

BLACK HISTORY

BY Gwen Walker

"Madame" C.J. Walker
(Sara Breedlove Walker-Cosmetic Manufacturer)

Sara Breedlove Walker was born a Pauper in 1869 in Louisiana and later became the first self-made woman millionaire. Her parents, who were ex-slaves died when she was six years old.



Madame C. J. Walker

She married C.J. Walker at age 14 and was widowed at age 20. While taking in laundry to make a living, she experimented in her spare time with a concoction of oils to condition her hair so that she could remove the typical negro curl. The oil softened the hair but did not remove the excessive curl. It was in 1905 that she developed a hot iron, or straightening comb, which could remove the tight curls.

For millions of African American women, the straightening comb was the answer to their major cosmetic problem, and Madame Walker found herself in business. She opened a school of cosmetology to train her operators, employed agents to sell her products and built a factory to produce them. Before her death, she had more than

Poems Wanted For Contest And Anthology

A grand prize of \$500 is being offered by Sparrowgrass Poetry Forum Inc. in its new "Distinguished Poet Awards" poetry contest. Thirty-four other cash awards are also being offered. The contest is free to enter.

Poets may enter one poem only, 20 lines or less, on any subject, in any style. Contest closes Jan. 31, 1990, but poets are encouraged to send their work as soon as possible, since poems entered in the contest also will be considered for publication in *Treasured Poems of America*,



Gwendolyn Walker

2,000 agents selling and demonstrating the "Walker System" of hair styling and cosmetic. She maintained an annual payroll of more than \$200,000 and reaped a sizable fortune from her large factory and school in Indianapolis. She advertised in all of the "Negro" publications and made headlines herself because of her social activities.

At a cost of about \$250,000, she built a mansion at Irvington-On-The-Hudson, New York, and furnished it with the most expensive items available. Despite her display of wealth, she was deeply concerned with the poverty of others and like many other American millionaires, became a philanthropist. She bequeathed \$100,000 toward the establishment of an academy for girls in West Africa and donated large sums of money to the Negro institutions and charities in America.

In 1988 the Walker Theatre was refurbished for \$3.5 million dollars in Indianapolis and the gala grand opening was attended by several black entertainers. The theatre will be a cultural center in the community.

Alex Haley was one in attendance and will be writing a book on Madame Walker's life.

a hardcover anthology. Anthology purchase may be required to insure publication, but is not required to be eligible for the prizes. Prize winners will be notified by March 31, 1990.

"We are looking for sincerity and originality in a wide variety of styles and themes," says William H. Trent, editor. "You do not have to be an experienced poet to enter or win."

Poem should be sent to Sparrowgrass Poetry Forum Inc., Dept. N, 203 Diamond St., Box 193, Sistrerville, WV 26175.

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the Congress' refusal to pass a comprehensive child care bill and the escalating inroads of crack and crime.

But there were strong positives, too.

This was the year in which Americans elected their first African American governor, as Douglas Wilder won election in Virginia.

His victory, and those of African American candidates

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in such diverse places as New York City, New Haven, Seattle, and elsewhere, demonstrated growing African American political clout. And they proved that black candidates can be winners by holding on to their base in the African American community while reaching out to capture large numbers of white voters.

That will be more common in the future, as many white voters who found it impossible to vote for black candidates get used to the fact of having minority mayors and governors. They'll feel freer to vote on the issues and on party affiliation, and not on their prejudices.

One very significant aspect of the 1989 election was the maturity of the African American vote. Many commentators said that black candidates had to run emotional, even demagogic, campaigns to get out the black vote.

But in 1989, black voters stood by their candidates even when conditions forced those candidates to act and sound like conservative whites. African Americans once again proved their sophistication, and their knowledge of the maxim that before you can change things you have to get elected.

This political maturity was matched by the maturity of our community's response to such serious internal problems as education, AIDS, crime, and drugs.

The African American community has become the nation's leader in voluntary citizen action to improve the schools, to fight drugs and crime, and to make our children's futures brighter.

The network of community-based institutions continued its unsung work during 1989, and I believe it helped to lay the foundation for a

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coalitions known by many different names, but maintaining the basic principle of "grass roots organization as the fundamental means of challenging and transforming American society for social, racial and economic justice."

When the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was established in Raleigh, North Carolina in the 1960's, the Southern Conference Educational Fund was one of the main South-wide multi-racial coalitions that openly supported SNCC financially and politically. Names of leaders like Joe Gelders, Jim Dombrowski, Aubrey Williams, Carl and Anne Branden, and Fred Shuttlesworth were important forces that forged an essential part of the foundation of the evolution of the Southern freedom movement.

Recently, in Birmingham, Ossie Davis rendered an emotional and captivating tribute ceremony to all of those who had worked here during the last 50 years in the South to keep the movement alive. From Ella Baker to Rosa Parks, from Martin Luther King, Jr., to Fannie Lou Hamer to Mojeska Simpkins to Virginia Derr and from many, many others the legacy of the struggle in the South is one of the caring and sacrifice, of joy and struggle and of winning people's victories for justice and human freedom.

While the list of all of the names of the persons who have given themselves to the struggle in the South is much too long to mention here, it is important that we pause to salute the thousands of named and unnamed persons who have participated in the various struggles in the Southland of this nation. If there is to be a new South and if there is to be a new nation where economic and racial justice are realities for all citizens then the one thing we have already learned is that the struggle must continue. And the struggle can only continue effectively to the extent to which multi-racial and multi-generational grass roots movements are organized, maintained and mobilized.

resurgence of African American community life in the 1990s.

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and experience needed to understand the complex issues in this area of the law.

The Reagan Administration completely undermined the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, once the watchdog over civil rights enforcement and programs. Up to this point, President Bush has not taken steps to restore the integrity of the commission.

Perhaps most disturbing has been the President's silence regarding the Supreme Court decisions that undermined affirmative action and other remedies for past workplace discrimination. At his recent meeting with the Black Leadership Forum, which I attended, Bush declined to express support for legislation being developed in Congress to restore the protections that the Supreme Court has taken away. Nor did he offer any clear civil rights thrust of his own.

Since the great majority of blacks are workers, the Administration's unfriendly attitude toward labor has also been a matter of great concern to the black community. For example, blacks are disproportionately represented among the minimum wage earners, whom Bush slapped down when he voted a \$4.55 minimum wage. That rate was too high, he declared, even though an increase to that level would not even have compensated for the inflation since the last minimum wage increase in 1981.

Furthermore, early in 1989 Bush effectively took management's side in the Eastern Airlines strike by refusing to appoint a mediation panel under the Railway Labor Act. In November, he voted a bill calling for a bipartisan commission to investigate the strike and make recommendations for a settlement.

In general, the President's performance on behalf of social justice offers little encouragement to the nation's black communities. For example, he has proclaimed that he wants to be known as "the education President" and has expressed concern for the well-being of children in poor families. Yet to date he has requested only small increases in a few social programs, with even these to come at the expense of other worthy programs.

So, unfortunately, we have to conclude that when it comes to matters of special

Letter to the Community From Elder O.L. Jefferson

Greetings!

The First Annual Gospel Talent Search is an event set up with the purpose to: introduce as many as possible to the saving grace of Jesus Christ through gospel music; to unify all races, creeds, colors and faiths; to publicly demonstrate, to young people, nationwide, that gospel music is universal so that they may lift their voices to the heavens singing old-time traditional and contemporary gospel songs.

All faiths and denominations are invited. We are asking Pastors to encourage the members of their congregation to participate in this unparalleled gospel talent search, to convene here in Las Vegas, Nevada. We are inviting you to join us in this spiritual rejuvenation to show that a peaceful coexistence of all faiths can be achieved through gospel music. We are the Christians of all faiths can live and work together in harmony as set forth in God's creation.

The goals here at St. John are to keep working, trusting, praying and doing things which God desires of us. We are asking God to bless our program, for we know through Him, all things are possible!

Yours in Christ,

O.L. Jefferson

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importance to blacks and other minorities, so far the difference between Bush and his predecessor has been almost exclusively in the realm of rhetoric.

But this should not be a cause for complaint and defeatism. Rather, it should be a signal to work harder. As the A. Philip Randolph Institute prepares to enter its 25th anniversary year, we will redouble our efforts on behalf of the black-labor agenda for racial equality and economic and social justice. And if Bush still doesn't get our message, then our 1990 voter participation drive in black communities will help assure that the he hears it loud and clear in next November's election.