

Sojourner Truth Stamp Issued February 4

A 22-cent commemorative stamp honoring human rights activist Sojourner Truth was issued on February 4 in New Paltz, New York. It will be available the next business day at post offices nationwide.

Assistant Postmaster General Mary J. Layton will be the principal speaker at the dedication ceremony for the latest issue in the Black Heritage Series. The ceremony will be held at 11:00 a.m. in the Sojourner Truth Library at the State University of New York in New Paltz.

Jerry Pinkney of Croton-on-Hudson, New York, who has designed all the stamps in the Black Heritage Series, created the vertically oriented stamp. It features a portrait of Sojourner Truth with a smaller image of her speaking from a lectern. "Sojourner Truth" and "22" are at the top of the stamp in two lines of black type. At the bottom in a single line of white type are the words "Black Heritage" and "USA."

Born about 1797 in Hurley, New York, she was named Isabella and spent her early adult life in slavery. After acquiring her freedom she went to New York City to live, but found it nearly impossible to earn a suitable living. Convinced that everything she had undertaken there had proved a failure, she decided, in 1843, to change her name to Sojourner Truth and leave the city to travel and lecture because "the Spirit calls me and . . . I must go."

Later, she told friends that "the Lord gave me Sojourner, because I was to travel up an' down the land, showin' the people their sins, an' bein' a sign unto them. Afterward I told the Lord I wanted another name, 'cause everybody else had two names; and the Lord gave be Truth, because I was to declare the truth to the people."

Historians have noted that Sojourner Truth was a woman of great mental, physical and spiritual strength who overcame many handicaps imposed on her by slavery. Her unflinching adherence to principle and her fearlessness and enthusiasm inspired many.

Before the Civil War, she traveled thousands of miles in many states lecturing against slavery. After the war, she dedicated her life to being an activist for the total enfranchisement of the newly freed slaves and to educating them in the moral, social, and domestic duties of life. Sojourner Truth noted that "they have to learn to be free" because their minds were still enslaved even though their bodies had been freed.

Sojourner Truth knew and had earned the respect of most of the leading figures of her time. On her journeys, she carried with her what she called the "Book of Life," containing the autographs of many distinguished people whom she had met, including Presidents Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant.



women should not be given equal rights even though they often performed men's work.

She remained energetic and dedicated to the cause of human rights until her death on November 26, 1883. Upon learning of her death Frederick Douglass remarked: "A marked figure has disappeared from the earth. Venerable for age, distinguished for insight into human nature, remarkable for independence and courageous self-assertion, devoted to the welfare of her race, she has been for the last 40 years an object of respect and admiration for social reformers everywhere."



DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING
"HE DID NOT EMBRACE NON-VIOLENCE OUT OF FEAR OR COWARDICE, HE CHALLENGED INJUSTICE WITHOUT A GUN."
DR. BENJAMIN E. MAY

Although she was not formally educated, she was considered one of the greatest orators of her time, known for her ability to control an audience with a few words. Numerous newspapers, journals and magazines wrote of her travels and lectures, bringing worldwide fame for her stance on slavery, temperance, penal reform and women's rights.

At a Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, in 1851, she gave her famous "Ain't I a Woman?" speech, reproaching men for their belief that



Photographed from left to right: Senator Moynihan, President Reagan, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Pierce, Mrs. Wilkins.

Wilkins Widow Gets Gold

On Thursday, January 16, 1986, President Reagan presented the Congressional Gold Medal to Mrs. Roy Wilkins.

Legislation introduced by Senator Moynihan (D-NY) and Congressman Rangel (D-NY) and signed into law on May 17, 1984, authorized the President to present to the widow of Roy Wilkins, on behalf of Congress, a specially struck gold medal. The medal is in recognition of the contributions of Roy Wilkins to the struggle for civil rights and equality for all Americans.

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A HERO'S STORY



During his brief lifetime, NASA astronaut Ronald E. McNair achieved remarkable successes: honors graduate of North Carolina A&T University, a doctorate in physics from M.I.T., specializing in lasers, Presidential Scholar, Ford Foundation Fellow, black-belt Karate master, husband and father.

In an essay he wrote for students and their parents shortly before his tragic death aboard the space shuttle Challenger, Ron McNair told of how the Black college experience put him on the path to a successful life.

General Foods Corporation will be publishing Ron McNair's full essay in the near future. We think the following excerpts in support of Black colleges speak eloquently to the concerns of our young.

"In September 1967, I arrived at North Carolina A&T University, a predominantly Black institution, to pursue a degree in physics, though I could barely say the word, could not spell it, and knew even less about the subject matter. After discussing the matter with my counselor and taking standardized tests, I was advised to 'go and try' physics because, in the words of one counselor, 'You're good enough.' Obediently I took this advice—and went on to graduate in physics, with honors, on schedule and armed with the tools that would launch my career on a trajectory through graduate school, into the industrial laboratories and, ultimately, around the earth aboard the space shuttle.

Black institutions have distinguished themselves through their capability to transform academic potential into scholarly achievement—while simultaneously challenging the precocious appetite. If there is uncertainty about what area to pursue, one must choose a college that gives the latitude to think about it and then 'go and try.' Many Black professionals (including myself) will readily concede that life probably would have taken a different course if the support structure and academic programs of a Black institution had not been available. (Though)

I do not advocate that anyone select or eliminate a school solely on the basis of its racial makeup...my support of Black colleges and universities as competitive and indispensable institutions is firm and unequivocal.

Early one peaceful morning in February 1984, as I blissfully floated on the ceiling of the space shuttle Challenger fast asleep, I was awakened by music being piped up from the mission control center. My eyes stretched wide open in disbelief and my face lit up with delight, for immediately I recognized the music as my college alma mater. I glanced at the N C A&T banner proudly affixed to the wall, and 400 years of history quickly raced through my mind. It was during this charged moment of heightened awareness that I thanked God that through a Black university, I had had the chance to develop, the desire to be, and the opportunity to do."



GENERAL FOODS

General Foods Corporation 1986

Black Greek Poster

Anheuser-Busch will mark the observance of Black History Month in Feb. by releasing a poster saluting the contributions of the eight Black Greek-Lettered Organizations which comprise the National Pan-Hellenic Council.

In addition to spotlighting selected individual programs which the groups have instituted to improve the quality of life in their community, the poster also provides biographical data and features the current president of each.

The organizations were singled out "because collectively they have set the precedents for social action, political involvement, economic development and humanitarian service in the Black community" said Henry H. Brown, vice-president, marketing development and affairs, Anheuser-Busch.

The poster is the second phase of Anheuser-Busch's effort to call attention to the importance of Black Greek organizations. Brown decided to go with the poster after receiving more than 25,000 requests for Greek-Lettered Organizations With An African Heritage, the brochure which launched the project.

"Based upon the response to the brochure by individuals and institutions, we felt that we were getting the message across and no time seemed more appropriate than Black History Month to keep the momentum going," Brown said.

Included are Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, Zeta Phi Beta and Sigma Gamma Rho sororities, along with Alpha Phi Alpha, Kappa Alpha Psi, Omega Psi Phi and Phi Beta Sigma fraternities.

The Greek poster and brochure are also part of an expanded series of publications by Anheuser-Busch which highlight the richness of Afro-American and African history. Other publications include the Kings and Queens of Africa heritage series.

Posters may be obtained by writing Anheuser-Busch Greek Poster, c/o Images, P.O. Box J, Orangeburg, SC 29116. Shipping and handling charges of \$1 per poster should be included for orders less than 50 or \$.50 per poster in quantities of 50 or more.