

Acclaimed writer praises Madam C.J. Walker

First black female millionaire was author's great-great grandmother

By Parker Philpot
Sentinel-Voice

Author and respected journalist A'Lelia Bundles, spoke with great authority about the legacy of her great-great grandmother, Madam C. J. Walker, who founded a Black hair care dynasty 100 years ago.

Bundles, who is an acclaimed award-winning writer and veteran ABC and NBC news producer, was keynote speaker for the inaugural luncheon of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women Greater Las Vegas Chapter. Honoring "Women in Business" was the theme of the local NCBW's first Madam C.J. Walker Awards Luncheon held at the Texas Station Hotel and Casino on Saturday.

Bundles gave glimpses into her present-day experiences and shared her intimate insights about her accomplished ancestral mothers, in particular, the often misunderstood, frequently maligned, self-made millionaire Madam Walker, who is considered the first Black female to attain that financial pinnacle. For these reasons, among more personal ones, Bundles authored Walker's in-depth biography, "On Her Own Ground: The life and Times of Madam C.J. Walker."

Walker formulated, manufactured and established a vast direct sales and distribution network for products that Black women



Sentinel-Voice photo by Les Pieres Streater

Dr. Sandra Mack, president of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, left, joins Rep. Shelley Berkley, D-NV, in welcoming A'Lelia Bundles, who was the keynote speaker for the Madam C. J. Walker Awards Luncheon held Saturday at Texas Station.

used for healthier care of their scalp and hair. Walker's signature line of products, bearing her likeness on the packages, was actively marketed for more than a half-century beyond her death in 1919 at the age of 51.

Bundles, by her living example, and by reference to her ancestor Walker's success, exemplified the event's foremost interwoven themes of entrepreneurial empowerment, tenacity through tough times, economic independence, personal responsibility and commitment to community.

Bundles spoke briefly about the better known aspect of Walker — the prolific pioneer in the hair care industry — the one most people are familiar with from Black history vignettes and incomplete, some even incorrect,

biographies about Walker.

Bundles began by addressing a troublesome issue: "It is a myth that she invented the hot comb. She did not invent the hot comb. It's one of my missions in life to get rid of that myth. But what's more important to me is what she actually did do. She created an enterprise that employed thousands of African-American women who would have otherwise been maids, or sharecroppers. She developed a line of products that improved the scalps diseases that existed at the time."

After straightening out the story, something she apparently has done repeatedly to near exasperation, Bundles continued in her relaxed, personable style.

"She was a founder of what is now a multi-billion

dollar industry..." Bundles told the audience of more than 200 women and about two dozen men.

Relating more about her great-great grandmother's business savvy, she said, "Just seven years after the founding of her company, it was national — international."

Bundles delivered a colorful and compact chronology of Walker's early years from orphan, to young widowed mother with her only daughter, to her struggles with physically laborious domestic jobs the entrepreneur-to-be encountered, then on to her subsequent marriage to Charles James Walker — the C.J. in Madam's name — to her business beginnings and the obstacles she overcame in her progression. Bundles told

how Walker started in the hair care business after she suffered from a scalp ailment that caused her to lose most of her hair.

Bundles underscored the importance of Walker's entrepreneurial efforts, then used the majority of her presentation time to expand the view to encompass Walker's "political and social activism" and the focus on what Bundles believes is her ancestor's greatest legacy and guiding lesson for the African-American community today: "philanthropy."

Bundles said that she believes Walker's impact was most significant when she raised "incredible sums of money through her direct appeals to corporate [funding sources] and community supporters." Walker's community work helped families in need in the cities where she lived. Bundles' research showed that her great-great grandmother placed charitable works high on her list of values, and she always focused on providing a way for those she helped, to help themselves.

One of the most poignant Walker quotes Bundles used shows the indomitable, self-sufficient spirit of Walker: "I got my start, by giving myself a start."

In the best-selling book, Bundles goes into deep detail about the socially sensational and politically powerful life of Walker and her daughter A'Lelia after they

relocated to Harlem where Walker's lavish family home, Villa Lewaro, still attracts attention today.

Bundles, who said she always knew she wanted to be a writer, felt that this was a rich part of her heritage waiting to be told. She said she was told by her mother, "It is your story to tell."

Bundles concluded with remarks of encouragement and thanks:

"Here in your community, as leaders working on political and social issues to make a difference, you exemplify the legacy of my great, great grandmother, along with honoring her ideals of philanthropy. I feel very fortunate and blessed to have the privilege of sharing Madam C. J. Walker's story with you. Her success reminds us that we have a history of being successful and of making great accomplishments. Her life has been an inspiration to others who have followed behind her, and her story is still reminiscent of success even after 100 years."

At the end of the luncheon, Bundles held a book signing.

Go to www.madamcjwalker.com for factual information about Walker's life, business achievements and official biography. There are designated areas on the education-oriented site especially for school-age students' projects and research papers, Bundles said.

City commemorating fifth annual Juneteenth festival

By Chelsi Cheatom
Sentinel-Voice

Las Vegas will host its Fifth Annual Juneteenth Festival on Saturday, June 18. The celebration will take place from 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Sammy Davis Jr. Plaza located on Twin Lakes Drive on the western side of Lorenzi Park, 3333 W. Washington Ave., between Valley View and Rancho Drive. Admission is free of charge to the public.

This year's event will include a variety of live entertainment including Critical Condition, Hip-Hop/ Funk group JuSSoul, The House of Blues Band, and vocalists Tony Terry and Traedonya. The celebration will also feature cultural and educational activities as well as guest speakers.

Food and vendors will have sales and information booths at the event.

The event was organized by the Las Vegas Juneteenth Committee led by Diane Hughes, director of marketing for Rainbow Medical Centers, a 17-year-old Black-owned business.

"Along with the barbeque and fried fish, there will be snow-cones and, of course, watermelon," Hughes said.

Visitors to the festival are encouraged to bring their entire families. "For children, there will be face painting at a children's booth. There will be door prizes 'for children only.' Also, we will have free popcorn available for the kids," Hughes added.

The festival is a good place to learn about local businesses and community

organizations, according to Hughes.

"We will have information booths including Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority, and the Links. Wells Fargo Bank, Community Bank, the City of Las Vegas and HUD," said Hughes.

"Sierra Health Services, Rainbow Medical Center, and the Anthony L. Pollard Foundation will have booths. TV-One, Cox Communications, The Family Foundation, and a variety of non-profit organizations will be there," she added.

Juneteenth started as a celebration among African-Americans living and working in Galveston, Texas, following the news that they were emancipated from slavery. June 19, 1865, is the day on which Major General

Gordon Granger and his Union soldiers arrived in Galveston — finally delivering the news about emancipation of the enslaved popu-

lation of Blacks in the U.S. His arrival came more than 2 1/2 years after President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation took ef-

fect on January 1, 1863.

Because of the migration to other cities by newly freed Blacks, the idea behind the (See Juneteenth, Page 4)

Home Owners in Need of Cash!!!

CALL TODAY

Low interest rates for bad situations - Low FICOS
- BAD Credit - Collections - BK - Mortgage
Lates - Free Mortgage Analysis and Credit
Report - Call Al Scalleat 702-497-3094. Family
Mortgage Inc. 2626 S. Rainbow Blvd., Ste 200,
Las Vegas, NV 89146 Phone: 702-876-4812