

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

COURAGEOUS AFRICAN AMERICANS



by Ron Weber

She Helped Others Learn

It's often said that one of the greatest and most challenging careers a person can have is teaching. Almost 150 years ago a young black woman from the South was sent to St. Augustine's Normal School and Collegiate Institute. Though only an adolescent, Anna Julie Hayward had already made up her mind regarding her lifetime career choice. She wanted to help others learn.

After getting her teaching credentials at 17, she took a job at the school as a teacher. By the time she was 19, she fell in love with a fellow teacher, George Cooper. They were married, but not without paying a heavy price.

Young married women in professional careers at the time were generally not allowed to work after being wed. They were expected to stay home, take care of the house and raise children. Two more years would pass and Anna became a widow. Broken hearted and unemployed she enrolled at Oberlin College in Ohio and earned a bachelors degree, only the second black woman in America to have done so. The year was 1884 and she was in her early 20s.

After teaching at Wilberforce University, Anna was asked to come back to St. Augustine's where she taught German, Latin and Mathematics. It was almost unheard of in those days to be a black woman and able to speak three languages.

Later she was recruited to the most prestigious African American school in the country, M Street High School in Washington, D.C. where she became the principal and a noted leader in advocacy and rights for minorities.

She wrote "A voice from the South," a book of speeches and essays on her political opinions. In 1923, at the age of 26, she became the fourth black woman in America to earn her doctorate.

Students of Africa, black folks often shunned those of a mixed heritage.

As Anna was also female, she faced even further discrimination. Men of all colors and backgrounds felt intimidated by women who were smart. In her field of academia it was no different.

At home she was a stern, kind and loving parent. Although she never married after George died and did not have any children of her own, she raised two foster children and five great nephews and nieces.

After helping educate kids all her life, she became president of Frelinghysen University in Washington D.C., a school primarily for educating black adults. Many years later the college lost its charter and had to close. Although Cooper felt disappointed, she retired knowing that she had made a huge difference in her long and successful career.

She lived to be 105 years old, never losing sight of helping the human mind grow, regardless of the age, color or sex of the person. Her tireless efforts helped thousands of black Americans reach their true educational potential.

Anna Cooper changed the American landscape and helped bring the American Dream to many who might have otherwise never found it.



Anna Julie Hayward



Chicago, 1893
Black doctor performs first successful heart operation.



North Pole, 1909
A black man is on top of the world.



Harlem, 1920's
An American Renaissance.



Tuskegee, 1941
Pilots prove heroism has no color.



Brooklyn, 1947
Baseball shows us courage, its #42.



Montgomery, 1955
Woman remains seated. And stands for justice.



DC, 1963
A man inspires a nation to dream together.



Celebrates Black History

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