

The Prince George's County Council
Presents

2018 BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Celebration

**WE
CONTINUE
THE FIGHT
WE**

Tuesday, February 27, 2018

1:00 p.m.

County Administration Building
Council Hearing Room, First Floor
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

Program

Opening Remarks

The Honorable Dannielle M. Glaros, Council Chair

“Lift Every Voice and Sing”

Ms. Lochelle Ferguson

The African American Experience

Ms. Dorothy F. Bailey

Prince George’s County Truth Branch, National Executive Council,
Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH)

Video

“African-Americans in Military History: Breaking Barriers”

By: Travis Sauls

The African American Experience in Prince George’s County

Ms. Karen Gooden and Dr. Alvin Thornton

Co-Authors, “Like a Phoenix I’ll Rise: An Illustrated History of African
Americans in Prince George’s County, Maryland, 1697-1996”

Video

“African Americans in Times of War 2018”

By: Shurman Riggins

“Lift Every Voice and Sing”

Lift every voice and sing
Till earth and heaven ring
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
let our rejoicing rise,
high as the list'ning skies, let it resound loud as the rolling sea
sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,
sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;
facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,
bitter the chast'ning rod,
felt in the day when hope unborn had died;
yet with a steady beat,
have not our weary feet,
come to the place for which our fathers sighed?
we have come over a way that with tears has been watered,
we have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,
out from the gloomy past, till now we stand at last
where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;
thou who hast by thy might,
led us into the light,
keep us forever in the path, we pray
lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met thee,
lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget thee,
shadowed beneath thy hand,
may we forever stand,
True to our God,
True to our native land.

Local Inspiration-Slave, Sailor, Minister and Chaplain to the Buffalo Soldiers

Excerpts of an article by John E. Carey | For Naval History Magazine 27 August 2003 with Input from the Plummer Family



Henry Vinton Plummer was born a slave. In 1862, Plummer escaped and made his way to Riversdale, where he hid until he could get to his aunt's house in the District. Soon thereafter he enlisted in the U.S. Navy. The Navy assigned Plummer to the USS *Coeur de Lion*. The ship was a converted lighthouse that the Navy pressed into service as a warship.

During Plummer's service he saw action in many engagements as *Coeur de Lion* frequently engaged in battles with blockade runners and Confederate warships in the eastern rivers, including the Potomac and the James. During a reconnaissance up the

Nansemond River, USS *Coeur de Lion* exchanged fire with enemy batteries on April 17 and 19, 1863. One of the battery commanders surrendered his battery to the commander of USS *Coeur de Lion*, Acting Master W. G. Morris.

Henry V. Plummer received an honorable discharge from the U.S. Navy just after the end of the Civil War. The next year, his family dispatched Henry to New Orleans to find his sister, Sarah, who had been sold in 1860. He found and returned with Sarah, who later started St. Paul Baptist Church in Bladensburg, Maryland.

In 1872 Plummer enrolled in Wayland Seminary where he graduated as a minister in 1876. He became the third pastor of his sister's beloved First Colored Baptist Church of Bladensburg, Maryland. During his administration, the church's name was changed to St. Paul's Baptist Church. He served for five years and in 1881 became the pastor of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church, Washington, D.C. He applied to become an Army Chaplain in 1884.

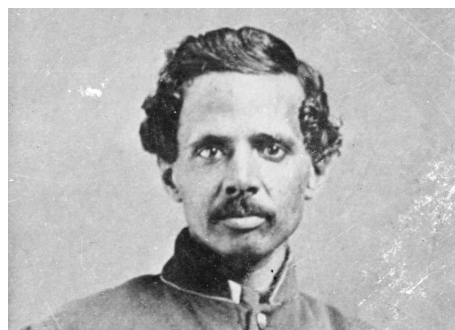
With Plummer's war record, service to his congregation and letters of recommendation from dignitaries such as Frederick Douglass, Plummer easily won appointment in the U.S. Army's Chaplain Corps. The Army assigned Plummer to minister to the famed 9th U.S. Cavalry, the Buffalo Soldiers, deployed to Kansas, Wyoming and Nebraska. Plummer served as the first African American Chaplain in the U.S. Regular Army.

The post correspondent to the *Army-Navy Journal* complimented Chaplain Plummer on his fine sermons and prayers and for "doing a good work among the soldiers." In 1894 Mrs. Mary Garrard, an officer's wife and the chapel organist, wrote that Plummer was "energetic, faithful & devoted to his duties." She noted that his influence on the troops was "decidedly good," and that she never saw a chaplain with "such large congregations." Mrs. Garrard believed Plummer's "own untiring efforts" led to his success. She made reference to possible racism at the post when she wrote that Plummer succeeded "almost entirely without help or encouragements from the officers" (who were all white).

3 Stories to celebrate 'African Americans in Times of War' for Black History Month

By MARYLOU TOUSIGNANT | The Washington Post | Published: February 15, 2018

From Crispus Attucks in the Revolutionary War to the Tuskegee Airmen in World War II to the tens of thousands serving in the military today, African-Americans have always been ready to defend their country. This was true even when racial bias deprived them of equal rights and opportunity in the military. The national theme of Black History Month this year is "African Americans in Times of War." Here are three inspiring stories.



From slave to hero

Powhatan Beaty was born a slave in Richmond, Va., in 1837. He later gained his freedom and fell in love with acting. When the Civil War broke out, Beaty, 25, enlisted in the Union Army. He was quickly promoted to sergeant and oversaw 47 other black recruits in noncombat jobs. As the war dragged on, the

men were given guns and sent into battle. In September 1864, Beaty's division attacked the enemy at Chaffin's Farm, near Richmond. When his unit's flag-bearer was killed, Beaty braved heavy fire and ran the length of six football fields to retrieve the banner. With all of the unit's officers and most of its enlisted men dead or wounded, Beaty took over and led a second charge, driving the enemy back. For this, Beaty was awarded the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military award. He lived a half-century and appeared onstage many times.

First black Navy pilot

As a boy, Jesse Brown dreamed of flying. He wrote to President Franklin Roosevelt, asking why there were no black pilots in the military. He got back a form letter saying that would change one day. Eleven years later, in 1948, he became the first black pilot in the U.S. Navy. Brown had felt the sting of racial taunts all



his life. But with the military ending its policy of racial segregation, the 24-year-old ensign was hopeful. "I'm the beginning of things to come," he said. In December 1950, he was flying his 20th mission of the Korean War when his plane was shot down. He crash-landed on a snowy mountaintop but was pinned in the fiery wreckage. His wingman crash-landed nearby to try to free him. A rescue helicopter also arrived, but Brown remained trapped. Brown grew steadily weaker and then stopped breathing. With darkness nearing, Brown's wingman didn't want to leave him. But the helicopter pilot warned, "You stay here, you freeze to death." The next day, officers decided that a recovery mission was too risky. Instead, the site was bombed to keep the aircraft and Brown's body from falling into enemy hands. The Navy honored Brown by naming a ship, the USS Jesse L. Brown, after him.



Army's top doctor

Nadja West grew up "eating, drinking, breathing (and) living Army." Her dad served 33 years, and nine of her 11 older siblings were in the military. She "couldn't wait" to join. She also was keen on science, inspired by Mr. Spock, the part-human, part-Vulcan science officer on the starship Enterprise in the "Star Trek" series. "Oh, my gosh, I wanted to be a Vulcan. And I wanted to be a scientist," West has said. After high school in Maryland, she went to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point (in just the third class to admit women), followed by medical school. The new doctor served as a captain in the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War. West, 56, was raised to work hard and do her best. As a black person and a woman, she was told, others would judge her differently. But it didn't affect her wartime service. She said her commanding officer asked, "'Doc, can you fix broke soldiers?' And I said, 'Yes, sir, I can.'" His response? "Glad to have you with us." Over the years, more postings and promotions followed. In 2015, West became surgeon general of the Army, its top doctor. She is also the Army's first black female three-star general and the highest-ranking female graduate of West Point. Mr. Spock would be proud.



This year's theme for Black History Month, 'African Americans in Times of War,' honors women and men who served their country in uniform and commemorates the centennial of the end of World War I in 1918.