

**2012 JOURNAL NEWS  
BLACK HISTORY MONTH ESSAYS**

**IMANI SOLAN  
MARCUS CHARLES  
ALANNA FABIO  
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## Rockland Black History Month essay: Domestic labor strikes in the South

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Imani Solan of Suffern High School is participating in a Black History Month essay program Jan. 24. / Peter Carr/The Journal News

Written by IMANI SOLAN

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Many people know of the strikes that took place during the civil rights movement, but they were not the first or the last time blacks came together and went on strike to gain equality.

After the Civil War, newly freed slaves were considered to be of the lowest social rank and had the burdens of society placed squarely on their shoulders. Luckily, blacks did not let these ideas define them. They had to support their families and fight for change in the racially charged world.

I admire that blacks determined their self-worth as equal human beings and fought so later generations wouldn't have to. The Washerwomen's Strike and the 1968 Sanitation Workers Strike are two notable labor strikes that helped shape American history.

After slavery, many of the conditions in the South were the same as during slavery, and newly freed slaves had little choice. The government took so long to provide blacks with aid; as a result, most became sharecroppers and still worked long hours on someone else's land.

Blacks' lack of education and resources caused most to have low wages and live in poverty. The lowest of all were black women, who were seen as powerless and yet showed their strength through the 1881 Atlanta Washerwomen's Strike.

Most black women worked long days doing domestic work in white households. A common job for a black woman was being a washerwoman. They washed, ironed and folded the laundry of



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About the author

Imani Solan, 14, lives in Montebello and is a ninth-grader at Suffern High School. She enjoys reading, drawing, filmmaking and running. Solan has been a member of Suffern High School's varsity track and field team since the seventh grade. She is involved in Naomi's Program of Excellence, Delta Academy, Jack and Jill, Youth Missions Club and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. She plans to become a lawyer. About this series This is part of a monthlong Black History Month series, with essays appearing on Sundays and Fridays. The topics and essayists were selected by the Mack Project, a Rockland-based nonprofit that offers academic, cultural and volunteer opportunities for young adults and teenagers of color. The organization recruits essayists based on recommendations from parents, school guidance counselors and community members.

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white families. Though washerwoman were independent, their wages were determined by their employers.

Washerwomen could earn as little as \$4 to \$8 a month. Zora Neal Hurston wrote, "Black women are the mules of the world." The problems of society dropped down through the social levels and eventually landed on black women.

Unhappy with their working conditions and pay, 20 black women formed The Washing Society in July 1881. They announced that all members would strike unless they received a raise of \$1 for every 12 pounds of laundry.

Through door-to-door campaigning, the Washing Society gained the support of other washerwomen, and with help from local ministers they gained the support of the community. In just three weeks, the group

grew to 3,000 members, which also included some white women. The washerwomen risked harm and sacrificed wages for fair pay. I believe this was very brave.

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## Rockland Black History Month essay: Domestic labor strikes in the South

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Written by IMANI SOLAN

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Another example of black workers fighting for equality is the Sanitation Workers Strike in 1968. This movement was so big it gained the support of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. On Feb. 1, 22 black employees were sent home with no pay for the day because of inclement weather. Their white co-workers, however, were allowed to remain on the job and received a full day's pay.

There was much discrimination of black sanitation workers, and the working conditions were dangerous. Two workers were even killed by a malfunctioning garbage truck. This incident led to an uproar as 1,300 men walked off the job on Feb. 11. The strike continued for about two months as workers demanded higher wages and the end of discrimination on the job.

Without the black workers, thousands of tons of trash piled up on the streets, and the authorities were forced to get involved. Many attempts were made by city officials to end the strike, but workers would not give in.

Protesters even organized boycotts, sit-ins and marches to reinforce their point, and as a result, black sanitation workers made certain their voices would be heard. After much effort, the strikers won and were given a raise along with the recognition of their union. This recognition ensured that the workers could not be silenced.

I am thankful for the many courageous men and women who participated in the strikes and fought for the opportunities and equality that all Americans have today.

Knowing that these people worked so hard and tirelessly to make a difference, inspires me to do my best and to take advantage of every freedom I have. I am glad that today I can still see the effects the washerwoman and sanitation workers have on society.



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On April 29, 2011, President Barack Obama, someone who benefited from the work of these pioneers, met with men who participated in the 1968 strike. Obama honored their sacrifice and contributions to job safety and equality on the job.

We should continue to learn from and honor these heroes. Because of these determined washerwomen and sanitation workers who paved the way for the labor movement, blacks are respected members of the workforce.

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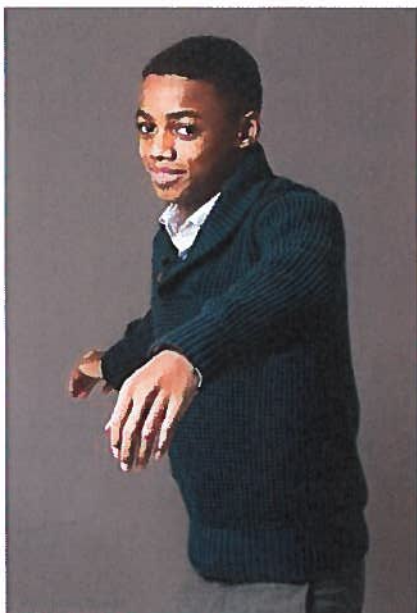
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# Black History Month essay: The history of black dance

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Marcus Charles of Suffern High School is participating in a Black History Month essay program Jan. 25, 2012. / Peter Carr/The Journal News

Written by **MARCUS CHARLES**

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The history of black dance has influenced many genres and styles of dance that are known today. Dance styles such as modern, jazz, tap, swing, the Lindy Hop, the Charleston, hip-hop, and waltz have all been affected by African-American dance.

From days of slavery to clubs in Harlem and the Bronx streets, black dance has mobilized different styles around the world.

In Africa, dance was a part of daily life. Africans danced to celebrate birth, marriage and other milestones. They also danced imitating everyday actions, such as harvesting crops and planting.

When Africans were brought to America by traders, the slaves danced to remember their origins and remain close to their roots. This practice was banned by the slave owners. Since dancing was defined as "lifting your feet," the slaves changed their movements.

Instead, they started using shuffling motions, moving their torsos and waving their arms.

The slaves' dancing soon appeared on stage in minstrel shows in 1604, but more as comedy than appreciation of the art. This would be the first time white audiences were exposed to African-American dance.

The minstrel shows consisted of black and white performers. The whites wore a black-face when performing as an African-American. These shows were meant to make a mockery of the black population, often characterizing these individuals as unknowledgable and lackadaisical. Although blacks were making fun of themselves, it gave them a chance to display their dancing.

Vaudeville, a genre of theater containing a

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**About the author**

Marcus Barry Charles, 14, of Montebello is a Suffern High School freshman and enjoys dancing at showcases that allow him to display his skill. He also plays the keyboard. Aspirations include producing music and creating a national dance competition. Since age 5, he has participated in Naomi's Program of Excellence, a community group whose purpose is to provide students cultural and educational enrichment. This is part of a monthlong Black History Month series, with essays appearing on Sundays and Fridays. The topics and essayists were selected by the Mack Project, a Rockland-based nonprofit that offers academic, cultural and volunteer opportunities for young adults and teenagers of color. The organization recruits essayists based on recommendations from parents, school guidance counselors and community members. Visit LoHud.com/bhm for a link to the Civil Rights in America Web page.

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variety of entertainment, eventually replaced minstrel shows in the early 1880s. As freedom and equal rights were gained, the minstrel shows slowly disappeared.

Without minstrel shows, success continued in the theater through vaudeville. This played a huge part in sanctioning black dance. The thriving theater world raised expectations for white and black dancers alike. "The Creole Show" was the first to be presented as vaudeville began to be incorporated. The show introduced a dance called the "cakewalk" to a widespread white audience. White people began to copy the dances they saw.

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## Black History Month essay: The history of black dance

The history of black dance has influenced many genres and styles of dance that are known today. Dance styles such as modern, jazz, tap, swing, the Lindy Hop, the Charleston, hip-hop, and waltz have all been affected by African-American dance.

From days of slavery to clubs in Harlem and the Bronx streets, black dance has mobilized different styles around the world.

In Africa, dance was a part of daily life. Africans danced to celebrate birth, marriage and other milestones. They also danced imitating everyday actions, such as harvesting crops and planting.

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American dance.

The minstrel shows consisted of black and white performers. The whites wore a black-face when performing as an African-American. These shows were meant to make a mockery of the black population, often characterizing these individuals as unknowledgable and lackadaisical. Although blacks were making fun of themselves, it gave them a chance to display their dancing. Vaudeville, a genre of theater containing a variety of entertainment, eventually replaced minstrel shows in the early 1880s. As freedom and equal rights were gained, the minstrel shows slowly disappeared.

Without minstrel shows, success continued in the theater through vaudeville. This played a huge part in sanctioning black dance. The thriving theater world raised expectations for white and black dancers alike. "The Creole Show" was the first to be presented as vaudeville began to be incorporated. The show introduced a dance called the "cakewalk" to a

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widespread white audience. White people began to copy the dances they saw.

Along with the rebirth of the theater, African-American dance started to appear in the clubs, and Harlem was the point of interest. During the "Roaring Twenties" and some of the 1930s, African-American culture was enjoying a revival through music, art, literature and dance. Popular clubs like the Cotton Club were the center of the dance movement. In clubs, African-Americans tested and showcased new dance styles like the swing, Lindy Hop and the Charleston.

African-Americans began to participate in modern dance and ballet in the 1940s and '50s. Anthropologists and dancers Pearl Primus and Katherine Duncan studied dance in Africa and the Caribbean. The lessons learned were brought to America and to the classrooms of modern dance. Many modern dance styles were influenced by these new techniques. Playing a big part in the growth of modern dance were the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and the Lester Horton Dance Theater. White and black choreographers used the African-inspired movements and hired African-American dancers in their performances.

In the 1970s, "Soul Train" made its debut in Chicago. "Soul Train" was where up-and-coming black dancers could be recognized. New dance moves were introduced each week like "the bump." The show attracted viewers of different racial backgrounds to black entertainment. The

show became famous for bringing black popular culture into the American home.

In the 1980s, another dance movement was rising. It was developing outside the theater, and this time the Bronx was the birthplace. Break dancing emerged as part of the hip-hop culture and hip-hop dance, and even though it was not directly influenced by African dance, it was brought up by young African-Americans and Latinos. Although break dancing and hip-hop were born in the streets, they made their way into studios and dance classes.

Dancing is moving your body to the music. Yet, if you are a dancer, you are part of a movement. All dance forms are connected to different cultures, and as you are dancing, you are representing that culture. Therefore, it is important to know the history of your dance style because you are not a "true representative" if you don't know the origins of that culture.

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# Black History Month essay: African-American doctors, patients were denied hospital access

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Alanna Fabio of Ramapo High School is participating in a Black History Month essay program Jan. 25. / Peter Carr/The Journal News

Written by **ALANNA FABIO**

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For many years, African-Americans have aspired to become doctors. It was not an easy road and they had to go through many more obstacles and struggles than other races. They faced segregation, racism, family troubles and financial problems, which led to them not being able to go to college.

It costs about \$36,000 on average to go to a four-year college today and about \$150,000 yearly in tuition and fees for medical school. During the 1960s, it cost about \$700 — \$2,500 to go to school, which was a lot for most people.

If African-Americans didn't have to go through all the difficulties that they faced through history, there would probably be more blacks doctors today. Today, there are about 30,000 black doctors in the U.S., which is roughly 4 percent of all doctors in the country.

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Nurses block Douglas Kennedy from removing baby from hospital unit

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**About the author**

Alanna Fabio is a 14-year-old freshman at Ramapo High School. In the spring of 2011, she was inducted into the National Junior Honor Society. She is a two-time recipient of the RCC Black Achievement Award for Academic Excellence. She plays softball, soccer, volleyball and basketball. Fabio participates in many community-based organizations, including Naomi's Program of Excellence, the Delta Academy, the Girl Scouts, Grace Baptist Church of Mount Vernon and the Zino's group of the National teaching sorority, Phi Delta Kappa Sorority Inc. She aspires to be a teacher or doctor.

**About this series**

This is part of a monthlong Black History Month series, with essays appearing on Sundays and Fridays. The topics and essayists were selected by the Mack Project, a Rockland-based nonprofit that offers academic, cultural and volunteer opportunities for young adults and teenagers of color. The organization recruits essayists based on recommendations from parents, school guidance counselors and community members.

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For more than 100 years, up to the civil rights movement, many local hospitals across the U.S. openly discriminated against black physicians, denying them the access to admit their patients to hospitals. They also lacked and did not receive the professional support that physicians need to advance their careers.

Hospitals in the South and the North denied African-American patients admission to hospitals or treated them in segregated places, such as cold attics and damp, unheated basements before the civil rights movement.

The civil rights movement was a big advancement in African-American history. Its goal was to stop segregation and get blacks the justice they deserved. Many white people, though, didn't listen and wanted the complete opposite of what the blacks wanted.

So the black people did what they had to do to stand up for themselves by boycotting buses and protesting in the streets.

Protesting was the response that blacks made against many years of racial hostility and discrimination.

Racial hostility and segregation was the reason that most African-American doctors had to practice medicine in poor communities. Stereotypes, racially biased practices and discrimination caused black patients, specifically wealthy ones, to prefer white physicians.

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# Black History Month essay: African-American doctors, patients were denied hospital access

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Written by  
**ALANNA FABIO**

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While a small number of whites went to physicians who were black, it was often for conditions such as abortions or sexually transmitted diseases they wanted to hide from Caucasian doctors. The majority of black physicians treated only patients who were black.

Black doctors were often denied the opportunity to practice medicine by hospitals and this caused black patients to choose white doctors because they had access to hospitals.. Even hospitals that handled only black patients hired white doctors exclusively. The white boards of trustees saw the hospitals as training grounds for white doctors and administrators. They even feared placing black doctors over white nurses in the segregated South.

Some black doctors responded to this by opening hospitals to fight and overcome racism, but many were forced to close due to financial struggles. They had to charge lower fees often so their patients would be able to afford their care. Due to this fact, black doctors practiced primarily in specific areas of the South, in larger communities, which were in close proximity to their training centers. This left many areas of densely populated cities and basically poor regions without enough doctors to treat the sick.

The Georgia Infirmary, founded in 1832, was one of the first segregated black hospitals. At the end of the 19th century, there were other hospitals being founded. They include Raleigh's St. Agnes Hospital (1896) and Atlanta's MacVicar Infirmary (1900). These segregated black hospitals included facilities created by whites to serve African- Americans. Changes in the African-American population led to the expansion of these hospitals. Some of the hospital's white founders expressed genuine desire and interest to supply health care to black people who were in need.



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Ben Carson, Charles Drew and James McCune Smith are just a few famous African-American doctors who have overcome obstacles and played a big part in the medicine field.

Carson is a pediatric neurosurgeon who specializes in brain surgery for children. He did not have an easy childhood. He had to go through his parents' divorce and then fell to the bottom of his class. But it all turned around for him when he later became famous for the separation of conjoined twins. Carson is still a physician today and continues to make history in medicine.

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# Black History Month essay: African-American doctors, patients were denied hospital access

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Written by **ALANNA FABIO**

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Lots of hard work and dedication pays off in life and that's what Dr. Lisa Francois told me when I interviewed her. She, like other inspiring doctors today, wanted to be a doctor her entire life. She went to UCLA Medical School and her class consisted of five African-American females in total.

Although the program was tough and very competitive, she succeeded and today is an obstetrician and gynecologist. Francois has delivered more than 2,000 babies in her 12-year career. She lives in Rockland County with her family and her success serves as a role model for aspiring black physicians.

Segregation and racism within the medical profession have, and still do, very much affect the African-American community. African-Americans always have to strive to do more and perform better than what is expected of them to receive recognition. And some of them did not get the credit they deserved.

African-Americans have contributed significantly to the field of medicine and the community. It's important to keep the African-American history and legacy alive or it will be lost forever.

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# Black History Month essay: Elite groups help us reach potential

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Photo of Ta'Tiana Jenkins of Paramus Catholic High School / Peter Carr/The Journal News

Written by TA'TIANA JENKINS

FILED UNDER

News Rockland County, New York

Traditionally, African-Americans have fought for rights for hundreds of years, going through slavery, Jim Crow laws, lynchings and more. This led to a serious rip in culture causing discrimination, segregation and inequality for American blacks.

Thankfully, today we do not really experience the harsh ills of society as history has documented. Black elite organizations founded in the early 1900s paved the way for today. Now we have stronger, healthier, intelligent and hard-working leaders of African-American descent, sustaining these black elite organizations. There are many organizations such as the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People, Jack and Jill of America, and Black Greek Letter Organizations.

### About the author

Ta'Tiana Jenkins is a 14-year-old freshman at Paramus Catholic Regional High School, where she is on the dance and soccer teams. She lives in New City with her

The NAACP (1909) fosters awareness on topics rooted in education, politics, social injustices and economical advancement/equality. The NAACP Youth

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parents, Carl and Tonya Jenkins, both educators. She is active in multiple sports activities; soccer, dance, softball, basketball, volleyball, tennis and karate (she is a second-degree black belt). Jenkins is also involved with Naomi's Program of Excellence Inc. and the Rockland County chapter of Jack and Jill of America Inc. She is also involved with the Delta Academy (mentoring program) and the Girl Scouts Heart of the Hudson. Her dream is to become a teacher, business owner, or possibly design buildings.

**About this series**

This is part of a monthlong Black History Month series, with essays appearing on Sundays and Fridays. The topics and essayists were selected by the Mack Project, a Rockland-based nonprofit that offers academic, cultural and volunteer opportunities for young adults and teenagers of color. The organization recruits essayists based on recommendations from parents, school guidance counselors and community members.

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Group focuses on similar issues and advocates awareness on equal rights and eliminating racial hatred and discrimination toward African Americans or any other ethnic group.

The NAACP firmly ensures that everyone has equal rights and no one should go through any form of discrimination. Today there are many local NAACP groups around the nation. As an active member of the NAACP Youth Group (West Nyack), it is my belief that they have done an amazing job of teaching me about equality and the harsh outcomes of discrimination. Along with the teachings of my parents and family, the NAACP has made me more aware of global issues and has afforded me an opportunity to proactively face prejudice and discrimination with a non-violent approach.

The NAACP has helped me educationally, socially and politically to become more involved in my community, as well as global

issues. For instance, the Youth Group advocates encouraging youth 18 and older to vote, dispelling racial myths and stereotypes, as well as having a greater awareness of the contributions we can make to society.

Jack and Jill of America focuses on awareness of self-enhancement. This nationwide organization was founded in 1938 by the late Marion Stubbs Thomas in Philadelphia. Marion Thomas could not have single-handedly achieved her goal. Thus, she had the foresight to seek support from 22 other mothers to come together to make this strong. Their goal was to create opportunities for children of color to have positive social, cultural and educational experiences from the ages of 2 to 19.

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## Black History Month essay: Elite groups help us reach potential

Traditionally, African-Americans have fought for rights for hundreds of years, going through slavery, Jim Crow laws, lynchings and more. This led to a serious rip in culture causing discrimination, segregation and inequality for American blacks.

Thankfully, today we do not really experience the harsh ills of society as history has documented. Black elite organizations founded in the early 1900s paved the way for today. Now we have stronger, healthier, intelligent and hard-working leaders of African-American descent, sustaining these black elite organizations. There are many organizations such as the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People, Jack and Jill of America, and Black Greek Letter Organizations.

The NAACP (1909) fosters awareness on topics rooted in education, politics, social injustices and economical advancement/equality. The NAACP Youth Group focuses on similar issues and advocates awareness on equal rights and eliminating racial hatred and discrimination toward African Americans or any other ethnic group.

The NAACP firmly ensures that everyone has equal rights and no one should go through any form of discrimination. Today there are many local NAACP groups around the nation. As an active member of the NAACP Youth Group (West Nyack), it is my belief that they have done an amazing job of teaching me about equality and the harsh outcomes of discrimination. Along with the teachings of my parents and family, the NAACP has made me more aware of global issues and has afforded me an opportunity to proactively face prejudice and discrimination with a non-violent approach.

The NAACP has helped me educationally, socially and politically to become more involved in my community, as well as global issues. For instance, the Youth Group advocates encouraging youth 18 and older to vote, dispelling racial myths and stereotypes, as well as having a greater awareness of the contributions we can make to society.

Jack and Jill of America focuses on

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awareness of self-enhancement. This nationwide organization was founded in 1938 by the late Marion Stubbs Thomas in Philadelphia. Marion Thomas could not have single-handedly achieved her goal. Thus, she had the foresight to seek support from 22 other mothers to come together to make this strong. Their goal was to create opportunities for children of color to have positive social, cultural and educational experiences from the ages of 2 to 19.

Jack and Jill of America, which has more than 220 chapters, was fashioned to help children of African-American descent to learn about their culture — more than what they experienced in the course of a day in public or private schools. Personally, as a member of Jack and Jill of America (Rockland Chapter), they have reached their goals yearly in giving African-American children enrichment beyond the school day socially, culturally, and educationally.

The Greek Letter Organizations are known for the infamous nine Black Greek Letter Sororities and Fraternities created as an alternative to white Greek Letter Organizations. Because blacks were not allowed to pledge in predominantly white sororities or fraternities, the goal was to have their own organizations.

These organizations strive for higher education and prominence with a proactive purpose.

And at five different colleges they created

nine different sororities or fraternities: Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, founded in 1906 at Cornell University; Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, founded in 1911 at Indiana University; Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, founded in 1908 along with Omega Psi Phi Fraternity (1911), Delta Sigma Theta Sorority,(1913), Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity (1914) and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority (1920), all at Howard University; Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, founded 1922 at Butler University and Iota Phi Theta Sorority, founded in 1963 at Morgan State University.

To date, many of these organizations devote time and energy to advance the message of positive relationships (sisterhood/brotherhood), public service, mentoring youth and excellence in the pursuit of higher education (scholarship).

Being involved in some of these elite black organizations personally has affected my life tremendously.

As a progressive teen, I am more aware of

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situations that involve social, economic and political injustices. Each year, I continue to learn more about historical people, places, things, as well as visit colleges and universities on college tours.

It is commendable for those who have decided to change lives, not just for themselves, but for the youth of the future. These black elite organizations continue to help children define themselves personally, socially and morally which intrinsically inspires children to reach for greater heights as they grow and change in an ever-changing society.

#### About the author

Ta'Tiana Jenkins is a 14-year-old freshman at Paramus Catholic Regional High School, where she is on the dance and soccer teams. She lives in New City with her parents, Carl and Tonya Jenkins, both educators. She is active in multiple sports activities; soccer, dance, softball, basketball, volleyball, tennis and karate (she is a second-degree black belt).

Jenkins is also involved with Naomi's Program of Excellence Inc. and the Rockland County chapter of Jack and Jill of America Inc. She is also involved with the Delta Academy (mentoring program) and the Girl Scouts Heart of the Hudson. Her dream is to become a teacher, business owner, or possibly design buildings.

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## Black History Month essay: The Magnificent 44th

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Darian Garner, 16, is a junior at Spring Valley High School. / Peter Carr/The Journal News

Written by **DARIAN GARNER**

FILED UNDER

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Rockland County, New York

I am completely engrossed in the 2012 GOP primary elections, waiting to see which candidate will run against President Barack H. Obama.

As long as I live, I will never forget the 2008 presidential election. I witnessed an election that changed not only my life but also changed our nation.

The election of the 44th president of the United States was riveting. That election cycle, my parents and I spent hours at our family dinner table discussing the significance of the fact that for the first time in U.S. history an African- American had been nominated for president.

I am incredibly proud that I was the first member of my family to believe Barack Obama would be elected. My confidence opened the door for conversations about the

racism that has permeated our nation's history. There were painful talks about slavery, second-class citizenship, segregation and its Jim Crow laws, the existence of the Ku Klux Klan and the "good old boys network."

Our chats also included my parents' personal experiences. My father told me stories about the racism he has faced in his professional career. His experiences taught me that racism still exists and sometimes it is subtle and sometimes racism is ugly, cruel and impossible to deny.

My mom grew up in the South and attended segregated schools for Head Start through second grade. She remembers being a little girl and entering the "colored only" door of a restaurant, and the local hospital. Mom can

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My mom grew up in the South and attended segregated schools for Head Start through second grade. She remembers being a little girl and entering the "colored only" door of a restaurant, and the local hospital. Mom can still recall feeling that being a "little colored girl" somehow made her less than her white counterparts.

Those experiences were more than 40 years ago, but revisiting that time is still painful for my mom. The suffering of my ancestors and the events that have occurred in my parents' lives helped me to have a clearer perspective of not only my parents' reservations, but also the true magnitude of the 2008 election.

Election Day 2008 was surreal. I did not sleep well Monday night; I was excited, yet nervous. I could hear my parents talking about the election late into the night; it felt like Christmas Eve. We arrived at the polls

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at 6:15 a.m., thinking we'd have the honor of being first to vote.

To our amazement, there was an incredibly long line of very diverse people waiting. There were many families with children and young babies. There were old people, young people, male and female voters. Every single person waited patiently; there was no pushing or shoving.

People who usually did not speak to each other greeted each other politely. I will always remember the distinctive energy and quiet excitement in the air. I felt a connection with total strangers; it was as if we all knew something monumental was about to happen in our country.

In that moment, we each recognized that collectively we held the power to make a difference. That power lay in exercising our extremely valuable right to vote. It is the right that many who came before us marched, protested and, when necessary, fought and died (for) so that African-Americans, like all other Americans, can freely go to the polls, vote and be counted in every single election.

If I live to be 100, I will never forget the moment when I went inside the voting booth with my dad and we pulled the lever to vote for Barack H. Obama for president of the United States. On Tuesday, Nov. 4, 2008, I, the great-great-granddaughter of Harry Randolph, who was a slave on a Virginia tobacco plantation, witnessed the election of the first African-American president of the United States of America.

Thinking about it today still gives me goose bumps!

As the 2012 election cycle intensifies with the Republican primaries, my thoughts are focused on the November election.

I'm asking myself: Did the fantasy of an Obama administration match the reality of his administration? Does America have what it takes to re-elect President Obama?

My response is a resounding, yes. Yes we can!

I only have one wish for the 2012 election: I wish I was old enough to vote.

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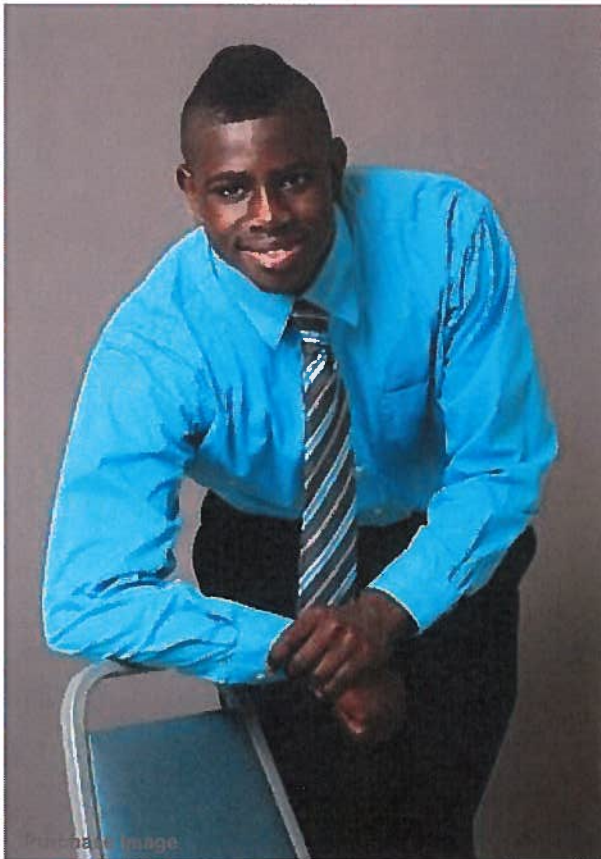
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## Black History Month essay: Freedom's Journal achieve

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The first black owned and operated newspaper published in the United States was Freedom's Journal. It started as a four-page, four-column standard-sized weekly and was published in New York City on a weekly basis from March of 1827 to March of 1829.

The co-editors were John Russwurm and Samuel Cornish (only through September of the first year). Freedom's Journal was superseded by The Rights of All, published between 1829 and 1830 by Cornish.

Samuel Cornish was the first black to establish an African-American Presbyterian church and John Russwurm was a member of the Haitian Emigration Society. Their objective with Freedom's Journal was to use

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Kyle Blair of Suffern High School is participating in a Black History Month essay program Jan. 24, 2012. / Peter Carr/The Journal News

Written by  
**KYLE BLAIR**

FILED UNDER

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**About the author**

Kyle Atiba Daniel Blair, 17, is an honor roll student at Suffern High School, has received black achievement awards and is an AP scholar. He was on the Suffern High School golf team in the ninth and 10th grades. He currently is on the varsity volleyball and basketball teams.

Blair does volunteer work the Martin Luther King Center in Spring Valley and People to People. He has been a member of the Chiku-Awali boys Rites of Passage program, the Rockland Omega AcaDemy (ROAD) and Naomi's Program of Excellence Inc.

He has traveled to Togo, Benin and Ghana with his mother and brother. Blair is a member of the New Life Pentecostal Church in Spring Valley and the Young Life Youth group in Suffern. During the summers he works as a caddy at the Tuxedo Country Club

Blair will be attending college in the fall of 2012. His choices are Howard University, SUNY Albany and SUNY Oneonta.

**About this series**

This is the last in a Black History Month essay series that appeared on Sundays and Fridays throughout February. The topics and essayists were selected by the

the newspaper — specifically the editorial pages — to fight against those who attacked African-Americans and endorsed slavery.

Cornish and Russwurm used Freedom's Journal to oppose the other racist newspapers in New York City and in order to publicly protest their treatment. They believed that these mass accounts misrepresented blacks in New York City and that their newspaper would be a response to the mass newspapers in NYC that distorted blacks. Their hope was that people who were ignorant of the truth might use Freedom's Journal to change the perception of blacks in society.

The Freedom's Journal readers were offered regional, national, and international news. Like many African-American dominated newspapers of the last century it attempted to entertain and educate its readers. Its readership was well in excess of 300,000 (mostly newly freed black men and women who immigrated to the North).

The journal published birth, death and wedding announcements because it was a paper of record and it presented stories to readers not only from within the continental United States but from countries such as Haiti and Sierra Leone. Many of its features highlighted high achieving blacks. This was done to encourage achievement among blacks.

Features were done on such luminaries as Paul Cuffee, a black Bostonian who owned a trading ship staffed by free black people, Touissant L'Ouverture and poet Phyllis Wheatley. School, job and housing listings were also made available in Freedom's Journal. The newspaper at various times employed between 14 to 44 agents to collect and renew subscriptions.

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The co-editors were John Russwurm and Samuel Cornish (only through September of the first year). Freedom's Journal was superseded by The Rights of All, published between 1829 and 1830 by Cornish.

Samuel Cornish was the first black to establish an African-American Presbyterian church and John Russwurm was a member of the Haitian Emigration Society. Their objective with Freedom's Journal was to use the newspaper — specifically the editorial pages — to fight against those who attacked African-Americans and endorsed slavery.

Cornish and Russwurm used Freedom's Journal to oppose the other racist newspapers in New York City and in order to publicly protest their treatment. They believed that these mass accounts misrepresented blacks in New York City and that their newspaper would be a

response to the mass newspapers in NYC that distorted blacks. Their hope was that people who were ignorant of the truth might use Freedom's Journal to change the perception of blacks in society.

The Freedom's Journal readers were offered regional, national, and international news. Like many African-American dominated newspapers of the last century it attempted to entertain and educate its readers. Its readership was well in excess of 300,000 (mostly newly freed black men and women who immigrated to the North).

The journal published birth, death and wedding announcements because it was a paper of record and it presented stories to readers not only from within the continental United States but from countries such as Haiti and Sierra Leone. Many of its features highlighted high achieving blacks. This was done to encourage achievement among blacks.

Features were done on such luminaries as Paul Cuffee, a black Bostonian who owned

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a trading ship staffed by free black people, Touissant L'Ouverture and poet Phyllis Wheatley. School, job and housing listings were also made available in Freedom's Journal. The newspaper at various times employed between 14 to 44 agents to collect and renew subscriptions.

The paper cost \$3 per year. One of its agents, David Walker from Boston, eventually became the writer of "David Walker's Appeal," which called for slaves to rebel against their masters. Freedom's Journal was soon circulated in 11 states, the District of Columbia, Haiti, Europe, and Canada. A typical advertisement cost between 25 to 75 cents.

Cornish and Russwurm's goal for their journal did not only concern racism against blacks but also involved the power and identity of blacks in society. They wanted blacks in the small communities to have a stronger bond and to feel better about their position/status in the larger white community.

In my opinion the role that the Freedom Journal played at the time and since in the lives of blacks is to make us feel like human beings. Before the journal we didn't exist in other papers. We were neither born, we didn't get married, we didn't die, we didn't fight in any wars, and we never participated in anything of a scientific achievement. We were truly invisible unless we committed a crime.

Due to the journal and future publications we became whole. We got married, our

children's births were published, we graduated from all levels of school. We achieved.

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