

white males' were allowed in the service. When the need arose again in the war of 1812, black soldiers made up nearly twenty percent of the Navy. Their bravery was credited to the winning of the Battle at New Orleans. Throughout this country's history, black soldiers were only allowed in the service when we needed them. America was not afraid in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century to send African Americans to the front lines to die and then ban them for duty as

soon as the wars were over.

Despite many well-documented acts of bravery and combat leadership, most African American officers were excluded from active duty, following WWI. This exclusionary campaign also spread to most National Guard Units. Early in WWII, the United States Army started taken steps toward racial integration. The main catalyst was the clear waste of money and space in having all twenty-four of its Officer Candidate Schools having duplicate fa-

cilities for whites and blacks. Other branches of the service gradually fell in line, integrating and encouraging African Americans to make a career out of the service. Since WWII, many black men and women have been promoted to high-ranking officers in the military.

Literature and Language

Someone once said so many black women wrote during the late nineteenth century because having the freedom to write was a way they could finally express themselves. After great orators like Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, African American women began putting their speeches on paper. Afraid they might be harassed or punished for standing out vocally in front of crowds, many black women learned to read and write fluently so their messages could be carried on through the pen. Slave narratives became a method of true expression and silent rebellion. Feelings were expressed in poems, songs, letters, essays, and other text forms. Religious conversions helped African Americans feel they had the "power" to speak out on paper with God behind them.

The Harlem Renaissance began around 1920 and continued on into the Great Depression years. Black writers, male and female, from almost every state in the country participated. Writers examining the works of Frederick Douglass, Will-

reotypical writing, they seemed rebellious. They celebrated African art and culture, surprising whites who often thought Black Americans had forgotten about their African "roots."

As the Great Depression deepened, and the Harlem Renaissance started to fade away, Richard Wright's *Native Son* was said to have started a new era in African American Literature. Poets such as Gwendolyn Brooks, Melvin B. Tolson, Margaret Walker and Robert Hayden were noted for using "classical and mythical themes" in their work. Brooks won a Pulitzer Prize in 1950 for her book *Annie Allen*. The writings of this new breed of African American writers was said to be "met with acceptance in the university community."

One of the most outstanding African American novelist, poet, and anti-slavery lecturer was Frances Ellen Watkins Harper. Her parents died when she was only three. She lived with an Uncle who was Reverend William Watkins, who owned and taught at a free school for blacks. Although she went to work as a domestic helper at age thirteen, she continued her education on her own at night. In 1845, at only twenty years old, her collection of verse and prose, titled *Forest Leaves* was published. In



William Liederdorff was an educator and businessman. He built San Francisco's first public school and first Hotel (City Hotel). Leidesdorff Street, which runs through the city's financial district in the shadow of Transamerica Building, pays tribute to him.

iam Wells Brown, Frances W. Harper or Harriet A. Jacobs felt their writings were more political than anything else, trying different styles of writing. Breaking away from ste-

HARTLEY OIL, INC

Celebrates Black History Month

**KEEPING FAMILIES OF
THE COMMUNITY WARM
IS OUR BUSINESS**
Fuel oil • Furnace Repair

506 NE Alberta St.
Portland OR 97211

(503) 331-3442

Safeway Joins
The Portland Observer
in Honoring
Black History month