Kids Talk

Do you know this person?

She was born into slavery. She gained her freedom at the age of 32, when New York freed its slaves. She changed her name from Isabella to another name when she began to travel and speak to raise funds for women's rights and to support the end of slavery.

Sojourner Truth

District Youth Exhibit Creativity

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEROME HILLIARD, 11 years old, from his photo essay "Finley's Boxing Club." Photo will be on display at the Capital Children's Museum as part of the "Inside the Corridor" exhibit. Jerome has been a photography student with the Museum's PhotoLab program for 3 years and has participated in several student exhibits throughout the city.

By Sherri Milner
AFRO Staff Writer

Children in the H Street community are seeing the world in a new light and sharing it with others.

After school, several of the young people ages 5 to 14 head for the Capital Children's Museum, 800 Third St., NE, to participate in the Museum Enrichment Training for Kids (MET-Kids). Photo Lab is the photography component of the program. The students learn about selecting subjects for the pictures they take, developing the photographs, framing, mounting and exhibiting.

"There are two purposes to the program: to teach the art and craft of photography and to build the self-esteem of these young people," said Nestor Hernandez, the photography instructor. His desire is to help the children in the area learn the history of their own neighbors and neighborhood.

Through a segment of the program called "Inside the Corridor" he centered the content of the children's photography lessons on H Street and its residents.

Erica Young, age 9, attends Bunker Hill Elementary School. She photographed the ins and outs of Douglas Memorial Church. She said, "I love writing poems and I think art can express your feelings. If you're sad, draw a rainy day. If you're happy draw a sunny day. Without a camera, when I look at things I say, "Big Deal." With a camera, the world looks more interesting.'

Stephen Biles, age 11, entitled his photography exhibit "Creative Recycling." The Stuart Hobson Elementary School student said, "Photography enlarges your view of the world. You feel different when you come out to the world with a camera."

As the children mastered photography and went on to learn video, the Museum brought experts to teach them the techniques of telling true stories about interesting things that happened in the past. The children combined their new knowledge of video and of oral history to record stories by H Street residents about the history of the corridor since the 1940s and including the civil disturbances in 1968.

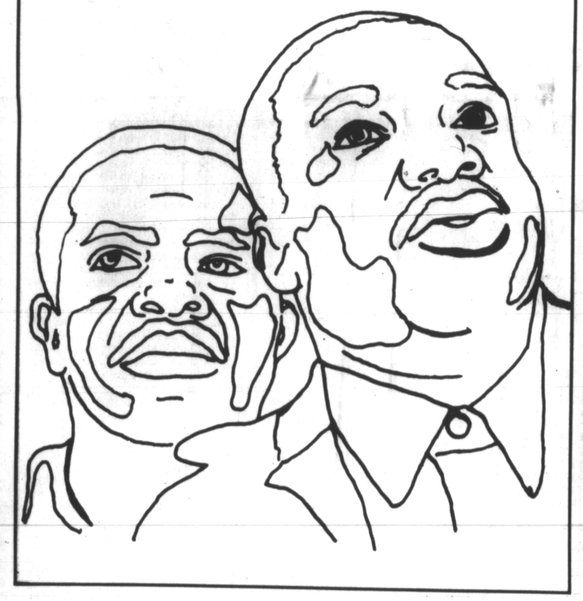
The exhibit is on display at the museum as a part of the annual Black History Month presentation. It will remain through March as a cornerstone exhibition during the month when the museum will inaugurate its tenth birthday celebration.

Special Reporters

Third grade students at Gage-Eckington Elementary School, Third and Elm Streets, have a new job. "Kids Talk" visited the school and recruited them as contributing reporters. Students in Ms. Forbe's and Ms. Pfundt's third grade classes have agreed to send in articles, poems, art work, and photographs for the page.

The students were excited about the project. The two classes will compete. The group that submits the most entries will win a field trip to the Afro-American newsroom and a party. Be on the lookout for fascinating material coming from these KT Special Reporters!

Color Me



Kids calendar

THEATER ARTS workshop classes are being offered at the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop for teens and adults. Song and dance classes are available Feb. 8—April 5 from 7 to 9 p.m. For information, call CHAW at 547-6839.

BLACK HISTORY celebration activities are being sponsored by the Drew Model School, 3500 South 24th St., Arlington, Va., Feb. 24, 7:30 p.m. This family evening will focus on the theme "From Africa to Arlington." The Lomax Children's Choir, Macedonia Bells of Joy, and poets will be featured. For information call LaMont Mitchell at 358-5825.

TALENT SHOW: An open talent exposition will be held at the Marlow Heights Community Center, 2800 St. Claire Drive, Marlow Heights, Feb. 25 at 8 p.m. The fee for adults is $5, for teens and pre-teens only $2. For information call 423-0505.

INDIAN DANCE demonstration, "Color and Rhythm Indian Style," will be held at the Langley Park Community Center, 1500 Merrimac Dr., Hyattsville, Md. There is no fee. For information call 445-4508.

INVITATION SWIM MEET in honor of Black History is open to all competitors ages 6 to 18. It is expected to attract over 500 participants for six major urban areas. The Capitol East Natatorium, 635 North Carolina Ave., S.E. will host the event. There is no fee. For information call 724-4495.

The original manuscript of Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland was sold in 1928 for $75,250.

Puzzling??

February

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J b l a c k h i s t o r y
I w o n s N Y c p Z H r T
Y V K H D R h a J A e p Z
W a W I Z o r R C t r L Y
H l P T o t Y s n e n H B
Z e K l i N t i s o M A Y
Y n C e A r w i t J Y K L
n t s U a A d q D y Y P Z
l i G e K e n K a V A B B
o n h Y n i X d l I R V Q
c e V t h O i l G E N K H
n V s s O l i A G A J N R
i M a R o h H J G I X I N
L W N h c G X T R K Q T L
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FIND THESE HIDDEN WORDS IN THE ABOVE PUZZLE:

Lincoln, chill, presidents, Washington, holiday, snow, Valentine, hearts, school, blackhistory, parties, winter

HERE IS THE ANSWER KEY:

George Washington the man

Pictures of President George Washington show him serious and dignified. But through his writings we see a different man. His many letters and detailed accounts that he kept show him to have been kind and thoughtful. He loved his home and his stepchildren, little Jackie and Patsy. He enjoyed growing things and planted thousands of seeds, roots and young trees.

He was the first president of the United States. He is often referred to as the Father of the Country. His birthday is Feb. 20.

Have You Ever Wondered....

How a duck can swim without having lessons?

A baby duck knows how to swim as soon as it hatches from the egg. It doesn't wait to be shown how. It just gets in the water and paddles away.

Even if a chicken sits on a duck egg and hatches it, the baby swims like a duck, without lessons.

This ready - made knowledge is something called "instinct." But how is it made? What causes it? This is still a great mystery. Scientist do not yet know the answer.

Perhaps a "Kids Talk" reader will become a great biologist and find out how instinct works!

Laff-A-Little

Q. What is the best book to have?

A. A pocketbook!

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Pa. Ave.: A look back at its golden days

By Jesse Peaker

A casual conversation with several friends, became the basis for the idea of a book, dedicated to the memory of the Royal.

We were reminiscing about the old theater, and the Avenue we knew in our youth. We talked and laughed about the various shows we had seen at the Royal, the characters we remembered who were regular denizens of the Avenue, and the many businesses that had come and gone over the years.

Toward the end, we bemoaned the fact that our community had allowed the Royal to perish, without a literal fight to the death.

When I got home, my curiosity was at an all-time high, in regard to the background of the theater.

I got some information, the next day from the plaque that now stands on the old site. Like all plaques, the brevity of the summarization only whetted my appetite to learn more.

For what I was seeking, there were only two logical sources of information, the micro-film of past issues of the AFRO-AMERICAN, and the black studies section of the Enoch Pratt Library.

Delving into the micro-film, I began with the 1921 issues. I hit a gold mine when I found a quarter page advertisement offering shares in the theater building project. From that point, the work became strictly a labor of love, as I compiled my notes.

Along the way, I realized it was going to be virtually impossible to write about the Royal's history without including the parallel history of Pennsylvania Avenue, so the two became part and parcel of the same story line.

Part II

In Baltimore, Pennsylvania Avenue is a major westside thoroughfare, that stretches from Franklin Street at the 600 block, northward to the tri-intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue, Fulton Avenue and Reisterstown Road, at the 2700 block.

The 22 block long strip is known colloquially as "The Avenue." It is a street that is akin to Harlem's Lenox Avenue. Both were the heart of their respective communities. The Avenue served as the business and entertainment hub for the black citizens of the city.

As the business hub, the Avenue was a multi-purpose potpourri of diversified businesses and services.

This was long before the advent of shopping malls, and it was during a time when blacks were not allowed access to the facilities of the "downtown" stores, such as being allowed to try on clothing prior to purchasing some.

The bright spot was, the black community could find literally everything they needed on the Avenue, so they didn't have to venture into the biased bastion of the downtown establishment.

As with that "street" that seemed to exist in nearly every black community, there was a dark side to the Avenue.

There were the speakeasies where one could purchase the aforementioned illegal booze, there were "ladies of the night" available for the bold, the borderline and actual underworld figures who plied their trade, usually under cover of darkness or in the shadows.

The Avenue also had it's share of gambling houses, for those with a sporting nature, and there were the misunderstandings that often resulted in flying objects, fists, weapons, injury and sometimes death of one combatant or the other.

The Avenue bristled with business activity of every ilk like, the Northwest Pharmacy at Dolphin Street, Burton's Clothier's at 1214, Newark Shoe Store two Avenue locations at 935 and 1719, the J. H. Bishop Hair Dresser Supplies at 1425 and Dodd's Clothes at 1224.

Blacks of that era, were fascinated with hair straighteners and skin whiteners, as evidenced by the glut of such products on the market.

Among the more popular were; Nu-Hair Tar Salve, Star Hair Grower, Nile Queen hair products, Excelento Quinine Pomade, East Indian hair grower, Dr. Lee's Tonic hair grower, Dr. Palmer's Skin Whitener, Pluko hair products and any number of products from Mme. C. J. Walker's line.

The Douglass featured matinees on Saturdays for the younger set, along with matinees on Tuesdays and Thursdays, the latter being Ladies Day.

The Regent was still offering strong competition, as their management offered "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" in twelve reels and the all-black feature, "The Crimson Skull" with beauty queen Anita Bush, Lawrence Chenault, Bill Pickett (the black cowboy credited with originating the rodeo sport of bulldogging), and the one-legged marvel, Steve Reynolds.

In spite of the fact that Douglass management had drastically altered their original intent from playhouse to semi-vaudeville house, the project failed as a business venture. Faced with overwhelming business losses, the theater went into bankruptcy, and closed its doors.

Gone now, was a noble project, a dream of the black community, perished in it's own flame like the mythical bird, the Phoenix. Never again would the theater be owned by blacks, although blacks ran the day to day operations.

Ownership of the theater went to the George W. Bennethum Theater Company, then passed along to one A. L. Lichtman. For a brief time, the theater stood dark and idle. The new owner did some minor repairs, some sprucing up, and made a name change.

On November 30, 1925, the renamed former Douglass Theater, reopened it's doors as the Royal Theater. There was a new grand opening to celebrate the occasion, as management and Andrew Downey presented "Hello Dixie," a musical revue featuring comedian Gus Smith.

A new price rate was established as 15 cents for children, 15 cents and 25 cents for balcony seats, and 50 cents for the main floor seats. Special shows became a regular part of the bill of fare, such as midnight shows, amateur nights, piano playing competitions, and Charleston dance contests.

Audiences poured in to see the likes of Caramouche & Mitchel's "Shake Your Feet," "Steppin' High" a musical comedy, blues queen Bessie Smith and her all-star revue complete with a nine piece band, Susie Sutton's "Bon-Ton Revue," the Hottentot revue, and the great Ma Rainey and her Georgia Jazz Hounds.

Among the major films seen at the Royal, were the originals of "King of Kings and The Ten Commandments," along with "Hearts of Dixie" with Clifford "Rex" Ingram, Mildred Washington, Eugene Jackson, Stepin Fetchit, Clarence Muse and Bernice Pilot, and the King Vidor production of "Hallelujah" featuring the famed Dixie Jubilee Singers.

For the younger reader, the term vamp was more often than not, irresponsibly affixed to the younger women at the time, mainly for the fact, they dared to be different.

They smoked in public, they drank alcoholic beverages, and they wore the most daring of clothing available. Today those same young women are classified as, liberated.

Royal management brought in Columbia recording star Clara Smith and the Club Alabama revue and "Step On It" a comedy revue with one of the leading comedians of the time, Dusty Fletcher.

Going a giant step further than their predecessors, management also brought in films. Now the Royal was on equal footing with both the Regent and the Lincoln, in terms of what they could offer to their paying customers.

THE AVENUE was the main throughfare, but the side streets also contained black businesses which flourished during this era. This photo, taken at the Kleeco Club on Presstman St., is of the founders of the National Negro Licensing Beverage Association. Among those present were Frank Reddish, William Adams, Shelton Coles, Maceo Paysour, Walter Thomas (Kleeco Club owner); Sterling Phillips, Askew Gatewood, Herb Saunders, Sr., Bill Curtis and Walter Brown.

Freedom and Love by Phillips — J Brown Courtesy of the Marbrough Gallery Inc. New York, New York

BLACK HISTORY IS A WORK OF ART.

African-American history is the portrait of a wisdom and love that defeated adversity. Of four hundred years of caring and contributing, and faith that was passed from one generation to the next.

Frederick Brown's painting, "Wisdom and Love," poignantly captures the indomitable spirit that produced great art, innovation and leadership against formidable odds. During Black History Month, the Adolph Coors Company is proud to make a gift of this important work to a major black museum.

We salute the Black Americans whose wisdom and love helped make America a better place.

Coors

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