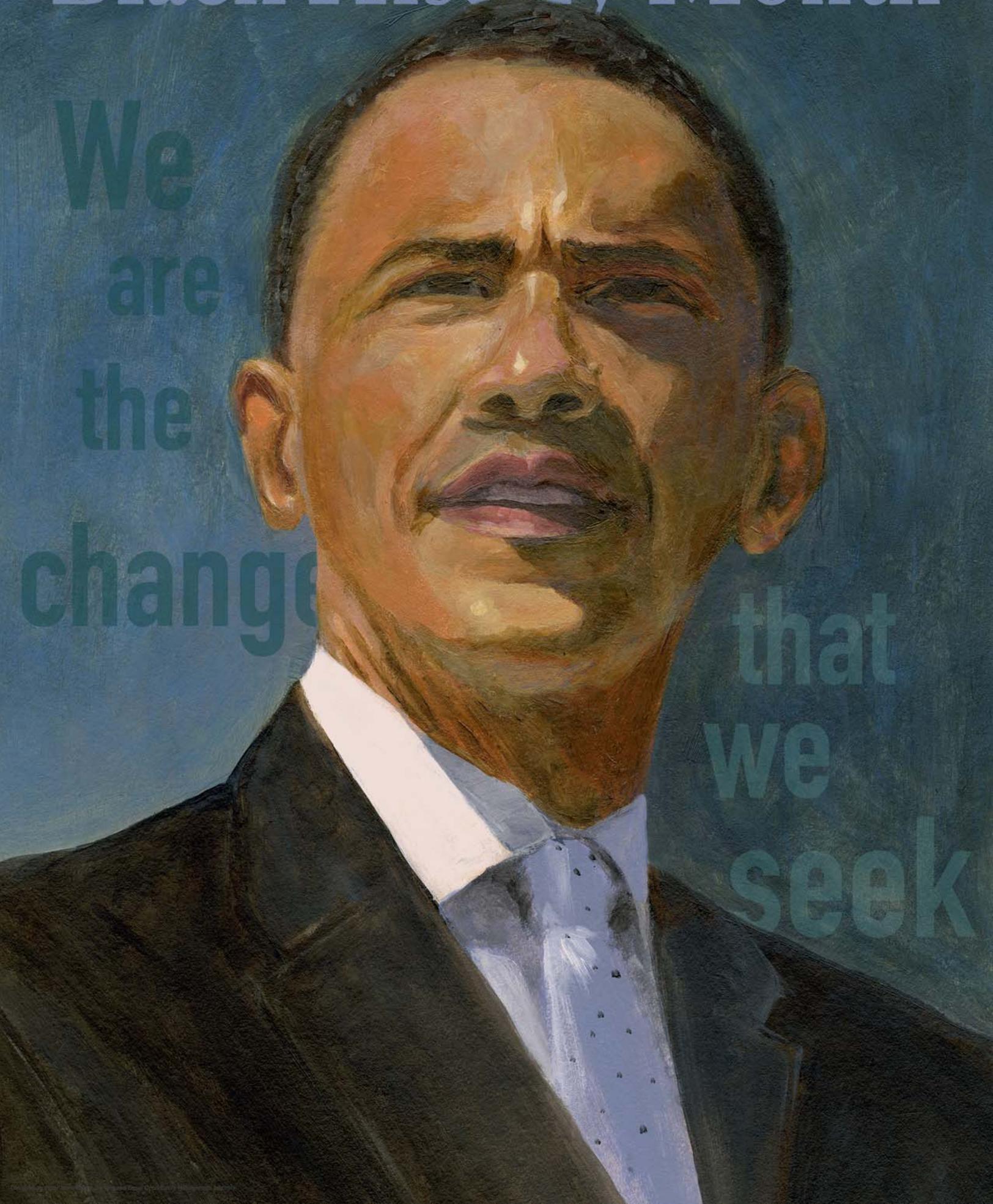


Black History Month

We
are
the
change
that
we
seek



Biography

Mr. Daniel Kennedy, Jr. attended primary school on military bases, in the civilian public, and private schools. Graduating high school in 1975, from Boone High School, Orlando, Florida, Mr. Kennedy went on to study for the Roman Catholic priesthood at St. Meinrad College, Indiana, and received a BA in philosophy in 1979. He continued to study and received a Masters in Divinity (Mdiv) from St. Meinrad School of Theology in 1984 and has taken various history courses at the University of Central Florida (UCF), Orlando. He was a doctoral candidate at UCF from 2002–2004.

Preface

Mr. Daniel P. Kennedy is a consultant for the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) and created this publication for Black History Month observance. This publication is posted on the Internet at: <http://www.deomi.org>. Additionally, there are various materials on the Web site that support other national observances.

<p>The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author and should not be construed to represent the official position of DEOMI, the military Services, or the Department of Defense.</p>

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America today is a pluralistic society. No group of citizens, regardless of delineation, has a monopoly on the meaning of what it means to be an American citizen. In fact, our country does not have an official language to define itself. Thus, to be an American is not dependent upon “Old World” understanding of what it means to be a member of one country or another. Perhaps what it means to be an American citizen can be found by reflecting upon the dynamics of how this country was formed. Many European settlers left the “Old World” seeking economic opportunity, religious freedom, or political freedom in the “New World.” In the nascent development of our country as she was declaring her independence from Great Britain in the document known as The Declaration of Independence, it was written that, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” (Constitution Society, 1995–2005). An American citizen is one who has the right to pursue happiness.

That pursuit of happiness can take many forms. One such form is the vocation or profession one chooses to enhance one’s life for self and/or others in the community. Unfortunately, for much of American history, Black-Americans were denied the God-given “unalienable” right of the liberty to pursue happiness. In other words, they were denied participation in what it means to be an American. This wall of denial began to crack and fall in the great Civil Rights Movements of the 1960s led by such notables such as Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Today, no one is legally denied the pursuit of happiness based on race. Black-Americans in pursuit of their happiness contributed handsomely to the American national experience at all levels. This paper highlights several Black-Americans’ and their pursuit for happiness, which ultimately allowed them to fully participate in American citizenship.

Current President of the United States, Barack H. Obama's, pursuit of happiness, resonates with many Americans who came after the WWII generation. Despite the fact that his mother was married twice and he was raised by his grandparents, the President excelled in his academic studies. President Obama, before the age of ten, went to school in Jakarta, Indonesia, in which the classes were not taught in English but in Indonesian (A&E Television Networks, 2008). At the age of ten, he moved to Hawaii and attended the prestigious Punahou Academy. He graduated, with honors, from the academy in 1979, and he was one of three black students in the school (A&E Television Networks, 2008). It is at this point in his life when he became aware of racism and what it meant to be black in America. "In his memoir, Obama described how he struggled to reconcile social perceptions of his multicultural heritage" (A&E Television Networks, 2008). In 1983, he graduated from Columbia University in which he majored in political science. In 1991, he received a JD from Harvard graduating Magna Cum Laude. During his attendance at Harvard he was elected the first Black-American editor of the Harvard Law Review (A&E Television Networks, 2008.).

President Obama not only pursued education excellence, but he also participated in community service to help others in their pursuit of happiness. In Chicago, he was a community organizer for persons of low income (KeepandShare, 2004–2009). In Chicago, he was a civil rights lawyer-practitioner. He also educated others on the law by teaching at the University of Chicago Law School. In the 1992 election campaign for Bill Clinton, he organized voter registration drives to help others get a chance for their voice to be heard (Daily Kos, 2008). His diverse family background and his activism in the community provided the foundation to be president of a multicultural society. For many Americans, the rise to the presidency of the United States of America by Barack Obama symbolizes a victory for Black-Americans in the struggle to

enjoy all the benefits of being an American citizen. His Inaugural Speech provided his understanding of the cost of being an American Citizen:

...Our challenges may be new. The instruments with which we meet them may be new. But those values upon which our success depends — hard work and honesty, courage and fair play, tolerance and curiosity, loyalty and patriotism — these things are old. These things are true. They have been the quiet force of progress throughout our history. What is demanded then is a return to these truths. What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility — a recognition, on the part of every American, that we have duties to ourselves, our nation, and the world, duties that we do not grudgingly accept but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character, than giving our all to a difficult task. This is the price and the promise of citizenship... (Associated Press, 2009)

One of the first American Institutions that treated Black-Americans like any other American was the U.S. Military. There is one group of Black-Americans that was instrumental in the ending of racial segregation in the military; that group was the Tuskegee Airmen. When the Armed Forces segregated, the military and political authorities had the unproved opinion that Black-Americans were not good fighters. The Tuskegee Airmen proved them wrong and to defend their country as they “were dedicated, young men who volunteered to become America’s first Black military Airmen” (Tuskegee Airmen Inc. and the Tuskegee University Office of Marketing and Communications, 2003–2009). Their fighting record in WWII is second to none. “Not one bomber was lost to enemy fire in more than 200 combat missions” (Tuskegee Airmen Inc. and the Tuskegee University Office of Marketing and Communications, 2003–2009). There has been a recent Air Force report that contradicts the above statement by saying that twenty-five

bombers were lost to enemy fighter planes, but no one contests that any planes were lost to anti-aircraft guns or other types of ground-to-air weapons (Associated Press, 2007). Even so, several presidential citations were awarded to these superb fighting men. These Airmen were so fierce that, “The tenacious bomber escort cover provided by the 332nd ‘Red Tail’ Fighters often discouraged enemy fighter pilots from attacking bombers escorted by the 332nd Fighter Group” (Tampa Chapter of Tuskegee Airmen, Inc., 2005). Their service allowed following generations of Black-Americans to serve in a racially integrated American military. The myth that Black-Americans were poor fighters was forever buried and never to be resurrected.

In the tradition of the Tuskegee Airmen’s level of excellence, Major Merryl David, a Black-American woman flew the Air Force’s elite U-2 spy plane (Weathers, 2005). She is the first Black-American woman to fly the elite spy plane (DEOMI, 2006). Maj. David was once an officer in the Navy. “She is one of only five women and one of three African-Americans chosen to fly in the Air Force’s elite First Squadron, where U-2 pilots receive their training” (Weathers, 2005). The U-2 pilot’s job is no “cushy job. Solo flights on U-2s can last nine hours and the aircraft can fly 70,000 feet up into the atmosphere (Weathers, 2005). Maj David is a Star Trek fan who dreamed of flying to the stars as an astronaut. The major has a formidable and varied flying experience. “She has flown combat helicopters and airplanes for the Navy in the Middle East and South America” (Weathers, 2005). This Black-American is pursuing her happiness in love for flight in the defense of her country.

Another Black-American serving his country is Major General Charles F. Bolden, Jr., USMC. [General Bolden was a former NASA astronaut at the time the “Real African-American History” article was written (Burton, 1999–2009)]. In 1994, he was the Deputy Commandant, U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis Maryland (Johnson Space Center, 2005). The marine general is

a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and received a BS in electrical science in 1968 and in 1977 he received MS in systems management from the University of Southern California (Ferren, 1997–2003). General Bolden earned numerous honors and just to name a few: he was the recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross; the Defense Meritorious Service Medal; the Air Medal; and the Strike/Flight Medal, 8th award (Johnson Space Center, 2005). To review all the honors awarded to Gen Bolden and his various levels of experience in NASA go to the link <http://www.raahistory.com/astro/bolden.htm>. This Black-American, in his pursuit of happiness, gave the American people a very impressive service jacket, which follows the tradition of excellence set by the Tuskegee Airmen.

One of the most well-known Black-American military leaders is General Colin Powell, former Secretary of State. For his time, he was the first Black-American to hold such a high office in the federal government (American Academy of Achievement, 1996–2009). As a young man at City College of New York, he discovered his calling when he joined the Reserve Officer training Corps (ROTC) and “He became commander of his unit’s precision drill team and graduated in 1958 at the top of his ROTC class, with the rank of cadet colonel, the highest rank in the corps” (American Academy of Achievement, 1996–2009). This serves as a precursor of how he ended his military career as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the highest uniformed position in the DOD. General Powell has received military accommodations such as the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star (Chew, 1995–2008). He served two tours of duty in Viet Nam. In his second tour he was injured in a helicopter crash. Even though he was wounded, he rescued his comrades from the burning flames of the crash and he received the Soldier’s Medal (American Academy of Achievement, 1996–2009). Colin Powell throughout his military career has received eleven military decorations, including the Legion of Merit (American Academy of

Achievement, 1996–2009). It was out of this commitment to excellence that such military decorations attest to Colin Powell’s rise to the summit of power. His pursuit of happiness allowed him to serve his country at the highest levels of government.

Some Black-Americans have pursued their dreams or happiness in the business world. Some have shared their story in how they became successful in their field of business in an article titled, *Successful African-Americans Share Secrets of Success* (Massie, Samuel P, Taylor, Susan L, Fudge, Ann, Rogers, John W Jr., 1995). One such person is Ann Fudge who was the Executive Vice President of Kraft General Foods, Inc at the time the article was written. According to her, the secret is hard work and an unwavering commitment to a goal and achieving it by a job well done. She believes that one has to balance between being a leader and a good team player. She continually seeks ways to improve herself by reading trade/professional journals and attending seminars or conferences. Ms. Fudge particularly mentions that in her early career she found that the National Black MBA Association meetings helped her, “because it was there that I heard other people’s success stories...” (Massie, Samuel P, Taylor, Susan L, Fudge, Ann, Rogers, John W Jr., 1995). She is very proactive in that she continually seeks feedback from her managers, peers, and friends so that a course correction can be made on the road to achieving success. She was the type of person in her organization who, “‘made a difference in how people view themselves individually and how they view themselves collectively,’ as she told *Business Week*.” (The Gale Group, Inc., 2006).

Another Black-American who contributed to the article, *Successful African-Americans Share Secrets of Success* (Massie, Samuel P, Taylor, Susan L, Fudge, Ann, Rogers, John W Jr., 1995), was John W. Rogers, Jr., President and Founder, Ariel Capital management Mutual Fund Manager. His firm manages assets valued over \$13 billion (Morehouse College, 2009). He has

three basic principles he strives to follow. The first one is to “do what you say you’re going to do” (Massie, Samuel P, Taylor, Susan L, Fudge, Ann, Rogers, John W Jr., 1995). Other people will come to realize that your character has integrity worthy of their respect. The second principle is to be selfish (wanting to have profit) by utilizing an unselfish track. Mr. Rogers says that when one works for someone else, whether it is a company, corporation, or a team, the most important task is to achieve the success of the organization’s goals and aspirations. Such a feat may require one to have delayed gratification for the greater reward of closing a deal or making that sale, etc. The third principle is to stay focused. “Learn what you have a knack for and really work at it-strive to become the best in that particular field or activity” (Massie, Samuel P, Taylor, Susan L, Fudge, Ann, Rogers, John W Jr., 1995). Another value he stresses, which is not surprising, is a dedication to hard work. He puts in long hours in the office.

Another contributor to the above article, Samuel P. Massie, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of Chemistry U.S. Naval Academy Vice President for Education, Bingwa Multicultural Software Company, gives his “10 Commandments for Success”:

1. Always do your best, and be proud of yourself.
2. Don’t quit. Remember, “You’ve never failed until you have tried for the last time.”
3. Be friends to all. “Be sure the words you say are sweet. You never know which ones of them you might have to eat.”
4. Like a good Scout, “Always be prepared.”
5. Learn English well, both written and oral.
6. Take several languages, and be proficient in the use of computers.
7. Do not be afraid of challenges: “It is the blowing of the wind that causes the roots of the strong oak to sink deep.”

8. "It's the set of your sail, and not the gale, which determines the way you go."
9. "A student is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be lit." A good fire needs plenty of fresh air. Keep your mind's "fire" going by using the library, computers, etc., to refresh your knowledge.
10. Believe in yourself. "You must be somebody, 'cause God does not make junk"
(Massie, Samuel P, Taylor, Susan L, Fudge, Ann, Rogers, John W Jr., 1995).

Another way Black-Americans have pursued happiness, beyond the business world, is by choosing a religious vocation. Some of the Black-American religious leaders have been the voice for the Black-American community to achieve equality and respect in America. One such person is the Rev. Calvin O. Butts, III, pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, president of SUNY College at Old Westbury (Schachter, 2009). For 18 years he has championed social issues. His approach has been the social activist, who involves himself in the political arena. Some of his critics have labeled him a 'firebrand' for his expression of displeasure for New York's civil institutions (Abdullah, 2005). Rev. Butts has continually been, for some, a potential mayoral candidate for the city of New York. Rev. Butt's primary ministry is in the arena of social issues, such as "racism, education, images of women and minorities in the media, and caring for the poor" (Abdullah, 2005). He has also aided in the establishment of the Abyssinian Development Corporation, which is involved in overseeing "new and improved" affordable housing (Abdullah, 2005).

A totally different approach to the pursuit of happiness is Dr. Creflo Dollar (Creflo Dollar Ministries, 2000-2009). Dr. Dollar is a very charismatic speaker who believes that material wealth is "accompanied by "spiritual well-being." His approach, unlike Rev. Butts, is not social activism, Dr. Dollar emphasizes personal responsibility and changing the way a person

approaches their life challenges. Dr. Dollar's church is based in Atlanta and, in 2005 had 25,000 members (Abdullah, 2005). His sermons are broadcasted all over the nation. Dollar's World Changers Church International, in 2005, had over "60 programs that offer social services, including training people for the workforce and helping them get out of debt, in diverse communities worldwide" (Abdullah, 2005).

Roman Catholic Archbishop, Wilton Gregory is another successful Black-American religious leader. He was the first Black-American to preside over the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) at one of the lowest times in American Catholic history (Reaves, 2002). It was his hard task to safeguard and repair the reputation of the American Catholic Church as it suffered through the clergy sex abuse scandals. He was the one who lead the American Catholic church to reform much of its policies and protect the believer against predatory priests. Although Archbishop Gregory no longer presides over the NCCB, he has gained public attention for "...willing to take the hard-line in considering sex abuse a crime and calling for the ouster of predatory priests" (Abdullah, 2005). This leading Black-American church leader, in his pursuit of happiness, is one of many who have protected the community at large.

One key figure in the quest of Black-American citizenship was Thurgood Marshall, the first Black-American to sit on the U.S. Supreme Court, 1967–1991 (Thurgood Marshall College, 2009). A key moment in his life occurred in 1930 when Thurgood Marshall was denied admission to the University of Maryland Law School, because he was black (Thurgood Marshall College, 2009). He was accepted at Howard University Law School, where he came in contact with Charles Hamilton Houston, the Dean of the school, who taught his students that the rights guaranteed under the Constitution should apply to all Americans. Thurgood Marshall attained an

impressive record of continually winning court cases against states that wanted to continue discriminating against Black-Americans. From 1961–1965, he was appointed as a circuit court judge in which he made 112 rulings, none of which were overturned by the Supreme Court (Thurgood Marshall College, 2009). President Lyndon Johnson appointed Marshall solicitor general, where he won 14 cases out of 19 argued before the Supreme Court (Thurgood Marshall College, 2009). As an associate judge of the U.S. Supreme Court, “...he developed a profound sensitivity to injustice by way of the crucible of racial discrimination in this country” (Thurgood Marshall College, 2009). Thurgood Marshall pursued his happiness by his keen understanding of the Constitution and was a guardian for us all to guard against government encroachment upon many voiceless Americans.

The second Black-American to become a member of the highest court in the land was the Associate Supreme Court Justice, Clarence Thomas. He was appointed to that position by President George H.W. Bush and was sworn in October 23, 1991 (Legal Information Institute, 2009). Thurgood Marshall fought the legal battles for civil rights and supported Affirmative Action as a means to create a more equitable American society. However, Justice Thomas feels the U.S. Constitution is colorblind and giving preferential treatment to people based on race should stop. Justice Thomas’ point is that we should all be treated equal and no one should receive preferential treatment based on race alone.

Another successful Black-American citizen is Dr. Condoleezza Rice, former Secretary of State. She is the second woman to hold that office after Madeleine Albright. She is the first Black-American to be Secretary of State. This Black-American woman is housed with talent. Dr. Rice mastered the piano at the age of three (Soylent Communications, 2009). Dr. Rice was able to skip the first and seventh grades, entered college at the age of 15 (Soylent Communications,

2009). She has three degrees, one of which is a doctorate in political science (Vanderbilt University Division of Public Affairs, 2004). From 1981-99 she was a professor of Political Science at Stanford (Soylent Communications, 2009). From 1993-99 she served as Stanford's provost in which she was responsible for the school's budget and academic programs (Vanderbilt University Division of Public Affairs, 2004). During the first Bush presidency Dr. Rice served on the National Security staff at mid-to-upper-level (Soylent Communications, 2009). Under the second Bush presidency, Dr. Rice served as National Security Advisor until she succeeded Gen. Colin Powell as Secretary of State. Her political views echoed Associate Supreme Court Justice, Clarence Thomas, when she remarked that when she was viewing the 1984 Democratic National Convention she "...decided that the Democrats' appeals to 'women, minorities, and the poor' really meant 'helpless people and the poor'. Rice said, 'I decided I'd rather be ignored than patronized'" (Soylent Communications, 2009).

Michael Jordan is a Black-American who pursued the American dream extraordinaire. He is arguably the best basketball player of all time. When one watched Michael on the basketball court one observed a well-choreographed ballet, where his feet developed wings like Mercury as he flew gracefully to lay the basketball in the hoop. But even the great Michael Jordan had to practice. When he was a sophomore in high school, he did not make the team. As a result, he continued to practice the game and he made the team as a junior (Air#23Jordan, 2009). Michael Jordan was taught the value of hard work and the importance of avoiding the temptation of street life by his father (Advameg Inc., 2007). His mother taught him such 'down to earth' skills of sewing, cleaning and laundry (Advameg Inc., 2007). The value of hard work hit home for Michael Jordan because basketball practice is very hard work. It took a tremendous amount of practice to be a professional ball player, especially at Jordan's level. Michael Jordan is a

successful businessman as well. He endorsed products, such as Nike™, Wheaties™, and Hanes™ underwear. One of the most successful ad campaign slogans was “Be like Mike.” That is how much Michael Jordan had been endeared by the American public. He has his own golf company and his own line of cologne in which he sold 1.5 million bottles in its first two months (Advameg Inc., 2007). In 2000, he became the third Black-American to own a basketball team, the Washington Wizards (Advameg Inc., 2007). In 2000, he donated \$1 million to help teachers make a difference (Advameg Inc., 2007). Michael Jordan certainly pursued his right to happiness as a citizen of this country.

In the quest for Black-American citizenship in these United States, it is important to chronicle the different familial histories of one’s ancestors. For those whose families originated from Europe, it is easier to trace their ancestors and where their place of origin resides. For many Black-Americans, tracing of their ancestors is nearly impossible. When the Black slave trade flourished, the indigenous Blacks were whisked away from their home and families, and were merely treated as a cargo of animals to be used as property and were listed as such. In fact, their language and culture was ripped away from them so that, in time, their identity as Africans was lost and replaced by a culture and language that reduced them to beasts of burden. The Black-American citizen, Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. hosts a PBS television series entitled “Black-American Lives,” in which he interviews celebrities, such as Morgan Freeman and discusses his ancestors (Gates, 2008). Dr. Gates is the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor at Harvard University and the director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African-American Research (Gates, 2008). To see more of the academic accomplishments of Dr. Gates, go to this link: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aalives/index.html>. Dr. Gates pursues happiness by discovering

Black-Americans' ancestors and by sharing their stories with their descendents. Consequently, Black-Americans can take pride in their heritage just as other American citizens do.

The world just witnessed the Inauguration of Barack Obama to the highest office in the land. This is the pinnacle of the quest of Black-American citizenship. The American Constitution explicitly states that only those born in the U.S. can be President. This implies that whoever holds the office of President is a citizen of the U.S. and enjoys all the rights guaranteed in the American Constitution. It also means that when the Declaration of Independence speaks about, "...all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (Constitution Society, 1995–2005), it refers to the person who holds that office. Barack Obama is a Black-American elected to the office of President of the United States. The quest for citizenship for Black-Americans has come to fruition for many. This does not mean racial prejudice is eradicated in America; we still have to change some people's hearts about their fellow citizens who are Black-Americans, or are different from themselves. Perhaps, if Barack Obama's performance in office follows the path of excellence set by the Tuskegee Airmen, then that change of heart might follow as it did when those grateful bomber pilots of WWII made it safely back home.

This paper discussed different Black-Americans and how they choose to pursue their happiness. It is in this liberty to achieve one's goal/happiness that gives America her strength. The struggle for the enjoyment of all the rights of being a Black-American citizen has been and will still be a long one. The Civil Rights Movement from the 1960s was a catalyst to break segregation. Men like Thurgood Marshall, who fought the good fight and won many legal battles, opened the door for many Black-Americans to education and the professions. The Tuskegee Airmen made it possible for future generations of Black-Americans to serve their

country equitably. The victories obtained in the struggle for Black-American citizenship made it possible for Mr. Obama to run for President of the United States. With the election of Barack Obama as President, this confirms and validates the struggle for citizenship for the Black-Americans.

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