

# Black History Month



Elizabeth Duncan Koontz was an educational leader who devoted her life's work to building a better quality of life for children through schooling and the support of women.

## The Black Press

Second part in a series

BY RON WEBER  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

## Passionate Voices for African Americans

First newspapers call for abolition of slavery and better treatment of black citizens

**1910 issue of "Crises" stated the greatest issue facing African Americans was residential segregation**

Newspapers for African Americans grew out of the passion of people of color oppressed by racism.

From 1854-1857, the "Provincial Freedom" became a strong anti-slavery newspaper, under one of America's greatest African American women. Mary Ann Shadd, who was born on Oct 9, 1823 to a prominent black family in Wilmington, Del.



Mary Ann Shadd Cary founded "Provincial Freedom" in 1854, a newspaper dedicated to transforming black refugees from the South into model citizens. She was the first black female editor, publisher and investigative reporter in North America.

Shadd became the first black female editor in all of North America. She also later became out nation's first black woman lawyers and opened a school for black children in Washington D.C.

Promoting self-reliance throughout her life, she wrote articles on temperance, general literature and anti-slavery. Affiliated with no particular political party, Shadd, whose married name was Cary, spoke freely about her passion for abolition of slavery and better treatment of America's black citizens.

The "Provincial Freedom" paper was located a short distance from New York on the Canadian side of the border where many African Americans fled to safety, due to the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in the early 1850s.

Although the paper had a large circulation, it was seized in July of 1856 for outstanding debts and was permanently closed a year later.

One of the longer running papers of its time was "The Recorder," published from 1861 to 1902 by the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Early success was partially due to a creative and very effective marketing tool, that of using black Union soldiers to distribute the paper to African American Slaves in the South. The four-page paper covered news on black regiments as well as departments on religious intelligence, domestic news, general items and foreign news, obituaries, marriages, notices and advertisements, along with "the normal compliment of prose and poetry found in the newspapers of the day."

In describing his paper in the early 1860's, the editor wrote:

"Outrages from the South were reported in purely factual terms of burning of churches and parsonages and midnight visitations. Of course sermons were reproduced, but there was excellent reportage from correspondents all over the South and West. In sum, the virtue of "The Recorder" lies not in its religious role but in the picture it provides of the Negro situation throughout the country: "From the tepid friendliness of at least some whites in the West, whether in Cheyenne or Santa Fe, to the cry to freed Negroes, 'Don't come to Mississippi.'"

"The National Era," out of Washington, D.C., edited by Dr. Gamaliel Bailey was proudly issued from Jan 7, 1947 to March 22, 1860 on what the newspaper called "a mammoth sheet of the finest quality." "The National Era" was also the paper in which Uncle Tom's Cabin was serialized. The paper's prospectus read:

"While due attention will be paid to current events, congressional proceedings, general politics and literature, the great aim of the paper will be a complete discussion of the question of slavery, and an exhibition of the duties of the citizen in relation to it."

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People started the publication "Crises" in 1910 with black intellectual and civil rights activist W.E. Du Bois as its first editor.

Du Bois became the most powerful black man in America and the NAACP grew quickly. The organization and the magazine both benefited from their partnership, each one relying upon the other. Although the original board members were mostly white, their mission was clearly to help break down racial barriers, thus improving the lives of non-whites.

An article in the 1910 issue of the



In 1910, W.E. Du Bois became the first editor of the NAACP publication "Crises" and soon thereafter became the most powerful black man in America.

Crises stated the greatest issue facing African Americans was residential segregation:

"This discriminatory practice arose in three forms; attempts at residential segregation through property holder's covenants; efforts towards that end through mob violence; and legislation designed to force Negroes to live in restricted areas."

"The Crises" and Du Bois left no

stone unturned in reporting the matter to their subscribers. The NAACP board members and magazine employees risked their very lives publishing the bold truth behind the white hoods of the Klan, racist politicians and large companies who continued to fight to keep African Americans from enjoying the freedom this country was founded on.

For decades to come, "The Crises" would be the nation's top black publication. Although most copies were sold to blacks, whites accounted for nearly 25 percent of paid subscriptions to the publication.

Memphis, Tenn. publisher Ida B. Well-Barnett headed for New York when her newspaper office was burned to the ground and her life was threatened.

In her paper, the "Free Speech and Headlight," she criticized a town that would "will neither protect our lives and property, nor give us a fair trial in the courts when accused by whites."

The article was in response to the hanging of three successful black businessmen in that city. Her anger over the matter also prompted her to write a scathing article against the town's white women and their alleged purity, claiming it would be easy for them to be attracted to a black man. While she was away from the office that week, a mob of whites burned her building down and made it clear that if she ever came back, she too would be lynched.

Taking her anti-lynching fight to New York was a quick decision, however it reaped great re-

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**Without these firsts, American History wouldn't be the same.**

*Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, performed the first successful heart operation in 1893*

Madame C.J. Walker, first self-made American woman millionaire • Hyman S. Thomas, invented the potato chip, originally known as the Saratoga chip • Matthew A. Henson, first man to set foot on the North Pole • Jessie Jarue Mark, first woman to earn a doctorate in botany • Isaac Murphy, won the very first Kentucky Derby • Dr. Charles Drew, discovered the method for preserving blood plasma • Jewel LaFontant Mankarious, first woman to argue a case before the U.S. Supreme Court • Yvonne Clark, first woman to earn B.S. in chemical engineering at Harvard • Louis Armstrong, first to sing in "scatting" style • Otis Boykin, invented guided missile device • Jane Wright, pioneered several advances in the field of chemotherapy • Frederick Mckinley Jones, inventor of portable X-ray machine • William A. Hinton, developed first test for syphilis • Norbert Rillieux, developed the first system for refining sugar • S. Boone, invented the first ironing board • Frank Grant, inventor of the baseball chinguard • L.D. Newman, inventor of the hairbrush • Shelby J. Davidson, created the first adding machine • William Warwick Cardozo, pioneered the study of sickle cell anemia • Kurtis Blow, first rap artist

You can't talk about Black history without talking about American history. Let's remember the African Americans who helped build America.

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