

CELEBRATING BLACK WOMEN

The Seattle Medium & Tacoma True Citizen Newspapers
Special Women's History Month Commemorative Edition

Braided Wisdom

March
2023

Produced in partnership with



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~ Celebrating Proud Moments ~



By Chris B. Bennett
Publisher/CEO

It is with great pleasure and pride that The Seattle Medium newspaper group, in partnership with the Black Future Co-op Fund, is producing our first Women's History

Month edition. While many of you may remember that The Seattle Medium produced a special edition honoring 50 Trailblazing Black women in our community a few years ago, that publication was produced as part of our annual Black Press Month celebration.

This historic publication, which you are now reading, marks two significant firsts for The Seattle Medium newspaper group. First, it is the first time that we produced a Women's History Month edition, because we typically produce a Black Press Month edition to commemorate the founding of the Black Press in 1827. Secondly, this is also the first time that we've had guest editors for any edition produced by The Seattle Medium.

I would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to the founders/architects of the Black Future Co-op Fund – Andrea Caupain Sanderson, Angela Jones, Michelle Merriweather, and T'wina Nobles – who served as guest editors for this historic edition. They've put in a great deal of hard work, thought, creativity, and wisdom into the development of this edition, for which we cannot thank them enough.

Over the years, Black women, both locally and nationally, have produced many great moments that we should all be proud of. While we cannot honor them all in this edition, we hope that the stories shared here inspire

you to do great things in your personal and professional life that will make all of us, including your friends and family, very proud of you.

It often goes unsaid, but I am saying it now that Black women are the "spine" or "backbone" of our community, doing the little things, the big things, and lifting the heavy burdens off of our shoulders so that we can stand tall in the face of adversity and prosperity.

Our community would not be where we are today if it were not for Black women. They provide the glue that keeps us together and the foundation of strength that gives all of us the courage and capacity to endure and persevere. Black women are the mothers, teachers, and nurturing protectors of children, but they're also the unsung heroes who sacrificed so much and helped pave the way for all of us to prosper and flourish.

So, in honor of Women's History Month, we proudly salute and honor the achievements of Black women. We encourage you to recognize and acknowledge all the Black women, both known and unknown to you, who've played a significant role in your life and helped shape your journey, as we continue to stand on the broad shoulders anchored to the strong spinal legacy of our ancestors.

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We honor the past, celebrate the present, and look forward to the future of those in our communities who identify as women, not just during Women's History Month, but throughout the entire year. As a not for profit financial cooperative, we strive to provide inclusive support and access to money. Many senior leaders at Verity identify as women, including our CEO and board chair, and regularly share their expertise so others can succeed in the business world.

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Black women are brilliant.

Black women are beautiful.

Black women boldly lead
the way to liberation.

This **Women's History Month**, and every month,
we **affirm the Black women in our lives.**



**BLACK
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#KnowBlackStories
BlackFutureWA.org

The Braided Wisdom Of Black Women

Dear reader,

The growth and well-being of Black hair depends on trust-based care from those who understand its unique characteristics—its kinks, curls, edges, and coils. For Black women, our mothers, grandmothers, and aunts are the experts who have nurtured and tended to our hair with love and skill. Their hands are tools of tenderness, and their feet a place of discovery. With each braid and twist, they impart wisdom and affirmations that shape our understanding of the world and our place in it.

It is this legacy of trust-based care that empowered us to create the Black Future Co-op Fund in 2020. As four Black women and leaders in the nonprofit industry, we came together in the wake of George Floyd's senseless murder to resist helplessness and mobilize around building a new model of philanthropy. We knew that Black liberation could only be achieved through sustained investment in our own communities.

The Black Future Co-op Fund is a cooperative philanthropy led by Black Washingtonians for Black Washingtonians. With less than two percent of philanthropic dollars going to Black-led nonprofits, we are committed to disrupting this philanthropic paradigm that historically has made it exceedingly difficult for Black-led nonprofits to access the resources they need.

Just as our mothers, grandmothers, and aunts listened to us with care and attention, we listen to our community and invest in community-backed solutions that prioritize Black generational wealth, health, and well-being. The Black community groups and nonprofits at the helm of these solutions are the fiercest advocates of Black well-being. They are the bastions of care in Black communities across Washington



(L-R): Co-architects of the Black Future Co-op Fund and guest editors for The Seattle Medium's 2023 Women's History Month Edition T'wina Nobles, Michelle Merriweather, Angela Jones and Andrea Caupain Sanderson

state, working to be good ancestors and realize a world where all Black people can thrive.

Since launching, the Black Future Co-op Fund has invested \$2.75 million in We See You grants to 60 Black-led groups and nonprofits, supporting their ability to serve their communities through arts and culture, restorative healing, educational innovation, policy development, and more. Our most recent round of funding in March 2022 fuels the powerful Black-woman-led work happening statewide.

The Black Future Co-op Fund reaches new heights each year; still our ultimate goal is to raise an endowment of \$246 million—\$1 million for each year of institutional slavery in the United States. This number is only audacious to those who don't know the Black women whose

shoulders we stand on.

This Women's History Month, we're honored to share their names and stories, pay tribute to their lives, and amplify the wisdom they braided into us in this special Seattle Medium edition. Every article and art piece in this compilation lifts up Black women. Behind each author and artist is a village of mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and mentors who created the precedents they embrace and the blueprints they've stepped into. We are honored to hold space for them to share their gratitude to the Black women who've shaped them in the 28 pages of this special edition.

The historic Black Well-being: Moving Toward Solutions Together report, published last December, outlined a community-defined vision of Black well-being in Washington state for the first time.

Like the three-strand braids our elders once bestowed upon us like crowns while we rested on their laps, that vision calls for a weaving of past and present, a bridging of young and old, a connecting of solutions in civic engagement, education, economic mobility, public safety, and health, and a sealant of trust. We invite you into the vision and the learning with this special edition as we work collectively toward Black prosperity now and for future generations.

In love and solidarity,

T'wina Nobles, CEO and co-architect
Andrea Caupain Sanderson, co-architect
Angela Jones, co-architect
Michelle Merriweather, co-architect

Featured Artist For This Special Women's History Month Edition



The Seattle Medium and the Black Future Co-op Fund engaged the talents of local artist Afomia Assefa to create a custom design for this special edition.

Assefa is a multimedia artist who draws inspiration from diverse creative disciplines, including literature,

photography, and film. Through her work, she seeks to harness the power of visual storytelling to inspire and transform, using bold colors, abstract backgrounds, and imagery sourced from her travel photography.

Her latest piece, Braided Wisdom, which can be seen on

Page 5, reflects on the cultural significance of hair grooming in the Black community. The act of braiding and weaving hair together not only offers an opportunity for connection and community-building but also serves as a means of transmitting ancestral wisdom from one generation to the next.

As Black girls are cared for by the nurturing hands of their grandmothers and aunts, they are instilled with a sense of cultural identity and pride that can help to foster well-being and liberation within their communities.

To find more of Afomia's work, visit afomiart.com.

CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

BRAIDED WISDOM



The Seattle Medium

A Message From The People... To The People



**BLACK
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Creatives Root Us In The Past, Present, And Future

By Vivian Phillips

Historically, Black women have been incredible keepers of our culture. They hold up our history with their wisdom shared through poetry, storytelling, visual and performing arts, arts leadership, and community support. In her novel *Family*, J. California Cooper writes in the opening words, "History. Lived, not written, is such a thing not to understand always, but to marvel over."

Cooper's stories brought to life Black female characters who confront a world filled with indifference, betrayal, and social invisibility, yet through it all, they find kinship and survival. A prolific author and playwright, Cooper wrote 17 plays, 13 books, and short story collections. Her career included work as a secretary, truck driver, and a stint working on the Alaska pipeline. Hers was a life of being unbothered by social norms and dedicated to imparting exemplary stories on love, intuitive wisdom, relationships, and community.

The legacy of Cooper, who lived in Seattle for a short time before she died on September 20, 2014, at the age of 82, lives on through the many women she moved, some personally, and others through her writing. Sharon Nyree Williams, Valerie Curtis-Newton, and Dr. Gilda Sheppard are three examples of women touched by "Ms. J" Cooper, as I affectionately called her, and continue to carry her torch.

As an educator, arts manager, Emmy Award winner, and practicing artist, Williams has woven her wisdom into every aspect of her professional career. With each project she undertakes, she creates opportunities for others to step into their own arts and cultural careers, building stairways to success. She understands that her work is not just for herself, but for her entire community. Whether in her adopted home of Seattle or on a national stage, Williams has dedicated herself to supporting fellow artists and arts leaders. For the past decade, she has led the charge at the CD Forum, but now she is ready to pass the torch to new leadership and focus more deeply on her artistic practice.

Valerie Curtis-Newton is a consummate and celebrated educator, writer, and director. She brings stories to life through her experienced and adept directing. Recently, Curtis-Newton directed



Author/playwright J. California Cooper

Reginald André Jackson's, *The History of Theatre: About, By, For and Near*, educating audiences on the legacy of Black thespians and Black theater over 200 years. Curtis-Newton's involvement was essential to Jackson's vision and execution. She is a trusted collaborator and skilled professional, whose love for live theater and the vast canon of work by Black playwrights that remain under-produced, led her to co-found The Hansberry Project, an African-American theater lab. Curtis-Newton's work is about legacy building and

remembering.

Dr. Gilda Sheppard is a true gem — an educator and filmmaker whose impact on students is nothing short of magnificent. Those who have taken her sociology, cultural, and media classes at The Evergreen State College praise her for her charisma and her downright unfiltered truth-telling. As a published author, Dr. Sheppard is one of the founding members and faculty of the Freedom Education Project Puget Sound, a program that offers college credit courses at the Washington

Corrections Center for Women. Her love for using art as a means of keeping culturally relevant educational stories alive can be viscerally felt in her film, *Since I Been Down*, which highlights, in the words of Angela Davis, "the liberatory potential of education."

Women who take up the mantle of arts and community building are often overlooked, underrated, and regularly second-guessed. But for the love of collaboration, shared creativity, limitless possibility, and the important act of sharing our legacy, Black women are holding up the sky and planting trees under which they will not find shade.

There are endless names of Black women providing wise counsel and leadership through the arts and cultural pursuits. They all remind me of Ms. J. California Cooper's wisdom. Women who see the end and the means while embracing generations of women and leading them to create their perfect place in the world. They are living Black history. They are women of intent. They are women who live by their commitment and ignore the deficit framing by which others might try to define them.

In their work, these women lovingly part the strands of our lives and knit together our shared history of survival and thriving. Their words, their actions, their art, their cultural expressions, and the strength they muster to come to the aid of their community, are what hold us all together. They braid us together — one part history, one part present moment, and one part future with endless future possibilities.

Vivian Phillips is a civic arts and culture leader. She is the founder and board president of the nonprofit Arte Noir black arts.





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**Eunice
Palmer**

**Carol
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Celebrate **Women's History Month**



March is when we celebrate the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women.

***To all women,
we celebrate you!***

www.seattleschools.org



Q&A With Dr. Cynthia Dillard, Dean Of Seattle University's College Of Education

Dr. Cynthia Dillard is a scholar and leader in education, with a focus on critical and creative pedagogies and liberatory leadership used by Black women teachers.

On behalf of the Seattle Medium, Angela Jones, J.D., co-architect of the Black Future Co-op Fund and director of the Washington State Initiative at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, interviewed Dr. Dillard about education, teaching, and creating spaces for joy and genius to arise for Black children.

Jones: What made you choose education as your life's work?

Dr. Cynthia Dillard: Not sure that I chose education; it feels more like education chose me. I started out as a communications major at the University of Washington! But every time I had a chance to work with young people, and we would figure something out or learn something new together, I always felt so happy, content even. Eventually, I realized that no matter how hard I tried, I kept coming back teaching. I have taught all over the world and, over four decades later, I still feel that joy as a dean of the College of Education at Seattle University. As one of our faculty said the other day: "You may be our dean, but you are always teaching!"

Jones: Who are the women that have had the most impact in your life?

Dr. Dillard: There are so many. All of the sisters and brothers on those transatlantic slave ships and on plantations in the U.S. who *chose* to survive. Mrs. Jones, the one and only Black teacher I had in my life as a student at Coleman Elementary here in Seattle. My mother, who raised me, and my siblings, loved us fiercely and taught us lessons I still use today. All of the intellectual and activist women like bell hooks, Toni Morrison, and Sweet Honey in the Rock who set the foundation for the endarkened feminist/womanist I am today. And all the Black women that I have had the blessing to teach all over the world: They were and still are my teachers, too.

Jones: You've written several books and I would love to chat about your newest book, *The Spirit of Our Work: Black Women Teachers (Re)member*. In the first chapter, you referenced the "invisible labor and burden that Black women teachers bear every day." Can you unpack what you mean by the invisible labor?



Dr. Cynthia Dillard

Dr. Dillard: That would take ages to unpack, Sis! I speak of the labor of living and working *within* the intersections and structures of racism and sexism and all the other identities we carry heavily in the U.S. and around the world. As an everyday part of our lives, we are asked to carry expectations and burdens that are not ours to carry, as they are a part of a worldwide system designed for us to be burdened, to not have the space and time to move forward because white supremacy and patriarchy want to live. These are not our burdens to bear and Black women are sitting them down! Tricia Hersey's book *Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto* speaks to how powerful it is to make the choice not to use our labor in this way but to take care of our bodies, minds and spirits, to move toward liberation from these structures and

ways of being to those that give us life as Black people! This (re)remembering stance is especially true for our teachers because their work is to share that life with our young people and they cannot do so with the kind of exhaustion that invisible labor requires.

Jones: You and your husband established a school in Ghana about 20 years ago. Why did you all choose to do so?

Dr. Dillard: We chose to build the school for two reasons. The first is that there was literally no school for children K-12 in the community where our school is now. *No school whatsoever*. And as an educator who believes that access to formal education is a basic human right no matter where you are born on the globe, this was something I could not live with. So we

started to build one, classroom by classroom. Today, we have about 150 children from grades pre-K through junior high school. And my students and colleagues from the U.S. have benefitted, too, in that we connected our school in Ghana with various teacher education programs where I have taught. In this way, our U.S. teachers have the opportunity to bear witness to the kind of education that is full of genius and joy and creativity for Black students at all grades. This full circle work is something we are very proud of. We have also learned tremendously lessons of our own African heritage through this labor of love.

Jones: I had a chance to visit your school in Ghana in 2022. What really struck me was that there was so much Black joy present. How do we ensure our Black students in this country get to experience joy in their education?

Dr. Dillard: We have got to begin with three of the most important places in a child's life: Their home, community, and school contexts. Part of what allows that joy to bubble up and out is that children in Ghana are deeply rooted in both of these things. Everything they see, do, and are allowed to be at school emerges from home and community. Then we have to know and love Black brilliance and creativity. So many who teach our children today do not know them or believe in their creative genius. And that is where joy comes from!

To create the space for joy and genius to arise for Black children in U.S. schools, we have to ask a different set of questions: Do I love Black children? Do I see it as my responsibility to create a space worthy of their creativity and brilliance and ignite my own as well? Am I willing to (re)member what I have learned to *forget* about Black people all the way back to the continent of Africa in schools like the one you visited, Angela. These are places where parents and community are a crucial part of the development of their children's education. Where economic and professional development are a part of the school's work with parents and elders. Where Black art and creativity are central to the curriculum and teaching because it is central to Black culture and knowing. I have seen schools where this type of rigorous Black joy is invited and it is cherished. But those schools are too few here in the U.S.

Black Women Educators Have Always Been Instrumental In The Plight Of Our Community

By Aaron Allen

The Seattle Medium

Through their roles as educators, many Black women have used their influence to not only educate our young people, but they have also served as leaders, organizers, and coalition builders that contributed to the rise of the Black middle class.

Throughout history, many Black women educators were heavily involved in building and sustaining Black churches, social clubs, and many Black community-based organizations like the NAACP, Urban League, and others that helped build a strong and vibrant Black community all across the country.

Apart from the biographical sketches of a few major black female educators and several monographs that survey Black female graduates, there are few scholarly articles and essays, and hardly any books that solely document the history of Black women in American education. Black female educators such as Mary McLeod Bethune, Charlotte Hawkins Brown, Lucy Laney, Fanny Jackson Coppin, and Nannie Helen Burroughs are a few that are mentioned in some Afro-American history sources.

Seattle's own legacy of educators has had a major impact not only on the school district but on the lives of young people throughout several decades. The list of influential women includes such legacies as Thelma Dewitty, Louise McKinney, Peggy Johnson, Iva Tolliver, Inus Hall, Gladys Lee, Virginia Galloway, T. Marie Floyd, Jeannette Jones, Mona Lake Jones, Dorothy Hollingworth, Sharon Williams, and others. Their work and effort can be attested to by generations of Seattleites.

"I think the roles we play as educators were and are extremely important," says Dr. Sarah Pritchett, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources for Seattle Public Schools. "Being a Black woman and the role that Black women played in our community and the significance of that role was what was holding communities together. I think we have played a huge role in building first our community and contributing economically to build a middle class, and the teaching profession played a major part in that."

Research and history show a funneled transition in the role of Black women educators. From slavery to the 1970s, society had no issue with Black women as



Thelma Dewitty, standing, Seattle Public Schools' first Black teacher. Photo/Seattle Urban League, UW Special Collections.

caretakers to take care of society's babies and children, both Black and White.

Over time, the natural abilities of Black women to care for children transitioned from being a "nanny" into being a primary "teacher," and Black women have taken that role, leveraged its power, and turned it into leadership.

"I think that it's kind of two-fold, and I think the teaching profession is an extension of caregiving in some respects," says Dr. Pritchett. "For example, there was an acceptable level or acceptable standard of Black women providing care for children. All the way back to slavery and everything else, it was okay for us to care for your children and be seen in that type of a way, so in some respects, teaching starts to fold into that as an acceptable kind of caregiving, upbringing, raising, so I see that as kind of a natural transition."

Although career choices for educated Black women were limited at the time, many of them found a fulfilling career in education. And in doing so, they helped facilitate the growth of the Black middle class and instill a sense of dignity, respect, and self-pride throughout their respective communities.

"They [Black women] very much held positionality, authority, and not just in schools but in the community," says Bev Redmond, Chief of Staff and Assistant

Superintendent of Public Affairs for Seattle Public Schools. "They were very much the leaders in all sectors. In their families, my role models and professional Black women were some of the first evidence of professional life or as we see it as the middle class."

African-American teachers educated African Americans and taught each other to read during slavery in the deep South. People who were enslaved ran small schools in secret, since, at the time, teaching slaves to read was a crime.

During the post-Reconstruction era, African Americans built their own schools, as the Black middle class believed that it could provide a quality education for their community. This resulted in the foundation of teaching as a profession for Blacks. Some Black families had multiple individuals who dedicated their lives to teaching. They felt that they could empower their communities. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, African American teachers made up about half of African American professionals.

Women, particularly Black women, were the ones who many times led initiatives to further education for colored students, advocate for the attainment of higher education, and promote equitable education opportunity. And they did this despite their own struggles to overcome

racism, sexism, and discrimination.

"I had a great benefit growing up in what I called a 'chocolate city,'" says Redmond. "I grew up knowing and seeing a lot of Black professionals around me. All types of professions. Among those, I saw a great deal of my teachers, Black women, who were among my first role models of what I could become, and that went from the teachers to the principals to administrators."

"They made a very specific impact on my life," added Redmond. "I knew that I could excel, and that college was for me, and that I could take my ranks and my place and then hand them off to someone else."

Promoting future generations in the face of dwindling representation in classrooms, Black women educators have been at the forefront of encouraging the next generation of academics to take on the mantle of being an educator, having a voice in the profession, and using that voice to exercise leadership.

"That's where I see that the struggle continues," says Redmond. "It's not enough to be at the table; we'll make room for you at the table, but we are also fighting and continuing to stand where we are to lead and be seen as bonafide leaders, not just position holders."



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Sarah Rector – The Richest Colored Girl In The World

By RayJaun Stelly

The Seattle Medium

In the early 20th century, Sarah Rector was a young African American girl who became known as the “richest colored girl in the world.” Her story of sudden wealth and success is both inspiring and complex, highlighting the challenges faced by people of color and Native Americans during this time period.

Rector was born on March 3, 1902, to Joseph and Rose Rector in a two-room cabin near Twine, Oklahoma, on Muscogee Creek Indian allotment land. Thanks to the Dawes Allotment Act in 1907, which divided Creek lands among the Creeks and their former slaves, Rector’s family received land, and Rector’s portion was 160 acres valued at \$556.50.

Having land was the easy part for Rector, but she had to maintain enough revenue to pay the \$30 annual tax bill that came around every year. Her father, Joseph, leased Rector’s allotment to the Devonian Oil Company from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, beginning Rector’s journey to millionaire status.

In 1913, Rector became financially stable, receiving an income of \$300 a day, when a wildcat oil driller named B.B Jones produced a gusher on her land that brought in 2,500 barrels a day. Rector’s allotment was part of the Cushing-Drumright Field in Oklahoma, and in October of that year, she made a staggering \$11,567 in income.

From that first gusher, she stood to make more than \$114,000 per year, which is nearly \$3 million in today’s dollars. Based on her allotment bringing in a substantial amount of money, Rector’s identity was made public, and numerous offers started to pour in. She received numerous requests for loans, money gifts, and marriage proposals despite just being 12 years old at the time.

Despite her wealth, Rector faced many challenges. She was still a young girl and had to navigate the complexities of being a member of a Native American tribe during a time when the government was trying to



Sarah Rector

assimilate Indigenous people into mainstream American culture. She also faced discrimination because of her race, even though she was one of the wealthiest people in the country.

To protect Rector’s interests, her parents decided to move the family to Kansas City, Missouri, where they could

live a more private life while investing her money in real estate. By the time she was 18 and finished school at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, Rector owned stocks and bonds, a boarding house and bakery, the Busy Bee Café in Oklahoma, and 2,000 acres of prime river bottomland.

Later on, Rector moved into a home

that would be deemed the “Rector Mansion,” where she started her own family, having three children. Despite being publicized and criticized for her “extravagant” spending, her investments and wealth continued to accrue throughout the 1920s.

Deborah Jean Brown, a niece of Rector’s, expressed, “She lived a life of luxury. She had money coming in, and she did whatever she pleased with it.”

Donna Brown Thompkins, another of Rector’s nieces, stated, “I remember the fancy cars she had, big fancy Cadillacs. I remember her coming to the house, and they’d play cards and sit around and have fun. They would close Emery, Bird and Thayer down, downtown, because we (African Americans) couldn’t go in there and try on clothes. But they closed it down for her to shop.”

Despite what people may have thought about her personal spending, Rector also used her wealth to support various causes, including the NAACP and the Tuskegee Institute. She also helped fund a local hospital and a church in her hometown of Taft, Oklahoma.

Despite her wealth, Rector’s life was not without hardship. She faced several lawsuits and legal challenges, including a case brought by the state of Oklahoma that claimed she was incompetent and needed a guardian to manage her money. She fought back against these challenges and eventually won the case, demonstrating her intelligence and business savvy.

Rector’s story is a remarkable one, not only because of her wealth but also because of the obstacles she faced as a young Black and Indigenous woman during a time of great racial tension in the United States. She was able to use her wealth to support causes she believed in and make a difference in the lives of those around her.

Although over time her wealth would diminish due to The Great Depression, she still had working oil wells and real estate holdings up until her death in July of 1967 at the age of 65.

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WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

March 2023

Madam C.J. Walker - One Of The Twentieth Century's Most Successful Entrepreneurs

By Rayjaun Stelly

The Seattle Medium

Madam C.J. Walker was a trailblazer in every sense of the word. Born into slavery, she transformed herself from an uneducated farm laborer and laundress into one of the twentieth century's most successful and self-made women entrepreneurs. Her journey was marked by determination, innovation, and a relentless pursuit of excellence, which allowed her to develop a homemade line of hair care products for Black women worldwide, create her own factory, and even fund scholarships for women at Tuskegee Institute.

Walker was born on December 23, 1867, in Delta, Louisiana, on the same plantation where her parents, Owen and Minerva Anderson Breedlove, were enslaved before the Civil War ended.

As an orphan, she worked with her older sister in the cotton fields of Delta and Vicksburg, Mississippi. Her life changed dramatically when, at the age of 14, she married Moses McWilliams to escape abuse from a brother-in-law. Sadly, two years later, her husband died, and she moved to St. Louis, where she worked for \$1.50 a day and saved enough money to educate her daughter in the city's public schools.

Developing friendships with other Black women who were part of the St. Paul A.M.E Church and the National Association of Colored Women opened her thinking to a new way of viewing the world itself. Forming those relationships helped her during the 1880s when she suffered from a scalp ailment that caused significant hair loss. Walker experimented with homemade remedies and store products that were made by Annie Malone, a Black woman entrepreneur.



Madam C.J.Walker

Walker's health condition led to her entrepreneurship. She moved to Denver as a sales agent and founded her own business selling 'Madam Walker's Wonderful Hair Grower,' a scalp conditioning and healing formula she created herself. Apart from owning a business, promoting, and marketing, Walker traveled for a year and a half throughout the heavily black South and Southeast, selling her products door-to-door and demonstrating scalp treatments at churches and lodges.

Her success in sales and marketing led her to move to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and open 'Lelia College' to train hair culturists. From opening a college in 1908, Walker continued to expand. By early 1910, she moved the business to Indianapolis, the nation's largest inland manufacturing center, where she built a factory, hair, and

manicure salon and another training school.

Just a year after being in Indianapolis, Walker grabbed national headlines with the Black press after she donated \$1,000 to the building fund of the Colored YMCA in Indianapolis.

In 1913, she traveled to Central America and the Caribbean for business expansion and opened another salon in Harlem. By 1916, Walker lived in New York and was heavily involved in Harlem's social and political life, during which time she donated \$5,000 to the NAACP's anti-lynching movement. She joined Harlem leaders who went to the White House to advocate for federal anti-lynching legislation.

Interested in the movement, she joined Harlem leaders who went to the White House to help advocate for federal anti-

lynching legislation. While taking a stance for Black people as a whole, her business continued to grow. With that, she organized the 'Madam C.J. Walker Hair Culturists Union of America Convention' in Philadelphia in 1917, one of the first national meetings among businesswomen in the country. During the convention, Walker honored those who worked for her and encouraged them to get involved with political activism.

In her speech during the convention, Walker said, "This is the greatest country under the sun. But we must not let our love of country, our patriotic loyalty cause us to abate one whit in our protest against wrong and injustice. We should protest until the American sense of justice is so aroused that such affairs as the East St. Louis riot be forever impossible."

On May 25, 1919, Walker passed away at her home in Irvington, New York, due to complications of hypertension. Her legacy and fortune were credited to her homemade line of hair care products for Black women worldwide. She used her wealth to fund scholarships for women at Tuskegee Institute and donated significant amounts to the NAACP, Black YMCA, and other charities

"I am a woman who came from the cotton field of the South, from there I was promoted to the wash-tub. From there, I was promoted to the cook kitchen, and from there, I promoted myself into the business of manufacturing hair goods and preparations. I have built my own factory on my own ground," said Walker.

Providing such an impact, Madam C.J. Walker's legacy is still ongoing today, as the makers of Shea Moisture and Nubian Heritage announced the launch of a new hair brand inspired by her named 'MADAM by Madam C.J. Walker'.

Keep up with all of the news affecting the African American community

seattlemedium.com

Women's History Month

Public Health
Seattle & King County



Dear community,

As a Black woman, a mother, an anti-racist leader, and the Director of Community Health Services at Public Health – Seattle & King County, I invite everyone to celebrate Women's History Month.

I'm grateful to live in a region that provides resources and services supporting women's health, including:

- WIC- a nutrition program for women, infants and children
- Programs such as First Steps helping people have healthy pregnancies, births, and success with their new babies
- Reproductive health services, including birth control, HIV and sexual health clinics
- Healthcare for people living homeless
- Health insurance and access to related services
- Medical and dental clinics that specialize in health care for historically underserved communities

Across these programs, Public Health staff see the brilliance & strength of all women, past and present. They remind us that stories are powerful. That we all benefit when we lift up women's health. Let's rise together to write the story of a more equitable and just future for women around the world.

- Vazaskia V. Crockrell
Director, Community Health Services

[Kingcounty.gov/clinics](https://kingcounty.gov/clinics)



Closing The Doors Doesn't Necessarily Mean That The Journey Towards Progress Is Over

By Michelle Merriweather

Co-architect of the Black Future Co-op Fund and President and CEO of Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle

"Where everybody knows your name", is not just a saying for Cheers. It rang true at one of my most treasured gathering places, Marjorie. The restaurant had been a staple in the Seattle area for 20 years, first in Belltown in 2010 then in the Central Area for the last 13 years. At the end of March, we said farewell to the legendary Marjorie as owner Donna Moodie makes room in her life and the community for her next adventure. As a community, we send a thank you for the hospitality, connection, and memories that restaurateur, leader, and community advocate Donna Moodie, created space for. I must also honor her dedication to economic mobility for our community, especially for her fellow Black women restaurateurs throughout the years.

Named after Donna's mother, Marjorie, served up a nod to her Jamaican roots and the love that I imagine was stirring in her mother's kitchen. It seemed that Donna handpicked her team to be an extension of that love, from the front of the house to those who cooked and plated the food. It also served as a place where like-minded people gathered to conspire to put good out into the world through partnerships, relationships, and celebration. It was as if you could only walk through the doors if you came with a mind of making the world better.

I first experienced Marjorie in 2015, when I accepted the opportunity to call Seattle home. I learned that it was a Black-woman-owned restaurant, and was immediately excited to support it. For so many of my colleagues and friends, it was a place for meetings, good food, and music that made you want to get up and dance! In



Donna Moodie

2020, when the rest of the world shut down, it became so much more than "just a great restaurant." It became a second home. Those of us who gathered there on a regular basis became family, and Donna became a mentor, friend, and co-conspirator in

creating a more equitable Seattle for those who choose to call Seattle home.

Donna's advocacy work not only permeated through the restaurant but through her life outside of the restaurant as well. If leading a popular gathering place

isn't enough, Donna is the executive director of the Capitol Hill Eco-District and vice president of Community Roots Housing. Again, when the world shut down, Donna did not rest, she dove in to be a part of the solution. Through her role, she is creating a more equitable, resilient, and vibrant community not only in words but through action. But this is no surprise.

Black women have historically been at the center of economic mobility for our community and regularly demonstrate what love and care for the community look like. Donna is a shining example. She is one at the center of solutions, lifting her experiences as an example of what is possible and her voice for more equitable investment into the community.

Marjorie has fulfilled its role in the community. It gave us a home through some of the toughest times. It gave us nourishment, laughter, and family. I will forever be grateful and those of us who called Marjorie home are forever connected through that experience. While I was heartbroken to see Marjorie close, I took notice of Donna's enthusiasm and excitement for the future and couldn't help but share her joy.

Her next adventure, likely opening this summer, will be located at 23rd and Union, the corner where we celebrate the connection to the historic Central Area through place, art, people, and food. Donna is not only working to open a new concept restaurant/bar. Through her next adventure, Donna is working to support the neighboring businesses in the corridor and generating generational opportunities for Black-owned businesses in our community.

We are excited for what is to come and join Donna on the next adventure.

March Is Women's History Month
#EmbraceEquity

Bessie Coleman – A Pioneer In Aviation

Bessie Coleman was born on January 26, 1892 in Atlanta, Texas. She was one of 13 children to Susan and George Coleman, who both worked as sharecroppers.

At the age of 12, Coleman began attending the Missionary Baptist Church in Texas and, after graduating, embarked on a journey to Oklahoma to attend the Oklahoma Colored Agricultural and Normal University (now Langston University), where she completed only one term due to financial constraints.

In 1915, Coleman moved to Chicago, where she lived with her brothers and worked as a manicurist. Not long after her move to Chicago, she began listening to and reading stories of World War I pilots, which sparked her interest in aviation.

In 1922, a time of both gender and racial discrimination, Coleman broke barriers and became the world's first black woman to earn a pilot's license. Because flying schools in the United States denied her entry, she took it upon herself to learn French and move to France to achieve her goal. After only seven months, Coleman earned her license from France's well



known Caudron Brother's School of Aviation.

Though she wanted to start a flying school for African Americans when she returned to the U.S., Coleman specialized

in stunt flying and parachuting, and earned a living barnstorming and performing aerial tricks. In 1922, hers was the first public flight by an African-American woman in America.

Tragically, on April 30, 1926, Coleman was killed in an accident during a rehearsal for an aerial show. She was only 33 years old.

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OUR CONTINUING HISTORY.**

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KING COUNTY SHERIFF PATTI COLE-TINDALL

Black women's empowerment

is

Black empowerment.

This Women's History Month, we continue to realize our vision of a Tacoma with empowered Black communities by uplifting Black women and the depth of their contributions and leadership.

TheTacomaUrbanLeague.org



**Tacoma
Urban League**

Rev. Harriett Walden - The Most Influential Person For Police Accountability In The Pacific Northwest

By Fabienne "Fae" Brooks

Chief, Criminal Investigations Division (retired), Martin Luther King County Sheriff's Office

Rev. Harriett Walden is a living example of how stories and/or lessons shared by our grandmothers have informed and directed how we live and dedicate our lives

Rev. Walden has spent her life standing up for what is right. Her life lessons are rooted in the town in which she grew up – Sanford (Goldsboro), Florida, known as one of the first self-governing all-Black municipalities in the United States.

Rev. Walden was born into segregation, the way of life for most Black people in the late 1800's-early 1900s, particularly in the south. The town of Sanford was a self-sustaining community with Black doctors, lawyers, dentists, and teachers. Imagine attending a school where there were only Black teachers. Imagine living in a community where there were Black Funeral homes and the Funeral Homes hired Black casket makers because no White casket makers would provide that item for Black residents. This also provided opportunities for Blacks to create their own businesses and hire employees. For Rev. Walden, this was a blessing because "if you could see it, you could be it". Imagine reading newspapers written by and for Black people, and singing the Black National Anthem ("Lift Every Voice and Sing"). In fact, she had never heard the Star-Spangled Banner sung in school.

Rev. Walden was blessed to have been raised by her grandmother from the age of two when she lost her mother. Loving, giving, and supporting one's community was what she learned growing up because of the positive images of Black people that she saw and associated with every day. She grew up on acreage property where people in the community had weapons that were readily available for protection. She grew up with people who were never afraid. Her grandmother could handle a shotgun; Rev. Walden knew her grandmother wasn't running away from anyone. She raised her to not be afraid, to love Black people, and to not be a hater.



Rev. Harriett Walden

Photo/Humes Photo

She brought all of her learned life lessons with her when she left home at the age of 17. She eventually moved to Seattle, Washington in 1975, where she opened Salisbury Photography with her then-husband James Salisbury, Jr. She raised four sons in Seattle who grew up knowing they were strong, smart, capable Black men; despite the loss of one son at a young age.

She quickly became involved in civil rights actions when she arrived in Seattle where she realized that the struggle of Black people in America was a national problem, and she simply could not stand on the sidelines. In 1990, when her sons

experienced police brutality first-hand, Walden became deeply involved in serving the community with the depth of her activism and foundational spirituality. She gives credit to the spiritual systems brought over to this country by the kidnapped and enslaved African people and her association with the First African Methodist Episcopal Church.

In addition to being the first Black woman in the state of Washington with an optician license, Rev. Walden also founded the Family Empowerment Institute. She still serves as the Director to this day.

Over the last 33 years, Rev. Walden has been a vocal advocate for better

police/community relations in Seattle and has worked tirelessly towards educating the public about police misconduct issues. She co-founded Mothers Against Police Harassment, assisting victims in filing complaints of police misconduct. The organization also worked towards educating the public about police misconduct issues. In 1996, the organization changed its name to Mothers for Police Accountability (MFPA) since its mission now went beyond ending harassment. They were one of the first justice groups to call for police accountability in the country and have made a name for themselves in the Pacific Northwest and the U.S. That message has been consistent and constant since its inception. MFPA works closely with other community organizations to seek positive changes in the criminal justice system. She also hosts "Mother's Justice Show", a weekly community-focused radio station focused on increasing dialogue in the community about police accountability, constitutional policing, and justice.

Our paths first crossed when I joined the King County Sheriff's Office in 1978 as the first Black female hired as a commissioned deputy. I was also a member of the Black Seattle community, attending church in the Capitol Hill area, living in the Beacon Hill area, partying at the Royal Esquire Club, and participating in Seattle area events in the Central Area. A passion for proudly representing and engaging with the Black community is a trait I am proud to share with the reverend. Over the course of our connection, we worked on various projects focusing on ensuring young black children were able to travel outside the area to see what the rest of the world was like. She coordinated trips to see the Tulips, to the ocean, and to many parks around the area. I could count on her to be upfront, honest, thoughtful, and energetic.

Rev. Walden cited a quote from Marcus Garvey during our conversation that I believe relates to her lived experience: "You can only know where you're going if you know where you've been". Rev. Walden knows where she's going because she knows and embraces where she's been.

Honoring Ancestral Legacies: Black Women Advocate For Economic Advancement And Emotional Well-Being



By Naima Chambers

For many Black women, the concept of public safety goes far beyond the criminal justice system. It's about creating safe and thriving communities where everyone has access to the resources they need to succeed. This means focusing on community-based solutions rather than relying solely on law enforcement and the criminal justice system. Black women often advocate for investments in community resources such as affordable housing, health care, and education recognizing that these investments can help address the root

causes of crime and violence and create more equitable and just communities.

Dating back to the enslavement of Black folks, where children were taken away from their mothers and sold, Black women have witnessed their men being beaten and stripped of their dignity, while they were forced to breastfeed and care for their masters' children, leaving their own children without care. Reflecting on the experiences of our ancestors, positive and negative, sheds light on the Black woman's experience and role in her family and community. For instance, my paternal great grandmother witnessed her husband's murder by a white store owner for being late on his refrigerator lease payment. My paternal grandmother was the first lady of the church, community servant, and mother of six, who had to fake her husband's death and send him out of the state to escape a lynch mob. My maternal grandmother was widowed at 30 due to racist violence. Determined not to accept public assistance, she worked multiple jobs to support her children, which later reduced to three following a hit-and-run that took the life of her 4-year old child. My mother and her siblings were victims of their circumstances, Black-Asian Americans in the 1960s, raised in South Central Los Angeles, subjected to poverty, trauma, drug addiction, and systems of oppression that infest communities of color.

As a Black woman, these traumatic experiences of my female ancestors are

unfortunately all too common in our community. Black women have been navigating through systems of oppression and discrimination that have disproportionately impacted our communities, where our psychological and physical safety, as well as that of our children, brothers, and fathers, are threatened daily. As a Black woman, we grow up, recognizing and developing a sense of responsibility to protect, care for, and uplift our community. This deepened sense of community has led to solidarity of purpose among Black women, who understand that well-being is interconnected with that of our loved ones and neighbors. We are forced into the realization that if we don't take care of each other and our community, no one else will. There is no room to wonder or question whether we should do something; the only question is what can we do and how can we do it.

Black women recognize the significance of economic advancement, fostering reliable community connections, and prioritizing emotional well-being as crucial components in promoting public safety. We acknowledge that poverty, limited economic prospects, and the ongoing effects of historical and intergenerational traumas are contributing factors to criminal activity and violence. That's why many Black women advocate for policies that support economic mobility, such as affordable childcare, paid family leave, mental health resources, a family wage, and

entrepreneurship.

We understand that building relationships and trust within the community is essential for creating safe and thriving neighborhoods, to address the common challenges historically under-resourced and under-served communities have faced.

Braided wisdom serves as a powerful metaphor for the interconnectedness of the issues Black women face and the importance of collective action in addressing these issues. It reminds us that our ancestors have left us a legacy of strength, resilience, and community, and that we are responsible for honoring that legacy by working together to create a better future for ourselves and future generations. Braided wisdom reminds us of the intergenerational strength and knowledge that Black women have inherited from their ancestors and uplifts the importance of collective action in creating safe, healthy, and thriving communities.

As a Black woman, I honor my ancestor's gift of braided wisdom that guides my steps and my actions as I strive to be a better woman, mother, daughter, sister, friend, and community servant.

Naima Chambers is founder and CEO of the Tri-Cities Diversity & Inclusion Council, a nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering a unified community through education, advocacy, and the promotion of cultural competence and compassion.

MARCH IS

WOMEN'S
 **HISTORY MONTH**

Happy National Women's History Month and International Women's Day

We honor and celebrate the trailblazing moments of history and the incredible work done by women within our colleges, local communities, and across the world. We recognize and send gratitude to the women we have the privilege of working with, learning from, and building community with every day. Please consider joining us.

~ D'Andre Fisher, Associate Vice Chancellor for
Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Community



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Q&A With Dr. Maxine Hayes About The Role Of Black Women In The Well-being Of Black People

Dr. Maxine Hayes is a public health expert with 35+ years of experience. Growing up in Mississippi during the Civil Rights Movement, she completed her medical degree from SUNY and an MPH from Harvard. As the former State Health Officer for Washington, she advised government officials on public health matters. Dr. Hayes has received several awards for her contributions to public health, including the American Public Health Association's Martha May Eliot Award. Throughout her career, she has advocated for health equity for underserved communities. This interview was conducted by Andrea Caupain Sanderson, co-architect of the Black Future Co-op Fund on behalf of The Seattle Medium.



Dr. Maxine Hayes

Caupain Sanderson: Dr. Maxine Hayes, we're here to uplift the wisdom you bring from the medical field about Black health and well-being. This is International Women's Month and Black women in particular are carrying a communal weight for our people. So, Mother Maxine, can you talk about the role Black women play in the well-being of our people?

Dr. Maxine Hayes: It is no secret. Black women make the family health decisions — whether for children, grandparents, or community friends. We must acknowledge this and make sure, in our interactions about health, that we have a relationship with the decision maker and that's Black women. We've always carried the burden for our families and those around us because our philosophy is very community oriented. I'm particularly happy when we're conscious of the role Black women play, and that we're using our knowledge to broaden the definition of health.

Caupain Sanderson: Talk to me about the empathy we hold as Black women.

Hayes: Well, certainly, our lived experience is the basis for which Black women understand what's truly going on with health and well-being in our families. As a mother raising African American boys to become men, I've lost one of my children. Every time we lose one of those children, the emotional tug on our hearts is real. In a world where there's so much violence and injustice, there's a lot of rage, and it's going to come out. Black women know this because we've been on the other

end of that rage. Many in medicine may not understand because they've never had that experience. We've experienced a lot of pain in our histories and empathy is one thing that we need more of from the health community.

Caupain Sanderson: Why are stress and trauma dangerous?

Hayes: This year marks 50 years post my graduation from medical school. Anyone 50 years ago who said stress can kill you would have been laughed at because people didn't recognize stress as a common denominator for many of our illnesses. Trauma is longstanding and something I've personally endured. Providers need to understand the historical context of hurt and injuries and get to the root causes of trauma. That's what we are challenged to do as a society and as individual caregivers.

Society's definition of health has been very narrow. It's not just the absence of disease. It's the social, emotional, and mental health components of well-being. What in the environment is making us sick? We have far too many toxic things in the environment, particularly for Black families. I can see it, our community can see it, and now we've got to have a society that recognizes it and says, "This is wrong."

Caupain Sanderson: What does well-being mean for you and as you knew it for our ancestors, what might it have been like for them to have well-being?

Hayes: I certainly think it means having comfort. We've got to change the narrative away from needing to be sick to receive care and comfort. Our ancestors didn't have pills for their mental health, but they had one another. They had the



Andrea Caupain Sanderson

intimacy and closeness of families in spite of being oppressed. We knew how to sing and how to be humble. These are healing and cleansing things and we have that ability in our DNA. We imagined a better life — that of a day justice would come. We had a notion, a spirit, that got us through those times and we need it again because we're in those same times right now. We've lost the importance of maintaining spirituality. It's how you get through tough times.

Caupain Sanderson: In many spaces today Black people are unable to be their whole selves. Can you talk about what it was like for you in the field of medicine and the importance of building a pipeline for the future?

Hayes: Well, I came through as a result of the Civil Rights Movement. I grew up in Mississippi with Jim Crow — everything was segregated. I went to Spelman College and got a Merrill Scholarship to go overseas and study abroad when Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy were assassinated. When I returned, the doors for professional postgraduate training programs had opened. I was one of five Black people in my medical school class of over 130. It was a lonely struggle, but the school now celebrates me for my courage and how it changed them. We don't know who we change when we change.

The Institute of Medicine's 2003 report *Unequal Treatment* was a look at glaring racial disparities. Congress didn't want to believe it. The bias in medicine was very obvious to me. They would always put African American women with any kind of pain in the category of women's health. I saw that and it really hurt, but it motivated

me to give care with dignity, which is something that Odessa Brown so beautifully displayed. It was Odessa Brown that got me to Washington State to take Dr. Lavizzo's place. It became my torch to carry, which was handed to Dr. Ben Danielson to carry. Now we have an opportunity to work with others coming.

Caupain Sanderson: I've heard you talk about your perspective on public health, the term public health, why has that term not served our communities well?

Hayes: I came from the Jim Crow environment and so this notion of 'public' had a connotation that it was mediocre. We didn't want it. Then, studies done by the U.S. Public Health Service revealed discrimination and mistreatment of syphilis. Public health needs to bring all the elements to the table including racism. We have work to do. We're the chosen ones during this time. These are hard times, but we are a generation that the Lord was preparing. He expects us to do something about these injustices. We have to change our workforce and have more people that look like the population being served. It will take experience, empathy, the family, the community, and trust — we never trusted that we were in good hands.

Caupain Sanderson: So ah, speaking of trust, that's a heavy word and in the medical sector, what is your opinion on the relationship between pharma and medical professionals?

Hayes: Well, that's one of those situations where the relationship is too cozy. Some of the pills they have don't work, and they're not meant to because if people are sick, that's profit. Where's the motivation to solve the problem instead of having a chronic problem?

Caupain Sanderson: Lastly, Mother Maxine, as a woman of faith will you tell me about your study of the book of Isaiah and how it can shed light for those of us in this world today?

Hayes: Isaiah was a prophet, the one that was chosen by God to warn Judah and Israel, to change their ways and right the wrongs of injustice. Injustice is mentioned many times in the Word. We are all spirits and the soul of man has got to be healthy — that means loving God and loving our neighbor. That's true love. This way, we could change some of the attitudes and behaviors, and the door to change can be women.

Honoring Black Lives *from the Start*

Did you know that pregnancy mortality rates for Black women can be up to four times higher than white women?

Breastfeeding reduces risks for various infections and conditions such as sudden infant death syndrome, type 2 diabetes, ovarian cancer and breast cancer among mothers.

This photo series is the work of Seattle/MLK Jr. County area community members, who are working to root out racism in our public health systems, and focus on improving health outcomes for Black families.

Learn more about our work at www.mahogonymoms.org



Photography by Angie Burgess



"Breastfeeding is very important in the Black community just because, one, I think that the stigma is that we're not going to do it because it's an inconvenience or we don't have time or the patience, and that's not true. I think our ancestors have been doing this for generations." — Stella

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
REACH
Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health



Seattle's Mary Mahoney Professional Nurses Organization: A Legacy Of Advancing Black Nurses

By Aaron Allen

The Seattle Medium

For 74 years, the Mary Mahoney Professional Nurses Organization (MMPNO), a local Black nurses association named after the first African American to study and work as a professionally trained nurse in the United States, has been providing a bridge for young Black women and men the opportunity to succeed in the field of nursing.

The legacy of the MMPNO is now spotlighted in a book written by Lois Price Spratlen, "African American Registered Nurses in Seattle: The Struggle for Opportunity and Success." The manuscript chronicles the lives of 25 of the early African American Registered Nurses hired in Seattle and goes into great depth to inform the reader of the tribulations and trials endured by these early nurses in order to obtain training and employment in the greater King County area. It also provides information on how they have given back to the community over the years.

A number of the storied women described in this book are presently in the Washington State Nurses Association (WSNA) Hall of Fame based on their lifetime of distinctive achievements, including Ann Foy Baker, Mary Lee Bell, Shirley Gilford, Maxine Haynes, Verna Hill, Vivian Lee, Thelma Pagues, Muriel Softli, Dr. Lois Price Spratlen, and Elizabeth Thomas.

Spratlen, who is now deceased, and her husband have given the rights to the book to MMPNO, which will use proceeds from its sales to benefit their scholarship fund for nursing students of African descent.

MMPNO began in 1949 as a small contingent of 13 African American Registered Nurses, 11 of whom are featured in Spratlen's book, who came together to support each other in gaining employment and combating the racial biases they faced as Black nurses in Seattle.

"When we started, it was just about supporting each other and to help in job searching in the Seattle area because at that time Harborview Medical Center was the only hospital to give Black nurses opportunities and hire them," says Vivien Lee, a long-time member of MMPNO.

Today, MMPNO continues its legacy in advancing the careers of Black nurses by advocating for the promotion of qualified



MMPNO President Dr. Keondra Rustan stands in front of an art piece honoring Lois Price Spratlen and her husband, Thaddeus Spratlen, while holding a copy of Lois' book that chronicles the lives of 25 Black nursing pioneers in Seattle.

Black nurses to higher levels of management and leadership positions where they could have influence in improving health services to communities of color. In addition, the organization annually provides scholarships to students interested in the field of nursing.

"I have always been amazed at how the organization was able to branch out to begin to support students in their journey towards admission and then enlarge their mission to collecting financial means to support students, that's how the endowment began," said Lee.

Gayle Robinson, a longtime member of MMPNO, says while their focus remains on nurturing and growing the community of Black nurses, it is important to note that

their membership and the students they support are very diverse.

"Some of us come from different backgrounds in our African heritage, whether we are born here in the U.S. or coming from outside of the U.S., like the Caribbean Island, even from the African continent and still practicing or going to school here in the U.S., so our range is big in African heritage," says Robinson.

"So, our legacy, I would still say, is not only supporting nurses and bringing in more Black women and Black men into the field, but also, to have such a wide range of nurses in practice. That to me has been huge, and to see Mary Mahoney doing this for the last 74 years now staying true to their mission of doing both education

service and community service," Robinson continued.

The University of Washington School of Nursing recently honored 16 members of MMPNO as part of the 100 most influential Nurses in the 100-year history of the school. In addition, the University of Washington School of Nursing named their Center for Anti-Racism and Equity Department after two of MMPNO's founding members -- Frankie Manning and the author of the book, Lois Price Spratlen. The department is now known as the Manning Spratlen Center for Anti-Racism and Equity In Nursing Department.

According to Robinson, she sees MMPNO's legacy as a bridge in how the ladies came together and utilized their struggles and experiences to help create a pathway into the industry for future generations.

"Dr. Spratlen who wrote the book about the nurses in Seattle had this vision of a bridge, where nurses started out at the very entry levels in nursing till their terminal degrees," Robinson describes. "Just picture this vision of a bridge and actually in that part of the time, she may have been the only one with a doctorate degree. [Today], you now have at least 6 or 7 of us who now have made that bridge from our entry level to our terminal degrees, all within Mary Mahoney."

"A lot of our success has come from the women who really encouraged us to keep pursuing our dreams of working in healthcare, and taking care of the people who look like us and pursuing what you wanted to be able to do in healthcare," added Robinson.

MMPNO understands the difficulties the underserved have in accessing existing health services or being served with cultural awareness by the existing sources of health care, and its members find their work to be rewarding and empowering.

"The most rewarding thing about being in nursing and working with Mary Mahoney and working with the men and women you work with is that you're empowered to do so much more," says Robinson. "And how you expand your vision, how you expand your career, that's the legacy that Mary Mahoney is a part of."

Spratlen's book is available on the MMPNO website at MaryMahoney.org.

Trailblazing Black Women In Space Exploration

Black women have made significant contributions to space exploration, blazing trails and breaking color barriers along the way. Mae Jemison became the first Black woman to go to space in 1992 as part of the STS-47 mission on the Space Shuttle Endeavour. Jemison earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering from Stanford University in 1977, and later attended Cornell University, where she earned a Doctor of Medicine degree in 1981. During her mission, Jemison conducted experiments related to bone cell research, helping to advance our understanding of how the human body adapts to spaceflight. Jemison's pioneering journey into space broke barriers and inspired many to pursue careers in science and space exploration.

Stephanie Wilson has flown on three space shuttle missions, including STS-121 in 2006, STS-120 in 2007, and STS-131 in 2010. Wilson earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering Science from Harvard University in 1988, and a Master of Science degree in Aerospace



Mae Jemison, pictured above, became the first Black woman to go to space in 1992 as part of the STS-47 mission on the Space Shuttle Endeavour.

Engineering from the University of Texas in 1992. During her missions, she played a key role in testing safety upgrades to the shuttle, installing the Harmony module on the International Space Station (ISS), and delivering supplies and equipment to the ISS. Her work helped advance our understanding of space exploration, engineering, and construction.

Joan Higginbotham flew on the Space Shuttle Discovery in 2006 as part of the STS-116 mission. Higginbotham earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering from Southern Illinois University in 1987, and later earned a Master of Management degree from Florida Institute of Technology in 1992. Higginbotham oversaw the installation of a new truss segment on the ISS and even performed a spacewalk to complete the task. Her work helped advance our understanding of space construction and engineering, and set the stage for future missions.

Yvonne Cagle served as a mission specialist on the Space Shuttle Endeavour

in 1996 as part of the STS 61C mission. Cagle earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biochemistry from San Francisco State University in 1981, and a Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Washington in 1985. Cagle's work involved studying the effects of spaceflight on the human body, particularly the cardiovascular system. Her research has contributed to our understanding of how the human body adapts to spaceflight and has helped improve the health of astronauts on long-duration missions.

These women's accomplishments in space exploration have expanded our knowledge of the universe and inspired future generations of scientists and space enthusiasts. By celebrating the achievements of these remarkable women and highlighting their educational backgrounds in science, engineering, and medicine, we honor their contributions to the field of space exploration and inspire new generations of women and people of color to pursue careers in STEM fields.



Join the Movement: Support Black Nurses with the Purchase of this Book

Looking to support a great cause and gain valuable insight into the challenges faced by African American nurses in Seattle? Look no further than Lois Price Spratlen's book, "African American Registered Nurses in Seattle: The Struggle for Opportunity and Success."

As a leader of the Mary Mahoney Professional Nurses Organization, Spratlen has dedicated her life to promoting diversity and providing financial aid and scholarships to students of African heritage studying professional nursing. Her work as a professor at the University of Washington's School of Nursing and as the first woman, professional nurse, and African-American to serve as University Ombudsman, make her an expert in enhancing diversity among faculty and students.

Additionally, as a mentor and volunteer for the Association of Advanced Practice Psychiatric Nurses, Spratlen has helped members gain valuable knowledge and move beyond the tradition of being educated by those from other professions.

By purchasing this book, you not only gain valuable insight into the struggles faced by African American nurses, but you also support the MIMPNO Endowment, helping to ensure that future generations of nurses have the support they need to succeed. So don't wait - order your copy of "African American Registered Nurses in Seattle" today and make a difference!

To purchase visit: marymahoney.org/purchase-book/

Fatima al-Fihri The Founder Of Universities As We Know Them Today

By Aaron Allen

The Seattle Medium

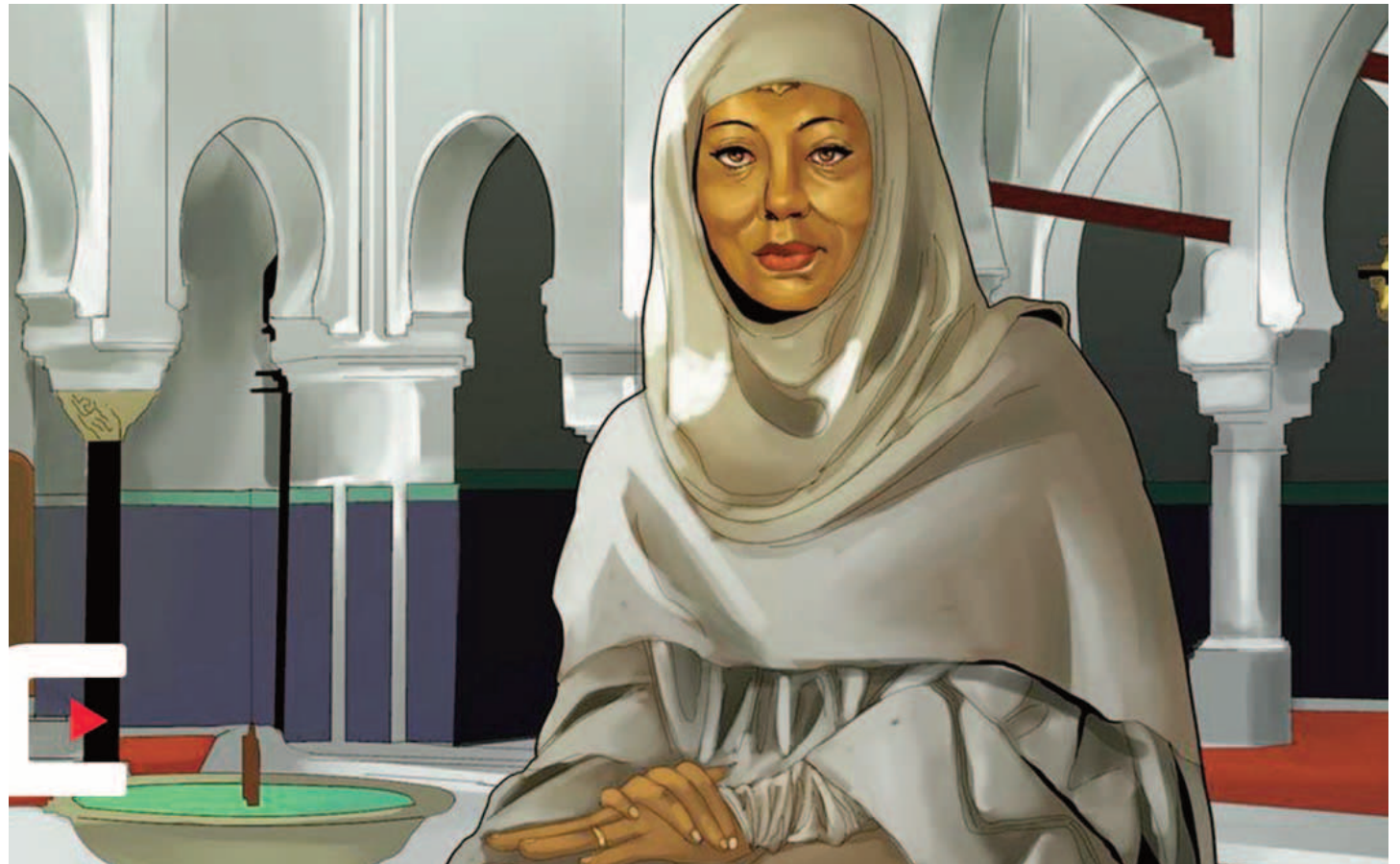
Few people know this, but many of the advancements that have taken place around the world may not be possible if it were not for Fatima al-Fihri. Fatima was a Muslim woman from Tunisia who founded the first known university more than 1,000 years ago that ultimately paved the way for modern universities around the globe.

Nestled in the vibrant city of Fez in Morocco, lies the University of al-Qarawiyyin - a grand institution steeped in history and culture that has stood the test of time. Founded over a thousand years ago in 859 AD by a Muslim woman named Fatima al-Fihri, it is recognized by Guinness World Records as the oldest existing and continually operating educational institution in the world. Its impact on higher education and its evolution from a mosque to a center for learning have paved the way for modern universities around the globe.

Fatima al-Fihri was born into a wealthy merchant family in Tunisia, and like many others of her time, education was highly valued in her family. She and her sister Mariam were given the best education possible, including religious studies, and the family was deeply committed to Islam. In the early 9th century, the al-Fihri family, along with many other Arabic people, left Tunisia and emigrated to Fez, which was then a bustling, cosmopolitan metropolis. They settled in the district of al-Qarawiyyin, named after their place of origin, Qayrawan in Tunisia.

"When her father died, Fatima inherited his fortune. The sisters then decided to invest the money in something that would benefit their local community," writes history journalist Moin Qazi. "They chose to build a mosque, which over time evolved into a center for higher education."

"In the world of Islam, higher education together with religious and literary sciences was practiced in masjids (mosques) and sometimes in the houses of the 'mudarris' (professors), in accordance with medieval tradition. Starting from the ninth century A.D., separate madrasahs began to be established next to masjids. These madrasahs were called 'mosques,' which means 'gatherer' in Arabic. In Europe, the Latin word 'Universitatis' was



Fatima al-Fihri the founder of the first known university.

used as the equivalent of the word 'mosque'. Universities were divided into kulliyahs (faculties), and each kulliyah offered education in a different field of science," explains Qazi.

The University of al-Qarawiyyin was initially a madrasah (school) that taught Islamic law, theology, and Arabic language and literature, along with mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and music. The school attracted many scholars from all over the world, including renowned thinkers and intellectuals such as Ibn Khaldun and Ibn Rushd (also known as Averroes).

As the reputation of the madrasah grew, it attracted students from far and wide, and the original mosque was expanded to accommodate the growing student body. Over time, the University of al-Qarawiyyin became one of the most prestigious educational institutions in the Islamic world. It attracted students from as far afield as sub-Saharan Africa, Spain, and Egypt, and it was particularly renowned for its focus on Islamic studies.

"At its height in the 14th century, the University of al-Qarawiyyin boasted an attendance of over 8,000 students who came to study Islamic law, theology, Arabic language and literature, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and other subjects," notes historian of antiquity Ivan Van Sertima.

The University of al-Qarawiyyin's importance and influence continued to grow throughout the Middle Ages, and the school played a key role in the intellectual and cultural exchange between the Islamic world and Europe. The school's reputation was further enhanced when Pope Sylvester II (946–1003), a famous mathematician and philosopher, studied there before becoming pope.

However, by the 19th century, the University of al-Qarawiyyin had declined in importance, and it had become a small, elite school catering to the Sultan of Morocco's family and government administrators. It wasn't until the modern Moroccan state was formed in 1947 that the madrasah was incorporated into the state

public educational system, and in 1963 it was renamed the University of Al-Qarawiyyin.

"The university still emphasizes Islamic religious and legal studies, and classes are taught in the traditional style of a teacher surrounded by a half-circle of students, reading and discussing texts. Other subjects are also covered, including technology," notes Moin Qazi.

Today, the University of al-Qarawiyyin remains a highly respected institution of higher learning in Morocco and around the world, and remains a symbol of the enduring power of education to transform lives and communities. The school's continued legacy is a testament to the vision and determination of Fatima al-Fihri, who sought to create an institution that would benefit her community and promote education and learning. Her legacy has endured for over a thousand years and has inspired generations of students and scholars to pursue knowledge and understanding.

Sandy Williams - The Master Braider

By Kiantha L. Duncan

The part in your head has to be straight. It has to be just right, and precise, although all of us have experienced days where that part was just slightly wrong-sah-di-dah as Grandma Anna called it.

The true art is in the braiding. Taking three pieces of hair, skillfully crossing them one over another, each section protecting the other two. There are many technical guidelines for hair braiding; one rule being that each of the three sections of hair must have the same amount of hair as the other two sections.

A skilled braider is aware of the importance of this technique and is adjusting the amount of hair in each section while plating the corn roll. This is key for the balance and cohesiveness of the finished braid.

Another technical guideline for hair braiding is to keep each turn of the braid tight so that the pattern of the braid is neat, uniform, and holds up. This step is important for the maintenance of the braid.



Sandy Williams

Photo/The Spokesman-Review (Colin Mulvany)

Braids are typically protective styles meant to last for a while. Making sure that the braids are durable is essential.

Sandy Williams was a master braider,

using the technical guidelines of hair braiding to build a strong, healthy, protected Black community.

As the publisher of the Black Lens, the only Black news publication for Eastern Washington, Sandy Williams understood that as part of the braid, unbiased information and both local and national knowledge were essential to Black health and wellness. Her coverage of media related to Black issues became a staple in homes across the Inland Northwest.

Sandy Williams' ability to braid community together in a tightly knit way through hosting events, such as community social outings, Covid-19 response clinics, business resource fairs, and many other community-led activities was legendary.

It would be fair to say that Sandy Williams understood the assignment, putting the community together in a way that was lasting and would stand the test of time.

Sandy Williams reached youth of color and LGBTQ+ youth through her work with

Odyssey Youth Center, Spokane Public Schools, and various higher education institutions in Eastern Washington. Sandy understood the importance of nurturing the voices of young people whom she hoped would one day become leaders. For Sandy Williams, youth were always an essential part of the braid.

Sandy's legacy lives on as her death ignited a spark among new community braiders.

People like Sandy, want nothing more than to bring the Black community together in ways in which they are cared for and protected. While the hands of the braider may have changed, the techniques of a master braider live on as new hands continue to skillfully cross one section over another, each protecting the other two.

Kiantha L. Duncan is an executive leadership and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging consultant. She is also a distinguished lecturer, speaker, filmmaker, author, and soon-to-be syndicated advice columnist.

Dr. Pela Terry was born and raised in innercity Chicago where she developed a passion for health and human services. She and her family felt the direct impact of gang activity, and racial segregation and marginalization. These experiences sparked her desire to help others.

Dr. Terry's nonprofit management career began in the 1990s and over the last few decades she has overseen program administration, governance and compliance, and serves on various nonprofit boards. She attended The College of New Rochelle (New York) to earn her Masters of Public Administration in human services. She received her Doctorate in Education in Executive Leadership from St. John Fisher University (New York).



After a nation-wide search, Seattle nonprofit Atlantic Street Center selected Dr. Terry as their newest Executive Director in May 2021. Since 1910, ASC has provided services to youth and their families, specifically families of color in Central and South Seattle.

Now fully settled in Seattle, Dr. Terry has committed to further supporting her new community by joining various groups, including the Women's University Club and the Professional Women of Color Network. Being part of the progress of wherever she calls home is what Dr. Terry considers most gratifying. To other women of any age, she advises to never be afraid of failure; it is a natural part of growth.

Dr. Terry awards an Atlantic Street Center youth with a certificate for completing the annual Summer Academy education program.



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