

RELIGION

From Slavery To Victory: One Man's Journey

BY ROBERT KELLEY

As envisioned by Carter G. Woodson, the observance of Black History Month (which originally began as a week, but was expanded in recent years to the entire month of February) is intended to focus the attention of the whole nation—but especially African Americans—on the significant contributions our people have made in America. The wide ranging array of events which make up the month are designed to be informative, educational and festive.

While I wholeheartedly support these aims, I do believe it is now critical that more African Americans engage themselves full time in conducting one of the lesser practiced activities of the observance. That activity is the reflective, studied seeking for meaning behind all of the facts of our history. For through knowledge as embodied in all of the facts of our history is important, meaning and understanding are what will take us to any next positive step in our developmental progress as a people.

In the Bible's book of Proverbs, King Solomon writes, "Wisdom is supreme, therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding" (4:7). He also states, "Wisdom brightens a man's face and changes its hard appearance" (Ecclesiastes 8:1c). Everyday living bears out the truth of Solomon's counsel and observation. A man can know his car will not start, however, until he accurately understands the cause, he is

helpless to fix the problem. With understanding, the frustration that snarled his face dissipated, replaced by a smile of satisfaction.

The search for meaning in the overwhelmingly negative mosaic of images which make up Black History—stories of individual achievement, heroism and courage notwithstanding—has been my personal quest for over twenty years. Spurred by youthful impatience and disillusionment with the status quo, I set out as a wide-eyed college student to know and understand my history. Through a wealth of Black Studies courses and personal research, I gained much knowledge, empathy and appreciative pride, but no acceptable understanding. My frustration, festering anger and bitterness grew toward the suffocating prospect of a history and a presence of suffering that seemed to have no just explanations or redeeming value.

The thought of being an eternal victim was not at all appealing to me—though I knew many of my fellow African Americans from every persuasion had embraced victim hood as the best possible interpretation for our suffering and the only viable posture to take in pricking white America's conscience. Giving up and finding escape from my serious inquiry in the comfort of apathy, all manner of self-destructive living, selfish, unrestrained pursuing of material wealth or angry, militant fighting of "the system" were no longer options, since I had previously done

these (as many of my people do) with no lasting satisfaction and had become by Black History Month 1979, a deeply committed follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Still, even as a regular church attending Christian and eventually a seminary graduate, I heard or learned no explanations about my history that brought my soul to peace.

PART II
A breakthrough did begin to happen for me in the early months of 1986. I was preparing what was then to be a series of history segments entitled, "From Slavery To Victory: One Man's Journey" for a radio program our Ministry was producing. The segments were intended to alternately present the facts and give a spiritual interpretation of Black History. Research for the facts in well known source materials was easy enough. However, I realized I still did not have any kind of coherent understanding of those facts to provide a spiritual interpretation. With great disappointment, I canceled the series (the entire radio program followed close behind) and retreated to resolute prayer and Bible study.

It quickly became clear to me that I had been looking in the wrong places for the understanding I needed. Indeed, Scripture verses trumpeting the wisdom giving, instructional and revelatory abilities of God began to leap off the pages of the Bible at me! Versus such as, "From heaven the Lord looks down and sees all mankind; from His dwelling place He watches all who live on earth" (Psalm 33:13-14) and "For the Lord gives wisdom, and from His mouth come knowledge and understanding" (Proverbs 2:6) along with "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5) took on new meaning and forced me to stretch my faith to do what I had not done up to then in my search for understanding of my history, ask God!

The explanations I had searched so long and hard for came to me little by little over the next several

years. So did deliverance from the frustration of ignorance and the just below the surface simmering of anger and bitterness agitated by every personally perceived or reported act of racial injustice (I still get angry at racial or any other type of legitimate injustice, however, now, it is truly righteous indignation that is usually brief and followed by the most powerful action on earth: prayer!)

By the Fall of 1992, I sat down to finish writing what would become the "From Slavery To Victory: One Man's Journey" Radio Special. During Black History Month 1993—seven years after I had begun to seek the Lord for understanding, the one hour program aired on a Dallas/Fort Worth area radio station. In March of 1994 the program was awarded an internationally recognized Silver Angel by Excellence in Media and aired on stations around the nation in June.

Thanks to the Lord, my search for understanding of my history turned out to be joyous, healing, liberating, hope inspiring, and triumphant! This, I believe, will be the outcome for all of my fellow African Americans who undertake the same search and who start in the right place. And what is many of us did? I'm convinced a chapter far more glorious than the civil rights era will be written in the history of our people and that our children of that day will celebrate it every moment instead of one month out of the year. For just as it is written, "Blessed is the nation whose God is Lord" (Psalm 33:12a).

All scriptures quoted from the New International Version Bible. The Rev. Robert Kelley is founder and president of Open Door Communication Ministries, Inc., Clackamas. The non-profit organization is conducting the *From Slavery To Victory Education Project* featuring the Radio Special, the production of tracts, study materials and seminars. Rev. Kelley also pastors the St. Mark Baptist Church of Portland.

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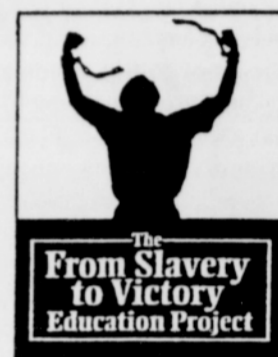
Written and Produced by: Rev. Robert Kelley

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Concerts In The Chapel To Feature Eclectic Brass

Eclectic Brass will be heard March 1st at 3 p.m. in the next musical program of Warner Pacific College's well-received Concerts in the Chapel series. Since their formation two years ago, the pleasing sound of this local brass quintet has charmed audiences wherever it has appeared.

For their Sunday afternoon concert at the College, Eclectic Brass has selected a variety of numbers from Edvard Grieg's Funeral March to an Irving Rosenthal arrangement of Little Brown Jug. Ian McDonald's Sea Sketches for Brass quintet will be heard as will selections from The Sound of Music, and the "Willy Tell" overture, an arrangement of a well-known Rossini piece by Paul

Chauvin.

Members of Eclectic Brass include Mark McCormick and Jim Huett (trumpets), Scott Barnes (horn), Joe Bonasera (euphonium), and Les Thornton (tuba).

The next concert—the final one in the 1997-98 series—will feature the Stradivari String Quartet, Friday evening, April 17.

Concerts are held in the Schlatter Chapel on the Warner Pacific College campus, southeast 68th and Division.

Tickets are \$7 (\$5 for students and seniors or \$15 for family admission).

Tickets will be available at the door or in advance by calling 788-7476.

OBITUARY

Walter Wheeler Sr.

January 18, 1931 - February 11, 1998

Mr. Wheeler was born in Tyler, Texas and was in the Navy in his last occupation as a Detailer for Allied Plating. His Religious Denomination was A.M.E.

He leaves behind to more:

Sisters Edith Currie of Sacramento; California, Bennie Jean Johnson; Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Brother Mike Edmund of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Sons Larry Wheeler; Atlanta, Georgia, Craig Wheeler, Walter Wheeler both of Los Angeles, California, Vaughn Wheeler; Portland, Oregon, daughters Lodi Wheeler of Portland Oregon, Jackie Wheeler of Los Angeles, California, Margie Durham of Cincinnati, Ohio.

11 grandchildren, 2 great-grandchildren

Barbara Ann Bacon-Deceased- Maiden name of Garry

Barbara was born in Arkadelphia, Arkansas on July 27, 1944 to Herman and Hattie May Gary. She passed away in Portland, Oregon on February 8, 1998 at the age of 53 years in a local convalescent hospital.

"Bobbie's" family moved to Las Vegas, Nevada in the late 1940's. She was reared in Hawthorn, Nevada; she came to Portland, Oregon in 1964 and joined the St. Paul M.B.C. Church in 1979. In 1984, she united with Christ Memorial C.O.G.I.C.. Missionary Barbara Bacon was licensed in 1992.

Between then and her death, she had worked for the American Cancer Society. She has lived in Portland, Oregon for the past 30 years. She had been a member of the Order of Easter Star.

Survivors include:

Husband; William Alfred Bacon, Portland, Oregon; Daughters; Christina Sanders, Denita Young both of Portland, Oregon; Brother; Bennie Earl Garry Portland, Oregon; Sister; Lottie Mae Clay Milwaukie, Oregon

Also-8 grandchildren and 1 great granddaughter



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Psalm 71:1

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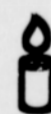
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