## Rock in a weary land: Phyllis Wheatley YWCA

By Sherri Milner AFRO Staff Writer

The early 1900's saw children in their arms.

in a couple of tattered bags, from the South to the North in search of employment oppor-tunities. The Phyllis Wheatley YWCA stood as a lighthouse in the midst of racially tur-

Like the mythical phoenix, threatened its existence. Tohas ascended from the abyss of past discrimination and injustice to live again amongst

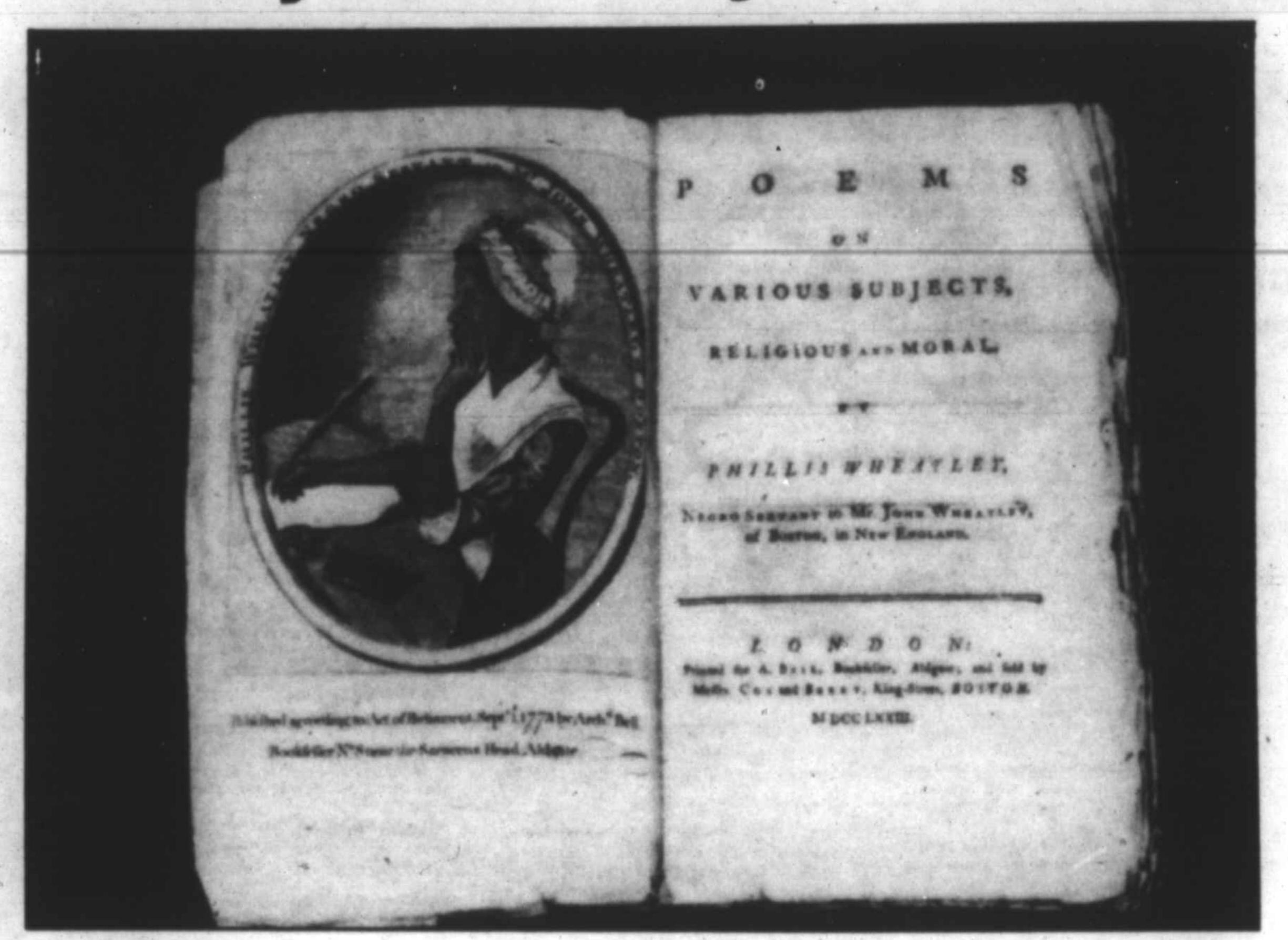
President Alma C. Hawkins. "We are expecting to collect

club, "The Booklovers," to president, recalled.

numbers did in 1914 at the outbreak of World War I.

money at all.

Today, poet, with its 40-room accom still reaches out to young women in transition. The dormitory area houses who could not afford expen-



An artist rendition of 18th century poet Phyllis Wheatley as depicted in her original

Although the Wheatley at least \$22,000 as a result of branch is the only one in the board members contributing the drive." The January event area that still offers housing money from their pockets to to young women, that is not pay the bills. programs designed to raise the only program for which funds, draw new members the branch is noted. "I and rejuvenate old ones. remember the after school The legacy began in 1905 programs that used to be of-when Rosetta Lawson, a fered from 3 until 5:30 p.m. church woman and social ac- The kids were served lunch tivist, became so inspired by and tutors came in to help a Chicago YWCA organizer with the homework," Marion that she invited her literary B. DeBerry, former vice-

> Said B. Arlene Renwrick, also a past vice-president, "This was a mecca of activieverybody met here. This was all we had back then."

In the early years the branch held classes in sewing, cooking, religious study, music, black history, folk dan-

In an era when no one else would have them, the women of the Wheatley YWCA persevered. With segregation and racism on every hand, the of the facility was a struggle.

It was once funded by the United Way, but since 1974 it assistance from the United Black Fund, board members

it operated with dedicated

"Today we are the only Y Renwrick. "They tried to sue to turn all our control over to us and say that we were not a ourselves and others of our them. They wanted to have Y at all, but it never got off the complete power over our ground. We faced hard times



Current Wheatley "Y" president Alma C. Hawkins is committed to the future.

financially, but we knew that we would do more than keep

racism became more covert, the relationship between the branch and the national YWCA improved, according to Wheatley board members. tatives from both the National Capitol Area YWCA and the branch, they claimed to have no knowledge of the reasons

President Hawkins and board members Renwrick, DeBerry, and Booker, along with all concerned persons associated with the Y, function under the belief expressed by Julia West Hamilton,

Hamilton once said, "This is not a welfare organization, in which one group of more fortunate, privileged women works for another group of less privileged. We are merely servants of Christ working together toward one common end, linked together in one common bond and seeking to

## honors

WASHINGTON, D.C.
Speaking at The George
Washington University's an-Luther King Day, President Stephen Joel Trachtenberg 21ST CENTURY D.C. SCHOLARS PROGRAM that will enable 50 outstanding Washington, D.C., public school system to attend the University for four years. The

For each of the 50 students selected, a four-year scholar-\$35,000 per year, or \$140,000 per student. The scholarship will pay the cost of tuition, room and board, as well as fees, textbooks and other RICHARD ALLEN - CRISPUS ATTUCKS - JAMES BALDWIN

We salute all those



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FEBRUARY 11, 1989