

Unique Black Women Cont'd.

For many Blacks, the threat of lynchings was ever present, and organizations (such as the one mentioned), were formed to eliminate the practice. One of its most outspoken antagonists was **Ida B. Wells Barnett**. Born in Mississippi in 1862, she attended a local school until the death of her parents in 1878. Not old enough to teach, she changed her name and age and took a teaching job to support her orphaned brothers and sisters.

In 1884 she moved to Memphis where she enrolled at Fisk while still teaching. An opportunity arose to become part owner of the newspaper **Free Speech**, and she became its editor. Her never diminishing hatred of injustices caused her to write scathing editorials about the rampant racism in the area. When three of her close friends were murdered, i.e., "lynched" for being too successful in business, she wrote the first expose on lynching.

In 1895, her pamphlet **The Red Record** offered the first statistics on lynching. In it she proved that lynching was politically and economically motivated rather than sexually, since fewer than 50% of those lynched were accused of rape or attempted rape. Statistics five years later indicated that less than 15% of those lynched were so charged.

Barnett and her husband, Ferdinand, became active in the National Rights League. She was Chairman of the Anti-Lynching Bureau of the National Afro-American Council.

Replacing Barnett as the chairman of the Bureau was **Mary Church Terrell**. The two women would be involved in the founding of the NAACP in 1909. Less militant than Barnett, Terrell, however began to become more forceful in her actions and she organized a D.C. Branch of the NAACP. She dedicated her life, as did Barnett to "promote the welfare of my race."

Although the crusade of Barnett, and others, against lynching did not terminate the practice, it was well publicized. Assaults against Blacks through willful or negligent acts had been a centuries-old practice, and though they did not always end in death, the trauma received generally needed some form of medical attention. Most often it was through the healing hands and knowledge of African women that the lives of many slaves were saved.

Using techniques and remedies learned through folk medicine, they passed their skills on to younger slaves. As midwives, they brought with them the ability to deal with difficult births, including Caesareans. They also knew how to perform abortions on slaves who were carrying the unwanted childred on white men.

Health care was a prime importance to these early practitioners, and with their life-sustaining herb concoctions and broths, they supplemented the meager diets of the slaves.

As noted earlier, some of the schools founded in the South by



Ida B. Wells

Black women included in their curricula a course or two in nursing. In 1881, Spelman College was the first to offer a degree program in nursing, the second was the Dixie Hospital Training School which was affiliated with Hampton. Others soon followed. Freedman's Hospital in Washington, D.C. offered perhaps the best program in the South.

Graduates of this school were the first Black women to serve in the Army Nurses Corps. in 1891, and they served in the Spanish-American War. Many graduates of southern nursing schools remained in the region, and were committed to improve the health care and facilities available to Blacks.

After **Ellen W. Carter** graduated from the Dixie Hospital Nursing School in 1895, she worked tirelessly for better health care for Blacks in the Carolinas, Virginia, and Louisiana. **Petra Pinn** also dedicated her life to this end. Numerous other Black nurses used their training and talents to improve the quality of life of the indigent Blacks in the South.

Southern Black women have made important strides in another field of health. Three of them hold the distinction of being the first

women doctors, Black or white, in the following states: Alabama, **Halle Tanner Dillon** 1891; Virginia, **Sarah G. Jones**, 1894; and South Carolina, **Matilda A. Evans**, 1898.

There are two other related fields of health, **Ida Mae Hiram** passed the Georgia State Dental Board in 1910, and practiced in Athens. In 1894 Meharry Medical College School of Pharmacy graduated three women: **Bella Coleman** from Mississippi; **Matilda Lloyd** from Tennessee; and **Margaret Miller** from South Carolina.

From their early beginnings, using rudimentary tools, passed down skills and knowledge from their African ancestors, Black women have evolved into highly trained specialists in the field of health, ceaselessly and unselfishly expending their energies for the betterment of their people.

THE WEST

As the "safety valve," the west offered to all a hope for a brighter tomorrow. Thus thousands, Black and white, made their way through the prairies and over the mountains to seek that which was denied them "back home".

Some, like **Biddy Mason**, were required to go west. As a 32 year old slave, she walked behind a 300 wagon caravan owned by her master who had decided to emigrate to California. During this long trip, she herded the cattle. Shortly after arriving in Los Angeles, her master decided to return to Mississippi, but Biddy appealed to a local sheriff who presented her case to court. She won the right to remain in California with her three daughters.

Through hard work and careful investments, she acquired much land. Biddy donated land for schools, churches and a nursing home. In addition, she aided flood victims and fed the men in the jails. She died a wealthy woman in 1891.

"Aunt" **Clara Brown** was also a shrewd investor. Born a slave in Virginia in 1803, she and her mother were sold, in 1806, to a family that headed west. Carefully saving every penny she could, she was able to buy her freedom in the 1850's. In 1859, while in St. Louis, she hired on as a cook to a party of prospectors, and the 30 wagon caravan ended in Denver. Brown then opened a laundry in Central City, Colorado and she began to save money to purchase the freedom of her family. With the money from her laundry, mining investments and nursing jobs, she accumulated ten thousand dollars in seven years.

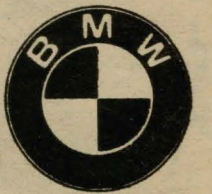
Cont'd. on Page 18.

Brief Moments In Black History . . .

SHIRLEY CHISHOLM . . . In 1968, Shirley Chisholm became the first Black woman ever to serve in the U.S. Congress. She ran for the Democratic nomination for President of the United States in 1972.



PHIL SMART, INC.



salutes

Unique Black Women

and

Black History Month