

The Theme of the 68th Celebration of Afro-American History:

"Afro-American Scholars: Leaders, Activists & Writers"

## PREFACE

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## PROLOGUE

I am a White male, an officer in the U.S. Army, with sixteen years in uniform. My time in the military has been primarily with troops as a line officer and a staff officer. I've never been assigned or trained as an Equal Opportunity person, though I've supported the EO program and done what is "normally expected" of a military person. The reason I tell you this is that I am your typical, average, middle-class person, probably just like you.

research project for the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI), but I did not know what my project was to be in advance. To be perfectly honest, I was somewhat disappointed to learn that my assignment was on Afro-American history. "Certainly there has to be something more challenging than that?," I thought. I was to discover how wrong I was. I've completed a thirty-day journey through Afro-American history, and the result is this paper. During this experience at DEOMI something important happened to me. A door opened, and I discovered the rich accomplishments of African-Americans, and became aware of the pain of slavery, the cruelty, the oppression.

America, but if it is sufficient to encourage you to take a trip through Afro-American history, your journey will be as rewarding as mine.

paper has overcome obstacles and achieved great success. Identifying and studying the values and characteristics of

courage, potential, determination, and education that made them successful could help us destroy the stereotypes that may have been formed from our previous experiences.

personal triumph and significant military accomplishments. His career was a series of firsts: he was the first Afro-American to graduate from the United States Military Academy at West Point in the 20th century; he was the first Afro-American general in the Air Force; and, he was the first Afro-American commander of the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II. But more significant than these firsts was his example of determination. He was an example of how one man's dream and personal determination can overcome tremendous personal adversity.

Afro-American general in the Army. In the 1920's, his father served on the teaching staff at Tuskegee Institute. In those days segregation and acts of discrimination were commonplace, and the Ku Klux Klan terrorized the Davis family, carrying flaming torches past their house. During these terroristic acts his father would put on his dress white uniform and stand on the porch with his family as a show of pride and defiance.

Point and then to become an aviator. In 1926, his father paid \$5 to take him on a barnstorming flight over Washington, DC. He was 14 years old and thereafter dreamt of flying.

United States Military Academy in 1932. His first dream was finally realized, but he wasn't prepared for the treatment he would be forced to endure. On the third night at the Academy someone knocked on his door and announced a meeting in the basement. He attended the meeting, but when he overheard someone say, "What are we going to do about the nigger?," he realized the meeting was about him and he returned to his room.

as if he didn't exist. Excluded from social events, he was shunned and given the silent treatment. He didn't have a roommate and wasn't invited to eat at anyone's table, but despite all this he graduated 35th out of a class of 276 in 1936.

did not want blacks at West Point. Their only purpose was to freeze me out. What they did not realize was that I was stubborn enough to put up with their treatment to reach the goal I had come to attain." (2:21)

a pilot in the Army Air Corps because there were no Black aviation units, and after graduation he was sent to Ft. Benning, Georgia, where he was assigned as an Infantry Officer in the School. The same negative treatment he had received at West Point continued. His commanding officer didn't visit him, and even his classmates from West Point wouldn't talk to him or his wife.

was not allowed to enter the Officer's Club at Ft. Benning, an action he considered the most insulting taken against him during his entire career. It was open only to White officers. Afro-American officers received worse housing, and were trained in inadequate facilities by White officers of a lower quality.  
(12:46)

aviation training. He was assigned to the famous 99th Pursuit Squadron, which was formed in January 1941, deployed to Europe in 1943, and attached to the 33rd Fighter Group, where they were shunned by the White flyers.

exceptional. By the end of the war the unit had shot down 111 enemy planes, eight in two consecutive days in January 1944.  
(13:37)

went along. During his Air Force career he commanded the Air Task Force Provisional 13 in Taiwan and the 51st Fighter-Interceptor Wing in the Korean War, became director of operations and training of the Far East Air Forces, and commanded the 13th Air Force in the Philippines. He retired in 1970 and held several other significant positions outside military service. He became the Safety Commissioner of Cleveland, Ohio, held several high level positions in the Department of Transportation, and was appointed to several presidential commissions.

overcome tremendous odds and achieved unequalled success in the U.S. military.

revitalizing the public school system. Born in Altavista, Virginia, her father died when she was four years old. In order to meet expenses, her mother worked cleaning homes and churches, and often couldn't afford necessities such as shoes.

from school because she wasn't wearing any shoes. Her mother became angry and said, "It doesn't matter what you wear or what you have, that's not important. What is important is that you

get a good education." Mary became determined that poverty would not hold her back.

and George Washington University, and began her professional career teaching in Alexandria, Virginia. In 1976 she was elected president of the Virginia Education Association, and in 1983 began the first of three consecutive terms as president of the National Education Association (NEA), the Nation's largest professional organization. In 1990, she became the elected president of the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Professionals, an organization representing 11 million teachers in 111 countries.

Black Achievement Award in 1984 and the NAACP President's Award, and she is listed in the Who's Who of American Women.

busing, school reform, school tuition credits, and job opportunities for high school graduates. She says with education improvements and education reform "you either pay now or pay later." She feels an investment in education today can cut welfare in the future. (1:88)

Georgia, on February 16, 1852, his many accomplishments have earned him the respect and admiration of many.

eight hours a day, a rare privilege for a slave. His slave master had taught him to read and write at an early age and allowed him to go to school. By the time he was twelve he began to study music, and when he was seventeen he was accepted at Atlanta University. He attended Atlanta University for two years then transferred to Oberlin College, in Ohio. He graduated from Oberlin in 1875 with an A.B. degree in Philosophy and Arts. He then attended Liberia College in West Africa where he earned an A.M. degree in 1878 and an LL.D. in 1882. Ten years later he also earned a Ph.D. from Kentucky State University. (11:416)

mathematics at Lewis High School and accepted a position as school principal in Cokesburg, South Carolina. In 1879, he became the first postmaster of Wilberforce, Ohio.

exceptional and included: Classical Greek, Hellenistic Greek, Sanscrit, Gothic, Lithuanian, Zend, and Old Slavonic (11:410-418), and he was a skilled writer. He published a book in 1881, □First Lessons in Greek□, which was hailed as a scholarly textbook, and several pamphlets including, "Our Civil Status" and "Birds of Aristophanes: a Theory of Interpretation."

four-star general in the United States military. After graduating from Tuskegee Institute and becoming one of the first Tuskegee aviators, his military career included 101 combat missions in Korea and 78 in Vietnam, and he held some of the most prestigious positions in the Department of Defense.

violence, his qualities of courage, leadership, bravado, and diplomacy would assure him a place in history.

1969, a military coup led by Colonel Muammar Khadafy seized key Libyan military installations and overthrew the King of Libya. At that time, Colonel James was the commander of Wheelus Air Force Base in Libya. Tensions mounted between the Americans and the Libyans, and Khadafy pressed for the removal of the air base. The Libyans tried to cut off communications between the base and the U.S. Embassy, and searches of American dependents and military personnel, as well as mounting anti-American demonstrations, forced Colonel James to take a defensive posture.

the main gates at Wheelus, and headed directly into the housing area at full speed. Colonel James personally went to the gate to face Colonel Khadafy. James carried his .45 in his belt, and Kahadafy stood outside the gate with his hand on his pistol, reminiscent of days past when the desperado dared the sheriff to make the first move. Colonel James told Khadafy to "move his hand away from his pistol!," and he recalled later, "If he had pulled that gun, he never would have cleared his holster." (9:255)

he attended the Air Force Air Command and Staff School at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama, where racial tensions were flaring. On weekends he visited his family, also in Montgomery. On one weekend, still in uniform, he stopped outside Montgomery to refuel his car. When then-Captain James reached for his wallet to pay for the gas, the attendant spat on him. Rage bubbled up but restraint was his decision. He wiped off the spittle, got into his car and drove away.

was mistaken for a luggage porter at civilian airports. Once while playing golf with Jerry Pate and Coach Bear Bryant of Alabama, someone thought he was the clubhouse attendant.

his best treatment. (7:151)

selection as Brigadier General and assignment as Deputy Assistant

Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), where he became the military spokesman for the Vietnam War. He also became widely known for his stirring speeches on what it meant to be an American.

highest-ranking Afro-American in the United States military and the first Black four-star general in military history. He went on to become the commander of NORAD/ADCOM and retired from military service in 1978.

The Washington Post said of him:

There was a kind of rock-ribbed Americanism about General James--a patriotism and a sense of gratitude that some found incongruous in a man who in childhood had known poverty and segregation firsthand. But there was really nothing incongruous about it. Chappie James simply possessed two qualities that nurtured his patriotism and powered his truly remarkable advancement to the top of the nation's military structure. An indomitable will to succeed and, with it, a profound sense of appreciation of the special opportunity his country offered him--whatever its flaws. There will be many tributes to General James, but we think none will more eloquently characterize him than the words he once used to describe himself. "I am," he said, "above everything else. . .an American." (9:331)

Foundation Medal in 1967 and 1968, and in 1970 he received the Arnold Air Society Eugene M. Zuckert Award for his contributions to the U.S. Air Force. His citation for this award read, "...fighter pilot with a magnificent record, public speaker, and eloquent spokesman for the American Dream we so rarely achieve." (7:160)

Montgomery, Alabama. He is credited with over 105 patents and 162 scientific publications. This distinguished scholar and scientist made tremendous improvements in the treatment of glaucoma and the production of health improving medicines, such as cortisone, and developed fire-suppressing foam used to fight aircraft-related fires.

from a family of six children where two brothers became physicians and three sisters earned master's degrees. His wife, the former Anna Johnson, earned a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree.

family honored him by seeing him off at the train station,

accompanied by his grandfather and 99-year-old grandmother. His grandfather had been a slave and two of his fingers were cut off for violating a code that prohibited Negroes from learning to read and write, so he represented a glaring contrast to his grandson's expected educational achievements.

courses in addition to his other college classes because of the poor quality of the education he had received in Alabama. Living in the attic of a White fraternity house, he paid his way by serving as a waiter and bus boy. After several years of study he graduated in 1920 as Valedictorian of his class and Phi Beta Kappa.

necessity of continuing his education. Unable to get a scholarship, he obtained a teaching position in chemistry at Fisk University, and two years later he was at Harvard University receiving a master of arts degree in chemistry. In 1929, he attended the University of Vienna, studied under the world-renowned chemist, Professor Ernst Spath, and earned a doctorate.

used to treat glaucoma. As this was considered a tremendous breakthrough by the scientific community, he received congratulations from around the world. Admirers wanted to make him head of the chemistry department at DePauw, the first Negro professor of chemistry in any White school in America, but the idea was rejected. The university was not ready for a Black man as department head.

in Wisconsin, but when Dr. Julian went for the interview, he discovered that the city had a statute that prohibited the

position at DePauw and accepted a position at the Glidden Company of Chicago. This appointment was hailed as a "turning point" for Black scientists. (4:94) During his tenure at Glidden he obtained 66 patents, and in only one year his discoveries almost tripled their profits. (3:152)

move to an exclusive community in Oak Park, he began getting hate mail and threats, some threatening to burn down his house. On one occasion, a bomb exploded under the window of his children's bedroom, but the family survived unharmed and remained in Oak Park.

years making over \$2 million when he sold it to Smith, Kline and French. He founded the Julian Research Institute in 1964, and had several plants and laboratories both in and outside the

United States. By 1973, at the age of 74, Dr. Julian was still working 10-12 hours a day.

back to the world, then Dr. Julian was tremendously successful. He received the Spingarn Medal from the NAACP, the Silver Plaque Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and the Chemical Pioneer Award from the American Institute of Chemists. In his lifetime, he was awarded 15 honorary doctorates, and DePauw University honored him by naming their chemistry and mathematics building after him.

age of seven she was brought to America, a servant to Mr. John Wheatley in Boston. She mastered English in only 16 months, surpassed even her tutors in language abilities, and said she read "like a woman possessed." (5:2)

including the □Bible□, Homer, Milton, and Shakespeare, and in 1770 she wrote her first poem, "A Poem by Phillis, A Negro Girl on the Death of Reverend George Whitefield."

several important dignitaries. George Washington was so impressed by her poetry he invited her to his headquarters early in the Revolutionary War. She also knew John Hancock, the Countess of Huntingdon in England, and the Lord Mayor of London. At one time, she had a performance scheduled for King George but found it necessary to return to the United States to care for John Wheatley's dying wife.

book, *Poems On Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*, published in 1773, was the first book published by an African-American, and only the second book published by an American woman. (5:2)

whose contributions have been almost totally forgotten by America.

attended Morgan State University, Columbia, and Howard University, and additionally received a scholarship to Barnard College in New York City, where she was the first Black student. She wrote several novels, short stories, and numerous magazine articles to include: *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934); *Mules and Men* (1935); *Tell My Horse, Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937); *Dust Tracks on the Road* (1943); *Seraph on the Suwanee* (1948)

African-American heritage in her writings. Her travels took her around the United States as well as to Haiti and the British West Indies. She even worked for the military for a short time. She

was employed in the Pan American Library at Patrick Air Force Base from June 1956 to May 1957. Every job, every incident in her life was captured in her novels, articles, and stories.

"anthropologist; folklorist; novelist; impassioned poet--hoodoo priestess of the black south; the flamboyant 'Princess Zora,' companion to novelist Fannie Hurst; contributor to the 1920's Harlem Negro Renaissance in arts and literature; drama instructor; playwright; singer dancer--and, at times cook, housemaid, manicurist, waitress." She was described in other publications as, "in the front rank, not only of Negro writers, but all American writers," "very bold and outspoken," and "an attractive woman who learned how to survive with native wit." (10:19;8:19)

the largest amount of money she ever received for one of her books was \$943.75. (8:34) She died penniless in a segregated nursing home, almost completely forgotten as a writer, and donations from her friends and publishers provided the money to bury her. In the 1970's, with the help of friends and family, her works and life were rediscovered.

oldest of 13 children, was the first African-American newspaper editor in the United States, whose exposure to slavery influenced her life.

prohibiting the education of Black people. This dedication led to her publication of the □Provincial Freeman□, a weekly newspaper with the motto, "Self-reliance is the true road to independence."

moving to Canada to better help runaway slaves. She started a private school for Blacks, and published a 44-page booklet telling other slaves about freedom in Canada. During the Civil War she was an Army Recruiting Officer responsible for enlisting Black volunteers to fight for the Union Army.

dropped out only to return to finish ten years later. In 1883, at the age of 60, she became the second Afro-American woman lawyer in the United States.

another professor's class just for a chance to hear him speak? If you knew Professor James N. Eaton, you, too, would want to attend his classes. Through 35 years of teaching he has touched many people's lives by making history come alive.

M University (FAMU), specializing in Russian and Southern

History. He earned a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts from Fisk University, and has completed additional graduate work at Duke University. In 1991, he was nationally selected by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) as the Professor of the Year for the state of Florida and one of the top undergraduate professors in the United States.

including the Rockefeller/Florida State University Scholar. He is listed in □Who's Who in Black America□ and □Who's Who in the South and Southeast□, and his work has been recognized by every major newspaper and magazine in the U.S.

Museum located in Tallahassee, Florida, and currently serves as its director and curator. He proudly notes that the Center is the largest repository of African-American documents, photos, and objects in the Southeast United States. Its collection of over 500,000 items reflecting the Black presence and participation in southern, national, and international history, boasts a visitor count of over 100,000 each year, more than 60 percent of whom are White.

contributions of the African-American, and his lifelong goal has been to blend African-American with White history to create one history book that records the history of all groups. "Black history is American history and American history is Black history," he says.

"most importantly--I'm an educator," and his attitude about history can provide an important lesson to all of America. He says, "the key to (eliminating) racism is knowledge and respect. . . . No matter what our ethnic background, we all must be sensitive to each other's needs, each other's history, and each other's contributions." He feels that historical knowledge of the contributions of our forefathers positively impacts on our self-esteem, and he explains, "By high self-esteem we can prevent many of the socio-economic problems we now are facing."

revolutionized the food industry. His story is one few people know.

development, and its use was very limited. There was no air conditioning in planes, trucks, vans, or ships, because it was considered "impossible." Block ice was used to keep perishables from spoiling and this made long-term storage and transportation of many food items difficult, if not impossible.

support his widowed mother, he enjoyed repairing automobiles, building race cars, and working with sound production equipment. When he was later employed at the Thermo-King Company, his interest turned toward air-conditioning.

near a lake in Minnesota. The heat was stifling so he rolled down a window for a breath of fresh air, but as soon as he did the car filled with mosquitoes. Opening and closing the window, he finally reached a point of frustration, and he said "Why doesn't somebody make a gadget to air-condition a car, like they do in theaters?." This incident encouraged him to begin to study everything available on air-conditioning and refrigeration, and draw plans for the first mobile air-conditioning unit.

not interested and said he thought it was too heavy, too expensive, and he didn't think anyone would buy it. The idea was shelved until a year later, when a friend of Mr. Numero complained that an entire shipment of chickens had spoiled during transport and had to be destroyed. Mr. Numero and two of his friends challenged one another to create a mobile air-conditioner that could be used in a truck.

Mr. Numero, he decided to act on his employee's idea. Using parts from a local junk-yard, Fred Jones created the first truck air-conditioner, manufacture of which quickly became a multi-million dollar industry for Thermo-King Corporation, and fresh food products became available around the world.

refrigerator for storing blood products. He developed an air conditioning unit for use in surgical hospitals during WW II, and the gasoline-powered air-conditioner is still being used today by the military to cool field hospitals. It has also been used to calm honey bees during travel and to cool the monkeys that flew in America's first space launches. Everyone who drives an automobile today can thank Fred Jones for being able to travel in

invented numerous other items. He obtained somewhere between 35-50 patents for other inventions, including: bicycles, hay loaders, broadcasting transmitters, portable X-ray machines, and the vending device that ejects movie theater tickets and change. By the time he retired, he had become Chief Engineer and Vice-President of the Thermo-King Corporation.

small tobacco plantation in Franklin Country, Virginia, eventually to rise from slavery to become, according to Barry Machintosh, "one of the world's most respected men." (6:7)

with his mother, brother, and sister, sleeping on the dirt floor on a "bundle of filthy rags." (6:14) His early life on the plantation consisted of carrying buckets of water to working men and taking corn to a mill for grinding, as well as fanning flies off the meal table of the plantation owner.

formulated his life's most important goal, as every morning he escorted the owner's children to their school. "The picture of several dozen boys and girls in a schoolroom made a deep impression upon me," he wrote. "I had the feeling that to get into a schoolhouse and study in this way would be about the same as getting into paradise." (6:16)

and his family, and they moved to West Virginia to join his step-father, who had escaped during the war. But life in Malden, West Virginia, was harder than what he had experienced as a slave. He worked first in a salt furnace and later in a coal mine, and after work he attended school on a special arrangement with the teacher.

Institute where he worked as a janitor to pay his expenses. Three years later he graduated with honors, and returned to Malden to teach elementary school.

many people, and years later he received a call to come to Tuskegee, Alabama. On July 4, 1881, at the age of 25, with no buildings, no land, no teachers, and only \$2,000 in his pocket, Booker T. Washington founded Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute. In his lifetime, Tuskegee Institute would grow into a 2000-acre campus, with 107 buildings, over 1500 students, and close to a 200-member faculty. (6:48)

delivered on September 18, 1895, called the Atlanta Speech, catapulted him to world-wide prominence.

A ship lost at sea for many days suddenly sighted a friendly vessel. From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal, "Water, water; we die of thirst!" The answer from the friendly vessel at once came back, "Cast down your bucket where you are." A second time the signal: "Water, water; send us

"Cast down your bucket where you are." And a third and fourth signal for water was answered, "Cast down your bucket where you are." The captain of the distressed vessel, at last heeding the injunction, cast down his bucket, and it came up full of fresh,

sparkling water from the mouth of the Amazon river. (6:72)

powerful men in the world. President McKinley visited him at Tuskegee in 1898; he traveled to Europe and had tea with Queen Victoria; and he had strong ties with Theodore Roosevelt, President Howard Taft, and philanthropists Robert C. Ogden and Andrew Carnegie.

degree in 1896, the first to any Black, and Dartmouth presented him with an honorary doctorate.

exceptional vision for mankind:

"I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life, as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed."

"From the very outset of my work, it has been my steadfast purpose to establish an institution that would provide instruction not for the select few, but for the masses, giving them standards and ideals, and inspiring in them hope and courage to go patiently forward."

Afro-Americans I feel to be interesting. It is certainly not intended to be a complete list of "Afro-American Scholars: Leaders, Activists & Writers." For additional information on the scholars listed here, and for biographies of many, many more Afro-Americans who have earned a place in American history, your local and military libraries are an excellent source.

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