

## **Milestones in African American History** **In All Our Glory**

Kwanzaa presents an intriguing and innovative method of determining the significance of events in African American History. The Nguzo Saba or Seven Principles of Kwanzaa-Umoja/Unity, Kujichagulia/Self-Determination, Ujima/Collective Work and Responsibility, Ujamaa/Shared Wealth, Nia/Purpose, Kuumba/Creativity, Imani/Faith-provide a framework and method for assessing achievements and events in African Americans. These value standards offer a new way of viewing events in African American History, assessing these events or achievements against standards.

Next, there are number of events and activities which are of significance and contributive to the advancement of African Americans and human civilization. The events, activities, or milestones in this volume were selected from a broad survey of African American literature and history. Arguably, there are events or activities of significance which may merit being included in this volume. Our selection was made on the standards defined by the Seven Principles.

Third, the milestones in the volume provide a sense of the historical contributions of African Americans as a people rather than the traditional view of looking at heroes and heroines in history. This is not to deny the rich and important individual contributions of African Americans. Rather it is to give a more honest assessment of the rich interplay of heroic and talented individuals and of the heroics of ordinary black people who made possible the circumstance, which gave rise to the heroics of individual African Americans.

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## Seven principles

The Seven Principles, as a core set of values offers internal moral cultural anchoring, reweaving the rich fabric and interplay of family and community that historically has fostered the healthy development of both children and adults. Without these values "Things", as the poet says "fall apart", because the centre-family and community- cannot hold. The family and the community, to be sure, are the examples at the micro level of how African Americans as a people perform, function, and achieve. Below is an explanation of how each of the values of the Seven Principles can be used to assess and measure African American Historical milestones.

**Unity:** *To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, race.* The **Unity** principle instructs that every member of the family and community is made up by a web of interpersonal relationships. The health and possibilities of the family and community is, therefore, dependent upon the quality of relationship within the family and community. The **Unity** principle encourages warmth and closeness between husband and wife, parents and children, home and school, and family and community and is the glue which holds the family and community, giving members of the community a sense of collective self-destiny. **Unity** demands the reciprocal responsibility of being collectively responsible for each other and is reinforced by the African Proverb which says "I am because we are and because we are I am."

**Self Determination:** *To define ourselves, to name ourselves, speak for ourselves and create for ourselves.* This principle says African Americans, like all people, need shared cultural values, symbols, rituals, and practices in order to give their families and children meaning and value, and identity. Self Determination says African American History has an important lesson for the world. It is a history of a resilient people who struggled to create and maintain their humanity in the face of the dehumanizing experience of slavery and legal segregation, and despite all of this, still triumphed and achieved, as evidenced by their classical literature; their spiritual thought and practice that reveals to them that they have a special mission

in the world to correct injustice and to build Martin Luther King, Jr's Beloved Community; their collective parenting practice expressed by the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child"; their improvised music known as Blues, Jazz, and Hip Hop; and their politics of social justice, defined by their long history of the struggle for freedom and more "Just Society", culminating in the 1960's Freedom Movement, which gave expanded citizenship to other people of color, women, senior citizens and immigrants. Sojourner Truth exhibited self-determination in naming herself: "I told the Lord I wanted tow names and the Lord gave me Truth, because I was to declare the truth to the people"

**Collective Work and Responsibility:** *To build and maintain our community together and make our sister's and brother's problems our problems and solve them together.* The **Collective Work and Responsibility** principle teaches each family member to recognize that their own well-being is derived from their family's and community's well being, that they must be concern with the overall health of their family and community; that the lives of each family member and that of the community are bound together; that the success of any one their lives is an aspect of and therefore is dependent on the goodness and health of the community as a whole; and that finally, there can be no private accounting of the success or failure of their individual lives one by one. The Ujima value instructs that the community must wrapped children in a cocoon of caring and activity. The popular proverb "It takes a village to raise a child" comes from the third principle of the Seven Principles- Ujima or Collective Work and Responsibility. This principle instructs that family, extended family, community, and teachers provide a seamless web of support for children. Community has a common interest in investing in and protecting all members of the community. The African proverb instructs that the rain falls on all the village houses and not just on some.

**Shared Wealth: To:** *build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and profit from them together.* This principle envisions a model of economic development through pooling and leveraging of resources in the service

of all. The **Share wealth principle** empowers families to come together around their collective economic interest and to see their economic strength in co-opting and buying. Moreover, the practice the **Share Wealth principle** builds moral ties which obligate those who live in the community to support, care for and look out for each other and to see their individual interest tied to the collective interest of the community. The essence of this principle is: "living together, working together, and benefiting together. As Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere puts it, "In our traditional African society, we took care of the community and the community took care of us".

**Purpose:** *To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.* The **Purpose** principle asks family and community members to see themselves linked to the larger project of developing the African American people and to consider the self-reflecting questions raised by Marcus Garvey who reflecting on the state of blacks in the early 1900's asked: Where is the black man king and queen? Where is his and Army and Navy? Where are his big men of affairs? I looked around and could not find them. I then declared to myself I would help to make them". Garvey's inquiry of deficit in black life leaves no room for self-pity or victim talk. Instead, he asserts problems or deficits in black life present opportunities for action or activity to address the problems or deficits. The **Purpose** principle promotes work and service and asked us to use our gifts, talents, and blessings in the service of other members of the community. Service Martin Luther King reminds us is a criterion for greatness. King asserts "Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."

**Creativity** *To do always as much as we can in the way we can in order to leave our family and community more beautiful and beneficial than when we inherited it.* The Kuumba principle promotes continuous learning and improvement. This principle encourages families and communities, adults, and youth not to be satisfied with

“just getting by”, with being a “C” student, nor with being satisfied with a “B” or “A” grade. George Washington Carver teaches us all that “No one has a right to come in to the world without leaving behind a distinct and legitimate reason for having passed through it”.

**Faith:** *To believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders.* The **Faith** principle cultivates and reinforces self-confidence and belief in possibility of change and great progress. Speaking of the power of faith, Mary McLeod Bethune advises: “Without faith nothing is possible; with faith nothing is impossible. Faith in god is the greatest power, but greater is faith in oneself”. Faith gives us confidence in taking on great challenges and even failing, for trying and not succeeding is not failure, but more attempts at succeeding. The African proverb reminds us that, “To stumble is not to fall, but to go forward faster.” To be sure, faith empowers family members to see beyond the immediate, to have the strength to love and to face insuperable challenges; faith as Howard Thurman teaches is the substance and spirit which makes “tired hearts refreshed and dead hopes stir with the nearness of life; faith is the “promise of tomorrow at the close of everyday, the triumph of life in the defiance of death, and the assurance that love is sturdier than fate, right is more confident than wrong, that good is more permanent than evil.”

## African American Historical Milestones



### Umoja



*“To strive for and to maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race.”*

### 📌 **Marcus Garvey Movement: “Up You Mighty Race.”**

Marcus Garvey led the first mass black movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Garvey movement called upon Africans everywhere to work reclaim Africa, struggle

to reclaim their better selves, and strive to restore their history and humanity. Marcus Garvey believed in the primacy of race as the starting point for the liberation of all African people. He believed that the oppressed African people throughout the world should have as their primary objective the emancipation of themselves as a race. Central to Garvey's "race first" philosophy was the doctrine self-reliance and self determination. All subsequent Black Power organizations and Black Nationalist leaders, including the Nation of Islam and Malcolm X, would draw from Garvey's "race first" focus and owe a debt to his example and philosophy. Using race as an organizing principle, the Garvey Movement pushed for blacks to unify, organize, and control their own institutions and daily lives. Through the establishment of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), the Garvey Movement inspired African people to dream again, constantly reminding them that they had once been kings and queens and rulers of great nations, and would again be rulers of themselves and Africa. Moreover, the Garvey Movement awakened in black people a desire to be masters of their own destiny. The Garvey Movement sought to build a nation within a nation, adopting the motto, "One God, One Aim, and One Destiny. The UNIA established chapters in the United States, Mexico, Brazil, Panama, Australia, and on the continent of Africa.

The central focus of the Garvey Movement was the idea of nation building-the building of strong independent black nations, which would take its rightful place among the communities of nations. The reclaiming and restoring Africa was the linchpin Garvey's nation building strategy. The starting point for the nation building efforts was the creation of an African centric culture which would reinforce a positive black self-image and a can-do ethos of nation building. A great many of the activities of the UNIA were designed to serve this purpose. "Nation building is our program, not building apartment houses or churches, that too small a job for us", thundered Marcus Garvey's wife, Amy Jacques Garvey.

In the United States, the UNIA had a profound effect on the cultural and political development of the Harlem Renaissance, spurring the establishment of black cultural and economic institutions. The UNIA news organ, "The Black World," had an international reach and circulation.

## 📍 **Montgomery Bus Boycott: "Walking With Dignity."**

The 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott set in Montgomery, Alabama, the cradle of the Confederacy, ignited a mass movement to address the indignities of segregation and the promise of American democracy. The stakes and outcome of bus boycott were high and crucial to the pillars of segregation. What happened in Montgomery in 1955 was the awaking of the social consciousness of black people which reached critical mass, spawning collective resistance, something that had never happened in the post- Reconstruction history of the South. The black community of Montgomery, which only a year earlier, like most black communities in the South, had given the appearance of being complacent and apathetic and without structure or form, organized itself into a disciplined, articulate, and superbly confident community, without any outside help or assistance. This transformation represented a renewed collective self-consciousness among African Americans, and a continuation of the struggle to once again, make real the promise of American democracy, freedom, and equality and the dignity and worth of every human person irrespective of color, class, or gender.

Sparked by the refusal of Rosa Parks to submit to the indignity of giving up her seat to a white man on the Montgomery Public Bus Company, a year-long boycott of the bus company was initiated by the black community. The voice of this protest was an unknown minister, Martin Luther King, Jr. King rallied and inspired blacks in Montgomery to see themselves as a force of history and God. "If you protest courageously, and yet with dignity and Christian love", Martin Luther King said to blacks during this boycott, "when the history books are written, future generations and historians will pause and say, 'There lived a great people-a black people-who who injected new meaning and dignity in the veins of civilization.'" For almost a year, blacks in Montgomery Alabama stopped riding the public buses even though many of them depended on the public transportation to get to and from work. Instead, they walked or organized for car pools to take them wherever they wanted to go. In 1956, the United States Supreme Court

upheld a lower court decision that declared Alabama laws requiring segregation on public transportation unconstitutional.

Yet, it was the heroic struggle of ordinary black people in Montgomery, Alabama which forced the issue which ended segregation in public transportation. The Montgomery Bus Boycott became the movement with capital **M** and propelled the civil rights movement into the national consciousness. Sensing that the Montgomery Bus Boycott was part of the rising tide of history, King said of the Boycott, King, "We have gained a new sense of dignity and destiny. We are not wrong in what we are doing. If we are wrong, then the Supreme Court of this nation is wrong. If we are wrong, the Constitution of the United States is wrong. If we are wrong, God Almighty is wrong. If we are wrong, justice is a lie."

#### **March on Washington: "We Shall Overcome."**

The March on Washington was an event bigger than life. The March united the American political establishment and citizenry behind the demands and goals of the civil rights movement. The brainchild of Asa Philip Randolph, the March on Washington mobilized over 250,000 people. Ordinary people joined a host of national figures and celebrities, who came to Washington to protest against legal segregation and racial oppression of African Americans. Moreover, the March on Washington signaled that the civil rights movement was a people's movement, a movement which elevated the African American freedom struggle to the national agenda, with victories in *Brown vs. The Board of Education* in 1954, followed by the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and the founding of Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Americans from all parts of the country came to Washington D C to support this national cause, with African Americans representing the largest numbers of participants. It was, to be sure, a rallying cry against centuries of racial oppression. At this march, Martin Luther King, Jr., gave his famous I Have a Dream Speech, recognized as one of the greatest speeches of the twentieth century. King articulated a vision of America, free of racism, where citizens would be judged on the content of their character rather than the color of their skin. This

speech as well as the march would become a point of reference and a model for human rights struggle all over the world.

### **1960s Civil Rights Movement: “We Shall Overcome”**

The 1960s civil rights movement was more than a social cause-it was a continuation of the American Revolution, advanced by ordinary black men, women and children, many of who risked or gave their lives so that others might live with dignity and freedom. In the face violence and terrorism, African Americans developed new forms of struggle, and empowered themselves to challenge the system of racism in America. This Movement became a social force which changed the character and structure of American society, forcing a nation founded on the principles of “freedom and justice for all”, to face the contradiction of its professed principles and its practice of segregation. The civil rights movement brought together people of all races, breaking the barriers of legal segregation and creating greater capacity for both political and social change in America for all people, especially, those in the labor movement and the emerging women’s movement. The civil rights movement’s anthem, *We Shall Overcome*, was tribute to the will of those involved in the civil rights struggle to make profound social change.

Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), headed by Martin Luther King, was central to organizing the black churches into a political network and support structure for the civil rights movement. Bayard Rustin, one of the principal civil rights strategist, declared, “When judging the SCLC, one must place above all else its most magnificent accomplishment: the creation of a disciplined mass movement of Southern blacks. There has been nothing in the annals of American social struggle to equal this phenomenon, and there probably never will be again.” SCLC was the organizational force that developed the infrastructure of the civil rights movement. It was the local movements that created a need for SCLC. It functioned as the decentralized arm of the black church. SCLC organized the church on a scale equal to the task of confronting segregation. Because SCLC was a church-based

movement organization, it was able to pull churches directly into the movement, making it a dynamic force. The formation of SCLC stimulated the emergence of new local movements while coordinating those already established.

A missing chapter in the history of the civil rights movement is the organizing strategies and abilities of local communities by ordinary people which produced new forms of democratic leadership as evidenced by the Mississippi Democratic Freedom Party which registered countless blacks and challenged the Democratic Party at its 1964 National Convention over the legitimacy of the all white delegation to represent Mississippi. The civil rights movement produced the student movement and a generation of social change leaders who went on to become elected officials, writers, scholars, and academic leaders. One of the most influential student organizations in the history twentieth century- SNCC (Student Non violent Coordinating Committee) emerged out of the civil rights movement, organizing blacks in the Deep South,. SNCC established freedom schools, organizing voter registration drives, organizing citizen leadership models.

The 1960s civil rights movement had a profound impact on American society. First it ended legally sanctioned segregation and the system of Jim Crow, the system of denial and deformation of black life and black humanity. Prior to the movement, the system of segregation forced blacks to live in separate and limiting world, characterized by poverty, racial discrimination and exclusion, powerlessness, symbolic and real subordination, and the imperative ritual and acts of deference to whites. Second, the move altered and expanded American politics by providing other oppressed groups with organizational and tactical models, allowing them to enter directly into the political arena through the politics of protest. Third, the impact of the civil rights movement penetrated far beyond the black community. Native Americans and other people of color, farmers, students, women senior citizens, were marginalized and their interest excluded from the centers of power. The extent of their exclusion varied, but they were nevertheless

marginalized. The civil rights movement changed the landscape of American society, opening it to previously excluded groups and gave these groups model of protest and struggle. The civil rights movement demonstrated to those groups that organized “street protest” and struggle by “any means necessary” was a viable method of social change capable of bring about desired results. The impact of the civil rights movement is not j just confined to the United States. Its influence can be seen in the antinuclear movement in Europe. The South Africa liberation movement drew from both the civil rights and black power movements

### **Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters: “ In Unity and Struggle”**

Founded by Asa Philip Randolph in 1925, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), the first black trade union, won key labor victories for African Americans in securing better wages working hours. BSCP became and integral part of the fight for fair employment practices in other industries and helped bring black workers in the realm of labor. The significance of the BSCP, however, goes far beyond its accomplishments as a trade union. Under the leadership of Randolph, the BSCP emerged as a strong voice for civil rights, paving the way for civil rights gains in the 1960s. The BSCP became a model for mass protest struggle. The BSCP influence was evident in the Montgomery Bus Boycott where one of the principal organizers, E. D. Nixon was a member of the BSCP. Prior to this, in 1943, A Phillip Randolph, founder of the BSCP organized the first planned march on Washington, threatening a mass march of 50, 000 to 100,000 to protest discrimination in hiring. The government conceded to the threat of the march. President Franklin Roosevelt issued the first federal decree on race relations since the Emancipation Proclamation – an executive order banning discrimination. In addition to this, the BSCP was instrumental in developing organizational and protest strategies for the civil rights movement which bore fruit in the March on Washington. The BSCP radicalized the civil rights movement and gave it organizational capacity and boldness.

## 📍 Million Man March: “Strong Men Just Keep on Coming”

In 1996, the largest gather of black men in the nation’s history gathered on the mall in Washington D. C. for a Day of Atonement and reconciliation. The event offered black men who attended a kind of public ritual that would allow them to repent for failing to care adequately for their families and their communities and to dedicate themselves to doing better.

The Million Man March was the largest mobilization of blacks in the United States. The march was organized by the Nation of Islam to draw attention to the deteriorating social conditions of the black community and to encourage black men to take control over their lives. Moreover, the Million Man March was a call by Nation of Islam minister Louis Farrakhan for day of atonement that would highlight the economic and social ills plaguing African American males. On October 16, 1995, One million black men came to Washington, DC to recommit themselves to being responsible fathers and productive men. The march had immediately impact, reinvigorating community outreach and activism. Sterling Brown’s poem, Strong Men, reflected the spirit and focus of the march:

*They broke you in like and oxen/They scourged you, they branded you/They made your women breeders/They taught you they're religion/They disgraced [yet] you sang;/The strong men keep coming on, the strong men get stronger.*



### **Kujichagulia**



*“To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves.”*

## ▣ Independent African American Church Movement: “Seeking Dignity and Spirituality”

Before and after the Civil War, African Americans used religion to inform their moral and worldview, making it the center not only of African American culture, but for the challenging of the American social and political system. The quest for freedom centered in African American churches, from African Methodist Episcopal Church to the Nation of Islam (NOI), from Richard Allen to Jarena Lee to Ida B Wells and Martin Luther King and from personal struggle to civil rights. The story of African American religious struggle for meaning, hope, and dignity is a crucial theme in this nation's history. African American religious history does not stand outside of the general struggle for African American freedom. African American churches had to contend with some barriers, structures, and systems of degradation and denial were present and prevalent in black life.

The independent African American church movement began in the early 1780s in the South. A relatively unknown black, Andrew Bryan, gathered a small group of blacks for worship outside of Savannah Georgia. By 1790, this small group swelled in numbers and became the First African Baptist Church of Savannah. By 1803, a second African church was organized and a few years later a third church was formed. These churches were separate and independent insofar as they met separately and chose their own ministers and officers.

In the North, the gradual abolition of slavery after the American Revolution made it possible for black congregations and clergy to take much more authority over their religious affairs. Between 1790 and 1820, black Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians founded churches and struggled with church leaders to exercise varying degrees of independence and control. Among the first to do so was Bethel African Methodist Episcopal

Church in Philadelphia, founded in 1794 by Richard Allen. Bethel was organized after a racial incident in which blacks were asked to worship separately from whites in another part of the church. This incident drove blacks from St George's Church which they had supported for years and became the founding event of black Methodism and black religious independence.

Black Methodists were the first to take control of their church finance, property and governance in the denominational level. The main public issues which drew the attention of free blacks in the North were the social conditions of poverty and illiteracy which afflicted the majority of black communities, the continuation and expansion of slavery in the South, the legal and social discrimination that restricted the rights of free blacks, and the coming to terms with the troubling questions of What did it mean to be black in America? As a single institution which blacks controlled, the church played an active role in addressing these issues.

Black churches helped form self-help organizations such as benevolent societies that were designed to aid widows, pay burial of the poor, and teach children how to read and write. They also formed moral reform societies to help foster racial pride and community activism. Through these societies, blacks acted cooperatively to change the conditions in which they lived. Too, black churches defended the antislavery position, teaching that slavery was incompatible with Christianity.

The black church has functioned as the institutional center for the civil rights movement in America. Historically, the black church provided the civil rights movement with an organized mass based; a leadership of ministers largely independent of the larger white society and skilled management people and resources; an institutional financial base through which protest was financed; and meeting places where the masses planned tactics and

strategies and collectively renew their commitment to the struggle. The engine which fueled the modern civil rights movement was the local movement centers. The civil rights movement was more than just one homogenous movement; was composed of and defined by numerous local movements with their own organizations, leadership, strategies and funding base. These centers were crucial to the emergence of the movement. The movement centers generated and sustained collective action.

### **Lift Every Voice and Sing: Black National Anthem**

In 1900, James Weldon Johnson and his brother, Rosamond Johnson wrote the song, *Lift Every Voice and Sing* for a chorus of five hundred schoolchildren in Jacksonville, Florida for special event, commentating the emancipation of black people in America. James Weldon Johnson set out to produce a work that would honor the spirituality and humanity of African Americans and their struggle to free themselves from slavery. For Johnson, *Lift Every Voice and Sing* was a moving work. After writing the first stanza of the song, Johnson said:

The spirit of the poem had taken hold of me. While my bother worked at his musical setting, I repeated the lines over and over to myself, going through the agony and ecstasy of creating. I could not keep back the tears, and made no effort to do so. When I put the last stanza down on paper, I knew that in that stanza the American black was historically and spiritually immanent.

After the special event, the school children of Jacksonville continued to singing *Lift Every Voice and Sing*. These students went off to other schools and continued singing *Lift Every Voice and Sing*. When they became teachers, they taught the song to their students. Within twenty years, *Lift Every Voice and Sing* was being sung in schools and churches and on special occasion throughout the South. Later it was adopted by the National Advancement of Color People (NAACP) as their anthem. In the 1960s blacks adopted the song as by African Americans as the National Anthem for African Americans. In reflecting on the creation of *Lift*

*Every Voice and Sing*, James Weldon Johnson wrote, "Nothing I have done has paid me back so fully in satisfaction as being part of the creator of this song."

### 📖 **The New Negro, 1920's: "The Emergence of a New African American Identity."**

The New Negro, as articulated by Alain Locke in a literary anthology, entitled *The New Negro*, signaled the emergence of a new African American personality. In the 1920s blacks in America became conscious of their African identity and heritage. Set at the beginning of the twentieth century, this was as historian Nathan Higgonbotten says "one of those rare and intriguing moments when a people decide that they are the instruments of history-making and race-building." The black intellectuals thought of themselves as part of some larger meaning in the sweep of history, a part of some grand design. These talented men and women presumed themselves to be actors and creators in the special occurrence of a people's birth which required a singular consciousness. In the opening decades of the twentieth century, black intellectuals in Harlem had such a self-concept. The New Negro Movement intended to define blacks in new terms, outside of the convenient stereotype of white America. The New Negro symbolized the cleansing of the effects of the dehumanization of slavery. In introducing and articulating the ethos of the New Negro, Alain Locke wrote.

In the last decade, something beyond the watch and guard of statistics has happened in the life of the American Negro. He simply cannot be swathed in a formulae. For generations in the mind of America, the Negro has been more a formula than a human being- something to be argued about, condemned or defended, to be "kept down" or "in his place" or "helped up", to be worried with or worried over, harassed or patronized, a social bogey or social burden. For the younger generations is vibrant with a new psychology; the new spirit is awake in the masses, and under the very eyes of the professional observers is transforming what has been a perennial problem into the progressive phases of contemporary Negro life.

The New Negro rushed into the national consciousness the visibility of African Americans as one of the defining moments in American history. The New Negro above all marked the coming of age of African American people, conscious of their history and humanity. As a cultural and social force, the New Negro reshaped the cultural landscape of America in the 1920s, redefining its popular music-introducing of blues, defining its native classical music, jazz, and giving new form and meaning to art and literature. Indeed, the cultural contributions which came out of this movement defined a generation of Americans.

### **Black History Month: " In All Our Glory."**

Carter G. Woodson established Black History Week as a way of calling attention to the historical achievements which blacks made to human civilization. Woodson said to African Americans.

We have a wonderful history behind us. It reads like the history in a heroic age. If you read the history Africa, the history of your ancestors-people of whom you should feel proud-you will realize that they have a history that is worthwhile. They have traditions that have value of which you can boast and upon which you can claim for the right to share in the blessing of democracy. We are going back that beautiful history and it is going to inspire us to greater achievements.

Woodson dedicated his life to advancing African Americans through the promotion of Black History. He often stated he was interested in preserving and publishing the records of blacks so that the "race may not become a negligible factor in the thought of the world." In Woodson's view, dissemination of black history would build self-respect among blacks. His aim was to have African Americans appreciate of what their race had thought, felt and achieved. By going back and reclaiming the history of African Americans, Woodson earned the title "Father of Black History". A lasting monument to Woodson's work was his organizing the second week in February, in 1926, as Black history Week celebration. This celebration of Black History Week has now become Black History Month.

### **Autobiography of Malcolm X: "The Handbook of the Black Movement"**

The Autobiography of Malcolm X is a work of enduring value for African Americans and produced one of the sharpest and most insightful critiques of race and racism in American society and set the conceptual framework for the Black Consciousness and Black Power Movements in the 1960s. In this book, Malcolm X speaks on behalf of the black people, the poor, and the marginalized. This book is widely read by people of all colors, and for many, it is a rite of passage for social and political activism. As professor of history, V.P. Franklin observes, "Virtually all studies of American Autobiography published after 1965 include some discussion of the Autobiography of *Malcolm X* which has come to be considered a classic in that literary genre."

It is consider one of the best critiques of the black condition in America. In the Autobiography, Malcolm calls attention to the revolutions in the Third World and suggested that young blacks would draw inspiration and instruction from these liberation movements. He also called attention to the ineffectiveness of the 'moderate established black leadership and the impending violence that would erupt in the black ghettos of America. The book also revealed the potential and possibility of the "criminal class" to transform itself through the religious and moral force of Islam. Malcolm recalls that the black Muslims hit him with the force of a revelation and turned his life completely around. The moral disciplines of the nation of Islam gave stability and focus to his daily life and boosted his self-esteem.

In prison Malcolm began a rigorous program of self-education to improve his vocabulary and his knowledge through reading. Malcolm's life was transformed from a "street hustler" to a morally disciplined leader. The moral and cultural transformation of his life, as revealed through his autobiography, is one of the most important a case study for identifying effective interventions for drug and criminally-involved males. The Autobiography of Malcolm had a strong influence on the emerging youth leaders of the 1960s and set the tone and direction for the emergence of a more radical critique and form of struggle in America.

## 📖 **Black Women Writers: Phenomenal Woman"**

In the 1970s African American women writers began to address the issues of racism in the women's movement and sexism in the black struggle. Many of these writers, June Jordan, Audre Lorde, and Alice Walker, to name a few, were active in the civil rights movement and brought the dual experience and sensibility of being black and female to their writing. The publishing, in 1970, of May Angelou's autobiography *I Know Why The Cage Bird Sings* signaled the existence of an audience for African American women writers. In this same year, June Jordan, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison, women whose writing would come to dominate black literature, published their first novels. This was followed by, an anthology of black women writers, edited by Toni Bambara. This anthology critiqued the male cultural nationalist movement while critiquing class and race in the women's movement. The writing of these and other black women expanded the dimensions of black literature with their critiques of relationships between black women and men and with their explorations of the complexities of black life, black culture, and the black community. In exploring gender issues, these writers introduced new themes in African American literature- motherhood, mother/daughter relationships, women's friendships and the relationship between sexuality and spirituality. The writing of these African American women in the 1970s prepared the ground work for literary scholarship on black woman writers of the past as well as for the development of black feminist criticism.

## 📖 **Dunbar High School: A Model of Educational Achievement**

Dunbar High School was named for the famed African American Poet, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, and was founded as a high school for black children in the District of Columbia. Within the walls of Dunbar from 1870 to 1954, there was teaching on only black children by only black teachers. There was a respect for learning and an expectation of superiority based on knowledge a pride emanating from teachers and instilled into pupils that made Dunbar

a special educational environment. The list of black principals and teachers are an extraordinary group of educators. Some of the principals include: Mary J Patterson, a graduate of Oberlin, Richard T. Greener, the first black graduate of Harvard and U.S. Consul at Vladivostok, Russia, F>L. Glasgow, Treasurer of South Carolina during Reconstruction, Robert H. Terrell, municipal judge and Anna Julia Cooper, author and recipient of a doctoral degree. In sum, the principals who served at Dunbar received their education and degrees from, Harvard, Oberlin, Dartmouth, Amherst, Glasgow in Scotland, Western Reserve, Howard, and the University Pittsburgh. The list of teachers who served under these principals is also a missing page in African American history and includes the grandson of Frederick Douglass and historian Carter G Woodson. The philosophy and teaching of Dunbar High School was therefore exemplary with a curriculum based on courses in English, Latin, French, Spanish, German, history, mathematics, science, art, and music. Dunbar did not, as a rule; attempt to prepare black athletes to seek coveted athletic scholarships. Dunbar graduates sought and received scholarships based on academic merit. A major hallmark of Dunbar graduates was not only their will to achieve but their pride in the achieving of other Dunbar graduates and in the school as an institution. At Dunbar teachers attempted to provide quality education for their students because they and the student and the community thought was possible to do so.

Dunbar educated generation of black students to meet any test. The lessons derived from Dunbar vividly illustrate the possibility of having intellectual equality within the black community. Dunbar shows that given certain conditions- kind of teachers, kind of students, quality school - black youth can be educated to meet any standards the American system wishes to project. Dunbar capitalized upon the strengths of black teachers and

principals who brought knowledge and security to an educational task because they themselves had met the standards of the larger society.



## Ujima



*"To build and maintain our community together and make our sister's and brother's problems our problems and to solve them together."*

### 📌 **Underground Railroad, 1830 – 1860: The Freedom Train**

The system of receiving, concealing, and freeing blacks who escaped slavery is known as the Underground Railroad. The "Railroad" started in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and was made up of a tightly knit network of safe houses located at strategic points along the escape routes coming out of the South. African Americans who traveled the Underground Railroad referred to also as the "Freedom Train", were escorted by a conductor, the person working secretly for the "Railroad" and managed the planned escapes. The Underground Railroad had complex, mathematical codes that allowed the "conductors" and "operators" to evade discovery and capture. The Underground Railroad was more than just a mode of transportation for escape. It brought hope to those who yearned for freedom. Free blacks, who were involved with the Underground Railroad, risk their own freedom, and indeed their lives, to help other blacks escape from slavery. Harriet Tubman was the best known "operator" Of the Underground Railroad. She guided more than 300 African Americans from slavery to freedom. As a fierce proponent of freedom, Tubman said, "There are one or two things I have a right to: liberty or death. I will fight for my liberty and the liberty of my people as long as my strength last". An equally daring and contributing "conductor" was William Still. Still conducted the Philadelphia station, helping hundreds of blacks to escape to freedom. It is estimated that from 1830 to 1860 the Underground Railroad assisted 2,500 passengers (blacks) escape to freedom. In addition to Still and Tubman, there were a number of African Americans who because of illness, physical limitations, or family obligations could not escape; yet still provide aid to those who

dared to travel the Underground Railroad. One of the ways these blacks aided those on the “Freedom Train” was to hang certain quilts which served as guidepost for those who had escaped. This “Freedom Train” was a testimony to the human will of African Americans to be free and a marvelous example of act of heroism and selflessness which would continue to mark the African American Freedom struggle.

### **Black Women Club Movement: Lift as We Climb**

The struggle of African Americans and women to free the “race” and to participate fully as women in American Democracy is a contribution to the ongoing struggle of human freedom and the liberation of women. African American women have been in the forefront and exemplars of women’s rights and women’s liberation. Women such as Sojourner Truth; Harriet Tubman; Francis Ellen Watkins Harper; Ida Wells-Barnett; Anna Julia Cooper; Fannie Lou Hamer; and Ella Bader, have advanced an instructive and inspiring model of womanhood and quality female and male relationships which challenged men and women to work together, free of the limitations of race, class and gender. Anna J. Cooper best articulated this model by observing:

All I claim is that there is a feminine as well as a masculine side to truth, that these are related not as inferior and superior, not as better and worse, not as weaker and stronger, but as compliments – compliments in one necessary and symmetric whole.

Black Women Clubs exemplified the commitment of blacks to be each other’s keeper, adopting the motto and mission, “*Be watchful over each other*”. In the absence of much-needed assistance from the government after the Civil War, black women clubs stepped in and made available needed social services for African Americans. These clubs organized mutual relief associations for newly freed blacks, advancing a model of shared resources. They provided literary training and positive role models and opportunities for less fortunate blacks. These talented and committed club women accepted the burden and responsibility to serve the black masses. Mary Church Terrell believed that black women clubs were tasked with

saving the race: The preservation of the race”, she asserted “demands that black women go among the lowly, illiterate, and even the vicious to whom they are bound by race and sex to reclaim them”. The activism of the women in these clubs who were mothers, wives and activist served as a model for women everywhere.

### **Black Mutual Aid Societies: “Forward Together, Backward Never”**

Established near the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, black mutual aid societies represent one of the oldest and most durable models of African American self-help organizations. Black mutual aid societies flourished after the Civil War, especially in the South, and provided social welfare services to newly freed African Americans who were particularly vulnerable to economic hardship and who were excluded from the services offered by the local and national government. These organizations formed to provide financial assistance for blacks: benefits for members who were unable to work because of illness; funeral and burial expenses; pensions for widows and orphans; and low interest loans. In addition to financial aid, many societies attempted to provide social uplift, encouraging temperance, and discouraging fighting and profanity among African Americans. The growth of Black mutual aid societies continued well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1910, for example, mutual aid societies in Mississippi had a combined membership of 80,000, almost equally that of black church membership in the state. Black leaders such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington praised these organizations, citing the value of the service they provided to African Americans. Black mutual aid societies laid the foundations for black businesses and the revenue sharing, economic models.

### **Black Extended Family Model: “I Am Because We Are and Because We Are I Am”**

The black extended family model is rooted in the African American southern tradition of African American life. This family model is based on social as well as blood ties. Extended family members-grandparents cousins nieces, nephews aunts uncles, and friends- are bound as family by a sense of obligation to each others. The black extended family model is grounded in the Africa and shaped by the experience of blacks in America. This family structure has a built-in mutual aid

system for the welfare of its members and the maintenance of the family as a whole. It is a model which provides for the emotional and social well-being of children. The strong emotional ties of the black extended family was the means and medium by which African Americans survived and flourished in midst of slavery and segregation. Moreover, the black extended family was born out of necessity, but maintained out of choice. This model of family structure provided and continues to furnish an excellent context for moral and social growth of children. The connectedness and stability of the social networks of the black extended family transcends single household families because the adults in a given community have the potential and authority to observe report on, discuss, reward, and punish the behavior of children. The network of the extended family reinforces the discipline the child receive in the home because other adults in the community assume responsibility for maintaining a standard of community and social behavior for all the children in the community. The black extended family is an expression and example of the African proverb: It takes a village to raise a child.



### **Ujamaa**



*"To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together."*

### **☐ Cooperative Movement Model, 1930s: In The Service of Each Other"**

Black economic development is rooted in the long-standing tradition of black self-help, mutual aid, and social uplift societies. Shared resources and mutual obligation were the ties that held blacks together at the close of the Civil War and during the era of legally sanctioned segregation. With the emergence of the New Negro Movement and Garvey Movements, African Americans began to explore and search for viable and sustainable economic models. The new models, whether socialist or capitalist, built on the black mutual aid societies models which along with the black church were engine which drove the development black businesses and economic life for the newly freed blacks. For the most part, African Americans were labors and were disadvantaged by the racial character of American capitalism

summed up in the phrase, "the last hired and the first fired." From the outset, therefore, blacks recognized that the likelihood of achieving economic success would be best accomplished through a cooperative approach to economic.

Cooperative economic models varied in activities and scope. In the south, cooperative economic models centered around agricultural activities. In the north, blacks developed consumer cooperatives. The idea of the forming black consumer cooperatives as an economic strategy gained momentum during the 1920s and after the 1929 meltdown of the financial market, known as the Great Depression. African Americans were extremely vulnerable and the hardest hit during this economic crisis. In response to their vulnerability and suffering, African Americans began to explore and consider alternatives to the capitalist order based on racial preference with whites at the top and blacks at the bottom. The search for alternative economic models began with the cooperative buying. A call was issued by a group of blacks, though on the major black newspapers, the Pittsburgh Courier, to develop and implement a strategy of cooperative economics African Americans. From this call, the Young Negro Cooperative League (YNCL), headed by future civil rights and socialist organizer, Ella Baker, formed a coalition of local cooperative and buying clubs in various parts of the country to leverage the economic capacity of African Americans. This and cooperative models surfaced as alternative strategy to the prevailing capitalist business model. Many of these consumers cooperative functioned well into the 1970s. Along with efforts to develop small businesses, blacks explored other models of economic models of development including those based on socialism and communism.

#### **Religious Model of Shared Wealth:**

Religion played a central role in the creation of the black economic development. Several modes of revenue sharing have been created and nurtured through the church. One such mode is grounded in the religious tradition of African Americans. The example and principles of community solidarity and mutual obligation embedded in the mutual aid societies informed and influenced the religious tradition of African Americans. A distinguishing feature of the black

church, dating back to the founding of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, was its integration of spiritual life and social life. Richard Allen founder of the AME Church advocated that true believers had to stretch out their hands beyond the circle of family and friends to comfort the poorer neighbor, the stranger, the widow, and the orphan. Allen argued that given the poverty and illiteracy of blacks, charity needed to be institutionalized.

In the 1930s, blacks through the leadership of Father Divine and his religious movement advanced a model of cooperative economics grounded in the black Christian experience. Father Divine adopted the cooperative principles and methods in building an economic infrastructure which could support blacks and mitigate their suffering during the Great Depression. By calling on his members to pooled their resources and labor together under the banner of self-help, Father Divine cooperative economic movement organized soup kitchens, stores, housing, nurseries, and employment agencies. Father Divine's cooperative enterprises helped many poor black people to survive the difficulties of the Great Depression. Although cooperative and communal living did not originate with Father Devine, he perfected one the most successful models.

#### **W.E.B. Du Bois Model:**

Consistent with his deepening socialist vision, WEB Du Bois advocated for an all-black cooperative venture as a national economic strategy. In a series of articles in the leading African American newspaper, the Pittsburgh Courier, Du Bois argued that though a cooperative model of economic the "entire working class could make one assault upon poverty and race hate". To accomplish this, however, Du Bois argued that African Americans had to build their own separate organizations along cooperative lines. He believed that the establishment of black cooperatives would become a model and the basis of unity between black and white workers. In the confines of Jim Crow, Du Bois saw cooperative enterprises as a transitional strategy toward a more human economic model for all of America. Du Bois and other practitioners of the cooperative economic saw a number of benefits outside of a more egalitarian distribution of economic wealth. The cooperative consumer movement, for example, offered organizers a way of working with people on a

protracted, day-to-day basis. Unlike the capitalist model, cooperative economic aided in establishing common priorities for those involved, solidifying democratic methods of decision-making, and building communication networks which encouraged people at the community level to engage in empowering their communities' lives and transforming themselves in the process. Du bois' advocacy of cooperative economics added an important intellectual voice to the call for a cooperative economic strategy.

### **Black Baseball Leagues, 1920-1960: "Revenue Sharing Model"**

During the period of American history known as "Jim Crow", one of the most thriving institutions in black life was the Black Baseball Leagues. For African Americans who lived segregated lives, the Black Baseball Leagues were cultural and economic institutions in the first magnitude. The men who played in this league became "symbols of competence and achievement for all blacks. The leagues enriched the quality of life in the black communities across the United States. The leagues were among the largest black businesses in the United States. A by-product of the leagues was the network of businesses, rooming houses, cafes, sewing factories which served and supported the leagues. The players, who played in these leagues, include hall of fame legends Willie Mays, Satchel Paige, Home Run king Hank Aaron, Josh Gibson, and Jackie Robison. Yet, the Leagues produced more than just great ball players. The black leagues, like the white ones were first and foremost a business enterprise. The struggle and marvelous success of the black entrepreneurs who managed the black leagues is a missing chapter in both the history of baseball and American business. The Black leagues were the product of and made possible through the example and lessons of the black mutual aid societies. From the outset, early black entrepreneurs recognized that any success in developing black businesses could occur only through economic cooperation. The sharing and consolidation of resources was the means and method for establishing the Black Baseball Leagues. And, besides developing a revenue sharing model that ensured the sustainability of the Leagues, the black baseball entrepreneurs introduced an entertainment aspect to the game of baseball, making it more commercially appealing. The amusement dimension of the game, often

characterized as clowning or comic play was a brilliant marketing strategy adding value to the sport of baseball. Today, professional athletes and teams seek to entertain viewers with various entertainment routines, including clowns and mascots. These athletes as well as those who market athletes and their sports team are emulating and using the marketing strategies invented by the black entrepreneurs of the Black Baseball Leagues.

### 📍 **Motown: Family Model**

Berry Gordy founded and presided over the musical empire known as Motown. Gordy endeavored to reach across the racial divide with music that could touch all people. Under his tutelage, Motown became a model of black economic self-determination, black pride and black self-expression. Motown was a repository for some of the greatest talent ever assembled at a single record company. The list of Motown artists include: **the Supremes**, Jr. Walker & the All-Stars, **the Temptations**, the Four Tops, **the Miracles**, Marvin Gaye, **Stevie Wonder**, the Jackson 5, **Gladys Knight & the Pips** and Martha and the Vandellas. His musical dynasty yielded in millions of dollars, but the story of Motown is the story of family and community. Motown's success was in the concept of the Motown family. The artists, musicians, technicians, business executives, and secretaries all shared an interest in everyone's success.

The artists alone, however, were not the whole story of the Motown Miracle. Motown's staff songwriting and production teams (e.g., Holland-Dozier-Holland) and in-house musicians (including such unsung heroes as bandleader/keyboardist Earl Van Dyke and bassist James Jamerson) helped to make the "Motown Sound". The idea of a self-contained operation exuding soul from its every pore was all part of Gordy's grand design. The studio musicians, known as the "Funk Brothers", gave Motown its signature sound.

The organizing genius behind the Motown Miracle was Berry Gordy who oversaw the whole operation from its founding in 1959 to its sale in 1988. Berry insured that Motown's stable of singers, songwriters, producers and musicians took the concept of simple, catchy pop songs to a whole new level of sophistication and, thanks to

the music's roots in gospel and blues, visceral intensity. At Motown, notions of "formula" were transformed into works of art in the hands of singers like **Marvin Gaye**, Mary Wells, **Smokey Robinson**, Levi Stubbs (of the Four Tops), David Ruffin and Eddie Kendrick (of the Temptations), Diana Ross, Martha Reeves and **Stevie Wonder**.

Rooted in gospel and blues, Gordy touted Motown as "the Sound of Young America." At Gordy's insistence, Motown's men and women of soul attended in-house finishing school, where they learned how to comport themselves onstage and in social situations. Gordy instituted an internal program of "quality control," including weekly product evaluation meetings. At the same time, the working environment was sufficiently loose and freewheeling to foster creativity. In Gordy's words, "Hitsville had an atmosphere that allowed people to experiment creatively and gave them the courage not to be afraid to make mistakes." Motown's musical legacy is well known and will continue to inspire and instruct. So too will its business and management model. The missing chapter in the Motown story is its entrepreneurial model of business; its participatory production style, and its artist incentive model which motivated Motown artist and musicians to innovate, collaborate, and create. The Motown Miracle to be sure was a collective achievement grounded in the culture of African Americans.



**Nia**



*"To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness."*

☐ **Yes We Can: The Election of Barack Obama, 44th President of the United States**

The election of Barack Obama as the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States is truly a milestone in both African American History and the history of the United States. It, as said elsewhere, "marks a remarkable moment in our country's history--a milestone in America's scarred racial landscape and a victory for the forces of decency, diversity and tolerance." Obama's team and campaign respect for decency, dignity, and intelligence of the American people was reflected their organizing strategy and mantra-Respect, Empower, Include." Engagement of ordinary, everyday American people and the historical possibility of electing the nation's first African American president drove a record-shattering turnout, especially among African Americans and contributed to Obama's decisive victory. Put another way, Obama's election was the realization of so many people who fought for equality and justice in the 20th century and before.

Moreover, Obama's campaign strategy, starting with his unexpected victory over Hillary Clinton and the Clinton machine in the Democratic primary, and extending into the general presidential campaign, will be study as a masterpiece and a new model for electoral politic in the United States. The President-Elect's victory will inspire generations to come. Yet, his victory for African American represents more than a historical milestone; it is affirmation of black people's humanity and will to achieve. In the words of Barack Obama:

If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible, who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time, who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer. It's the answer that led those who've been told for so long by so many to be cynical and fearful and doubtful about what we can achieve to put their hands on the arc of history and bend it once more toward the hope of a better day. It's been a long time coming, but tonight, because of what we did on this date in this election at this defining moment change has come to America.

As historian Benjamin Quarles writes, in the Civil War, the African Americans were both a symbol and participants in the war and their own liberation. African Americans furnished a concrete expression of one of the most ennobling goals of the war- that of enlarging the compass of human liberty. From the start, African Americans were active participants in their own liberation. Following the Congressional and Presidential edicts issued 1862, thousands of black men and women crossed union lines to secure their freedom. Frederick Douglass urged blacks to struggle by any means necessary to secure their freedom:

The general sentiment of mankind is that a man who will not fight for himself when he has the means of doing so is not worth being fought for by others, and this sentiment is just. For a man who does not value freedom for himself will never value it for others, nor put himself to any inconvenience to gain it for others. The world we live in is very accommodating to all sorts of people. I will co-operate with them in any measure which they propose; it will help those who earnestly help themselves, and will hinder those who hinder themselves. The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of struggle. If there is not struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. The struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle.

Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them, and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress. If we get free from the oppressions and wrong heaped upon us, we must pay for their removal. We must do this by labor, by suffering, by sacrifice, and if needs be by our live and the lives of others.

African American freedom fighters responded to the call for freedom through struggle. Blacks in the North, for example, used every available platform to reframe the meaning and purpose of the Civil War from “saving the Union to “freeing enslaved African Americans.” Harriet Tubman and others planned and execute plantation raids, freeing enslaved blacks and disrupting military resources. In the South, blacks began to escape in large numbers, further crippling the Confederacy. After escaping, many would often return to free other relatives and friends and to fight on the battle field with other blacks. Over 200,000 blacks served in the federal army and navy. Yet, military service was not the only method and means of resistance. As blacks confronted their former slave owners on the field of battle, other blacks, unable to escape to Union lines, played a crucial role in helping to break the back of the Confederacy. Some refused to work; others broke tools, burned plantations, and turned the system of terror that had been employed against them onto the owners of plantations. During the war black women demonstrated heroism and bravery. Sojourner Truth and Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin became recruiters of black troops. Harriet Tubman raided plantations, leading black and white troop, and in one expedition freed 750 African Americans. Other black women traveled with the black regiments, helping their husbands and other soldiers, enduring terrible hardships. Their resistances hasten the demise of the old order of slavery. The collapsed of the Confederacy was a result of the assault of the federal troops, inclusive of blacks, from without and the subversion of the old order from within by blacks. It is well documented that African Americans were the “tipping point” for the demise of the confederate army and the rapid end of the war.

### **Black Reconstruction, 1860 – 1870: America’s Unfinished Revolution**

Reconstruction, the immediate period after the American Civil War, witnessed the unfolding of a democratic experiment out of which America had its most inclusive participatory democracy. This period saw African Americans participating as agents of radical change in the expansion of American Democracy. This period broke new ground in protecting the civil rights of African Americans, instituting

universal manhood suffrage, and establishing public schools for all races. Reconstruction as a legal fact and process was enshrined in the civil right act of 1865, defining people born in the United States as national citizens, entitled to the rights of citizenship regardless of race. During the Reconstruction period, the United States Constitution was expanded to include the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment which abolished slavery, the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment which defined United States citizenship to include African Americans, and the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment which protected the voting rights of blacks. Reconstruction, to be sure, was a time when African Americans took the initiative to build institutions that would provide mutual aid for those in need and would prepare them to participate as free people in the American democratic experiment. For African Americans, education was next to freedom, the most highly desired goal. Booker T Washington observed that after the Civil War “blacks flocked to school and had a burning desire to learn. It was as if a whole race was going to school.” Moreover, public education flourished during the time of Reconstruction. WEB Dubois attributes the establishment of public education in the South to blacks and Reconstruction. The high water of Reconstruction witness racial justice, participatory democracy, and the building of the first free institutions-businesses, churches, aid and social clubs-which supported their aspirations to live a free, proud and productive life. Reconstruction was “an amazing expression of hope for America’s future.” However, “the United States”, Du Bois wrote, “that emerged out of Reconstruction was not one over which God smiled; it was one over which God wept.”

### **The 1954 Brown Decision: Ending Legal Segregation**

May 17, 1954, marks the day of the landmark decision by United States Supreme Court on *Brown v. Board of Education*. On this day, the Supreme Court, in the case of *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka*, ended federally sanctioned racial segregation in public schools by ruling unanimously that “separate educational facilities were inherently unequal.” A groundbreaking case, *Brown* not only overturned the precedent of *Plessey v. Ferguson* (1896) which had declared “separate but equal facilities constitutional, but also provided the legal foundation of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. Although *Brown* was a decision which shook

the foundations of segregation, it was the culmination of a legal strategy developed by brilliant legal team of America's premiere civil rights organization, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). On the local level, the NAACP demanded only that local government provide African American children with equal facilities. On the national level, the NAACP, through its first full-time legal counsel, Charles H. Hamilton, focused on graduate and professional schools, demanding equal facilities. The NAACP legal team set out to prove that segregation was not only unable to provide equal facilities, but imposed a "badge of inferiority on black children, causing psychological damage. Beginning a 40 year push, the NAACP won a number of court cases which lead to the historic Brown decision. The Brown decision, coming at a time of great racial inequality in America, sent the country a strong message, reflected in the freedom struggle played out in the streets of America, that legalized racial inequality in America would no longer be tolerated. In addition, the Brown decision along with the Victory in the Montgomery Bus Boycott fueled the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement.

### **Black Nationalists Movement: "The Rebirth of the African Worldview."**

The modern Black Nationalist Movement, born out of the Marcus Garvey Movement, gave African Americans a renewed sense of respect and historical purpose. The African American nationalism represents a continuing manifestation of cultural distinctiveness. The Nationalist movement turned toward Africa for cultural models and ideas in its attempt to implant a value system for African Americans and to organize blacks around their own interest. Black Nationalism, with its focus on an African worldview, was presented as alternative to the Eurocentric worldview. The Black Nationalist Movement beginning with the Garvey Movement advanced an ideology that emphasized positive aspects of black life and black culture, the historical contributions of Africa and African American to human civilization, and the possibilities inherent in the unity of African People. The central focus of African American Nationalism is "nation building". Garvey summed up the call for nation building when he declared, I asked: "Where is the black man's government? Where is his kings and kingdom? Where is his president, his country,

and his ambassadors, his army, his navy, his men of big affairs?" I could not find them, and then I declared I would help make them." During the 1960s African American nationalism, articulated by Malcolm X, rose to the forefront of the freedom struggle, elevating and propagating nationalism in all aspects of black life: Religion, Black Liberation Theology which placed emphasis on African Americans as agents of god in the service of profound social change and transformation; Economic, focused on "Buy Black" and "self-help"; Politics, Black Power, a call for Self-Respect, Self Determination, and Self-Defense, and Culture, black value system, Nguzo Saba (7 Principles), Swahili language, black consciousness> The legacy and contributions of the Black Nationalism includes: African American National flag- black, red, and green; Black Studies; Pan African projects, most notably "Free South Africa and Nelson Mandela Movements; Kwanzaa; Black Consciousness Movement ( black pride, black beauty, black self respect), Nation of Islam; Us Organization; Marcus Garvey; and Malcolm X.

### **Black Electoral Politics: Inserting a Moral and progressive Agenda**

The decades of the 1970s and 1980s witness sweeping and significant changes in the American political landscape brought about through and by the 1960s Movement. In 1972, blacks debated the idea of forming an independent black political party that would fight for and represent the interest of African American people. Although this party was not formed, it helped lay the foundation for the election of blacks to elected office across the country. The role of blacks in electoral politics multiplied as African Americans, through voter registration drives and the opening of the electoral system, went to the voting polls in unprecedented numbers, electing African Americans to local, state and national offices. Black elected officials became common place in major cities- Los Angeles, Newark, Chicago, and Cleveland. The 1970s saw the emergence of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), made up of black members of the House of Representatives. The CBC became a political force in keeping the Civil rights Agenda before the nation. The CBC's avowed aim was: "To promote the public welfare by introducing and passing progressive legislation designed to meet the needs of millions of neglected citizens".

In the 1980s the role of African American elected officials in international affairs was demonstrated through their contributions and intervention in the "Free South Africa Movement." The CBC, TransAfrica, a Washington-based lobby for African Affairs, and churches, and Black Nationalist organizations, led protest against the oppressive white government of South Africa, forcing American businesses, colleges and municipalities to divest their funds in South Africa. This protest movement brought international attention to the liberation struggle in South Africa and helped to dismantle the apartheid structure and society. Leveraging their electoral presence and success of the 1980s, African Americans rose to continue to capture key position of power at the national and state levels. Doug Wilder winning of the governor race in Virginia and Ron Brown election of Chairman of the National Democratic Committee (DNC) was emblematic of the rise of blacks in the electoral politics. Ron Brown, the first African American chair of the DNC, is credited with building the infrastructure for the Democratic Party which elected Bill Clinton president in 1992.

### **Jesse Jackson Presidential Campaigns: "Reestablishing a Moral and Progressive American Agenda."**

In the face of attempts to roll back the gains blacks and other progressive people achieved through the 1960s struggle, Jesse Jackson launched two Presidential Campaigns in 1984 and 1988. These campaigns introduced race and class issues and as substantive issues meriting attention. The Jackson Campaigns demonstrated that American people were indeed interested in substantive issues which impacted their daily lives and future. The campaigns became a platform to articulate progressive issues, address issues affecting the lives of ordinary Americans, and giving voice and choice for the voiceless and marginalized. Those not elected, Jackson's campaigns became a model and inspiration for black and other progressive candidates, yielding tangible benefits such as: 1) galvanizing black voters, 2) registering new voters, especially those disaffected and alienated from the electoral process, 3) raising the level of presidential dialogue and issues ( issue oriented dialogue versus personality driven dialogue, 4) placing morality and

ethics at the core of domestic and foreign policy, and 5) demonstrating the possibility and viability of African Americans being elected to state and national offices.

### **▣ The African American Freedom Struggle: “Power Concedes Nothing Without A Demand”**

From the onset, African Americans have waged a struggle to liberate themselves and to create a “Just Society”. Journalist Andrew Kopkind says that the African American freedom struggle “Is an engine that drives the great vehicle of social change in America and that ; Black people’s epic struggle for equality and quest for identity create both the pretext and the context for national upheaval and transformation.” The black freedom struggle begins with the resistance to enslavement. The life and lives of African Americans were and continue to be consumed with defining and defending their humanity, resisting attempts to reduce them to non-historical beings. Richard Allen founded the AME Church to as a means for black people to worship in dignity and decency. David Walker’s Appeal, published in 1829 is a serve critique and condemnation of slavery. African Americans found the Appeal and inspiring articulation of African American pride and a fearless call to radial action in the name of those principles of justice to which Americans were suppose to be dedicated. Walker’s Appeal inspired and pushed a generation of black to fight against racial oppression and dehumanization. Sojourner Truth, formerly known as Isabella, took on the mission of traveling the county to “testify about the hope that was in her, the conversion and empowerment she felt for black people to free themselves. Frederick Douglass, called by James McCune Smith, a black physician and abolitionist, hailed Douglass as a “Representative American Man”, was the premier spokesman for black people, elevating the black freedom struggle into the national consciousness of the nation. In one of his memorable speeches, A Fourth of July Address, Douglass reminded Americans that the 4<sup>th</sup> of July more than any other occasion underscored the hypocrisy of America: “My fellow-citizens why I am called upon to speak here today? What have I, or those I represent to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that

Declaration of Independence, extended to us?" Blacks used the Civil War as a means to promote a "New Birth of Freedom" and to give this war elevated meaning. Reconstruction, the promise of freedom and fully citizenship produced a model of true democracy and gave the nation the idea of public education. The period after reconstruction, referred to as the Great Nadir, the period of unrelenting violence and terror through lynching and burning and state sanctioned disenfranchisement enshrined in the Supreme Court of Plessey vs. Ferguson, sanctioning segregation. Yet, despite of this second enslavement- Jim Crow-the system of laws and customs that enforced racial segregation and discrimination throughout the United States, especially the South, from the late nineteenth century to the 1960s- blacks held out hope for the nation and continued to advance the cause of freedom. WEB DuBois chronicled the strange meaning and experience of being black in America at the dawn of the twentieth century in his classic works the Souls of Black Folk, prophesying that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of color-line." James Weldon Johnson responded to the Great Nadir by composing what would become the Black National Anthem, daring blacks to lift every voice and sing a "song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us and full of the hope that the present has brought us." The Harlem Renaissance, the outgrowth of the "New Negro" movement redefined African Americans as significant cultural and social force in the nation and indeed the world, giving America its popular and classical music- Blues and Jazz, developing a new genre of literature based in the experience of African Americans. Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, Mary McLeod Bethune, Martin Luther King, Jr, Asa Philip Randolph, Jesse Jackson Louis Farrakhan National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Black Panther Party, Us Organization, and Student Nonviolent Coordinating committee (SNCC) all have the "engine that drives the great vehicle of social change in America" and the expression of "black people's epic struggle for equality and quest for identity create both the pretext and the context for national upheaval and transformation."



**Kuumba**



*"To do always as much as we can in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherit it."*

### **Black Scientist: Grace Under Pressure, Creativity in The Face of Adversity:**

The contributions of blacks in the field of science have been a missing chapter in the narrative of America's scientific and technological advancement. From the beginning, African Americans were part of America's scientific endeavors: Benjamin Banneker produced the blueprint for Washington DC; Norbert Rillieu, chemical engineer, revolutionized the sugar industry by building a refining system; Elijah McCoy whose name became synonymous with high-quality (The Real McCoy) patented more than fifty inventions used by the railroad companies; Grandville T. Woods, invented the trolley car system and helped invent the light bulb, telegraph and telephone systems; Lewis Latimer produced the drawing for the telephone and wrote the world's first book on electric lighting; Jan Matzeliger, revolutionized the shoe industry with the invention of the shoe lasting machine, and Garrett Morgan invented the gas mask and traffic signal. The conditions under which blacks created and invented helps to better appreciate the contributions of African American to science and the advancement of America. Black scientists made their inventions and discoveries in the "face of an indifferent and hostile society." Thus, it is a tribute to their inner urge to create in spite of the continuous questioning of their humanity and intellect. Their internal fortitude demonstrated by these giants reaffirms music and social critic Albert Murray belief that:

Human beings unlike machines may give high-octane performance on low-octane fuel. Deprived machines always grasp in desperation and run down; deprived human beings, on the other hand, may become immensely creative. But perhaps the catch in all of this is that it is not really possible to deprive human beings as one deprives a mechanical device. After all, a human being can always wish and dream and he can never be reduced to zero. Not as long as he is potentially capable of defining himself in terms of his own aspirations.

Black scientist and inventors, deprived of human freedom, yet the products of a resilient and affirming African American culture, dreamed and gave give “high-octane performance on low-octane fuel”, thereby enabling America to advance its Industrial Revolution and technological advancement.

### **The Souls of Black Folk: “On the Meaning of Being Black in America”**

At the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 1903, WEB Dubois set forth to explain to the world the meaning and significance of being black in a white world. Dubois accomplished this in his masterpiece, “Souls of Black Folk.” Dubois was clear on the focus and purpose of his masterpiece writing: “Herein lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the *strange* meaning of being black here at the dawning of the Twentieth Century.” Souls is Du Bois’s biting dissent from racist and white nationalist ideologies, animating the public culture of post-Reconstruction America. Announcing that the “problem of the twentieth century is the problem of color-line”, Dubois explored the “strange meaning of being black” in a racially hierarchical where “white skin” was a top of the hierarchy and black the bottom and where because of this racially driven society blacks were routinely treated with indifference and contempt. Souls details a sweeping narrative of African American social and political life, highlighting the economic legacy of slavery, the fight for political and civil rights, and the contributions of African Americans to the spiritual and material formation of America as nation. The publishing of Souls was an incisive event- a philosophical and daring initiative that affirms the humanity of black. As a classic, Souls of Black Folk has played a decisive role in the formation of African American literature. While Souls is historically rooted in the segregationist era of Jim Crow, it still has relevance and its compelling ideas and memorable themes continue to shape valuable discussion of black literature and racial politics in America today.

### **Harlem Renaissance Movement, 1920s: “A Measure of a People’s Greatness”**

In the 1920s, Harlem Renaissance Movement, expressed in the artistic flowering of artistic creation – literature, music, poetry, painting, and dance –made

an indelibly mark on American popular culture. This is the decade in which African Americans came of age. The artists who contributed to this renaissance were informed, instructed and inspired by the vision and ethos of the New Negro. As such, the Harlem Renaissance represents something more than the actual works of art it produced. The Harlem Renaissance had both an internal and external message, signaling that African Americans were to be taken seriously by themselves as well as by others. The Harlem Renaissance was a period of unprecedented creative production by any group of people in the United States. The migration of blacks from the South as well as Africa and the Caribbean to New York, coupled with New York being the center of American publishing, and the emerging Cultural Revolution, made Harlem the ideal and logical urban city for the flowering of black cultural production.

The primary artistic leaders of the Harlem renaissance movement were a group of intellectuals dubbed "The Six"- Jessie Redmond Faucet, Charles S Johnson, Alain Locke, WEB DuBois Walter White, and James Weldon Johnson. They put a premium on the rediscovery and promotion of black folk material for the purpose of documenting and celebrating the black cultural heritage and for the use of these materials as sources of inspiration and points of departure for artistic creation. To advance the movement, Johnson and Locke issue a call for artists to come to Harlem. W.C. Handy, father of the blues, composer William Grant Still, and jazz great Duke Ellington answered the call. The emergence of blue and jazz as America's popular music suggest the primacy of black music to the Harlem Renaissance philosophy and practice. The idea that black music was America's only distinctive contribution to American and world musical culture was accepted and emphasized by the Renaissance leaders and participants of the Renaissance movement. The cultural environment created by the Renaissance leaders promoted literature and established a network of institutions and possibilities-nightlife, cocktail and rent parties, literary discussions and strategy sessions that supported all artistic. The music of the black theater shows, the dance music of the cabarets, the blues and ragtime of the speakeasies and the rent parties , the spiritual and the art songs of the recitals and concert halls all created an ambiance for Renaissance activity and contemplation.

### **African American Blues Ethos: “The Soul of a People”**

The Blues Ethos is defined as that quality of African American psychology, which makes possible for African Americans to face and overcome insuperable odds. The blues has been associated with low spirits. Yet as music critic Albert Murray brilliantly explains, “With all its preoccupation with the most disturbing aspects of life, the expressed purpose of blues is to “make people feel good, which is to say high spirits, but in the process of doing so it is actually expected to generate a disposition that is both elegantly playful and heroic in its nonchalance.” The blues to be sure is preoccupied with human vulnerability as so many of its memorable lyrics have always been, and as suggestive of pain as some of its instrumentation sometimes seems to be, blues music, yet, can hardly be synonymous with low spirits. The blues ethos, music and social critic Albert Murray, is irrefutable evidence of black people’s resiliency in responding creatively to adversity and unfavorable conditions, expressed as grace under pressure, creativity in an emergency, continuity in the face of disjuncture. Moreover, it is this ethos that challenges and affirms the African American humanity and “sustains his/her humanity, and enables him/her to maintain his/her higher aspirations in spite of the fact that life is so often a low-down dirty shame.” Musically, the blues statement sometimes takes the form of improvisation, jazz, or; it sometimes takes the shape of the rhythm of the community, rhythm & blues and expresses a sense of life that is affirmative. The blues, to be sure, is the foundational music for rhythm & blues, rock & roll, and rock.

### **Kwanzaa 1966: “To Do That of Value Is Eternity”**

Dr. Maulana Karenga’s creation of the holiday Kwanzaa is a compelling model of creativity that demands recognition and praise. As a cultural holiday, Kwanzaa allows African Americans to celebrate themselves while using the values, symbols and activities of Kwanzaa to strengthen personal and family relationships, make commitments to improve the life of the family and community through moral

excellence and personal accomplishments. Kwanzaa is based five concepts from the “First Fruits” celebration in traditional African societies:

- ◆ Celebrating the harvest translates into parents attaining personal and family goals, and children earning “good grades”.
- ◆ Giving thanks for life and the well-being of the family and community now expressed in spiritual or faith-based life- prayer and worship- or in the secular world through service to others.
- ◆ Celebrating and honoring the accomplishments of family and community translates into recognizing and honoring children with good grades and adults for being nurturing parenting and community involved.
- ◆ Paying homage to the ancestors now means remembering and honoring those who have enriched our lives- family members our parents, grandparents uncles aunts; significant others- friends and community members; and historical figures such as Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, WEB DuBois, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, George Washington Carver, Mary McLeod Bethune, James Weldon Johnson, Carter G. Woodson, Rosa Parks, Marcus Garvey, Ella Baker, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr.

Centered around the seven principles (Nguzo Saba- Umoja/Unity, Kujichagulia/Self-Determination, Ujima/Collective Work and Responsibility, Ujamaa/Shared Wealth, Nia/Purpose, Kuumba/Creativity, Imani/Faith) families and families members use these values as a yardstick and standard to measure progress. The holiday Kwanzaa, which was created in 1966 is now celebrated by millions cross the United States and is recognized internationally as a cultural celebration and holiday for African Americans.

### **Black Literature, 1700 to Present: “The Articulation of African Humanity”**

African Americans responded to their enslavement and denial of their humanity in many ways. Literature was one of the ways in way which African Americans resisted dehumanization and in the process defined and preserved their humanity. From the onset then, African American literature has been central and

essential to the struggle of blacks to free themselves and to defend their humanity. Because their humanity was constantly under attack and because they were asked to prove their humanity in the context of slavery, literature presented a way for African Americans to prove their humanity and demonstrate a capacity for artistic creation and imaginative thought. With this as a measure of human worth, James Weldon Johnson set the standard and the aim of African American literature writing: "The final measure of the greatness of a people is the amount and standard of the literature and art they have produced. The world does not know that a people is great until that people produces great literature." Indeed, African Americans responded to Johnson's challenge: W E B Du Bois produced *Souls of black Folks*, the preeminent statement of black consciousness; Phyllis Wheatley, landmark volume of poetry met the three standards of literature- imagination, originality, and vision; Paul Laurence Dunbar show originality and insight in defining the human condition of blacks in America, using the folk language of African Americans; the writers of the Harlem Renaissance- James Weldon Johnson, Alain Locke, Claude McKay, Zora Neale Huston, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and other Renaissance writers used African American culture to give diversity American literature; Richard Wright's *Native Son*, helped define and influence the entire sweep of African American fiction of the post-World War II era, Ralph Ellison *Invisible Man*, demonstrated outstanding skill in the use of intertextual and cultural nuance of the jazz and blues idiom to define the historic moment of the mid-twentieth-century America, James Baldwin, wrote with elegance and artfulness in pierced the historic block in America's racial consciousness by linking the condition of African Americans with the broadest questions of national and global destiny and Toni Morrison, Nobel Prize Winner, transformed the view of American history and literature with the publishing of a sting of novels that include-*Bluest Eyes* and *Beloved Song Of Solomon*. These writers and many other redefined American literature thorough the use of the8r own culture and history.



## Imani



*"To believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers,*

*our leaders and the righteousness and victory of our struggle."*

### **We've Come this Far by Faith: "Walking By Faith, Not By Sight"**

The gospel some *We've Come This Far by Faith* sums up s the central factors which sustained African Americans thought the brutal experience of slavery and the disappointment of promise of freedom after the Civil War. From the onset of enslavement, the struggle to be free was driven by faith. There was, to be sure, constant disappointment. The courts and a long line of presidents had sided with those who advocated for the continuation of the evil institution of slavery. Despite their participation and heroic in the American Revolutionary War, African Americans were denied freedom, and when freed from England, Americans sanctioned the dehumanization of African Americans in the United States Constitution, reducing blacks to three-fifths of a person. The pain of the denial of freedom and black humanity is best captured by James Weldon Johnson in the lines of the Black National Anthem: "hope died before it was even born." And yet, blacks were inspired and sustained in their struggle by faith. The words of the gospel instruct: "We've come this far by faith. Leaning on the Lord, trusting in his holy word." Yet, The African Americans struggle for freedom has been replete with moments of despair and disbelief: In the run-up to the Civil War, black were disappointed by the infamous Dred Scott decision handed down by the United States Supreme Court, announcing that the African Americans were not citizens and therefore, had "no rights" which the white man was bound to respect"; the timidity shown by American presidents before and after the Civil War to act on the principles in the Declaration of Independence and the moral code of Christianity which blacks believed in an upheld; and the institutionalization of the denial of African humanity and history through acts of cultural and physical violence, depriving them of their citizenship rights and the "pursuit of happiness". Faith, however, is what kept black people believing in America and its possibilities. "We walk by

faith, not by sight," Frederick Douglas reminded black people and the gospel song reinforces Douglass' assertion: "Just the other day I heard someone say they didn't believe in God's word. But I can truly say that God has made a way. And He's never failed me yet. That's why we've come this far by faith."

### **Advice From Mother To Son: "Keep on Pushing"**

In Praise of black mothers who have encouraged their sons in moments of doubt to have faith in themselves and to see challenges as opportunities for growth and to realize their full potentialities. Hughes, reminds African Americans that life in America for them has been unfair and often without the basic necessities of life. He uses the crystal stair a metaphor for an easy path in life without obstacles. African Americans, on the other hand, had had to come to terms with the natural challenges and up and downs that life presents as well as those artificial barriers- racism, discrimination, segregation, denial of the history and humanity of the race and the daily attacks on the dignity of the blacks as a people. The poem start with the statement: Well son I tell you, life for me ain't been no crystal stair/It's had tacks in it/And splinter boards torn up and places with no carpet on the floor-Bare. Yet, these obstacles natural and human made, Hughes makes plain, are not reason to surrender, give-up, or be crushed by these heavy burdens. Rather, Hughes asserts these unfair conditions, circumstances, and barriers bring forth the best in blacks as a people. I have been climbing on/And reaching lands and turning corners/And sometimes going in the dark where there ain't no light. Giving-up because of challenges and difficulties is not an option. Hughes says, So boy don't you turn your back /Don't you sat down on those steps because you find it kind

of hard/Don't you fall now/I am still climbing/And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

### 📖 African American National Anthem, 1903; "Lift Every Voice And Sing"

Written by James Weldon Johnson, Lift Every Voice And Sing is a praise poem to African Americans who in the face of the lived experience of slavery and the dehumanizing Post –Civil War experience of Jim Crow segregation continued to hope and have faith in possibilities of a better life, free of the daily insults and assaults of racism. The poem, which became the African American National Anthem, begins with a call to unity that which commands the attention of heaven (God) and earth (humans). Lift every voice and sing/Till earth and heaven ring. Let our rejoicing rise/High as the listening skies. Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.

The poem then exhorts black to draw on their experience of enslavement which they overcame through faith and build on the possibilities of today, as symbolized by the rising sun or the rising tide of history which blacks represented, and continue to struggle to achieve their aspirations. Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us/Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us. Facing the rising sun of our dew day begun/Let us march on till victory is won.

The next stanza crystallizes meaning of faith, suggesting in a haunting way that hope died before it was even born, yet was brought into being by constant struggle and belief. Stony the road we trod/bitter the chastening rod/Felt in the days when hope unborn had died; yet with a steady beat/Have not our weary feet/Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?

Building on this theme of faith, the poem acknowledges the presents of spiritual force in the lives of African Americans even during the most trying

times and that this spiritual silent force has created a righteous path for which has sustained black people in spite of the fact that life for black people so often has been “a low down dirty shame.”

### **Mercy McLeod Bethune Last Will and Testament: “Keep the Faith”**

Bethune in her last testament offers blacks advice on the power of faith. Faith, for Bethune is the foundational principle and building block of life. Faith, she says is the life force of service and commitment to others. She begins her instruction with a statement on the importance of faith. “I leave you faith: Faith is the first factor in a life devoted to service. Without faith, nothing is possible. With it, nothing is impossible. Faith in God is the greatest power, but great too, is faith in oneself. She parallels “faith in oneself” with faith in “God”, underscoring and linking belief in human potential and possible with the power of the most powerful force in the universe. She measures progress by African Americans with depth and faith of African Americans in themselves and their leaders, writing “The measure of our progress as a race is in precise relations to the depth of the faith in or people held by our leaders. Our greatest black leaders have been imbued with faith.” She concludes that setbacks, obstacles, no matter how great, must not be a justification for African American s losing faith. She writes, “Our forefathers struggled for liberty in conditions far more onerous than those we now face, but they never lost faith.”

### **Black Resiliency, 1960s; “Still I Rise”**

In Maya Angelou's ode to African Americans she honors the indomitable spirit which has allowed black people to maintain their dignity and humanity and thrive in environment hostility to their presence and humanity. Maya writes: You may write me down in history with your bitter twisted lies/ You may tread me in the very dirt, but still like dust I rise. She elaborates further on this theme of black resistance and resiliency, stating: You may shoot me with your words/You may cut me with your eyes. You may kill me with your hatefulness, but still like air, I will rise. Maya Angelou concludes by reminding the world of the determination of African Americans to make their own history, posing them as an irresistible force, the "dream and hope" of the past.

#### **Believe In The People, 1960s: "Answers In Progress"**

Poet Amiri Baraka reminds us that the answers in the problems of life are in progress through love, struggle and trust in each other. The poet wrote: "Walk through life beautiful more than anything/stand in the sunlight. Walk through life/love all the things that make you strong, be lovers, be anything for all people of earth." Baraka instructs that social and material progress in the world is predicated on embracing each other in love, trust and struggle. "You have brothers /you have each other/change up and look at the world now it's ours. We have each other and the world/don't be sorry." This statement reinforces the importance of putting a premium and priority on people and human relations in the pursuit of life and a better world for people to live, work, and inhabit. Baraka ends this poem by returning to the central focus of experiencing life and all the beauty life and struggle has to offer through opening up ourselves to each other. He writes, "Walk through life and know that we are on the go for love / to open our lives/ to walk/ tasting the sunshine of life."

