

Celebrating African American History

February 2019 – Week 3

28 biographies for 28 days
compiled by Reverend Carolyn Matthews

Lucie E. Campbell (1885 – 1963)

Lucie E. Campbell (Williams) was born on April 3, 1885, in Duck Hill (Carroll County), Mississippi, the youngest of nine children of Burrell and Isabella (Wilkerson) Campbell. Her father worked for the Mississippi Central Railroad and her mother worked as a cook. Shortly after Campbell's birth, Burrell Campbell was killed in a train accident. In 1889 Isabella Campbell moved her family to Memphis. She not only wanted her children to receive an education, but she also wanted them exposed to the performing arts. She could not afford a musical education for all of her children, so Campbell sent Lora, Lucie's sister, for piano lessons. Lucie would listen and practice the lessons on her own. When Lora wanted to cease the lessons, Lucie readily embraced the opportunity. Educated in the Memphis public schools, in 1899 Lucie Campbell graduated from Kortrecht High School (later Booker T. Washington) as class valedictorian at the age of fourteen. Later, she earned her baccalaureate degree from Rust College in Holly Springs, Mississippi, and a master's degree from Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State University.

Campbell began her teaching career at Carnes Avenue Grammar School. In 1911 she was transferred to her high school alma mater where she taught American history and English. Respected by her colleagues as an educator, Campbell was elected vice president of the American Teachers Association. From 1941 to 1946 she served as president of the Tennessee Teachers Association (TTA). The same year that her tenure as president of the TTA ended, Campbell was named to the National Policy Planning Commission of the National Educational Association.

Like other women of her era, Campbell was an activist for civil and social justice. In the same city that saw Ida B. Wells once take a determined stance against segregation, and coming a decade before Rosa Parks' galvanizing act of civil disobedience, Campbell too defied the era's Jim Crow laws by refusing to relinquish a seat in the whites-only section of a streetcar. As president of the Negro Education Association, she struggled with governmental officials to redress the pay scale and benefit inequities for Negro teachers. In 1938, at the invitation of President Franklin Roosevelt, Campbell attended the Negro Child Welfare Conference.

While pursuing her vocation as a professional educator, Campbell also pursued her musical avocation. In 1904 she organized a group of Beale Street musicians into the Music Club. This group later became a thousand voice choir under the direction of Lucie that performed at the National Baptist Convention. In 1915 she was elected the Music Director of the National Sunday School and Baptist Training union Congress. She wrote songs and pageants for the Congress as well as the Congress' study lessons and other instructional materials. In 1919, she published her first song, 'Something Within' followed by more than 100 other songs. instructional materials.

In her position as music director for the National Baptist Convention's Sunday School and Baptist Training Union Congress, Campbell introduced young promising talent and auditioned

musicians to appear before the convention's audiences. Such individuals included Marian Anderson, J. Robert Bradley, Thomas A. Dorsey, and Mahalia Jackson. In 1919, twenty years before she was denied access to Washington's Constitutional Hall by the Daughters of the American Revolution, Campbell introduced Marian Anderson (the first African-American singer to perform with the Metropolitan Opera) to the convention and served as her accompanist. She also discovered renowned Baptist singer J. Robert Bradley when he was twelve years old. Selected in the 1940s by English composer Roger Quilter to introduce his songs, Bradley gained global fame as "Mr. Baptist."

Lucie was the first woman among pioneering African-American gospel music composers such as the Reverend Charles Albert Tindley, Thomas Andrew Dorsey, and the Reverend William Herbert Brewster. A trailblazing composer during the "Golden Age of Gospel," she published more than one hundred compositions in America's newly created musical genre, including "The Lord Is My Shepherd" (1921), "He'll Understand and Say Well Done" (1933), "In the Upper Room" and "My Lord and I" (1947), and "Footprints of Jesus" (1949). Major gospel singers including Mahalia Jackson, Clara Ward, and Ruth Davis and the Davis Sisters recorded her songs. Campbell, like Tindley and Dorsey, endeavored to articulate the conventional language of everyday people in her compositions. As a composer her professional career covered the years from 1919 to 1962, a forty-three-year period during which few years passed without her penning a composition. Sung by all races and creeds, Campbell's songs became standards. From 1919 through the 1920s and 1930s many of her songs were included in the Gospel Pearls, Inspirational Melodies No. 2, and Spirituals Triumphant Old and New songbooks published by the Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., still used in many African-American religious communities.

On January 14, 1960, Lucie E. Campbell married her lifelong companion and business partner, the Reverend C. R. Williams. In June 1962, while preparing to attend a banquet held in her honor given by the National Sunday School and the Baptist Training Union Congress of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., Campbell-Williams became gravely ill. She died six months later on January 3, 1963, in Nashville.

Sources and further reading:

<http://memphismusichalloffame.com/inductee/luciecampbell/>

<http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=191>

An Encyclopedia of African American Christian Heritage by Marvin McMickle
Bobby L. Lovett and Linda T. Wynn, Profiles of African Americans in Tennessee History (1996); Elizabeth Patrick, "Lucie (Lucy) Campbell Williams" in Notable Black American Women, Jessie C. Smith, ed. (1992); William M. Washington, ed., Miss Lucie Speaks (1971).

Suzan Johnson Cook (1957)

There are some stories and words that for some reason strike a chord in a place deep within our hearts. Dr. Cook's words in the last paragraph of this entry had that effect on me.

Suzan Johnson Cook was born January 28, 1957, in New York City. Her mother was a schoolteacher and her father, a trolley car driver and together they founded a security guard business that moved the family from Harlem, New York, to a home in the Gunn Hill section of the Bronx, New York. Cook was one of the few African American children to attend the

Riverdale Country Day School in the Bronx, and her parents helped to organize an African American Parent Teachers Association. Cook studied acting and singing at Emerson College in Boston, Massachusetts, where she received her B.S. degree. She received her M.A. degree in education from Columbia University, her M.Div. degree from Union Theological Seminary and her D.Min. Degree from Ohio's United Theological Seminary. She is also a graduate of Harvard University's President's Administrative Fellows Program.

In 1983, Cook was appointed pastor of the Mariner's Temple Baptist Church in lower Manhattan, becoming the first African American woman to be named pastor of an American Baptist Church. At Mariner's Temple, she inaugurated the Wednesday Lunch Hour of Power. After thirteen years of service, during which the membership increased from 15 to 500, in 1996, she became the founder and senior pastor of the Bronx Fellowship Christian Church. In 1990, David Dinkins appointed Cook as the first woman chaplain to the New York Police Department. She was also the first woman to be elected president of the Hampton University Minister's Conference, the largest gathering of African American Clergy in the country.

Cook served on the Domestic Policy Council in the White House in 1993, and with HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros as a consultant on Faith Initiatives from 1994 to 1997. She then became the co-founder and chief operating officer of JONCO Productions, Inc., a sales, management, and diversity firm which hosts a speaker's bureau and media/book distributions. She is the author of several books including the best seller, *Too Blessed To Be Stressed*, released in 2002. In 1997, *Ebony* magazine named Cook one of the top fifteen women in ministry in the nation, and in 2000, she was named one of New York's top five preachers.

In 2010 President Barack Obama appointed Cook to be the U.S. ambassador-at-large for International Religious Freedom, a position created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. After being confirmed by the U.S. Senate, she was sworn in on May 16, 2011, making her the first woman and first African American to hold this position. Her main responsibility was advancing the president's agenda on promotion of the right to freedom of religion as a universal human right across the globe.

Ambassador Johnson Cook left her post in October 2013, returning to private life as a minister and motivational speaker. Cook is married to Ronald Cook and they have two sons, Samuel David and Christopher Daniel.

Cook was greatly influenced in her decision to pursue a career in ministry by Rev. Dr. Katie Cannon (our Wednesday entry), a Presbyterian minister and theologian. Cook speaks eloquently and forcefully about her call: "I make no apologies for being a woman. And I make no apologies for being a woman in ministry. If God didn't want me to be in the ministry, he would not have called me. If he didn't want me to preach, he would not have shut up the fire in my bones. If I couldn't preach, I believe I would spontaneously combust. I even preach in my dreams. That's one of the ways I knew God was calling me into the ministry in my early twenties; I would be sound asleep and wake up preaching."

Taken from:

<http://www.blackpast.org/aah/cook-suzan-denise-johnson-1957>

<http://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/honorable-reverend-dr-suzan-johnson-cook>

An Encyclopedia of African American Christian Heritage by Marvin McMickle

Anna Pauline (Pauli) Murray (1910-1985)

Anna Murray's life and legacy are so very rich I recommend that you follow the links at the end of this entry to read her full story (my copy of one of the books listed for further reading is on its way to me). She is another of the many, it seems, unsung she-oes who had an indelible impact on the social justice changes that have taken place in our country. Her story is not only inspirational, it is hopeful for those of us who might find ourselves in our latter years and wondering what comes next. "Renaissance woman" is how Marvin McMickle describes her in the beginning of his entry about her in the Encyclopedia of African American Christian Heritage. Murray was a poet, author, attorney, and in 1977 became the first African American woman and the second woman ordained to the priesthood of the Episcopal Church (which is why her entry appears today). What follows are excerpts from the linked entries.

The wager was ten dollars. It was 1944, and the law students of Howard University were discussing how best to bring an end to Jim Crow. In the half century since *Plessy v. Ferguson*, lawyers had been chipping away at segregation by questioning the "equal" part of the "separate but equal" doctrine—arguing that, say, a specific black school was not truly equivalent to its white counterpart. Fed up with the limited and incremental results, one student in the class proposed a radical alternative: why not challenge the "separate" part instead?

That student's name was Pauli Murray. Her law-school peers were accustomed to being startled by her—she was the only woman among them and first in the class—but that day they laughed out loud. Her idea was both impractical and reckless, they told her; any challenge to *Plessy* would result in the Supreme Court affirming it instead. Undeterred, Murray told them they were wrong. Then, with the whole class as her witness, she made a bet with her professor, a man named Spottswood Robinson: ten bucks said *Plessy* would be overturned within twenty-five years.

Murray was right. *Plessy* was overturned in a decade—and, when it was, Robinson owed her a lot more than ten dollars. In her final law-school paper, Murray had formalized the idea she'd hatched in class that day, arguing that segregation violated the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution. Some years later, when Robinson joined with Thurgood Marshall and others to try to end Jim Crow, he remembered Murray's paper, fished it out of his files, and presented it to his colleagues—the team that, in 1954, successfully argued *Brown v. Board of Education*.

By the time Murray learned of her contribution, she was nearing fifty, two-thirds of the way through a life as remarkable for its range as for its influence. A poet, writer, activist, labor organizer, legal theorist, and Episcopal priest, Murray palled around in her youth with Langston Hughes, joined James Baldwin at the MacDowell Colony the first year it admitted African-Americans, maintained a twenty-three-year friendship with Eleanor Roosevelt, and helped Betty Friedan found the National Organization for Women. Along the way, she articulated the intellectual foundations of two of the most important social-justice movements of the twentieth century: first, when she made her argument for overturning *Plessy*, and, later, when she co-wrote a law-review article subsequently used by a rising star at the A.C.L.U.—one Ruth Bader Ginsburg—to convince the Supreme Court that the Equal Protection Clause applies to women.

Anna Pauline (Pauli) Murray was born in Baltimore on 20th November, 1910. Her mother, Agnes Murray died of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1914. Her father, William Murray, was a

graduate of Howard University and taught in a local high school. He suffered from the long-term effects of typhoid fever and eventually was confined to Crownsville State Hospital where he was murdered by a guard in 1923. Pauli went to live with her aunt, Pauline Fitzgerald, an elementary school teacher and her grandparents Robert and Cornelia Fitzgerald in Durham, North Carolina.

After Murray graduated from Howard University in 1944 she wanted to enroll at Harvard University to continue her law studies. In her application for a Rosenwald Fellowship, she listed Harvard as her first choice. She was awarded the prestigious fellowship but after the award had been announced, Harvard Law School rejected her because of her gender. Murray went to the University Of California Boalt School Of Law where she received a degree in law. Her master's thesis was *The Right to Equal Opportunity in Employment*. Murray moved to New York City and provided support to the growing civil rights movement. Her book, *States' Laws on Race and Color*, was published in 1951. Thurgood Marshall, head of the legal department at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), described the book as the Bible for civil rights lawyers. In 1952 she lost a post at Cornell University because the people who had supplied her references: Eleanor Roosevelt, Thurgood Marshall and Philip Randolph, were considered to be too radical. She was told in a letter that they decided to give "one hundred per cent protection" to the university "in view of the troublous times in which we live".

In 1956 Murray published *Proud Shoes: The Story of an American Family*, biography of her grandparents, and their struggle with racial prejudice and a poignant portrayal of her hometown of Durham. In 1960 Murray travelled to Ghana to explore her African cultural roots. When she returned President John F. Kennedy appointed her to his Committee on Civil and Political Rights. In the early 1960s Murray worked closely with Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin and Martin Luther King but was critical of the way that men dominated the leadership of these civil rights organizations. In August, 1963, she wrote to Randolph and pointed out that she had: "been increasingly perturbed over the blatant disparity between the major role which Negro women have played and are playing in the crucial grass-roots levels of our struggle and the minor role of leadership they have been assigned in the national policy-making decisions."

Since her death additional books have been published about her life and work (see below).

<https://paulimurrayproject.org/pauli-murray/biography>

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/04/17/the-many-lives-of-pauli-murray>

<https://communications.yale.edu/anna-pauline-pauli-murray-yale-1965-jsd-1979-hon-ddiv>

An Encyclopedia of African American Christian Heritage by Marvin McMickle

Further Reading

Anne Firor Scott's *Pauli Murray & Caroline Ware: Forty Years of Letters in Black and White*
Azaransky, Sarah. *The Dream Is Freedom: Pauli Murray and American Democratic Faith*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Bell-Scott, Patricia. *The Firebrand and the First Lady: Portrait of a Friendship: Pauli Murray, Eleanor Roosevelt, and the Struggle for Social Justice*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016.

Finn, Anthony B., ed. *Pauli Murray: Selected Sermons and Writings*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006.

Gilmore, Glenda Elizabeth. *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009.

Mayeri, Serena. *Reasoning from Race: Feminism, Law, and the Civil Rights Revolution*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011.

Rosenberg, Rosalind. *Jane Crow: The Life of Pauli Murray*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Willie Mae Ford Smith (1906 – 1994)

Considered the greatest of the "anointed singers," artists who live according to the spirit, and who perform with the ultimate aim of saving souls, Willie Mae Ford Smith was among the most legendary gospel vocalists of her era; rarely recorded, her enormous reputation instead rested almost entirely on her incendiary live performances, where her dramatic, physical style inspired many of the finest soloists to follow in her wake. She was also the first to introduce the "song and sermonette," the act of delivering a lengthy sermon before, during, or after a performance.

Smith was born in 1906 in Rolling Fork, MS and raised in Memphis; one of 14 children, she was the daughter of a railroad brakeman who relocated the family to St. Louis in 1918. There her mother opened a restaurant, where Smith soon began working full-time, leaving school during the eighth grade; though raised as a devout Baptist, she sang everything from blues to reels as a child, but upon forming her family quartet the Ford Sisters, she turned solely to gospel.

Debuting at the National Baptist Convention in 1922, the Fords created a sensation with their performances of "Ezekiel Saw the Wheel" and "I'm in His Care." After her sisters married and quit the group, Smith mounted a solo career; a high soprano, she briefly flirted with pursuing classical music, but was so profoundly moved by Detroit's Madame Artelia Hutchins' performance at the 1926 Baptist Convention that she returned to gospel once and for all. Upon marrying a man who operated a general hauling business, Smith began touring to supplement their household income; with the exception of the legendary Sallie Martin, she was arguably the first gospel performer to tour relentlessly, conducting musical revivals in many of the cities she visited. In her travels Smith crossed paths with Thomas A. Dorsey, who in 1932 invited her to Chicago to help organize the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses. She later formed a St. Louis chapter, and was the longtime head of the soloists' bureau.

Smith's rendition of her own composition "If You Just Keep Still," delivered at the 1937 National Baptist Convention, set a new standard for solo singing; just as influential was her skill as an arranger, with her radical reinterpretations of "Jesus Loves Me," "Throw Out the Lifeline," and "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" galvanizing a new generation of singers to include the songs in their repertoires. As a teacher, Smith also mentored Brother Joe May, Myrtle Scott, Edna Gallmon Cooke, and Martha Bass. She joined the Church of God Apostolic in 1939, and immediately her music reflected the rhythm and energy of the sanctified church; still, she did not finally begin recording until the end of the following decade with her protégé May. Enjoying massive success with her style, she saw no point in entering the studio. Only a handful of Smith recordings were issued in her own lifetime, and by the early '50s, she had turned to evangelical work; still, she continued to remain a great inspiration, dying on February 2, 1994.

See full article at:

<http://www.allmusic.com/artist/willie-mae-ford-smith-mn0000686873>

<http://www.nytimes.com/1994/02/03/obituaries/willie-mae-ford-smith-89-singer-who-joined-the-blues-and-gospel.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xX2AUI8fDDs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHh0UrlQPac>

Henry (Harry) Thacker Burleigh (1866 – 1949)

Henry Thacker Burleigh was born in Erie, Pennsylvania, on December 2, 1866, the second son of Henry Thacker Burleigh and Elizabeth (Waters) Burleigh. His father was a laborer while his mother worked as a domestic servant because she was unable to get a teaching position despite her college education and fluency in French and Greek. Burleigh acquired his knowledge of Negro Spirituals from his maternal grandfather, Hamilton Waters, who had been born in slavery but was freed after being beaten and partially blinded. He worked as Erie's town crier and lamplighter and Burleigh, known throughout his life as "Harry," would accompany him. As he performed his duties, he sang plantation songs to young Harry, thus passing on a music--the Negro spiritual--that his grandson would one day make known around the world.

Burleigh's mother, who he credited as his strongest supporter, recognized his strong desire to hear music. She gained permission from her employer, Mrs. Elizabeth Russell to have Harry answer the door when guests arrived for concerts. Young Burleigh heard several prominent performers who gave recitals at the home of Mrs. Russell.

Growing up, Burleigh took several jobs as a laborer to help support his family. Music, however, was his steady companion. He sang while at work, and he took advantage of any opportunity to hear musicians who came to town. He sang at school and in the choirs at St. Paul's and Park Presbyterian churches and the Reform Jewish Temple. After graduating from high school in 1887, Burleigh continued to improve his skills as a musician while he was employed as a stenographer for two area businesses.

In 1892, at the age of 26, Burleigh heard that the National Conservatory of Music was holding auditions for a scholarship. Burleigh journeyed to New York, departing Erie with only \$30, which he had acquired through gifts and loans, and a letter of recommendation from Mrs. Russell. The adjudicators at his audition concluded that he fell just below the standards required to receive the scholarship. However, Frances MacDowell, the school's registrar and an acquaintance of Mrs. Russell's, intervened, and Burleigh eventually received a scholarship.

The subjects that Burleigh studied at the conservatory included voice, harmony, and counterpoint. He also played in the orchestra and was its librarian. Because his scholarship only covered his tuition, he also had to work just to survive. Among the contacts that Burleigh made during his years at the conservatory were composer Edward MacDowell, son of Burleigh's benefactor, and composer/conductor Victor Herbert. However, it was his association with Czech composer Antonin Dvořák that most strongly influenced Burleigh's career as a composer.

Dvořák came to the United States in 1892 as the new director of the conservatory. He learned of the spiritual through his contacts with Burleigh. During Dvořák's term as director, he used the melodies he heard Burleigh sing in his compositions. His major work of this period was his "Symphony no. 9 From the New World," which premiered in December 1893. He used portions of one of the spirituals, "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," as a theme within the symphony's first movement. Burleigh spent many evenings singing the spirituals of his youth for Dvořák as well as manuscript copying for the composer.

Two significant events occurred in 1894. The first, Burleigh, along with soprano Sissieretta Jones, were the featured soloists in Dvořák's arrangement of "Old Folks at Home," presented in New York's Madison Square Garden. The second event had a major impact on Burleigh's life. He

auditioned for the baritone soloist position at St. George's Episcopal Church of New York. Although there was much debate about hiring a Negro to sing in the affluent parish, he was selected for the post over numerous other applicants. The beginning of this 52-year relationship marked the first time that Burleigh's income allowed him to concentrate on his studies. He made several influential contacts, including entrepreneur J. Pierpont Morgan, who arranged additional engagements for Burleigh.

The next six years were very busy for Burleigh, both professionally and personally. In addition to his work as a singer, he completed his studies at the conservatory and taught sight-singing there from 1895 until 1898. He married poet Louise Alston in 1898; their son, Alston, was born the following year. This was also the year that three of Burleigh's early songs, on texts by his wife, were first published by G. Schirmer. In 1900, he became an editor for G. Ricordi, and he was selected as the first African-American to serve as soloist for Temple Emanu-El, an affluent New York synagogue.

Burleigh continued and expanded his contacts with the Black musical and academic community. He was a guest lecturer and performer at Black colleges and universities. He became acquainted with celebrated personalities such as composers Will Marion Cook, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, and Robert Nathaniel Dett, and academicians Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois. By 1916, Burleigh had published several works, mostly art songs. Most notable amongst these were "Jean" (1903), "Ethiopia Saluting the Colors" (1915), and the song cycles "Saracen Songs" (1914) and "Five Songs" by Laurence Hope (1915). He also wrote a few vocal and instrumental works based on the plantation melodies he had learned as a child. However, his 1916 setting of the spiritual, "Deep River," is considered the first work of that genre to be written in art song form specifically for performance by a trained singer. Burleigh commented on his motivation for setting spirituals,

“. . . In Negro spirituals my race has pure gold, and they should be taken as the Negro's contribution to artistic possessions. In them we show a spiritual security as old as the ages. . . . These songs always denote a personal relationship. It is 'my Saviour,' 'my sorrow,' 'my kingdom.' The personal note is ever present. America's only original and distinctive style of music is destined to be appreciated more and more."

"Deep River," and other spiritual settings became very popular to concert performers and recording artists, both black and white. It was soon normal for recitals to end with a group of spirituals. Musicians such as Roland Hayes, Marian Anderson and Paul Robeson made these songs a part of their repertoires.

There are various estimates of the number of songs Burleigh wrote. In all Burleigh made almost 190 choral arrangements and composed over 260 works for solo voice. The revenue from publication of Burleigh's works helped pay for his extensive travels, including several trips to Europe, and his studies of languages. Over the years he performed for such dignitaries as the king and queen of England and President Theodore Roosevelt. He encouraged the careers of young musicians: like Marian Anderson, Paul Robeson, Carol Brice, Margaret Bonds, and William Grant Still, to name a few.

Burleigh was a charter member of the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) when it formed in 1914 and became a member of its board of directors in 1941. He received a number of honors, including the Spingarn Medal in 1917, and honorary degrees from

Atlanta University and Howard University for his contributions as a vocalist and composer. In 1944, members of St. George's recognized his many years of service as soloist with gifts of \$1,500 and a silver-banded cane. Later that year, he gave the fiftieth annual performance of Jean-Baptiste Faure's "The Palms" at both morning and afternoon services, and he did a special performance of the work, broadcast over a local radio station, for New York Mayor Fiorello La Guardia.

Illness forced Burleigh to retire as soloist in 1946. On September 12, 1949, Harry Burleigh died of heart failure at the age of 82. His funeral was held at St. George's and was attended by 2,000 mourners. Some of his choral and solo settings were sung during the service, and the pall bearers included composers Hall Johnson, Noble Sissle, Eubie Blake, William C. Handy, and Cameron White.

<http://biography.jrank.org/pages/2951/Burleigh-Henry-Thacker.html>

<http://www.afrovoices.com/burleigh.html>

<http://chevalierdesaintgeorges.homestead.com/burleigh.html>

Eddie South (1904 – 1962)

Eddie South (Edward Otha South) was an American jazz violinist and bandleader born (in Louisiana, Missouri) on November 27, 1904. He is known for having achieved legendary status only after he died. One of the top violinists of the pre-bop era, Eddie South was a brilliant technician who, were it not for the universal racism of the time, would probably have been a top classical violinist. He began his violin studies at a very early age and by age 10, was studying at the Chicago Music College, from which he graduated. Since classical positions were not open to black violinists, he entered the world of jazz in 1921, with assistance from Darnell Howard (a leading jazz violinist of that era), playing with Erskine Tate and Mae Brady. In 1923, he was musical director of Jimmy Wade's Syncopators in Chicago.

South's first recording came in 1923 with Wade's Moulin Rouge Orchestra. He formed his own band, the Alabamians, in 1927. The group was named after the place they performed in, the Club Alabam, on the corner of Rush and Chicago Streets, a section of Chicago then known as Chicago's Bohemia.

Along the way, South also worked with bandleaders Charles Elgar, Henry Crowder, and Freddie Keppard, as well as bassist Milt Hinton, and pianist Billy Taylor. He toured Europe with this band between 1928 and 1930. Having arrived in Europe, he also studied at the Paris Conservatory. While in Budapest, Hungary, in 1929, South took a liking to Gypsy (Roma) music and eventually made it a part of his improvisations. During a tour of Europe in 1937, he performed and recorded with jazz legends Stephane Grappelli, Michel Warlop, and Django Reinhardt (who famously played with his two usable fingers only) in Paris. Among the tunes recorded was Bach's concerto for two violins - in jazz style.

Besides recording, he also played on radio and television. From 1947 to 1949 he played in the big bands led by Earl Hines. South also worked in New York and Los Angeles. Nevertheless, despite the exposure he got from working with the biggest names in Jazz, as far as the public was concerned, he stayed unknown for the remainder of his life. He recorded for the Chess and Mercury labels among others. One of his last recordings was produced in 1951, though he last recorded in 1959. South died in Chicago on April 25, 1962, at age 57.

<http://pronetoviols.blogspot.com/2012/04/eddie-south.html>
<https://www.allmusic.com/artist/eddie-south-mn0000174902/biography>
http://www.violinjazz.com/music_of_eddie_south.php

Septima Poinsette Clark (1898 – 1987)

Septima Poinsette Clark was born in Charleston, South Carolina, May 3, 1898, the second of eight children. Her father Peter Poinsette – who had been born into slavery – and his wife Victoria Warren Anderson, a laundress encouraged her to get an education. Clark attended public school, then worked to earn the money needed to attend the Avery Normal Institute, a private school for African Americans.

Clark qualified as a teacher, but Charleston did not hire African Americans to teach in its public schools. Instead, she became an instructor on South Carolina's Johns Island in 1916. In 1919, Clark returned to Charleston to teach at the Avery Institute. She also joined with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in trying to get the city to hire African-American teachers. By gathering signatures in favor of the change, Clark helped ensure that the effort was successful.

Clark married Nerie Clark in 1920. Her husband died of kidney failure five years later. She then moved to Columbia, South Carolina, where she continued teaching and also joined the local chapter of the NAACP. Clark worked with the organization—and with Thurgood Marshall—on a 1945 case that sought equal pay for black and white teachers. She described it as her "first effort in a social action challenging the status quo." Her salary increased threefold when the case was won. Going back to Charleston in 1947, Clark took up another teaching post, while maintaining her NAACP membership. However, in 1956, South Carolina made it illegal for public employees to belong to civil rights groups. Clark refused to renounce the NAACP and, as a result, lost her job.

Clark was next hired by Tennessee's Highlander Folk School, an institution that supported integration and the Civil Rights Movement. She had previously participated in and led workshops there during breaks from school (Rosa Parks had attended one of her workshops in 1955).

Clark soon was directing Highlander's Citizenship School program. These schools helped regular people learn how to instruct others in their communities in basic literacy and math skills. One particular benefit of this teaching was that more people were then able to register to vote (at the time, many states used literacy tests to disenfranchise African Americans). In 1961, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference took over this education project. Clark then joined the SCLC as its director of education and teaching. Under her leadership, more than 800 citizenship schools were created. . Dr. King acknowledged Clark when he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 by insisting that she accompany him to Sweden.

Clark retired from the SCLC in 1970. In 1979, Jimmy Carter honored her with a Living Legacy Award. She received the Order of the Palmetto, South Carolina's highest civilian honor, in 1982. In 1987, Clark's second autobiography, *Ready from Within: Septima Clark and Civil Rights*, won an American Book Award (her first autobiography, *Echo in My Soul*, had been published in 1962).

Clark was 89 when she died on Johns Island on December 15, 1987. Over her long career of teaching and civil rights activism, she helped many African Americans begin to take control of their lives and discover their full rights as citizens.

<http://www.blackpast.org/aah/clark-septima-poinsette-1898-1987>

<http://www.biography.com/people/septima-poinsette-clark-38174>

Quotes attributed to Clark:

I believe unconditionally in the ability of people to respond when they are told the truth. We need to be taught to study rather than believe, to inquire rather than to affirm.

My philosophy is such that I am not going to vote against the oppressed. I have been oppressed, and so I am always going to have a vote for the oppressed, regardless of whether that oppressed is black or white or yellow or the people of the Middle East, or what. I have that feeling.

I just tried to create a little chaos. Chaos is a good thing. God created the whole world out of it. Change is what comes of it.