

The **REFLECTOR**



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Black History Theme 2024: African Americans and the Arts

Each year, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, founded by Carter G. Woodson, the father of Black History Month, selects an annual theme for the celebration. This year's theme, "African Americans and the



Arts," explores the key influence African Americans have had in the fields of "visual and performing arts, literature, fashion, folklore, language, film, music, architecture, culinary and other forms of cultural expression."

In each of these fields, African-American influence has been paramount. Artistic and cultural movements such as the New Negro, Black Arts, Black Renaissance, hip-hop, and Afrofuturism, have been led by people of African descent and set the standard for popular trends around the world.

For centuries Western intellectuals denied or minimized the contributions of people of African descent to the arts as well as history, even as their artistry in many genres was mimicked and/or stolen.

In 2024, as Black History Month encourages you, take time to examine the varied history and life of African-American artists and artisans. In addition, find ways to support Black artists of today.

More than just listening to the Black music or watching a Black film, we encourage you to take in a Black art exhibit, a play, poetry reading or read a Black book.



Give tribute to and enjoy the work of some famous Black Artists of Kansas and Missouri. The work of Topeka native Aaron Douglas is celebrated with a mural reproducing one his works, on Topeka's 12th Street between Lane and Washburn. A large artwork by Kansas City, KS, native and first Black astronaut turned sculptor Ed Dwight can be seen in the Linwood Square Shopping Center in Kansas City. Or a poem by Missouri native Maya Angelou is as close as a Google search.

Judge Constance Baker Motley 47th Black Heritage Stamp

By Bonita Gooch
Editor-in-Chief

Judge Constance Baker Motley (1921–2005), a civil rights pioneer and judiciary trailblazer, is the 47th honoree in the Black Heritage stamp series.

About Judge Motley

Motley was the first African-American woman to argue a case before the U.S. Supreme Court and the first to serve as a federal judge. A master legal tactician, Motley played a key role in knocking down legal segregation.

She started her career in 1945 when she began working for the future U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Legal Defense and Education Fund (LDF). She would stay 20 years, rising to associate counsel, second from the top.

While at the LDF she sued the University of Mississippi on behalf of James Meredith, who had been refused entrance, and the state of Mississippi on behalf of "Freedom Riders," who had been jailed while testing the interstate transportation laws.

She also represented Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., after he was arrested for marching in Birmingham, AL, in spring 1963. Motley worked on about 60 cases that reached the Supreme Court. She won nine of the 10 cases she argued before the Court.

In 1966, Motley was nominated by President Lyndon B. Johnson to a seat on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York. Motley was sworn in on Sept. 9, 1966, and became the first African-American woman on the federal bench.

Motley was awarded the Presidential Citizens Medal in 2001 by President Bill Clinton. She died Sept. 28, 2005.



Constance-Baker-Motley

About the Stamp

The stamp features a portrait of Motley by internationally acclaimed artist Charly Palmer, based on an Associated Press photograph. Palmer's signature style involves providing his subjects with dynamic, stylized settings.

For the postage stamp image, Palmer created an arc of lace-like wheel shapes that surround the judge's head like a halo. He exaggerated a corsage that Motley is wearing in the reference photograph he worked from, setting his subject's face above a lush arrangement of tropical flowers whose colors are picked up in the background. Faint scratch marks add a nice textural component to the vibrant image.

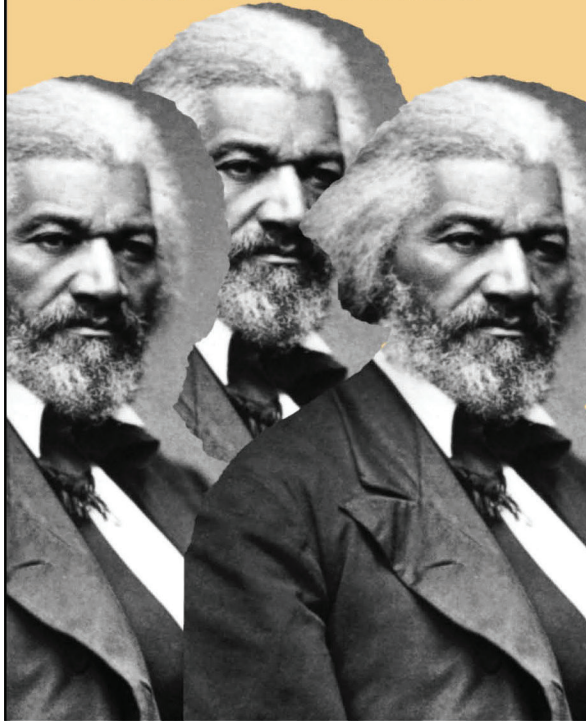
"For me, painting a portrait isn't just capturing the likeness, but the spirit," says Palmer, who notes that he had the chance to speak to the late judge's son in preparing for the portrait.

Black Heritage Stamp

In 1978, the Postal Service initiated the Black Heritage stamp series, to recognize the achievements of individual African Americans.

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Frederick Douglass*

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Robert McMeans
787 Project Manager
Spirit AeroSystems

A special congratulations to Robert McMeans who has been selected as the 2024 Walt W. Braithwaite Legacy Award honoree. He will be recognized at the Black Engineer of the Year (BEYA) conference this month.

Learn more about career opportunities at spiritaero.com/careers.

Art: The Cultural Side of the Black Power Movement

The Black Arts Movement was one of the most influential art movements from the 20th century.

By **Bonita Gooch**
The Community Voice

The Black Arts Movement was a Black nationalism movement that focused on music, literature, drama, and the visual arts made up of Black artists and intellectuals. This was the cultural section of the Black Power movement, in that its participants shared many of the ideologies of Black self-determination, political beliefs, and African American culture.

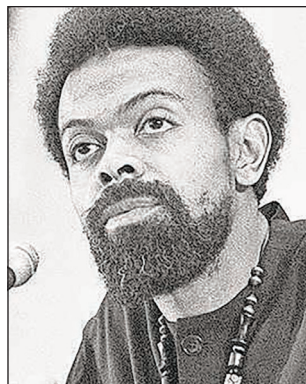
By incorporating visual motifs representative of the African Diaspora, as well as themes of revolutionary politics supporting Black Nationalism, the Black Arts Movement overtly distanced itself from White Eurocentric forms of art. It not only highlighted the work of Black artists but sought to define a universal experience of Blackness that expressed empowerment, pride, and liberation.

The Beginning

The Black Arts Movement is credited with starting in 1965 when poet Amiri Baraka established the Black Arts Repertory Theater in Harlem, New York, as a place for artistic expression, shortly after the death of Malcolm X.

Malcolm's death is also seen as an impetus for the movement, but others say... it was just time. With the creation of the Black Arts Movement, the Black Power movement often fell into one of two camps: the Revolutionary Nationalists, who were best represented by the Black Panther Party, and the Cultural Nationalists.

The latter group called for the creation of poetry, novels, visual arts, and



Amari Baraka

theater to reflect pride in black history and culture. This new emphasis was an affirmation of the autonomy of Black artists to create black art for black people as a means to awaken black consciousness and achieve liberation.

Amiri Baraka

Widely perceived as the father of the Black Arts Movement, the eminent African American poet was one of the most pertinent figures of the 20th century poetry and drama. Although he was born Everett Leroy Jones, he invented a moniker LeRoi Jones and became connected to other writers of the Beat generation in the late 50's.

Since he was already an established artist and play-writer at the time of the advent of the movement, many people find his turn to Black nationalism as a breaking point in the Black Arts history. His biggest contribution was the founding of the Black Arts Repertory Theatre / School (BARTS), a theatre that operated for a short period of time, but its influence remained strong in the following years.

However, for the majority of African American poets and writers, it was the 1962



Two Sides of Black Unity, Elizabeth Catlett, Black Unity, 1968, (cedar)

Umbrage Workshop that gave impetus to the Black Arts as a literary movement. The group consisted of young Black authors, mostly writers and musicians, with a few members who were involved in visual arts as well. It was based in Manhattan's Lower East Side, which is where Baraka used to live before he decided to start BARTS in Harlem.

At the upstart of the Black Arts Movement, theater and poetry took precedence. Baraka's poem, "Black Art," published in "The Liberator" in 1966, was a call to arms for Black artists to galvanize and assert themselves using language and aesthetic expressions that were uniquely indicative of the Black experience. In the poem, Baraka wrote:

"We want a black poem. And a / Black World. / Let the world be a Black Poem / And Let All Black People Speak This Poem / Silently / or LOUD."

In addition to Baraka, other notable Black Arts Movement authors and poets include Audre Lorde, James



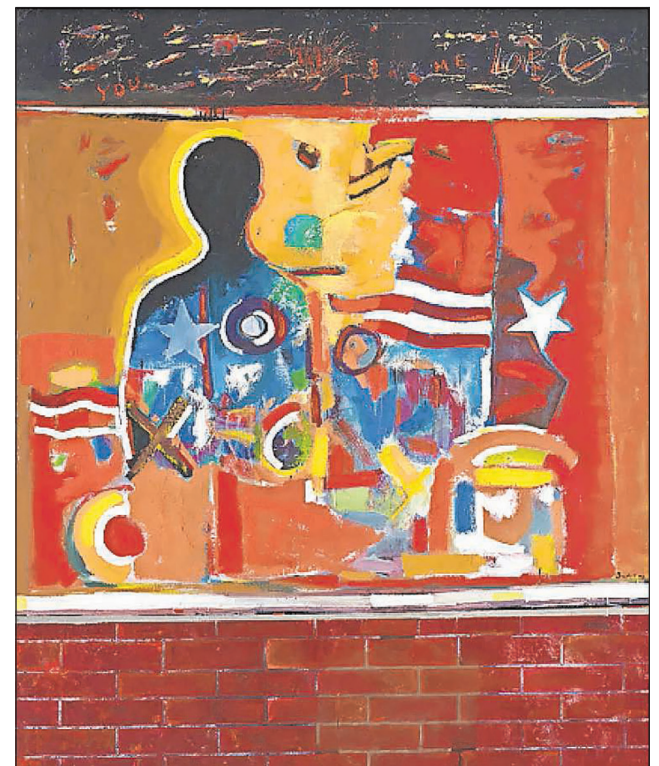
Revolutionary Suit

Jae Jarrell, Revolutionary Suit, 2010 (Wool, suede, silk, wood, pigment) Baldwin, Gil Scott-Heron, Sonia Sanchez, Nikki Giovanni, Dudley Randall, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Maya Angelou.

Theater Groups and Journals

Key roles in the Black Arts Movement were played

See ART Page 18 →



David Driskell, "Ghetto Wall #2," 19 (oil, acrylic and collage on linen)

Nikki Giovanni Black Art Movement Poet

Nikki Giovanni is of the most famous female poets related to the Black Art Movement, along with Sonia Sanchez and Rosa Guy. The poet has written more than 30 books of poetry and some of the most famous among them have brought her great recognition. She was given the Princess of Black Poetry title by the "New York Times" and the Woman of the Year by "Ebony" magazine in 1970. She is one of the most devoted advocates of the Hip Hop subculture, which she sees as "a modern day civil rights movement."



Nikki Giovanni. ANDY MANIS

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THECHAMBER

The Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce celebrates African American entrepreneurs and business owners who have helped shape, influence and cultivate Wichita's vibrant business community.



Local artist Hank Smith painted this mural-scale history of Douglass State Bank.

Henry Warren Sewing Founded the First Black-Owned Bank in the Midwest

How he went from cotton picker to a successful bank president dedicated to serving the Black community.

By Thomas White
Kansas City Reporter

Henry Warren Sewing came from humble beginnings, but his tireless work led to him founding the Douglass State Bank, the first Black-owned and operated bank in the Midwest.

Born in Bremond, Texas, in 1891, his parents were Thomas and Margaret Sewing, who worked as a sharecropper and a washwoman. Sewing helped out the family by seasonally picking cotton and attended public school before he graduated from Tillotson College in 1915.

H.W. met his wife, and aside from a brief military service during World War I, they began settling into Austin, TX. Sewing had taught at Tilloston and Fisk while pursuing his education, so post college he found work as an educator in an elementary school before teaching Latin and math at an area high school.

With Black teachers making half of what their White counterparts did, Sewing took an accounting class as a possible new direction.

Sewing ran into a friend of his who was leaving Texas for



The Sewing Family 1939: Seated are Dimple Lee and H.W. Sewing, standing are Margaret Alma Sewing and Ina Rebecca Sewing.

a better opportunity, and that moment changed his trajectory. Sewing confided with his friend that he wouldn't mind leaving if an opportunity came his way.

"They [opportunities] will not come to you," Sewing recalled in his memoir. "You have to go to them."

Sewing tore up his teaching contract and set out for Chicago, where he looked for work but realized the area wasn't for him. He took a train to Kansas City and stayed at the Paseo YMCA until he found work in the meatpacking and railroad

industries.

"I don't believe that you can keep a good man down if he is determined to stand up and go forward," said Sewing.

Before long, he sent for his wife and child. The Sewings settled into Kansas City, KS, and Henry found more suitable work as a math instructor at Western University in Quindaro, Kansas. The industrious Sewing supplemented his low teacher's income first as a shoe cobbler, then as a part-time insurance salesman.

This began a successful decades-long career in the insurance industry for Sewing.



Douglass State Bank in Kansas City, Kansas.

He was an immediately successful salesman in 1922 for the Standard Life Insurance Company of Atlanta, Georgia. Prosperous years followed for Sewing, and he became the president and founder of his own Sentinel Loan and Investment Company that gave out small loans and underwrote insurance policies.

The idea of opening a Black-owned and Black-run bank seemed to come out of nowhere for Sewing. He recalls in his memoir mentioning the need for a Black bank in Kansas at a banquet without having thought of it before. But once the idea

was in his mind, he couldn't shake it, and he set out to open a bank even if it cost him his security.

"I must not only take the risk of losing such a substantial income, along with retirement and welfare benefits, but I must also do it with a smile of satisfaction because I am duty-bound and heaven-bound to take the leadership in these ventures," Sewing wrote in his diary April 21, 1946.

At the time, there were only eight banks in the US that were Black-owned and operated. Sewing hit the road and visited those banks and

Commissioned Douglass State Bank Mural

Upon an expansion, Sewing commissioned local artist Hank Smith to paint a mural-scale history of Douglass State Bank. The mural stayed at the original location of Douglass State Bank when it became Liberty Bank, which recently changed locations.

Mural ownership was transferred to the Sewing family, who donated it to the Black Archives of Mid-America. A dedication ceremony celebrating the mural's donation and relocation to the Black Archives is set for March 16.

their owners as he prepared to open his own. Sewing says that he didn't set out to establish a segregated bank but wanted one that was open to all and catered to the underserved Black community in the area.

See **BANK** Page 18 →

Segregated by Policy

How U.S. Government Housing Policies Segregated America

By **Bonita Gooch**
Editor-in-Chief

Key Points:

- For decades, federal policies for home loans locked Black families into ghetto-like neighborhoods in the 1940s, '50s and '60s.
- Prohibited from buying homes in the suburbs, they did not gain the equity appreciation in their homes that White families gained, resulting in generational wealth and higher quality of life.

We all know that discrimination against Black people in America continued beyond slavery. However, a lot of people, both Black and White, aren't aware how discriminatory the country's housing policies were. They weren't separate but equal, but separate and very unequal.

Economists agree the residual effects of the historic federal housing policies and programs have had a negative economic impact on African Americans that will be felt for generations to come.

The Depression

The U.S. government housing programs began during the Great Depression (1929-1933) with the government stepping up to help Americans of all races and to help stabilize the economy. Through the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), the federal government began buying up and refinancing delinquent loans to help families save their homes.

To further stimulate the housing market, the National Housing Act of 1934 created the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). This new agency insured mortgages issued by qualified lenders, which protected the lenders from homeowners who might default on their home loans.

Before the establishment of the FHA, purchasing a home could be tough, with most mortgages requiring homebuyers to pay 50% of the cost of the home upfront. To encourage new and first-time homebuyers, the

new FHA loans offered more favorable loan terms with low down payments and interest rates, and longer repayment terms.

Redlined

As great as the FHA loans were, FHA policies made it nearly impossible for Blacks to qualify for these favorable loans.

Intending to develop national standards for analyzing the "risk" of a long-term home loan, HOLC created Residential Security Maps for 230 cities that were based on similar standards.

For each of these cities, they produced maps identifying neighborhoods they deemed safe to risky for home loans. Neighborhoods graded safest were given a grade of A and colored green on the map. "Still Desirable" neighborhoods were given a B and colored blue. "Definitely Declining" neighborhoods were given a C grade and colored yellow.

"Hazardous" neighborhoods were given a grade of D and colored red - hence the term redlining. On the maps, these high-risk areas were outlined in red, or sometimes colored red.

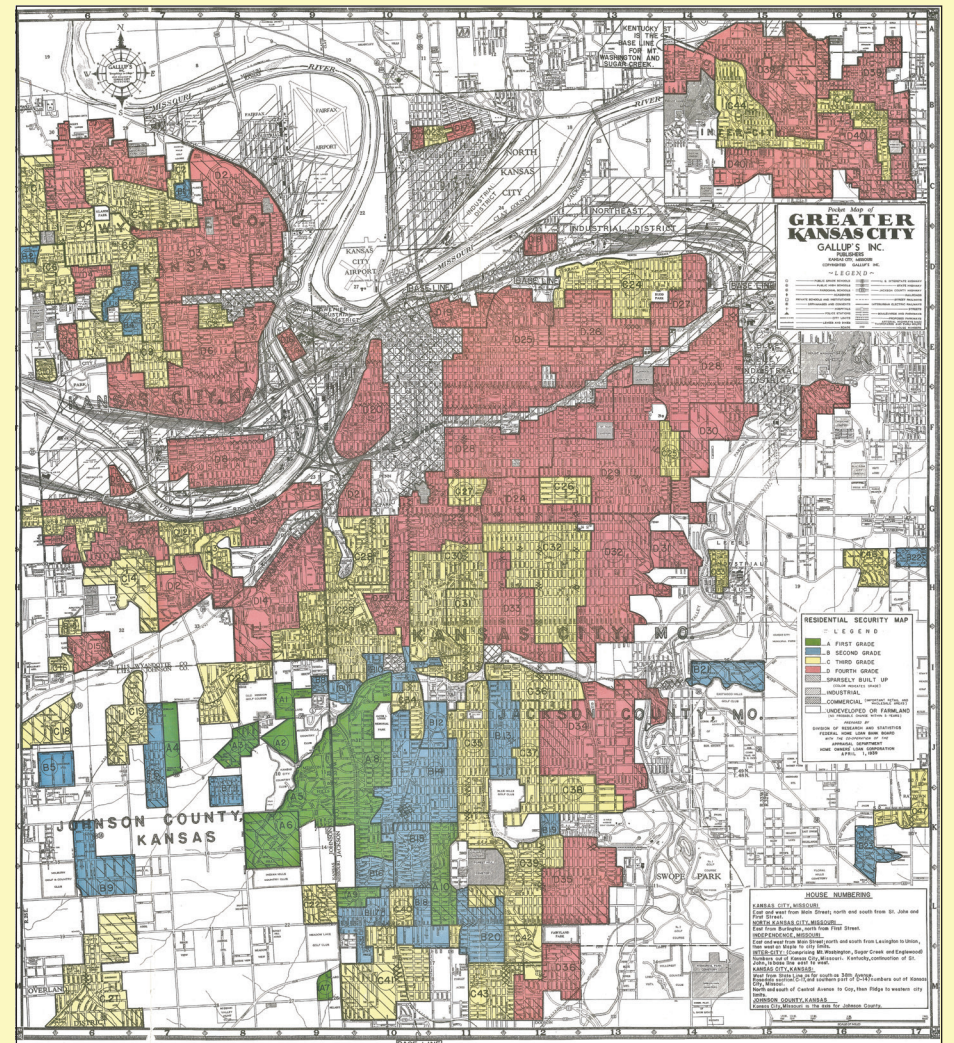
Areas where Blacks lived were almost always classified as hazardous, no matter the income level of the Blacks living in the area. The FHA usually wouldn't offer their amazing new mortgages in redlined inner-city Black neighborhoods, it didn't matter how financially safe the buyers were.

Many private banks, savings and loans, and later the Veterans Administration, copied federal redline lending standards when making their mortgages.

Policies Supported Segregation

The FHA wouldn't make a loan in a "Hazardous" area other than to Black buyers and they wouldn't let qualified Black buyers purchase homes in green, blue or yellow areas.

The early FHA "Underwriting Manual," which all lenders who issued FHA-insured mortgages were required to follow, had numerous references to the importance of maintaining racially separate housing areas as a way to maintain the "stability" of neighborhoods and to minimize decreasing



Residential Security Map Kansas City Home Owners' Loan Corporation

4% Best
7% Desirable
26% Definitely Declining
41% Hazardous

HOLC Area Description and Characteristics of Hazardous Area

This far-flung area, containing the principal negro habitat of Kansas City, MO, is that old section where values were "shot" several years ago. The colored belt extends from the vicinity of Troost east to the vicinity of Cleveland, south to 27th Street and north to the vicinity of 12th Street. Scattered throughout the negro district is the typical wide variety of large old houses, poorly kept, occupied by low-income wage earners and laborers.

values of homes they insured.

As an example, section 937 “Quality of Neighboring Development” in the Underwriting Manual read, “If a neighborhood is to retain stability, it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes.”

The Underwriting Manual also recommended highways as a good way to separate African-American from White neighborhoods. While policies like these weren’t a matter of law, they were published government regulations and they weren’t hidden.

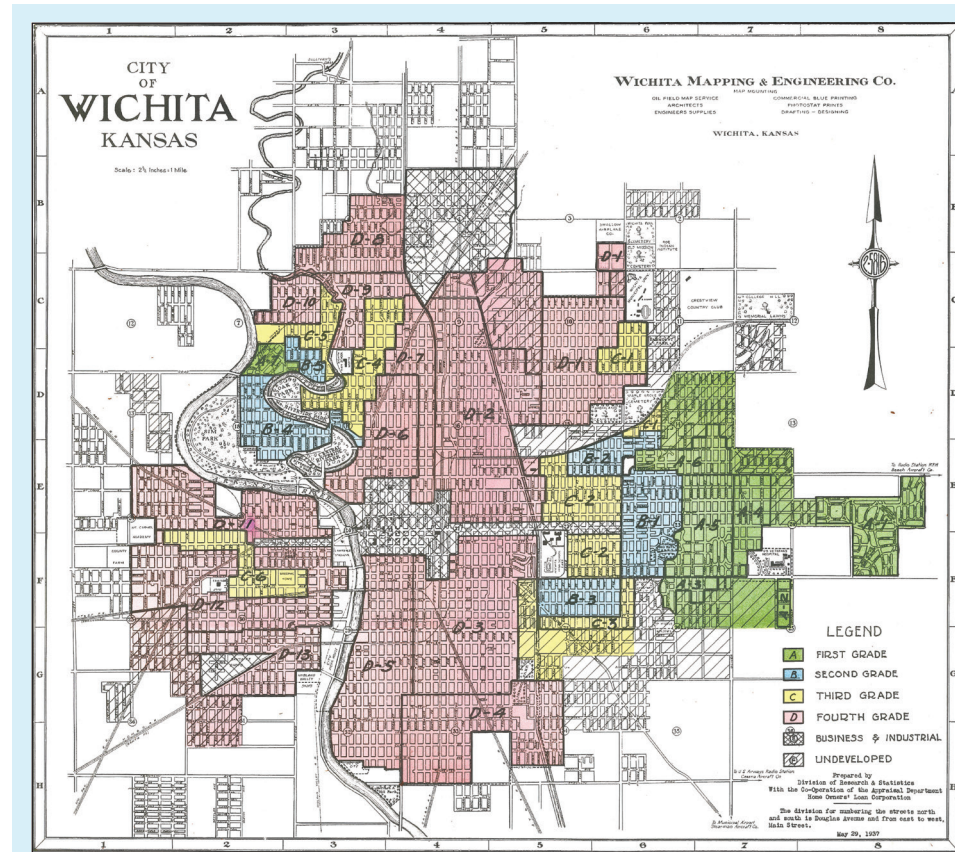
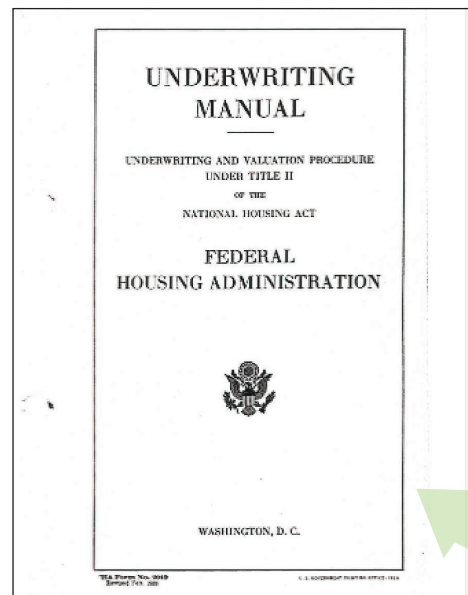
Racial Covenants

Another way FHA and developers helped maintain segregated communities was by supporting the use of racial covenants or deed restrictions. Race covenants typically restricted selling or even renting a home to a person of color.

With no laws against them, racial covenants were an accepted practice in most new suburban developments in the 1950s. The FHA Underwriting Manual section 980G encouraged the use of restrictive covenants to “prohibit the occupancy of properties except by the race for which they were intended.”

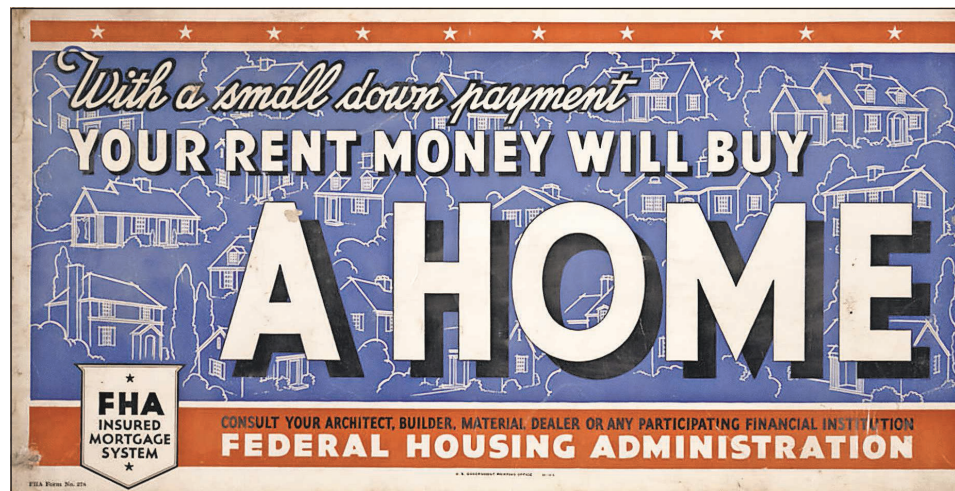
Creating Ghettos

With African Americans restricted from moving into many areas due to racial restrictions, FHA underwriting policies and other lending practices, they were limited to purchasing homes -- almost exclusively -- in predominantly Black or redlined communities. The FHA and VA were sometimes willing to secure mortgages for qualified Black homebuyers wanting to buy homes within redlined areas. While this practice maintained segregated areas, it did generate a slight uptick in Black homeownership in the ’50s and ’60s.



**Residential Security Map
Wichita Home Owners’
Loan Corporation**

14% Best
7% Desirable
11% Definitely Declining
28% Hazardous



Excerpt from the 1938 Underwriting Manual, a federal policy guidebook courtesy of the Department of Housing and Urban Development

937, Quality of Neighboring Development

Areas surrounding a location are investigated to determine whether incompatible racial and social groups are present, for the purpose of making a prediction regarding the probability of the location being involved by such groups. If a neighborhood is to retain stability, it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes. A change in social or racial occupancy generally contributes to instability and decline in values.

Economic Consequences

Generations of Black families are still suffering from the economic consequences of residential segregation. Because African Americans were prohibited from buying homes in the suburbs in the 1940s, ’50s and ’60s, they did not gain the equity appreciation in their homes that White families gained.

As a result, today African-American incomes on average are about 60% of average White incomes, but African-American wealth is about 5% percent of White wealth. With most middle-class families in this country gaining their wealth from the equity they have in their homes, it’s easy to see how the enormous difference in wealth is almost entirely attributable to federal housing policies that kept Black homeowners out of suburbs and in segregated ghettos.

In the 1940s and ’50s, homes were affordable for working-class families – both Black and White – with homes selling for about twice the national median family income. Those VA and FHA homes financed during the period when Black families were shut out of the suburban market are now selling for \$300,000 or \$400,000, or eight to nine times the national median income.

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 made discriminatory housing practices illegal. But by then homes were no longer affordable for working-class Americans.

Off of their gained equity, White families were able to send their children to college, care for their parents in old age, and bequeath wealth to their children. None of those advantages accrued to African Americans, who, for the most part, were blocked from the suburbs.

Sources:

- “Redlined: Cities, Suburbs, Segregation” – jcpurd.com/museum
- Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis – st-louisfed.org and fredblog.stlouisfed.org
- Nation Community Reinvestment Coalition – ncr.org
- The Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston – bostonfairhousing.org
- History.com
- NPR.org
- Catalyst.independent.org
- Forbes.com
- Bankrate.com

Donald Sewing: Trailblazer of Integration in Johnson County

By Thomas White
Kansas City Reporter

Developer J.C. Nichols' expanded his influence on the Kansas residential market when he expanded development into northeast Johnson. Along with his upscale style, he brought along his firm beliefs in racial segregation.

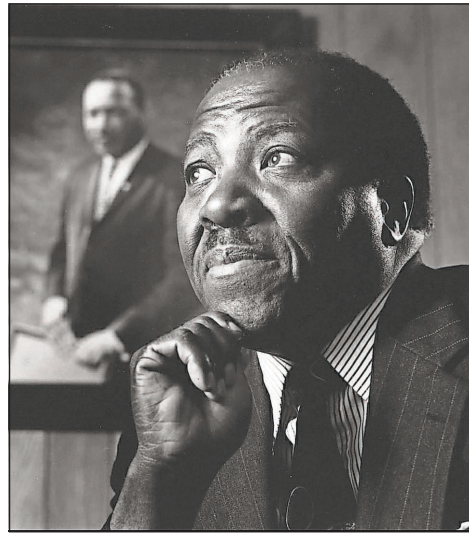
Nichols developed a "Declaration of Restrictions" that he filed with plat maps for his suburban subdivisions. In addition to governing minimum size and cost, they also race restrictions.

Segregationists.

These restrictions were stronger than deed restriction that just covered on home, the Declarations of Restriction applied to the entire subdivision and applied for a minimum of 20 years. By 1950, an estimated 96% of all subdivision in Johnson County, KS were under racially restrictive covenants.

But then came Donald Sewing, a visionary real estate agent whose efforts reshaped the demographic landscape of Johnson County.

Sewing, alongside his wife, Virginia, made history as the first Black family to integrate the new Johnson County subdivisions. There had been a couple of pockets of Black residents in Johnson County – in Merriam and Olathe – but the new suburban developments were all White when the Sewings purchased their home



Realtor Donald Sewing is H.W. Sewing's nephew.

in Fairway, KS in 1966.

Because of the racial restrictions, the Sewings had to purchase their home through a series of straw buyers and a White friend who sold them the home in 1966.

The Sewings faced pushback. At first, there was a lone picketer outside their home on a hot day, who the Sewings invited inside for a soda to talk and get to know them. Then the Sunday edition of "The Kansas City Star" got a hold of the story and printed a bold headline, "Negro Moves Into Fairway," and things escalated.

According to an archival interview with

Sewing, cars paraded all day in front of their home. They were blocked from getting into their driveway. Some protesters threw paintballs, rocks, and large firecrackers over and around their new home.

Someone set up loudspeakers where the Sewings heard angry, racist, hate messages. Car horns were blown, car lights were flashed and threats were made on the Sewings' lives.

For several weeks, Fairway Mayor Neale Peterson sent police escorts to their home. Some friendly nearby neighbors, including the Schechter family, the Rev. Dr. Bob Meneilly, and members of Village Presbyterian Church, made regular visits to the home to support the Sewing family.

Over time the protestors disappeared and the Sewings and their neighbors began to respect each other, even if everyone wasn't friendly.

"I know my neighbors got a genuine education," Sewing said in an oral history interview. "I wanted them to know that whenever you think of yourself, think of us because it ain't no difference except color."

Sewing did not stop with his family. Through his real estate company, he worked to integrate other suburban neighborhoods throughout Northeast Johnson County. He utilized the 1964 Fair Housing Act and the 1968 Civil Rights Act to help Black families purchase homes in Merriam, Prairie Village, and Leawood.

He deployed a sophisticated strategy of

scattering Black families across Johnson County to prevent racial turnover of White families, or "blockbusting."

"The theory was if you use the scatter approach to integration in housing, there was no place [for White families] to run to," said Sewing.

By 1969, about 30 Black families had purchased homes in previously segregated Johnson County, and by 1971, the number had jumped to nearly 60. Sewing even received national attention when his efforts were featured in "The Wall Street Journal" in February 1969.

Donald Sewing lived in Johnson County until his death in 2007 at age 76. His widow, Virginia Sewing, still resides in Johnson County.

Virginia also made significant contributions to the cause of integration, when she became the first African-American elected to the Northeast Shawnee Mission School Board and as the first Black person to graduate from Johnson County College School of Nursing.

In 2022, Virginia and Donald Sewing were given the Civil Rights Pioneer Award by the Johnson County NAACP, recognizing them for breaking barriers and blazing a trail for future generations in the area.

Sources:

Redlined: Cities, Suburbs, Segregation
<https://www.jocohistory.org/digital/collection/oralhist/id/32/>

ART, from Page 13 ↓

by Black theaters and journals that began operating independently, if not differently, from the system established by the White society. Besides its initial purpose as a home for performance, dance, music and drama, the Black theater was used perpetually as a place for lectures, talks, film screenings, meetings and panel discussions.

More importantly, it kept the spirit of a productive, activist cultural center, as opposed to other theatres (Black or White), which were either vastly commercialized or restrictive, primarily focused on high art.

Black theater groups opened all across the United States - in New York, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, San Francisco, etc. Some of the most famous ones include The New Lafayette Theatre and Barbara Ann Teer's National Black Theatre from New York and The Organization of Black American Culture (OBAC) in Chicago. OBAC attracted visual artist groups as well,

whose work inspired mural movements and reportedly influenced the inauguration of Afri Cobra - the African Commune of Bad, Revolutionary Artists.

However, all that was achieved in theatres wouldn't have been as influential had there not been the magazines and journals that popularized Black literature and made it known by the public. The most important magazine to publish Black literature was "Negro Digest / Black World," a journal that became famous for high-quality publication content, that included fiction, poetry, drama, criticism and theoretical articles as well.

Significance and Legacy

Although the movement does not exist as such today - the members took separate ways, as their political views started diverging in 1974 - you can hear, feel and see the influence of the movement in its spirit echoing in today's music, Rap music; poetry, Spoken Word; and art with its expressive aesthetics of many kinds.

BANK, from Page 15 ↓

"The color of a man's skin is not a safe standard for measuring his credit risk," said Sewing.

In 1947, he opened the Douglass State Bank at 1314 N. 5th Street, Kansas City, KS, to a great ceremony. A motorized parade began at the segregated Lincoln High School in Kansas City, MO, and ended at Sumner High School, its Kansas counterpart that was six miles away.

"Douglass State is a continuation of the things Frederick Douglass fought for," remarked a speaker at the bank's dedication day.

This so-called "Negro bank," the product of Henry Sewing's vision, provided home mortgages and small business loans and brought economic development to its community. Douglass State Bank was the first in the area to have a night deposit box, and through their efforts, they showed other area banks that Black folks' money is just as good as White.

Douglass State Bank was the first in the area to offer home loans to Black individuals no matter where they intended to buy a home. Over the first 30 years of operation, the bank invested over \$17M in home mortgages, empowering the community with home ownership.

The bank also offered good-paying jobs for the Black community and boasted several future bank presidents they trained and employed.

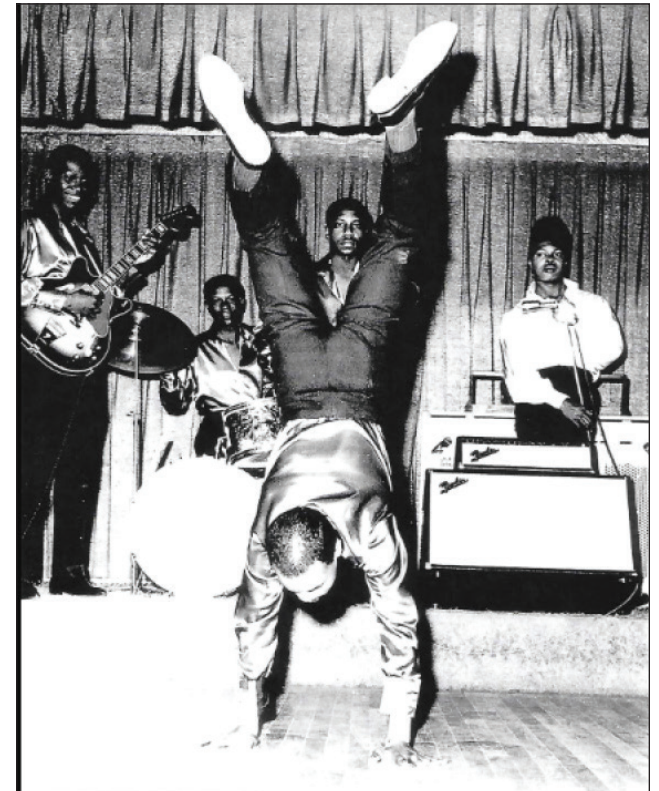
Henry Warren Sewing passed away in 1980, and Douglass State Bank closed in 1983.

Sources:

Henry Warren Sewing: Founder of the Douglass State Bank, 1971
An oral history interview was also used for reference:
<https://kchistory.org/islandora/search/Henry%20Warren%20Sewing?type=edismax>



These Smart Brothers Band were a local hit in Wichita, known for their high energy and big instrumental sound.



Brother John Smart was known for popping handstands and back flipping at the climatic end of a song period

Hall of Fame Family: Historic Wichita's Smart Brothers Band

The soulful sound of Wichita's Smart Brothers Band has a much deserved recognition: a place in the Kansas Music Hall of Fame. The band was inducted in 2017 into the

hall, established in 2004 to recognize Kansas and Kansas City Metro Area musicians' contribution to music in Kansas and across the world.

The Smart Brothers Band

was a Wichita favorite in the 1950s, '60s and '70s. While the group's membership and name changed over the decades, they always stayed true to their soulful roots. The group was primarily composed of the Smart Brothers – there were eight of them – who played instruments and knew how to entertain an audience.

Band leader Richard "Dick" Smart says the brothers all played instruments and loved engaging the audience.

"The Smart Brothers

were exciting," Smart says. "They had a lot of showmanship, showmanship I don't even see today."

John and Leroy Smart were the band's animated front line. John was known for popping handstands and back-flipping at the climatic end of a song, and for dancing while balancing his saxophone on the back of his neck. Leroy "Iron Jaw" Smart's moves were even more unbelievable. He'd warm up with some handstands and back-flips, then jump off the stage into the splits,

pick up a table or chair by his teeth and toss it aside.

In the '60s and early '70s, the band played weekends at their family-owned club and restaurant, called Smart's Palace. The band was also the opening act for The Temptations and The Staple Singers when they came to Wichita to perform.

Theirs was an old school, funky sound, heavy on live instruments. The band had a full-instrumental ensemble with some real funky guitar players.

Dick was the band's

bass-player and business manager and the power behind the Smarts' soul empire, which included the band, club, restaurant, record store, and record label.

If you want to hear what the band sounds like, in 2009, they released on the famed Numero reissue label a compilation of songs by the Smart Brothers and Smart Palace-affiliated groups.

Listening to the 19-song mix gives you a real understanding of Wichita's historical music scene.

You can hear the album on Spotify, and probably other streaming channels. Search "Eccentric Soul: Smart's Palace."

The Smart Brothers joined other notable African Americans with Kansas roots in the Kansas Music Hall of Fame, including Count Basie, Bobby Watson and Charlie Parker. Another early inductee into the hall was Wichita star Rudy Love.

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During Black History month, we're recognizing trailblazing individuals like **CHRISTYN GUNTER**, Sr. Pastor at Rock Christian Fellowship church. Christyn hosts Alzheimer's educations for her ministry leaders and congregation and encourages them by saying, "We need to take better care of our bodily temples and each other by accessing resources such as the Alzheimer's Association." Christyn has also served on the Memory Gala Committee and provided the invocation at both the Gala and an AWARE event. Learn more about Alzheimer's disease at [alz.org](https://www.alz.org).

If you need help, please know that the Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline is here for you every day, all day.

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Harrison R. Brown
First Black Police Officer to
lose his life in the line of duty
1923-1925.



Jeff Thompson
First Black Wichita
Police Detective



Sam Jones
First Black Police Officer
1896-1930



Charles Giles
First Black Police Officer to
arrest whites.



Floyd Powell
First black police officer to attain
the rank of major and interim
Chief of Police



Wanda Parker-Givens
First Black Female Deputy Chief



Captain Robert Peach
First black police officer to make
the rank of captain 1957-1977

Wichita Police Department Celebrates Black History

This month, we honor the outstanding African Americans who have made an indelible impact on the Wichita Police Department and our beloved community. Their invaluable contributions and sacrifices have paved the way for generations of African American leaders in Wichita and across the United States. It is our privilege to acknowledge their achievements during Black History Month.

From trailblazing officers to community advocates, we recognize and salute those who have played a pivotal role in shaping the fabric of Wichita. Their resilience, courage, and dedication have inspired us all.

As we commemorate Black History Month, let us celebrate the rich cultural heritage, the triumphs, and the adversities that have shaped our nation's history. Together, we honor the legacy of African Americans who continue to inspire us with their enduring spirit and unwavering commitment to justice and equality.

Join us in celebrating Black History Month and honoring the profound impact of African Americans in our community and beyond. Together, let's continue to strive for a future where diversity, inclusion, and unity reign supreme.

The Wichita Police Department is currently seeking eligible candidates who are willing to contribute to their community and build a legacy story for themselves. If you are enthusiastic about serving and wish to follow in the footsteps of African Americans who played a significant role in law enforcement, we invite you to join our team and apply today at wpdjobs.com.

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

"The History of the Negro Baseball Leagues"

presentation by BYRON MOTLEY

Tuesday, February 20 at 6:00 p.m.

Butler Community College - El Dorado Campus
Hubbard Welcome Center - Clifford/Stone Room

Mr. Motley's presentation will include a short introduction and then the presentation of a documentary movie he has created called, "The League." This will be followed by Q&A by Mr. Motley.

Free and open to the public.

Made possible by the Harold Smith Cultural Series through the Butler Foundation.

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This Black History Month, we're rebuking the legacy of felony disenfranchisement that continues to silence Black voices.

Join us for our **Restore My Vote** training, where you'll hear from system-impacted Kansans about the effects of felony disenfranchisement, take part in a "Know Your Voting Rights" training, and learn about community resources.

This training is for all of us who care about an equitable and fully representative democracy.

Restore My Vote:

Empowering Returning Citizens with Voting Rights Education and Community Resources

Sedgwick County

Wyandotte County

March 5 @ 6:30 PM

Feb 25 @ 1:30 PM

RSVP @ restoremyvoteks.org



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POWER

Callie House Dedicated Her Life to Getting a 'Pension' for Ex-Slaves

Key Points:

- Callie Guy House co-founded the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty, and Pension Association.
- Crusaded for the U.S. Government to pay pensions for ex-slaves.
- Her idea was popular and gained a lot of supporters but also a lot of enemies who tried to stop her crusade.

them in powerful places.

House was born a slave in Tennessee in 1861, not long before the end of slavery. So, she grew up free, but in the Jim Crow South.

She didn't receive much education, but in 1883 she married William House and they had five children. She worked taking in laundry and moved with her family to Nashville in the mid-1890s.

In south Nashville, House saw various advertisements and flyers for pro-reparations movements.

Encouraged, she teamed up with Isaiah Dickerson, also a former slave, to organize the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty, and Pension Association in 1894 to provide relief and services on a local level while agitating for reparations on a national level.

In 1898, House and Dickerson traveled throughout

southern and border states gathering support for the new organization.

The organization was open to everyone regardless of their religion, financial standing or race.

During her 1897-99 lecture tour, the association's membership increased by 34,000, mainly through her efforts. By 1900, its nationwide membership was estimated to be around 300,000.

On a local level the organization functioned similarly to immigrant aid societies that emerged in urban areas in the early 1900s.

Local chapters were established and funded through monthly dues to provide burial expenses for members and to care for those who were sick and disabled.

On a national level, the organization held conventions, elected national officers, and worked for the passage of congressional legislation in support of ex-slave reparations.

The national organization also provided traveling expenses to reparation lobbyists and local chapter organizers. Additionally, it corresponded with local chapters, which responded by paying national dues to further the goal of a reparations bill that would provide monetary compensation for ex-slaves for their labor in the

antebellum American South.

Is This a Scam?

Leading Blacks of that time, like W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington, pretty much ignored House and her movement. They were busy working on Civil Rights.

Newspapers of the time often ridiculed her efforts.

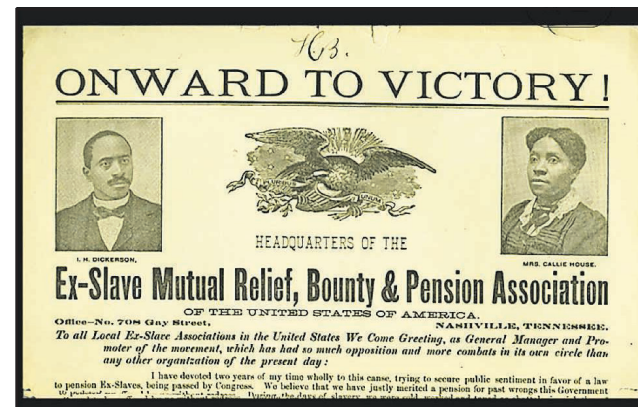
Whites were so convinced that the reparations legislation wouldn't pass that they suspected House and Dickerson were defrauding African Americans out of their money with promises of reparations.

In response from supposed complaints from White constituents, the U.S. Pensions Bureau, the governmental agency that supervised the dispersion of money to Union veterans, started covert surveillance on House and the association.

Federal mail fraud laws gave the U.S. Post Office wide powers to deem any piece of mail fraudulent and deny the use of mail to persons engaged in fraud or perceived fraud.

In 1899, House received notice that the Post Office had issued a fraud order against her and her organization, ostensibly because they were, according to postal authorities, soliciting money under false pretenses.

Continued federal hostility led House to step down from her post as assistant secretary of the Ex-Slave Pension Association in 1902. She continued to organize local chapters throughout the South, but after the failure of Alabama Congressman Edmund Petus'



reparations legislation in 1903, the reparations movement in Congress lost momentum and support eroded.

The Audacity to Sue

Facing the prospect of stalled legislation, House enlisted the aid of attorney Cornelius Jones to sue the U.S. Treasury Dept. for \$68,073,388.99 in cotton taxes traced to slave labor in Texas. In 1915, they filed the suit in district court and, although the litigation raised the profile of the slave reparations issue, the District of Columbia Court of Appeals dismissed the suit, citing governmental immunity from litigation.

Indicted

In 1916 Postmaster General A. S. Burleson sought an indictment against Callie House. On May 10, 1916, Nashville District Attorney Lee Douglass filed indictments against House and other officers of the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty, and Pension Association charging that they had obtained money from ex-slaves by fraudulent

circulares proclaiming that pensions and reparations were forthcoming.

The district attorney's evidence was flimsy. None of the victims of the supposed fraud were named, and the literature in question stated only that the monies paid to the national organization would be used to promote the passage of legislation for slave reparations.

Additionally, House still resided in the same home in South Nashville, undermining the allegation that she personally profited from her work with the association.

Although the evidence was weak, an all-male, White jury convicted House on the charge of mail fraud, resulting in a sentence of a year and one day. She served her sentence in the Jefferson City, MO, penitentiary from Nov. 1917 to Aug. 1, 1918, earning early release for good behavior.

Following her release from prison, she resumed her work as a laundress in her south Nashville community. She died in 1928.

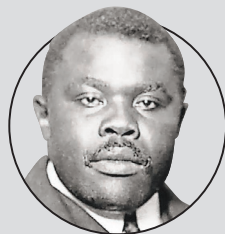
By Bonita Gooch,
Editor-in-Chief

Between 40 acres and a mule and the modern-day reparations movement, sits Callie Guy House.

House was a Black woman in the South who dared to believe ex-slaves should receive some financial benefits for their years of free service.

She found lots of fans, but made lots of enemies, some of

BLACK HISTORY COMPARISON



Marcus Garvey
(1887-1940)

Marcus Garvey was founder of the Black Nationalist movement the Universal

Negro Improvement and Conservation Association, more often referred to as the UNIA, also built a big grassroots organization.

At its height, the movement reportedly had more than 2,000,000 members. The organization was dedicated to racial pride, economic self-sufficiency, and

the formation of an independent Black nation in Africa.

However, like House, he attracted many enemies and was eventually bought down by an indictment and conviction of mail fraud. He was arrested in 1922, just six years after House was similarly indicted.



John Conyers
(1929 - 2019)

John James Conyers Jr. served as a Michigan Congressman from 1965

to 2017 and was the longest-serving African-American member of Congress in history.

Like House, Conyers was a big supporter of reparations. Conyers first introduced the "Commission to Study Reparations Proposals for African Americans Act"

in January 1989. At that time, he stated his intention to annually propose this act until it was approved and passed, and he did each year until he left congress in 2017. The bill's designation was changed to HR40 in 1997, alluding to the promise of "40 acres and a mule."



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Black History Month.**

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