some as simple as Granson's others on a grander scale once slavery was ended. Free Blacks in Washington, D.C. could not send their children to the public school, for which they were taxed, so they provided for the education of their young by supporting private schools. One of the first was founded by **Ann Marie Becraft** in Georgetown. Her seminary was both a boarding and day school. Other private schools soon followed in the District and elsewhere in the South, notably Charleston, S.C., Baltimore and New Orleans.

Myrtilla Miner established the first school of higher education for girls in 1851 when she founded the Normal School for Colored Girls in Washington D.C. Ridiculed and harassed for her "lofty ambitions," she persevered. Neither arson nor insults could prevent her from achieving her goal. Today, the school exists, a memorial to an indomitable spirit.

Ten years after Miner founded her school, **Mary Peake**, born free in 1823 in Norfolk, VA., opened a one room school on the first floor of her home in Hampton. Funded by the American Missionary Association, she taught about 50 girls, most of whom were free, with the understanding that secrecy was important. Although she felt ill, she continued to administer to the needs of her students until her death in February, 1862. Her school is believed to be the forerunner of Hampton Institute.

While it is unarguable that slavery has had a tremendous negative impact upon generations of Blacks, there were those for whom the fires of freedom never cooled. Recognizing that knowledge adds fuel to that fire, Black women have been founders of institutions that would educate their people; who, in turn, would educate more and so an unending chain would be forged-link by link.

In 1886, **Lucy Craft Laney**, a graduate of the first class at Atlanta University, founded Haines Normal and Industrial Institute in Augusta, Ga. Beginning with one teacher and six students, she built it into an academic institution that offered courses from the elementary level to teacher education. When promised funding from the Presbyterian Church was not forthcoming, she became a seasoned fund-raiser. For her efforts, she received a number of honors and the undying affection of her students.



Charlotte Hawkins Brown

Two women whose names are synonymous with education in the South are **Charlotte Hawkins Brown** and **Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune**.

Brown opened her school, Palmer Memorial Institute, in 1902. As a prep school it attracted students from all along the Eastern Seaboard.

Mrs. Bethune founded her school in 1904 with five girls enrolled. Ten years later the school included secondary industrial and academic courses. Merging with Cookman Institute in 1925, it has evolved into the co-educational Bethune-Cookman College. Mrs. Bethune has been widely recognized with many honors, served on innumerable panels, and has been a consultant to President Roosevelt and the U.S. delegation which helped to form the charter of the United Nations.

Not all of the schools that were founded in the South were for children from stable homes. **Janie Porter Barrett** administered a school in a reformatory for Black girls in Peaks Turnout, VA. So well did she "...transform (ing) the lives of these girls..." that the Child Welfare Department of the Russell Sage Foundation gave the school its highest rating. Other schools were also founded for orphans and delinquents.

Black women who went into the field of education did so for the

Seven Up Salutes Black America

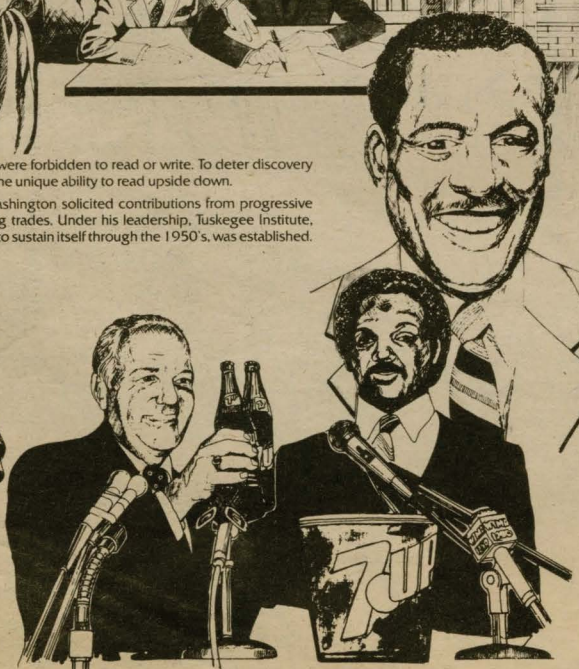


During slavery, Blacks were forbidden to read or write. To deter discovery and punishment, they developed the unique ability to read upside down.

After emancipation, Booker T. Washington solicited contributions from progressive whites interested in Blacks learning trades. Under his leadership, Tuskegee Institute, the first of over 100 Black colleges to sustain itself through the 1950's, was established.



"I have a dream..." immortalized the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He led his people from the depths of gross injustices to the plateau of social and political integration and the right to be equally considered for a job. He paid the supreme price while trying to get his people to the "Promised Land."



A new era began when the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson and other Black leaders asked Corporate America for economic integration: to allow Blacks to supply goods and services in direct relationship to their economic support.

The Seven-Up Company agrees. Our business activities must make social sense, and our social activities must make business sense. We favor economic trade rather than economic aid. It is our belief that these programs will enhance Black and other minority Americans' full participation in this country's free enterprise system.



The Seven-Up Company

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