

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

FEBRUARY 2000

A SUPPLEMENT OF SIDELINES

Volume 75 No. 38

Murfreesboro, TN

Catch a Fire



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The man behind the month

Carter Godwin Woodson contributes to acknowledgement of African Americans in history

Shawn Whitsell
Section Editor

Carter Godwin Woodson was born on December 19, 1875 at New Canton in Buckingham, County, Virginia.

A son of former slaves, James and Ella, Woodson was unable to attend school regularly.

However, by the time he was 17, he had mastered the fundamentals of common school subjects.

In order to further his education, Woodson and his brother Robert moved to Huntington, W.Va.

Woodson would go on to work as a coal miner in Fayette County before entering Douglass High School, where he earned his diploma in less than two years.

Upon completion of high school, Woodson entered Berea College in Kentucky and earned his associates degree in 1901.

Woodson later became the principal of his former high

school, served as supervisor of schools in the Philippines, taught languages at high schools in the Washington, D.C., area and became dean of the School of Liberal Arts at Howard University and West Virginia State College.

To broaden his horizons even more, Woodson enrolled in the University of Chicago and earned his bachelor's and master's degrees by 1908.

He later earned his doctorate degree from Harvard University in 1912, the second African American to receive such a degree.

Afterwards, Woodson studied for a year in Asia and Europe.

He taught the Philippines following the Spanish American War and the United States occupation of the former Spanish colony.

Laura Spelman Rockefeller later gave Woodson a grant for his study of the 1830 census.

On Sept. 9, 1915, Woodson founded The Association for

Woodson established Negro History Week in 1926, which is now known as Black History Month.

the Study of Negro Life and History in order to research what his fellow scholars had ignored for years, the role of the Negro in American history.

Out of the foundation came some of Woodson's most important pieces of literature, "The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861" (1915), "A Century of Negro Migration" (1918), "The History of the Negro Church" (1927) and "The Negro in Our History," which underwent various editions and was revised after Woodson's death in 1950 by Charles Harris

Wesley.

The following year, 1916, Woodson began publishing the scholarly "Journal of the Negro History" which has never missed an issue despite the depression, loss of funding and two World Wars.

Woodson's vision for the journal was to publish works of black and white scholars who researched and wrote about people of color.

Other works by Woodson include "The Mind of the Negro as Reflected in Letters Written During the Crisis, 1800-1860" and "The Mis-Education of the Negro."

In 1920, he organized Associated Publishers, the oldest black publishing company in the country, which made publishing books on Negro life possible.

Woodson established Negro History Week in 1926, which is now known as Black History Month (or African American History Month), and in 1937, he published "The Negro

History Bulletin" for teachers in elementary schools.

He also directed the subsidization of research in Negro History by the Association and continued to write numerous articles and books.

Although Woodson was able to achieve a lot in his lifetime, he didn't get to complete one of his most cherished ambitions, the sixth volume of Encyclopedia Africana, which wasn't completed until after his death on April 3, 1950.

A focused and hard worker, Woodson would decline dinner invitations from friend Dorothy Porter Wesley by teasingly saying,

"No, you are trying to marry me off. I am married to my work," he reportedly said.

The work of Carter G. Woodson will not be forgotten because he left a strong legacy. Everytime Black History Month is celebrated, it is a celebration of a Carter G. Woodson brainchild. ■

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37132**
EDITORIAL: 898-2337
ADVERTISING: 898-2533
FAX: 904-8487
www.sidelines.mtsu.edu

EDITOR IN CHIEF Randall Ford
SECTION EDITOR Shawn Whitsell
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"Sidelines" is the non-profit, editorially independent student newspaper of Middle Tennessee State University and is published every Wednesday during June and July and on Monday and Thursday during the fall and spring semesters. FLASH!, the entertainment magazine, is published every Wednesday during the fall and spring semester. The opinions expressed herein are those of the individual writers and not necessarily of "Sidelines" or the university.

Unity luncheon honors unsung heroes

Staff Reports

On Tuesday the MTSU's African American History will be kicked off with the traditional Unity Luncheon, which recognizes and honors select "unsung heroes" throughout the community.

These "unsung heroes" were chosen because they have spent large portion of their lives helping others and making a positive difference within the community.

This year's five honorees are Dora Rucker, Willa McIntyre Vaughn, James Issac Mitchell. All are of Murfreesboro except Nathaniel Watts of Lebanon and Billy Easley of Nashville.

Rucker has been a licensed beautician and Avon representative for over 50 years.

She attended Queen of Sheeba School of Cosmetology in Nashville and celebrated her graduation at a ceremony in the War Memorial Auditorium in 1946. The ceremony was the first African American event ever held at the Auditorium.

Dora Rucker was an active member of the American Business Women's Association and is also a member of the Rutherford County Election

Commission. As a member of the Democratic Women's Association, she has registered more than 2,000 voters.

She is a member of the Homemakers Club and the Urban Environmental Commission, and she serves on boards of the Wee Care Day Care and the Murfreesboro Senior Citizens Center.

Willa Vaughn has dedicated herself to 44 years of service to the Rutherford County and Murfreesboro City school systems and, according to her pastor, Rev. Melvin E. Hughes of the Allen Chapel AME Church, she "has touched many lives in the community."

At Allen Chapel, Vaughn serves as a Holy Steward, Mass. choir member, assistant Sunday school teacher, member of the Women's Missionary Society, member of the Better Homes and Gardens Club and a tutor for Allen Chapel Tutorial Services. As a tutor, she dedicates time every Tuesday and Thursday with students from kindergarten to college in subjects such as math, science, reading and writing.

James Mitchell launched Mitchell Backhoe and Trucking Company more than 40 years ago despite the lack of formal

education he received.

Mitchell, who is a World War II veteran, has continued to serve others through his church and the Shiloh Community Improvement Club.

Eighteen years ago, Mitchell and his wife adopted two young brothers in order to help make their dream of playing football a reality.

Years later, the young boys would become two of Oakland High School's best players.

Friend Marilyn Hill said that following her husband's death, the Mitchells took her and her two young children into their home just two weeks before Christmas.

"That was one of the best Christmases my children ever had," she said.

After operating his own photo studio, Bill Easley was hired to work at "The Tennessean." He covered the Civil Rights riots in the late 60s, and in 1969 he developed a series of articles chronicling "Negro History Week."

His work has appeared in Glamour, Ebony, Essence Magazine and Star.

Easley has earned the prestigious Carter G. Woodson award, as well as awards from Garnett, the National Press

Association and Columbia University. He is also a member of the National Association of Black Journalist Hall of Fame.

Easley, who was the first African American photo-journalist to work for a major U.S. southeast daily paper, retired from his full-time position at "The Tennessean" in 1989.

Nathaniel Watts has the distinction of being the only African American in the country who works as an aviation safety inspector for the Federal Aviation Administration.

Watts was a helicopter mechanic and crew member for the U.S. Army. He also did a tour of duty in Vietnam as well as other domestic and foreign duty assignments.

After 28 years of military service, Watts retired with numerous honors, including the Distinguished Air Medal.

Watts was an instructor at the Alabama Aviation and Technical College, where he certified FAA Aircraft and Power Plant mechanics before he went to work for the FAA in 1972.

Watts serves as a senior deacon and trustee in his church. ■

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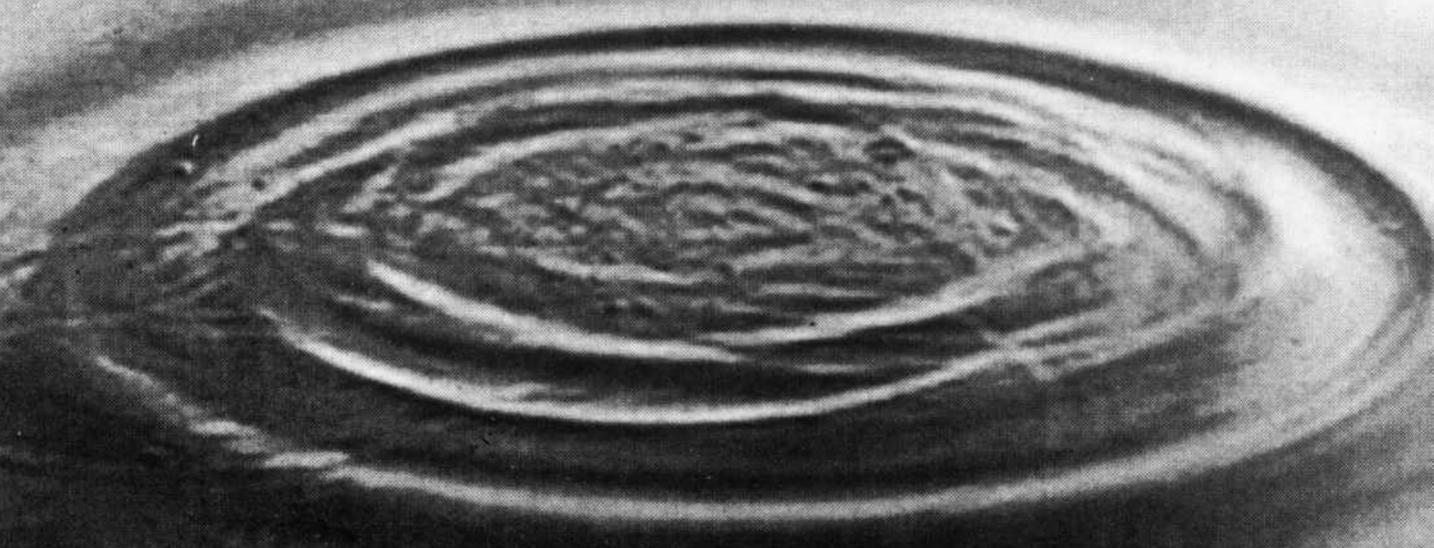
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Malcom X's pilgrimage to Mecca

The following letter was sent from Malcom to his assistants, new Muslim Mosque, press and his wife, during the conclusion of his pilgrimage to Mecca. The content is reproduced from The Autobiography of Malcom X as told to Alex Haley.

Never have I witnessed such sincere hospitality and the overwhelming spirit of true brotherhood as practiced by people of all colors and races here in this Ancient Holy Land, the home of Abraham, Muhammad and all other prophets of the Holy Scriptures. For the past week, I have been utterly speechless and spellbound by the graciousness I see displayed all around me by people of all colors.

I have been blessed to visit the Holy City of Mecca. I have made my seven circuits around the Ka'ba, led by a young Mutawaf named Muhammad. I drank water from the well of Zem Zem.

I ran seven times back and forth between the hills of Mt. Al-Safa and Al-Marwah. I have prayed in the ancient city of Mina, and I have prayed on Mt. Arafat.

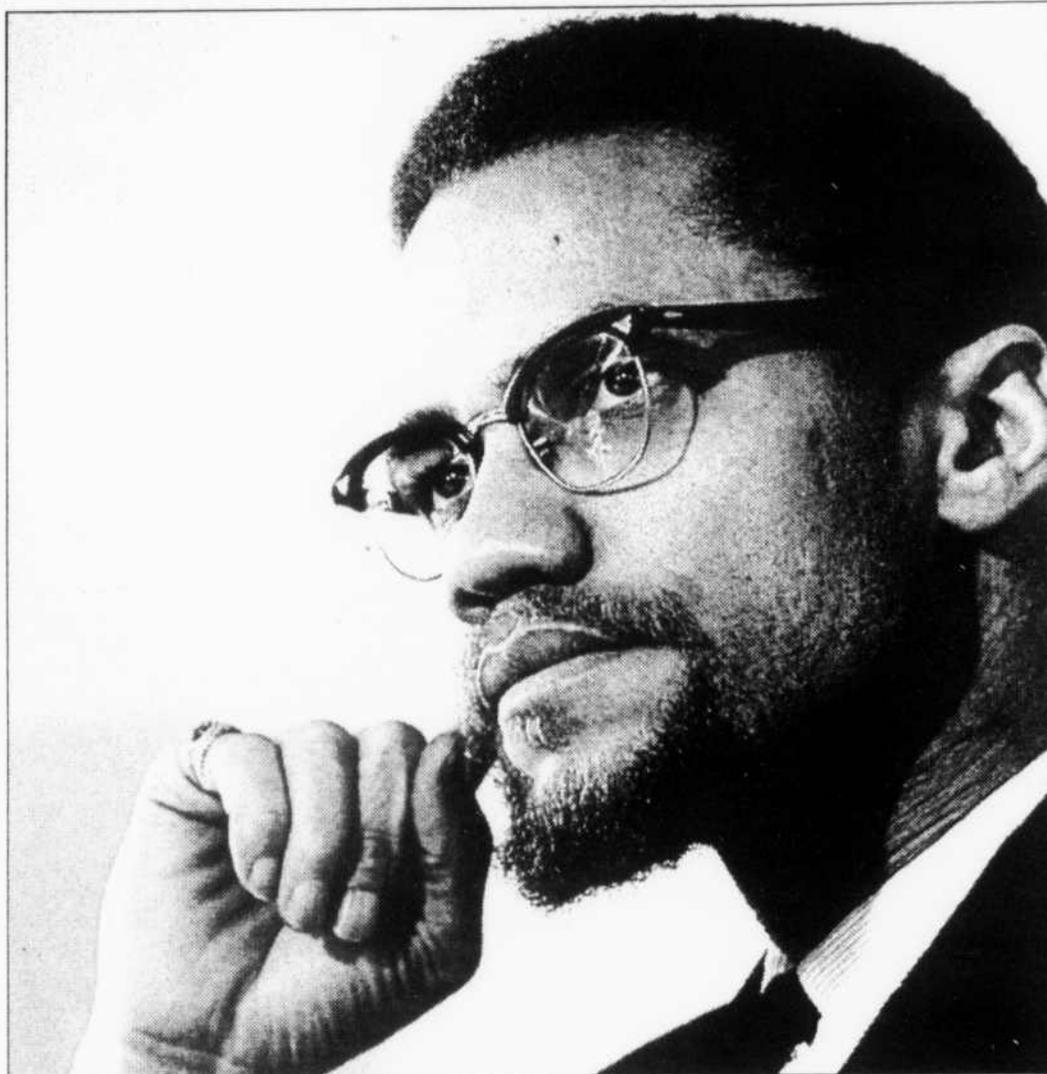
There were tens of thousands of pilgrims, from all over the world. They were of all colors, from blue eyed blonds to black skin Africans. But we were all participating in the same rituals, displaying a spirit of unity and brotherhood that my experiences in America had lead me to believe never could exist between the white and non-white.

America needs to understand Islam, because this is the one religion that erases from its society the race problem. Throughout my travels in the Muslim world, I have met, talked to, and even eaten with people who in America would have considered 'white' — but the 'white' attitude was removed from their minds by the religion of Islam. I have never before seen sincere and true brotherhood practiced by all colors together, irrespective of their color.

You may be shocked by these words coming from me. But on this pilgrimage, what I have seen, and experienced, has forced me to re-arrange much of my thought patterns previously held, and to toss aside some of my previous conclusions. This was not too difficult for me. Despite my firm convictions, I have always been a man who tries to face facts, and to accept the reality of life as new experiences and new knowledge unfolds it.

I have always kept an open mind, which is necessary to the flexibility that must go hand in hand with every form of intelligent search for truth.

During the past eleven days here in the Muslim world, I have eaten from the same plate, drunk from the same glass, and slept in the same bed, (or on the same rug) — while praying to the same God — with fellow Muslims, whose eyes were the bluest of blue, whose hair was the blondest of blond, and whose skin was the whitest of white. And in the same words and in the actions and in the deeds of the 'white' Muslims, I felt the same sincerity that I felt among the black African Muslims of Nigeria, Sudan and



Ghana.

We were truly all the same (brothers) — because their belief in one God had removed the 'white' from their minds, the 'white' from their behavior, and the 'white' from their attitude.

I could see from this, that perhaps if white Americans could accept the Oneness of God, then perhaps, too, they could accept in reality the Oneness of Man — and cease to measure, and hinder, and harm others in terms of their differences in color.

With racism plaguing America like an incurable cancer, the so-called 'Christian' white American heart should be more receptive to a proven solution to such a destructive problem. Perhaps it could be in time to save America from imminent disaster — the same destruction brought upon Germany by racism that eventually destroyed the Germans themselves.

Each hour here in the Holy Land enables me to have greater spiritual insights into what is happening in America between black and white. The American Negro never can be blamed for his racial animosities — he is only reacting to four hundred years of conscious racism of the American whites.

But as racism leads America up the suicide path, I do believe, from the experience that I have had with them, that the whites of the younger generation, in the colleges and universities, will see the handwriting on the wall and many of them will turn to the spiritual path of truth — the only way left to America to ward off the disaster that racism inevitably must lead to.

Never have I been so highly honored. Never have I been made to feel more humble and unworthy.

Who would believe the blessings that have been heaped upon an American Negro? A few nights ago, a man who would be called in America a 'white' man, a United Nations diplomat, an ambassador, a companion of kings, gave me his hotel suite, his bed. By this man, His Excellency Prince Faisal, who rules this Holy Land, was made aware of my presence here in Jedda. The very next morning, Prince Faisal's son, in person, informed me that by the will and decree of his esteemed father, I was to be a State Guest.

The deputy Chief of Protocol himself took me before the Hajj Court. His Holiness Sheikh Muhammad Harkon himself okayed my visit to Mecca. His Holiness gave me two books on Islam, with his personal seal and autograph, and he told me that he prayed that I would be a successful preacher of Islam in America.

A car, a driver, and a guide, have been placed at my disposal, making it possible for me to travel about this Holy Land almost at will.

The government provides air conditioned quarters and servants in each city that I visit.

Never would I have even thought of dreaming that I would ever be a recipient of such honors — honors that in America would be bestowed upon a King — not a Negro.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all the Worlds.

Sincerely,
El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz (Malcom X)

Black History Month: A timeline

1953-1954 - On May 17 the U.S. Supreme Court rules unanimously in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* that racial segregation in public schools violates the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

1955 - Rosa Parks, secretary of the Montgomery, Ala., chapter of the NAACP, refuses to surrender her seat when ordered by a local bus driver, leading to the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955-56.

1959 - "Raisin in the Sun," by Lorraine Hansberry, becomes the first drama by a black woman to be produced on Broadway.

1961 - Testing desegregation practices in the South, the Freedom Rides, sponsored by CORE, encounter overwhelming violence, particularly in Alabama, leading to federal intervention.

1963 - Medger Evers, Mississippi field secretary for the NAACP, is shot and killed in an ambush in front of his home, following a historic broadcast on the subject of civil rights by President John F. Kennedy.

1965 - The Voting Rights Act is passed following the Selma-to-Montgomery March, which garnered the nation's attention when marchers were beaten mercilessly by state troopers at the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

1966 - The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense is founded in Oakland, Calif., by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, with the original purpose of protecting residents from acts of police brutality.

1967 - Heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali refuses to submit to induction into the armed forces. Convicted of violating the Selective Service Act, Ali is barred from the ring and stripped of his title.

1968 - On April 4 the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., is assassinated in Memphis, Tenn. The assassination is followed by a week of rioting in at least 125 cities across the nation, including Washington, D.C.

1974 - Baseball player Hank Aaron hits his 715th run, breaking Babe Ruth's record, which had stood since 1935.

1980 - Black Entertainment Television (BET) was founded by Robert L. Johnson.

1982 - Singer Michael Jackson creates a sensation with the album *Thriller*, which becomes one of the most popular albums of all time, selling more than 40 million copies.

1983 - Civil-rights leader Jesse Jackson announces his intention to run for the Democratic presidential nomination, becoming the first African American to make a serious bid for the presidency.

1984 - The *Cosby Show*, starring comedian Bill Cosby, becomes one of the most popular situation comedies in television history and is praised for its broad cross-cultural appeal and avoidance of racial stereotypes.

1991 - The Senate votes 52-48 to confirm the nomination of Justice Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court following charges of sexual harassment by former aide Anita Hill during confirmation hearings.

1992 - Riots break out in Los Angeles, sparked by the acquittal of four white police officers caught on videotape beating Rodney King, a black motorist. The riots cause at least 55 deaths and \$1 billion in damage.

1995 - Minister Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, rises to the height of his influence as the most prominent organizer of the "Million Man March" of African American men in Washington, D.C.

1997 - Michael Jordan, often considered the greatest all-around player in the history of basketball, leads the Chicago Bulls to their fifth championship.

1998 - Lauryn Hill's "Doo Wop (That Thing)" was the first number one single written, produced and performed by a woman.

From the Section Editor Remember those who fought for you

Once again, it is my pleasure to present to you the special year 2000 Black History Month issue of "Sidelines."

I titled this issue "Catch A Fire" after a prolific album by the late great Robert Nesta Marley.

I chose this title not just because I'm a huge Bob Marley fan but because his music, with its positive revolutionary messages, ascends through all space and time and continues to unify the people.

I'm not completely sure what Marley meant with the phrase, "Catch A Fire," but I take it that he wanted the people, especially the ghetto youths of Jamaica, to catch the fire (inspiration) to bring about positive change in their communities, cities and the greater world.

Hopefully, this issue will not only educate or reiterate on things of the past but also bring focus to the future of African Americans so that we can continue to make great contributions to the world.

It is important for our generation to realize that we are standing on the shoulders of so many great black men and women who came before us and paved the way. We need to regain the "fire" that our ancestors possessed. Our ancestors fought battles so we wouldn't have to, such as the battle against slavery.

Though we've made it through that,

we can't forget about the battles we face today.

Today we're fighting modern-day versions of the same battles our ancestors fought. Although our ancestors fought for us through physical slavery, let's continue to keep our minds free of mental slavery. We have to continue to struggle so hopefully our children won't have to struggle as hard. The process may seem continuous and tiring, but like Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "We as a people will get to the promise land."

We must not get complacent with our lives because the struggle continues even in the year 2000. Even in this new millennium we still have to face racial discrimination and stereotypes.

So many of my young, black "bredren," along with myself, are often labeled "suspect" because of the color of our skin and the hip hop style in which we dress.

Because we wear the mini froes, braids, dreads, baggy jeans and backwards caps, we're sometimes assumed to be possible trouble-makers.

Riding in a nice car is sometimes reason enough for us to be pulled over at night.

Because we sometimes use street terms (slanguage), it's often assumed that we can't articulate intelligently.

All these factors are still present even in the year 2000, so it's important for us to continue to strive.

We must also remember not to commit any racist or discriminatory acts against others.

Let's not forget that history is history. Black history is just one aspect of the entire history of this planet. Black History Month is not to exclude other races; it's just a celebration of the rise of blacks from being on our knees as slaves to standing on our feet today as students, teachers, preachers, entrepreneurs, musicians, writers, producers, lawyers, doctors, directors, humanitarians, mothers and fathers.

February celebrates the triumph of a race of people, which is, in essence, a triumph for all people.

So I strongly encourage everyone to broaden their horizons by studying the history and cultures of different ethnic groups. If we do this, we can gain a better understanding of others, which can lead to a better understanding of ourselves.

Like my uncle Wesley always says, "Understanding is the best thing in the world."

If we can get some understanding, we can begin to love each other for who we are.

I often heard and even made jokes about how Black History Month was given to us on the shortest month of the year.

But the truth is, Carter G. Woodson, the Father of Black History, founded Negro History Week, which evolved

into Black History Month.

Let's not restrict ourselves to celebrating Black History just in February. February is only the beginning of the year-long celebration. February just sets the tone for the rest of the year.

Shawn Whitsell

In the spirit of Bob Marley, I say to you, Jah bless.

Old pirates see they rob I
Stole I from the merchant ship
Minutes after, they took I
From the bottomless pit
But my hand I was made strong
By the hand of the Almighty
We forward in this generation
triumphantly

Won't you help me sing
These songs of freedom
Cause all I ever had
Redemption Song, redemption song

Emancipate yourselves from mental
slavery

None but ourselves can free our minds
Have no fear of atomic energy
Cause none of them can stop the time
How long shall they kill our prophets
While we stand aside and look
Some say it's just a part of it
You've got to fulfill the book

Won't you help to sing
These songs of freedom
Cause all I ever had
Redemption song, redemption song
—Bob Marley
Redemption Song

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Jacques D. D.

'The Piano Lesson' depicts family struggle

Ruth Peltier
Staff Reporter

Have you looked inside yourself lately? You are a composite of all your experiences and all the experiences of your family. You are your history.

It is your responsibility to take your history and meld it into the history of your community, your country and your world. It is your responsibility to build on that history and carry it on into the future.

August Wilson, America's most celebrated black playwright, is writing 10 plays about Black American experience in the 20th century, one play to represent each decade. Thus far, he has completed eight of them.

In these plays, he opens the door to America's closet and turns on a light. It is terribly important for all Americans, black and white to look inside.

This month, the Murfreesboro Ensemble Theater (MET) will present Wilson's fourth play, "The Piano Lesson," directed by Robert Fish.

Fish ranked Wilson with other great American playwrights of this century, declaring his work to be on a par with Arthur Miller, Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams. He pointed out that "The Piano Lesson" was the second of Wilson's plays to win the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

Fish said that in "Piano Lesson," Wilson's characters play the role of the traditional African storytellers.

They relate of the history of the Charles family and the story of the piano that links them to it.

According to Candy Robins, who plays the part of Berniece, the piano was carved by the great-grandfather of the present-day Charles family during the time when the Charles family was owned by the Sutter family and worked the Sutter land.

He carved into it the history of their family; it is their heritage.

After emancipation, the family struggled to gain possession of the piano and members of the family died the acquisition of it. When part of the family joined the great migration north, they took the piano with them.



Photo provided

Carlyle Johnson (Wining Boy) and Candy Robins (Berniece) rehearse on the set of "The Piano Lesson."

Now the heirloom is in Pittsburgh in Berniece's home. She is the great-granddaughter of the slave who carved it. She owns it jointly with her brother, Boy Willie.

Fish explained that the play depicts a struggle between two sets of values. Berniece wants the piano to remain the

property of the family, as a symbol of all the family struggles, both under slavery and in the intervening years.

To her, the piano represents the past. Actually, it is standing in the way of her moving on with her life.

Berniece insists that she learned to play the piano only

to please her mother. It linked her grandmother to the spirits of the past. After her mother died, Berniece never touched it again, afraid of arousing those spirits.

Boy Willie is looking toward the future.

See Play, 4

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Black History Month events

Feb. 1

Unity Luncheon - This event recognizes and honors our elderly unsung heroes who have made outstanding contributions to the middle Tennessee community. Tuesday, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., James Union Building, Tennessee Room.

For more information, please contact the College of Mass Communication at (615) 898-2813.

Feb. 2

Legal Issues in Tennessee - Speaker: Judge D'Army Bailey, Division VIII, Circuit Court Tennessee, 30th Judicial District, Memphis, TN. Wednesday, 7:00 p.m., James Union Building, Hazelwood Dining Room. Sponsored by AAHM 2000 and the MTSU Division of Academic Affairs.

Feb. 3

Fireside Chat - The Life and Times of Lorraine Hansberry. Moderator: Robert Rucker, associate professor, MTSU Department of Social Work. Thursday, 5:30 p.m., MTSU's Foundation Reception House, 324 West Thompson Lane, Murfreesboro, TN.

Feb. 4

Community Health Education and Promotion Fair - Friday, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., James Union Building, Tennessee Room.

Sponsored by Central Tennessee Area Health Education Centers, Public and Community Health Division of MTSU Department of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Safety, MTSU School of Nursing, and Adams Chair of Excellence in Health Care Services.

Feb. 5

Miss Black Jewel Pageant - Saturday, 6:30 p.m., Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building. \$10 general admission. For more information, please contact the Office of Multicultural Affairs at (615) 898-2987.

Feb. 6

African American Images in Film - Sundays, 3:00 p.m., Keathley University Center Theater.

Today's feature is "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner."

As the star in numerous racially charged films of the '50s and '60s, Sidney Poitier played the young black man who, through intelligence, charm, reason, and right, won over bigotry both overt and subtle.

Sponsored by MTSU Fine Arts. FREE and OPEN to the public. For more information, please contact MTSU Special Events at (615) 898-2551.

Feb. 8

African American Studies Lecture - Tuesdays, 3:30-4:30 p.m. in Peck Hall 220. Sponsored by the Department of African American Studies. For more information, please contact Bonnie Shipp at (615) 898-2655.

African American Mass Communicators Panel - Finding Employment and Success in Mass Communications: A How-to for African American Students. Moderator: Dr. Sybril Bennett, assistant professor, MTSU Radio/TV/Photography. Tuesday, 7:00

p.m., Mass Communication Television Studio, Bragg Mass Communications Building.

Feb. 9

Quiz Bowl: The Black Perspective - Wednesday, 7:00 p.m., Learning Resources Center, Multi-Media Room.

Sponsored by the MTSU African-American Student Association. For more information, please contact Genora Reed at (615) 898-4085.

Feb. 13

African American Images in Film - Sundays, 3:00 p.m., Keathley University Center Theater.

Today's feature is Carmen Jones. Director Otto Preminger's version of Bizet's opera "Carmen" transplants the tale of lust, betrayal, and murder from nineteenth-century Spain to the post-World War II South.

Sponsored by MTSU Fine Arts. FREE and OPEN to the public. For more information, please contact MTSU Special Events at (615) 898-2551.

Feb. 15

African American Studies Lecture - Featuring noted scholar Dr. Craig Werner, Tuesdays, 3:30-4:30 p.m. in the State Farm Room in BAS. Sponsored by the Department of African American Studies. For more information, please contact Bonnie Shipp at (615) 898-2655.

Feb. 16-19

MTSU Theatre Production - "A Raisin in the Sun" by Lorraine Hansberry, a milestone in both contemporary theatre and African-American literature, is as powerful today as it was 40 years ago.

Wednesday-Saturday, each evening at 8:00 p.m., Studio Theater, Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building.

MTSU students admitted free with a valid I.D. For more information and ticket prices, please call (615) 898-2267.

Feb. 20

African American Images in Film - Sundays, 3:00 p.m., Keathley University Center Theater.

Today's feature is "The Wiz," a spectacular movie version of the hit Broadway musical based on L. Frank Baum's classic "The Wizard of Oz."

Sponsored by MTSU Fine Arts. FREE and OPEN to the public. For more information, please contact MTSU Special Events at (615) 898-2551.

Feb. 22

African American Studies Lecture - Tuesdays, 3:30-4:30 p.m. in Peck Hall 220. Sponsored by the Department of African American Studies. For more information, please contact Bonnie Shipp at (615) 898-2655.

Feb. 23

John Pleas Award Reception - This award honors an African American professor or administrator who has made significant contributions to the MTSU campus and surrounding community in the areas of research and public service.

The ceremony will be from 3:00-5:00 p.m., James Union Building, Faculty Senate Room.

Feb. 23 - 26

MTSU Theatre Production - Replay of "A Raisin in the Sun" (See Feb. 16-19).

Wednesday-Saturday, each evening at 8:00 p.m., Studio Theater, Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building.

MTSU students admitted free with a valid I.D. For more information and ticket prices, please call (615) 898-2267.

Feb. 24

AAHM School Children's Luncheon - James Union Building, Tennessee Room, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Feb. 27

African American Images in Film - Sundays, 3:00 p.m., Keathley University Center Theater.

Today's feature is "Cotton Club." Director Francis Coppola's stylish evocation of the Jazz Age's hottest nightclub follows the exploits of two sets of brothers: the Hines', who attempt to tap their way to the big time, and Richard Gere and Nicholas Cage, who tap into their own underworld connections.

Sponsored by MTSU Fine Arts. FREE and OPEN to the public. For more information, please contact MTSU Special Events at (615) 898-2551.

Distinguished Alumni Awards Reception - This event recognizes distinguished African American alumni of MTSU who have made outstanding contributions in their professions and throughout their communities. Sunday, 5:00-7:00 p.m., Alumni Center. Co-sponsored by AAHM 2000 and MTSU Alumni Office.

Feb. 28

Aerobics with Hope Bakari - Bakari is the coordinator of aerobic activities at the Murfreesboro YMCA. Monday, 4:30-7:00 p.m., Dance Studio A, Murphy Center (dress comfortably).

Feb. 29

African American Studies Lecture - Featuring author Yolanda Joe. Tuesdays, 3:30-4:30 p.m. in the State Farm Room in BAS. Sponsored by the Department of African American Studies. For more information, please contact Bonnie Shipp at (615) 898-2655.

March 4

AAHM 2000 Celebration Party - Join us on Saturday, March 4, from 8:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m., as we celebrate our accomplishments. The party will feature food, music and fun, and will take place in the MTSU Foundation Reception House, 324 West Thompson Lane, Murfreesboro, TN. For more information, call (615) 898-2551.

Important Information

Admission - unless otherwise specified, all events are free and open to the public and are held on the campus of Middle Tennessee State University.

AAHM 2000 Committee Co-Chairs - Mimi Thomas, assistant director for student programming, MTSU Office of Student Unions and Programming, (615) 898-2551 and Dr. Dwight Patterson, assistant professor, MTSU Department of Chemistry, (615) 904-8252. ■

Play: tells stories

Continued from 3

He lives in the South, near the original family home and sharecrops for the Sutter family. Because of a death in the Sutter family, the 100-acre farm that the Charles family once worked as slaves is now for sale. Boy Willie sees this as an opportunity to bring some meaning into the family's struggles.

However, to help raise the money for the purchase of the land, he needs to sell the piano.

Boy Willie sees land ownership as a way to build for the family. He pleads with his sister, "Land is here for everyone. All you got to do is figure out how to get yourself a piece of it."

Max Johns plays the role of Doaker, uncle of Berniece and Boy Willie. Doaker is titular head of the family and the custodian of the family stories.

Johns, who earns his living as a blues guitarist, pointed out that many of the lines in the play come directly out of blue songs. He added that this is not surprising because blues music depicts life, and particularly it depicts life as African Americans have experienced it.

"The Piano Lesson" and Wilson's other plays confront tough questions. They tell stories that must be told if black and white Americans are ever going to come together as one nation. For far too long, if these stories were told at all, they were told only in the black community. These are American stories.

They belong to all of us. Until all Americans, of both African and European heritage, confront the reality of slavery and learn to discuss it together, we will be held as securely to the past as Berniece is held there by the piano.

Fish explained that Murfreesboro Ensemble Theater is a relatively new theater company in Murfreesboro.

It is in its third season and produces three plays a year, concentrating its attention on plays that more traditional companies might not produce.

Both Robins and Johns are hoping to act in future productions with MET. They hope that the success of this production will open more opportunities for aspiring actors and actresses from all the ethnic groups in this area.

Fish expressed concern that there is little live theater available in our modern society.

He sees live theater as an opportunity for a community to talk to itself. The people on the stage are part of the community. They can share their history, their beliefs and their cultures.

Other cast members include Maurice Bullard (Boy Willie), Frank Harp (Avery), Carlyle Johnson (Wining Boy), Kelli Patton (Maretha), Shawn Whitsell (Lymon) and Janet Awokoya (Grace), who also serves as assistant director.

Murfreesboro Ensemble Theater will present "The Piano Lesson" at the Rutherford County Center for the Arts, 110 W. College St., Feb. 10-13 and 17-19.

The Feb. 10 performance is a special preview and tickets will be \$5. For the other performances, tickets will be \$10.

Senior tickets are \$8 and student tickets are \$5. Performances begin at 8 p.m. except for the Sunday matinee, which will begin at 2 p.m. ■