Winning essays in History Month contest stress fight for education

A highlight of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History Black History Month observance is the annual essay contest in which local students write essays on the theme of the year's program.

The theme this year was "Black Americans and the Struggle for Excellence in Education," with Sammie Ellis chairperson of the National Black History Observance Committee.

Two of the winning essays were written by local students, Jesslyn C. Ingram of Banker Hill Elementary School, and Rodney Moore, Seventh Grade student at Kelly Miller Junior High. The essays are reprinted herewith:

HISTORY MONTH — Secretary of Labor Raymond J. Donovan and Women's Bureau director Lenora Cole Alexander (center), who helped launch opening ceremonies of the Labor Department's observance of Black History Month, are shown with other participants, from left, Andre C. Whisenton, director, Office of Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Programs; Thomas C. Komarek, assistant secretary for administration and management; Paul Berry, a Washington news reporter and keystone speaker, and Pearline Carter, personnel director of the department's Bureau of Labor Statistics. This year's theme for Black History Month is "Black Enterprise: The Future is Open."

By Jesslyn M. E C. Ingram.

Even before the chains of slavery were broken, Black Americans had a burning desire to be educated. Young Frederick Douglass, with a little help from his master's wife, began to educate himself while still a slave.

The hard times that followed the Civil War did not quench the Black American's thirst knowledge. Mary McLeod Bethune, the fifteenth of seventeen children and a champion cotton - picker, declared, "I will learn to read."

Booker T. Washington read every book that crossed his path. He said, "No one can make you ignorant, but yourself."

Educational opportunities for Blacks began to improve in America and by 1950 ninety percent of the Black population between the ages of 14 and 24 could read and write. In spite of these advancements, Blacks were concerned about the unfairness of the separate but equal" law which had been in existence in schools since 1896.

In 1951, Linda Carol Brown who was eight years old and lived in Topeka Kansas had to walk through a railroad yard to catch a bus that took her to a school twenty-one blocks away. There was another school only five blocks from her home, but it was for white children only.

Linda's father, with the help of the NAACP, took the case to court. On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court of the United States agreed that it was unconstitutional to segregate children in public schools.

Over the years, Blacks have learned that merely going to school with white children does not automatically guarantee Black children a good education. We must continue our struggle for Excellence. The D.C. Public School System has accepted this challenge by setting tough city - wide standards for its pupils. Now it is my turn and the turn of every boy and girl in school today to participate in the struggle for excellence in education by doing the necessary studying and hard work required to bring our test scores up to or above "national norms."

Our Superintendent, Floretta Duke McKenzie, lets us know she is counting on us when she says,".....We have much to be proud of, much to look forward to, and much to do."

By Rodney Moore

I would like to speak to you this afternoon on the 1984 theme for Black History Month. It is: "Black Americans and the Struggle for Excellence in Education."

Recently, the "National Council on Excellence in Education," which was created in 1981, brought in its findings. The news was not good. In effect, American public education received a poor report card! Understandably, the educational community is in an uproar.

For centuries, the wise among humankind has understood the importance of a sound education. The Greek philosopher, Aristotle, said! "All who have meditated on the art of governing mankind have been convinced the fate of empires depends on the education of youth."

Napoleon Bonaparte said! "Public instruction should be the first object of government."

Daniel Webster said! "Mere knowledge does not comprise all that is included in large term 'education'."

Yet, America, the self proclaimed "home of the free and land of the brave," failed miserably a large segment of her population. She allowed laws to be passed which made it a crime to teach slaves to read. Add to this the so-called "scientific" claim that Blacks were mentally inferior and not receptable to education.

Why would one need to pass laws to prevent people from learning how to read who could not be educated anyway?! Resultantly, Blacks were excluded from the educational mainstream for generations.

We know that we are descended from special people! There has got to be something pretty remarkable about a group who a mere century ago had an illiteracy rate of 95 percent of its children and youth in schools!

In closing, I'd like to dedicate a poem whose author and title have been lost in history to a group without peers: Black Teachers! In the face of tremendous odds, they have nobly discharged their sacred trust: that of instilling in the Black young pride in self and race and grooming Black leaders for tomorrow! It reads: "A builder builded a temple; He wrought with care and skill. Pillars and groins and arches Were fashioned to meet his will; And men said when they saw its beauty; 'It shall never know decay. Great is thy skill, O Builder, Thy fame shall endure for aye! A Teacher builded a temple; She wrought with skill and care; Forming each pillar with patience, Laying each stone with prayer. None saw the unceasing effort; None knew of the marvelous plan; For the temple the teacher builded Was unseen by the eyes of man. Gone is the builder's temple; Crumbled into the dust, Pillar and groin and arches Food for consuming rust; But the temple the teacher builded Shall endure while the ages roll; For that beautiful, unseen temple Was a child's immortal soul!".

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Banneker-Douglass Museum open house set in Md.

ANNAPOLIS — A reception to celebrate the opening of the Banneker - Douglass Museum, which will showcase the history and contributions of Black Americans to life in the state, will be held on Saturday, Feb. 25 from 1 to 3 p.m.

Tours of the new facility, which is located at 84 Franklin St. in Annapolis, will be conducted by museum staff and volunteers. The public is invited to attend.

The 110-year-old building, formerly the Mount Moriah African Methodist Episcopal Church, will house two museum exhibit halls and the offices of the Maryland Commission Department of Economic and Community Development.

The church had housed a congregation with direct links to a free Black congregation sold the church to Anne Arundel County, which originally planned to demolish it. The church subsequently was leased to the State of Maryland, which provided much of the funding for the rehabilitation of the facility.

April 1-30: "From Toleration to the Civil Rights Movement: Marylanders in the Struggle for Freedom and Equality"

Regular operating hours for the museum will not be established until this summer. Until then, groups interested in touring the facility should call the Maryland Commission on Afro-American History and Culture.

For further information, call the Maryland Commission on Afro- American History and Culture at (301) 269-2893.

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Bowie State College, founded in 1865, offers new programs in 80's

Bowie State College was established in Baltimore on January 6, 1865, under the auspices of the Baltimore Association for Moral and Educational Improvement of Colored People. The school operated as a graded and normal school until 1893, when it was organized as a normal school to train colored teachers.

The Baltimore Association dissolved in 1870. However, the school continued under the direction of the Board of Trustees. Nelson Wells, who died in 1843, left his estate to support free colored children. The trustees of the estate declared that $3,500 was to go for support of the normal school.

In 1903, the school was designated Baltimore Normal School. In 1908, the State of Maryland assumed control and designated it Normal School No. 3.

The school operated under the State Board of Education until 1963, when the state named a Board of Trustees for the State College system. The College currently operates under this Board.

The school moved to its present location in 1911. It operated as a high school and teacher training school until 1924. In 1925, the standard professional normal school course was introduced. The high school curriculum was eliminated in 1928, and the entire program was devoted to the two-year professional curriculum in elementary education.

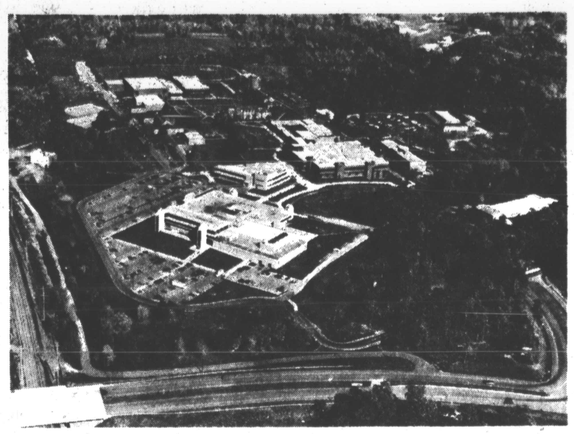
The third and fourth years were added to the curriculum in 1935, and the name was changed to Maryland State Teachers' College at Bowie.

In June, 1941, the Bachelor of Science degree was conferred for the first time in the history of the college. Preparation of junior high school teachers was added to the curriculum in 1951. In 1963, a liberal arts program was initiated and, again, the name was changed - this time to Bowie State College.

The graduate program was started in 1967, with the first graduate of the program in 1970. That year, we had 50 students to complete the program, bringing the total number of graduates since its inception to 1,931.

The college offers the Master of Arts degree in Administrative Management and Counseling Psychology and the Master of Education in nine areas of concentration. In addition, there are certificate programs in Family Counseling, Child Development, and Psychotherapy.

Last year, the Board of Trustees issued New Directions for the 80's. This was the result of a study conducted by the Academy for Educational Development in which they evaluated the current programs of the college and the enrollment and identified new programs and services in the college's service area, making recommendations on the future directions that the college should take to better serve the area and the state.



An aerial view of Bowie State

As a result, new programs have been established which include Bachelor of Science in Computer Science, Master of Arts in Human Resource Development and the Bachelor of Science in Technology with concentrations in Computer Science Technology: Business Administration Technology, Computer - Data Processing, Criminal Justice-Law Enforcement, Secretarial Management, Health Administration, and Human Service Administration.

Bowie State College has come a long way since 1865 — from four teachers and 370 students to over 1,700 students and 390 faculty and staff; from one building to 19; from an operating budget of ten thousand dollars to one of over ten million dollars.

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WORLD'S BEST — Edwin Moses, record-breaking track star, was the winner of prestigious Jesse Owens International Amateur Athlete Award, designating him the top amateur athlete in the world. Moses, with Mrs. Jesse Owens admires the bronze trophy presented during the fourth annual Jesse Owens Awards Dinner last week at the New York Hilton. Herb Douglas, vice president Schieffelin & Co., and a former Olympian, is founder of the Jesse Owens Amateur Athlete Award.

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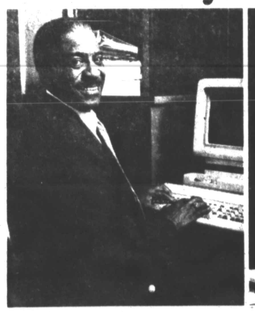

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