Workshop Session I: Communities
Thursday, June 21, 2012
1:30 – 3:00 PM

Workshop 1. The Politics of Community for the Early Modern African American Woman: Narrative and Strength

Organizers: Elizabeth Johnson (History); Tammara Winn (Communication); Crystal Blount (Psychology); Sheree Sanderson (Communication).

Abstract: This presentation emphasizes the conference theme of communities by examining the lives for four African American women (Margaret Garner, Margaret Murray Washington, Phillis Wheatly, and Fannie Jackson Cooper) through excerpts of Hallie Q. Brown’s book, Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction. One can argue that early modern African American women developed an ethos in their communities that intertwined European American standards, as well as standards from their African and African American ancestors, despite exclusion and exile (enslavement) that reaches into the 21st century.

Primary Readings for the Workshop and Facilitating Discussion:


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--------Beginning of the readings--------

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PHILLIS WHEATLEY

1754--1783 (?)

'Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there's a God--that there's a Savior, too,
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.
In the year 1761, a little slave girl about seven years old, stood in the market place in Boston, Massachusetts, with a number of others to be sold as chattel.

The little girl had been brought from far off Africa. She stood a pitiful looking object with no clothing save a piece of dirty, ragged carpet tied around her. Mrs. John Wheatley had several slaves, but they were growing too old to be active and she wished to purchase a young girl, whom she could train up in such a manner as to make a good domestic. For this purpose she went to the slave market and there she saw the little girl who appeared to be in ill health, which no doubt was due to the suffering she endured in the slave-ship on the long voyage. Mrs. Wheatley was a kind, religious woman and though she considered the sickly look of the child an objection, there was something so gentle and modest in the expression of her dark countenance and her large mournful eyes that her heart was drawn toward her and she bought her in preference to several others who looked more robust. She took her home in her chaise, gave her a bath and dressed her in clean clothes. They could not at first understand her and she resorted to signs and gestures for she spoke only her native African dialect and a few words of broken English. Mrs. Wheatley gave her

the name of Phillis Wheatley, little dreaming that it, and the little slave girl she had rescued, would become renowned in American history.

Phillis soon learned to speak English, but she could tell nothing of herself nor when she was torn from her parents by the slave-traders, nor where she had been since that time. The poor, little orphan had gone through so much suffering and terror that her mind had become bewildered concerning the past.

The only thing that clung to her about Africa was seeing her mother pour out water before the rising sun which would indicate that the mother descended from some remote tribe of sun-worshippers. And that sight of her mother doing reverence before the great luminous orb coming as it did out of the nowhere, but giving light and cheer to the world, naturally impressed the child's imagination so deeply that she remembered it when all else was forgotten about her native land. In the course of a year and a half a wonderful change took place in the little forlorn stranger. She not only learned to speak English correctly, but was able to read fluently in any part of the Bible. She possessed uncommon intelligence and a great desire for knowledge. She was often found trying to make letters with charcoal on the walls and fences. Mrs. Wheatley's daughter became her teacher. She found this an easy task for the pupil learned with astonishing quickness. At the same time she showed such an amiable, affectionate disposition that all members of the family became much attached to her. Her gratitude to her motherly benefactress was unbounded and her greatest delight was to do anything to please her. At the age of fourteen she began to write poetry. Owing to such uncommon manifestations of intelligence, she was...
never put to hard household work. She became the companion of Mrs. Wheatley and her
daughter. Her poetry attracted attention and friends of Mrs. Wheatley lent her books which she
read with great eagerness. She soon acquired a good knowledge of

geography, history and English poetry. After a while she learned Latin which she so far mastered
as to be able to read it understandingly. There was no law in Massachusetts against slaves
learning to read and write and Mrs. Wheatley did everything to encourage her love of learning.
She always called her affectionately "My Phillis" and seemed to be as proud of her attainments
as if she had been her own daughter. Phillis was very religious and at the age of sixteen joined
the Orthodox Church that worshipped in the Old-South Meeting-house in Boston. Her character
and deportment were such that she was considered an ornament to the church. Clergymen and
other literary persons who visited Mrs. Wheatley's home took a great deal of notice of her. Her
poems were brought forward to be read by the company and were often praised.

She was often invited to the homes of wealthy and distinguished people but she was not turned
by so much flattery and attention. Seriousness and humility were natural to Phillis and she
retained the same gentle, modest deportment that had won Mrs. Wheatley's heart when she first
saw her in the market-place. Although tenderly cared for and not required to do any fatiguing
work, her constitution never recovered from the shock it had received in early childhood. At the
age of nineteen her health failed so rapidly that physicians said it was necessary for her to take a
sea-voyage. A son of Mrs. Wheatley was going to England on commercial business and his
mother proposed that Phillis should go with him. In England she received even more attention
than had been bestowed upon her at home. Several of the nobility invited her to their houses and
her poems were published in a volume with an engraved likeness of the author. Still the young
poet was not spoiled by flattery. A relative of Mrs. Wheatley remarked that not all the attention
she received, nor all the honors that men heaped upon her had the slightest influence upon her
temper and deportment. She was the same simple-hearted, unsophisticated being. She addressed

a poem to the Earl of Dartmouth who was very kind to her during her visit to England. Having
expressed a hope for the over-throw of tyranny she says:

"Should you, my Lord, while you peruse my song,
Wonder from whence my love of Freedom sprung,--
Whence flow these wishes for the common good,
By feeling hearts alone best understood.--
I, young in life, by seeming cruel fate,
Was snatched from Afric's fancied happy state.
What pangs excruciating must molest,
What sorrows labor in my parent's breast!
Steeled was that soul, and by no misery moved,
That from a father seized his babe beloved.
Such was my case; and can I then but pray
Others may never feel tyrannic sway."

King George, the third, was soon expected in London and the English friends of Phillis wished to present her to their King; but letters from America informed her of the declining health of her beloved Mrs. Wheatley and she greatly desired to see her. No honors could divert her mind from the friend of her childhood. She returned to Boston immediately. The good lady died soon after. Mr. Wheatley soon followed and the daughter, the kind teacher of her youth, did not long survive. The son married and settled in England. For a short time Phillis remained with a friend of Mrs. Wheatley, then she rented a room and lived by herself. It was a sad change for her. The war of the American Revolution broke out. In the Autumn of 1776, General Washington had his headquarters at Cambridge, Massachusetts. The spirit of the occasion moved Phillis to address some complimentary verses to him. In reply, he sent her the following courteous note:

"I thank you most sincerely for your polite notice of me in the elegant lines you enclosed. However undeserving I may be of such encomium, the style and manner exhibit a striking proof of your poetical talents. In honor of

which, and as a tribute justly due to you, I would have published the poem, had I not been apprehensive that, while I only meant to give the world this new instance of your genius, I might have incurred the imputation of vanity. This, and nothing else, determined me not to give it a place in the public prints.

"If you should ever come to Cambridge, or near head-quarters, I shall be happy to see a person so favored by the Muses, and to whom Nature had been so liberal and beneficent in her dispensations.

"I am, with great respect,
"Your obedient, humble servant,

"GEORGE WASHINGTON."
The early friends of Phillis were dead, or scattered abroad and she felt alone in the world. About this time she formed the acquaintance of a colored man by the name of Peters who kept a grocery store. He was very intelligent, spoke fluently, wrote easily, dressed well and was handsome in appearance. He proposed marriage and in an evil hour she accepted him. He proved to be lazy, proud and high-tempered. He neglected his business, failed and became very poor. Though unwilling to do hard work himself, he wanted to make a drudge of his wife. She was unaccustomed to hardships, her constitution was frail and she was the mother of three little children with no one to help her in household labors and cares. He had no pity on her and increased her burdens by his ill temper. The little ones sickened and died and their gentle mother was completely broken down, by sorrow and toil.

Some of the descendants of her lamented benefactress heard of her illness. They found her in a forlorn situation, suffering for the common comforts of life.

The Revolutionary War was still raging. Everybody was mourning sons and husbands slain in battle. Currency was deranged and the country was poor. The people were too anxious and troubled to think of the African poet whom they once delighted to honor. And so it happened that the gifted woman who had been patronized by wealthy Bostonians and who had rolled through London in the splendid carriages of the English nobility, lay dying alone in a cold, dirty, comfortless room.

It was a mournful reverse of fortune; but she was patient and resigned. She made no complaint of her unfeeling husband.

The friends and descendants of Mrs. Wheatley did all they could to relieve her destitute condition but fortunately for her she soon went "Where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

Her husband was so generally disliked that she was never called Mrs. Peters, but went by the name bestowed upon her by her benefactress and by which she will be known to all posterity the name of PHILLIS WHEATLEY.

--L. Maria Child in Freedmen's Book to whom much of the above is due.

the home of her childhood days, but she did not desire to die and be buried in a slave state. She says: "I have lived in the midst of oppression and wrong and I am saddened by every captured fugitive in the North; a blow has been struck at my freedom, in every hunted and down-trodden
slave in the South. North and South have both been guilty and they that sin must suffer." Again we find the Muse evoked to voice her sentiments:

"Make me a grave where'er you will,
In a lowly plain, or a lofty hill,
Make it among earth's humblest graves,
But not in a land where men are slaves."

The tragic and bloody deed which terminated in the capture and death of Margaret Garner in Ohio called forth the following from her pen: "Rome had her altars where the trembling criminal and the worn and weary slave might fly for an asylum; Judea her cities of refuge; but Ohio with her Bibles and churches, her baptisms and prayers, had not one temple so dedicated to human rights, one alter so consecrated to human liberty, that trampled upon and down-trodden innocence knew that it could find protection for a night, or shelter for a day."

In 1860, in the city of Cincinnati, Mrs. Harper was married to Fenton Harper, a widower, and resident of Ohio. As a home maker she was compelled to give up her travels but did not cease from literary and Anti-Slavery labors. Her retirement was of short duration for on May 23, 1864, death deprived her of her husband.

She entered heartily into the cause of freedom being waged in the Civil War and lost no opportunity to speak, write or serve the cause of freedom. She writes: "We may look upon it as God's controversy with the nation, His arising to plead by fire and blood the cause of His poor and needy people." When the long looked for Emancipation Proclamation came Mrs. Harper was in great demand as a platform speaker. In the days of reconstruction she began her

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FANNIE JACKSON COPPIN

1835-1912

TEACHER AND MOULDER OF CHARACTER

On the fly leaf of "Hints on Teaching," by the subject of this sketch is the following dedication: "This book is inscribed to my beloved Aunt Sarah Orr Clark, who, working at six dollars a month saved one hundred and twenty-five dollars and bought my freedom."

The woman thus redeemed rose from the depth of slavery and became one of the most eminent educators of this country. The hardships of her childhood, the struggles for an education are sad to contemplate but a ray of sunshine here and there brighten the path and lighten the burden. In her short biography, for she was too busy teaching the race to write at length concerning herself, she tells us somewhat of herself. Fanny Jackson was born in Washington, D. C. The children called their grandmother "Mammy." One of Fanny's earliest recollections was when about three
years old, she was sent to keep Mammy's company. It was in a little one-room cabin. They used to go up a ladder to the loft where they slept. Mammy was accustomed to make long prayers in which she asked God to bless her "offspring." Only one word was remembered by Fanny and that was offspring, for she wondered what offspring meant. Mammy had six children, three boys and three girls. The father bought his own freedom and then that of four of his children, her Aunt Sarah being one, but Lucy, her mother, remained in slavery.

Sarah went to work at six dollars a month, saved one hundred and twenty-five dollars and bought little Frances.

During her babyhood she had two severe burnings. At her christening, a party was given and while the company made merry, she was tied in a chair and left near a stove. At night when they took off her stocking, they found the whole skin from the side of the leg next to the stove peeled off. At another time when her mother was out at work for the day mammy had charge of the baby. When the mother returned mammy exclaimed, "Here, Lucy, take your child, it's the crossest baby I ever saw." When she was undressed at night it was found that a coal of fire from mammy's pipe had fallen into the baby's bosom and burned itself deep into the flesh.

After the aunt saved the one hundred and twenty-five dollars and bought her, she was sent to live with another aunt at New Bedford, Massachusetts. She was put to work at a place where she was allowed to go to school, when not at work. But she could not go on wash days, ironing days, nor cleaning days, which interfered with her progress.

When fourteen years old she decided that she ought to take care of herself. She soon found a permanent place at Newport, Rhode Island, in the family of Mr. George H. Calvert, a great grandson of Lord Baltimore who settled in Baltimore, Maryland. His wife was Elizabeth Stuart, a descendant of Mary, Queen of Scotland. Every other afternoon in the week Fanny was given one hour to take private lessons. Mrs. Calvert taught her many useful things, how to darn, to take care of laces and to sew beautifully. At the end of several years she was prepared to enter the examination for Rhode Island State Normal School, located at Bristol, Rhode Island, under Dana P. Colburn. Here her eyes were opened to the subject of teaching.

Having finished the course of study there she felt she had just begun to learn. She heard of Oberlin College and made up her mind to try to get there. She had learned a little music while at Newport and had mastered the elementary studies of the piano and guitar.

With the assistance of her aunt she found herself at
Oberlin College, which was at that time the only college in the United States where colored students were permitted to study. The course of study then was the same as that at Harvard College. The faculty did not forbid a woman to take the gentleman's course, but they did not advise it. There was plenty of Latin and Greek in it and as much mathematics as one could shoulder. Our student took a long breath and prepared for a delightful contest. All went smoothly until she was in her junior year in college. Then one day she was summoned before the faculty. The call seemed ominous! It was a custom in Oberlin that forty students from the junior and senior classes were employed to teach the preparatory classes. It was now time, so the faculty informed her, for the juniors to begin their work and that it was their purpose to give her a class; but if students rebelled against her teaching, they did not intend to force it. Fortunately her training at the Normal School coupled with her own dear love for teaching sustained her; there was a little surprise on the faces of some, but there were no signs of rebellion. The class increased in numbers until it had to be divided and she was given both divisions.

Miss Jackson, speaking of her college life, expressed her lasting gratitude to Bishop Daniel A. Payne, of the African Methodist Church, who gave her a scholarship of nine dollars a year upon her entering Oberlin. She further states that her obligations to the dear people of Oberlin can never be measured in words. When she first went to Oberlin she boarded in the Ladies' Hall. She began to run down in health and was invited to spend a few weeks in the family of Professor H. E. Peck which ended in her staying several years until independence of the Republic of Haiti was recognized under President Lincoln and Professor Peck was sent as first United States Minister to that interesting country; then the family was broken up and she was invited to spend the remainder of the school year in the home of Professor and Mrs. Charles H. Churchill. These two Christian homes, where she was regarded as an honored member of the family circle had a great influence upon her life and was a potent factor in forming her character, which was to stand the test of new and strange conditions in her future life. Her life at Oberlin was varied and interesting; at one time at Mrs. Peck's when the girls were sitting on the floor getting out their Greek, Miss Sutherland from Maine suddenly stopped and looking at her said, "Fanny Jackson, were you ever a slave?" "Yes," replied Fanny. The girl from Maine burst into tears. Not another word was spoken, but those tears seemed to wipe out a little that was wrong.

She tells us that she never rose to recite in her classes, but that she felt she had the honor of the whole African race upon her shoulders. At one time when she had won a signal honor in Greek, the Professor in Greek decided to visit the class in Mathematics and see how they were getting along. She had heard it said that the race was good in languages, but stumbled when they came to mathematics. Being always fond of demonstration she was given the very proposition she was well acquainted with and so "went that day with flying colors." French was not in the Oberlin Curriculum, but under private tutelage, she completed a course and graduated with a French essay. She went to Oberlin 1860 and was graduated in August, 1865, after having spent five and
a half years. She was elected Class Poet for the Class Day exercises and carried away the kindest remembrances of the dear ones who were her classmates.

When Miss Jackson was within a year of graduation an application came from a Friend’s School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for a colored woman who could teach Greek and Latin and higher Mathematics. The answer returned was: "We have the woman but you must wait a year for her." The years 1860 and 1865 were of unusual historic importance and activity. In 1860 the immortal Lincoln was elected, and in 1865 the Civil War came to a close but not until freedom for all the slaves in America had been proclaimed and that proclamation made valid by the victorious arm of the Union forces. In September, 1865, Miss Jackson began her work in Philadelphia.

In the year of 1837 the Friends of Philadelphia established a school for the education of colored youth in higher learning, to make a test whether or not the Negro was capable of acquiring any considerable degree of education. For it was one of the strongest arguments in the defense of slavery that the Negro was an inferior creation; formed by the Almighty for just the work he was doing. No doubt they had in mind the remark made by John C. Calhoun, that if there could be found a Negro that could conjugate a Greek verb, he would give up all his preconceived ideas of the inferiority of the Negro. "Well, let's try him and see," said the fair minded Quaker people and for years this institution, known as the Institution for Colored Youth was visited by interested persons from different parts of the United States and Europe.

It was here that Miss Jackson was given the delightful task of teaching her own people and rejoiced to see them mastering Caesar, Virgil, Cicero, Horace, Xenophon's Anabasis, and also taught the New Testament Greek. At one of her examinations, when she asked a titled Englishman to take the class and examine it, he said, "They are more capable of examining me, their proficiency is wonderful." When she began her work at the Institute, Ebenezer Bassett had been Principal for fourteen years. In 1869 Mr. Bassett was appointed United States Minister to Haiti by President U. S. Grant, at which time Miss Jackson was elected Principal and held that important office for nearly forty years. During that long period she wrought many changes to better the condition of the school and pupils.

She instituted normal training with a Preparatory Department to give ample practice in teaching and governing under daily direction and correction. The Academic Department of the Institute had been so splendidly successful in proving that the Negro youth was equally capable with others in mastering a higher education, that no argument
was necessary to establish its need, but the broad ground of education by which masses must become self supporting was to this broad minded educator, a matter of painful anxiety.

At the Centennial in 1876, the foreign exhibits of work done in trade schools of Europe, opened the eyes of the directors of public education in America as to the great lack existing in our own system of education. If this deficiency was apparent as it related to the white youth of the country, it was far more so as it related to the colored. Richard Humphrey, the Quaker, who gave the first endowment to found this school stipulated that it should not only teach literary studies, but that a mechanical and industrial department, including agriculture should come within its scope.

Miss Jackson now began an eager and intensively earnest crusade to supply the deficiency in the work of the Institute. With the great thought of bettering the condition of her people she spoke before literary societies, churches in Philadelphia, New York, Washington, anywhere, everywhere the opportunity presented. The minds of the colored people needed enlightenment upon the necessity of Industrial Education. The money was forthcoming, the work advanced and finally in 1879 the Industrial Department was fully established and the following trades were being taught to boys; brick laying, plastering, carpentry, shoemaking, printing, and tailoring. For girls; dressmaking, millinery, typewriting, stenography and classes in cooking, including both boys and girls. Stenography and typewriting were also taught the boys as well as the girls. As a means of preparation for this work, which she called an Industrial Crusade she studied Political Economy for two years under Dr. William Elder, who was a disciple of Mr. Henry C. Carey, the eminent writer on the doctrine of Protective Tariff. In the year 1878 the Board of Education of Philadelphia began to consider what they were doing to train their young people in the industrial arts and trades. Before the directors and heads of some of the educational institutions, Miss Jackson was asked to tell what was being done in Philadelphia for the industrial education of the colored youth. She said: "You may well understand that I had a tale to tell." She told them that the only place in the city where a colored boy could learn a trade was in the House of Refuge or the Penitentiary, and the sooner he became incorrigible and got into the Refuge, or committed a crime and got into the Penitentiary, the more promising it would be for his industrial training.

Such was the argument used in her appeal to the public for funds to start the wheels of industry in Philadelphia. Having taught the trades it now became necessary to find work for those who had learned them which was no easy task. She saw building after building going up and not a single colored hand employed in the construction. Nor was she comforted by what the Irishman said, that all he had to do was to put some brick in a hod and carry them upon the building and there sat a gentleman who did all the work. She said she was determined to know whether this industrial and business ostracism was “in ourselves or in our stars" so from time to time she knocked, shook, and kicked at those closed doors of industry. A cold metallic voice from within
replied, "We do not employ colored people." "Ours not to make reply, ours not to question why." "Thank heaven," she said, "we are not obliged to do and die, we naturally prefer to do"--with this heroic motive she established the Woman's Industrial Exchange, where the work of various departments could be exhibited. In 1881 Miss Jackson was married to Reverend Levi J. Coppin, who in 1900, was elected one of the Bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and assigned to South Africa. This was most fortunate and came as a culmination to a long and useful life to finish her active life in Africa, the home of the ancestors of those whose lives she endeavored to direct.

In 1888 as president of the Woman's Home and Foreign Missionary Society of the A. M. E. Church, she was elected delegate to the Centenary of Mission held in London, England. And so, this woman born in slavery and poverty became the polished, masterful exponent of higher education, and the pioneer of industrial education, antedating Tuskegee, and other institutions in training the head, the hand and the heart. The message she leaves to those who contend today is to go forward to teach, to uplift, to cooperate for the millions of our fellow beings with a faith firmly fixed in that "Eternal Providence" that in its own good time will "Justify the ways of God to man."

(Compiled from "Reminiscences of School Life")

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MARGARET MURRAY WASHINGTON

1865-1925

Mrs. Booker T. Washington was born in Macon, Mississippi. There were five children in the family, of which she was the third. Strange how guiding angels or powers of unseen forces manifest themselves in directing the affairs of many of our great men and women from the beginning, for when but a child she went to live with a Quaker family, whose careful teaching and thorough training influenced her life during those impressionable years, and of those friends she always spoke in warmest terms. Catching a glint of the possibilities of little Margaret Murray they sent her to Nashville, Tennessee to be educated. Entering Fisk University, she stayed and studied and worked for eleven years. As she became more experienced, there developed the determination to thoroughly fit herself that she might help challenge the cause of the Negro woman , in whom she had abiding faith. More and more she felt confident that if the Negro woman was given a chance like other women, she would gain and maintain in the world a place for herself.
The vision of the Negro women came to her as a student at Fisk. She never lost sight of it, and during her last years in the University she quite decided that her life would be consecrated to the work of setting before our people high standards and developing race pride, always with the assurance and guarantee that in the end the Negro would triumph. And thus the early years of her life were filled with intensive work and study, in the preparation for greater service, with an ever passionate desire to help where she was most needed.

General Armstrong had recommended Booker T. Washington at the inquiry of a southern gentleman, Mr. George W. Campbell, for a teacher in the Black Belt of Alabama. Mr. Washington came to Tuskegee and pitched his tent on barren ground. With such scanty means he started the Institute that only a magician or believer in miracles would have attempted such an undertaking. Having been married twice to women of good training, high standing and with the keenest desire to help him in the struggle for his race, Mr. Washington found himself again in 1887 alone with three little children,—an attractive little girl, Portia, and two dear little boys, Booker T. junior and Ernest Davidson named for his mother. How discouraged he must have felt, with a great vision before him, the development of the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute,—with no money, few influential friends, and three small children the youngest being only two years of age when his mother died.

Mr. Washington visited Fisk University, at which time he spoke in his characteristic way, laying down his practical, solid and constructive program. To the graduates of Fisk it was a challenge. Who was convinced that Booker Washington was doing a work worth while? Who knew better than she the conditions in the south? Who was eager to render real service? Who was strong enough not to let difficulties stand in her way? Margaret Murray, of Macon, Mississippi, who had until this time planned to teach in the State of Texas. At Mr. Washington's invitation she came to Tuskegee in 1889 as Dean of the Woman's Department, doing classroom work, and anything else she was called upon to do. She was never afraid of working too hard or doing too much.

Being able to study Margaret Murray at close range, Booker Washington recognized her strength of character, her unusual ability to direct affairs, and loved her for her sterling worth. After three years' work at Tuskegee, she entered more intimately into his life as his wife, mother of his children, and his strong and constant support in the development of the institution. How they planned and worked together!
How they opened avenues of employment for well educated Negro men and women who had been thoroughly trained in schools, colleges and universities all over the country and who wanted employment! How they inspired hundreds of unlettered young men and women who came from all over the southland seeking a more abundant life, with nothing but their desire to do, and their firm belief in God to become useful citizens,—can only be interpreted in the wonderful way Tuskegee grew by leaps and bounds from year to year.

Mrs. Washington was a keen, energetic, magnetic, forceful executive. Underlying these characteristics was a lovable, sympathetic disposition, qualities she did not always display unless the appeal was very deep.

Largely through her strenuous efforts at Tuskegee, a home for girls' industries was erected--Dorothy Hall--and she was made director of that phase of the work. For twenty-six years she inspired young girls as well as the teachers who worked with her, with the importance of learning practical things,—the necessity of knowing how to make the home attractive, how to properly prepare and serve wholesome meals,—the importance of sanitation and good health; and all matters that were so vital in the development of womanhood of our race.

Located in a community where social service work was a crying need, she visited rural homes, schools and churches. Into these places she always carried sunshine and words of encouragement, with the assurance that a better day for the Negro was ahead if he would only improve his home and conditions around it, send his children to school, and seize the opportunities that were at his door. This message was received by large numbers of rural folks and in many communities improvements were evident. Women's clubs, night schools and mothers' meetings were agencies set in action, and teachers at the Institute were detailed here and there to keep close supervision over each newly started interest.

Thirty years ago Mrs. Washington organized the Tuskegee Woman's Club. It is composed of women of the faculty and families of the Institute. At the time of organization she was elected president and held that position until her death. This is one of the best known groups in the South, and has done a magnificent work, first, in bringing the women of the Institute in close touch with one another, together with helping the poor and dependent in the community, and inspiring high ideas and ideals in the women generally.

With the full years her vision broadened and her interests extended. She was one of the few in a group of women who met in the north and agreed to organize clubs all over the country, which finally resulted in the National Association of Colored Women. She was made National President at Hampton Institute, Va., in 1910, a position she held for two terms. It is customary that the ex-presidents of the National Association be made honorary Presidents at the expiration
of their term of office. This gives them lifetime membership on the National Executive Board. Mrs. Washington, therefore, continued to give much of her thought and time to this growing power for good.

Largely through her untiring efforts, the women of the state of Alabama were organized and federated clubs started that have done constructive and far-reaching work all over the state. Mrs. Washington was president of the Alabama State Federation for a number of years. At this time Negro boys, young and old, were sent to the jails for petty offenses as there was no place provided for the confinement of such cases. Mrs. Washington, with a number of influential women of Alabama, realized the need of a reform school for colored boys where they might be sent and given a chance to be taught the right way of living. Clubs all over the state responded liberally to this cause.

Individuals, North and South, made generous contributions, and the school became a reality. The officials of the state were glad to recognize this creditable work of the colored women. Seeing its growth and knowing the need for such an institution, located at Mt. Meigs, Alabama, is now the home of three hundred and more boys who are cared for, controlled, taught and loved. It has done great good, and many a wayward boy has gotten a new lease on life and taken a fresh hold.

A similar school for girls has been started at Mt. Meigs, Alabama, under separate management. This was another seed planted and nurtured by Mrs. Washington and the club women of the state. The little seed has sprung up, as yet tiny plant, but never to be crushed, for it is the determination of the women of Alabama to have as good an institution for the girls as the one already established for the boys, with the satisfaction and assurance that the State will come to the rescue when the time is fully ripe.

In Richmond, Virginia, a few years ago, Mrs. Washington organized the International Council of Women of the Darker Races of the World, and inspired here at Tuskegee a course of study on conditions of women in foreign lands. She thought and spoke of them as our sisters, and it was her hope that this Council would bring together the women of the darker races in a close and sympathetic contact.

Very recently she was appointed Chairman of the Colored Women's Work for the Inter-Racial Commission of Alabama. She was a member of the general commission with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. Her opinions and advice were sought on the subject of race relations, a study in which she was profoundly interested. So great was her faith in both races that she firmly believed the question of interracial co-operation would ultimately be adjusted.

Mrs. Washington is asleep, not dead. "Can a woman die whose ideals live?" Tuskegee and our country have lost a great character in her passing, but her memory and
influence will live always. I was glad it was my privilege to have been intimately associated with her for the past nine years. She has rendered real service in helping the women of our race realize they have a definite place the world will respect, that no other women can fill.

--------End of readings--------

Additional Information:

Panel members will discuss the following women from Hallie Q. Brown’s text:

1. Margaret Garner: The psychological tragedy of runaway slave Garner killing her child to free the child from returning to enslavement and the fictional narrative of Garner’s life in Toni Morrison’s Beloved (Presented by Crystal Blount).


3. Phillis Wheatly: Despite being kidnapped from Senegal and enslaved in the U.S., Wheatley became a prominent poet and numerous community centers/schools across the U.S. honor her by naming their institutions after her (Presented by Elizabeth Johnson).

4. Fanny Jackson Coppin: Learned educator who not only became school principal, but was also the first African American superintendent of a school district in Philadelphia (Presented by Tammara Winn).

The workshop will begin by viewing pictures and drawings of the four key African American women and author, Hallie Q. Brown. Panel members, respective of their disciplines, will give a brief history of their woman of interest (12-15 minutes). While the four scholars will give brief introductions to their topics, the workshop will be centered on the seven questions to be discussed by the participants from the primary and secondary texts. The questions are: (25-30 minutes).

1. How did these four African American women excel despite exclusion and exile by dominant society?
2. How did they move through their communities and what objectives were at the forefront of their agenda?
3. What can we, women in the academy, gain and apply in the 21st century from their lived experiences?
4. How are their examples applicable to those in the academy? Or how could someone outside of the academy benefit from these women’s narratives/lived experiences?
5. How can we use their experiences to teach someone beyond the parameters of Black History Month to better understand the dynamics and politics of all early modern American women?

6. How do the efforts of these women in the 18th–20th centuries play into current agendas about women’s cultural, social and political participation?


Finally, we will share ideas from the lives of the four key women that broaden female empowerment across racial and socio-economic boundaries (15 minutes). We hope to be able to learn whether there was something unique about African American women’s experiences in various communities and the obstacles that they overcame that provide encouragement and enlightened examples.

**Further Reading:**

**Margaret Garner readings:**


**Margaret Murray Washington readings:**


**Phillis Wheatly readings:**


**Fanny Jackson Coppin readings:**


