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ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

BLACK HISTORY MONTH SPECIAL EDITION

Mordecai Walker, Teacher For Life



Mordecai Walker and his African-American Wheel of History

BY HARRY L. HARVEY
SPECIAL TO THE
CHALLENGER

ST. PETERSBURG - Mordecai Walker retired from teaching in 1987. However, he has never stopped demonstrating his zeal and love of teaching. Without putting forth a great deal of effort, you can find him teaching during the "Great American Teach In" at Melrose Elementary or demonstrating how to propagate plants to members of the Pathfinders, a group of students mentored by his Fraternity. Recently, Walker was observed teaching students of the Yvonne C. Reed Christian School located at Bethel Metropolitan Baptist Church. There he displayed his famous and informative African-American wheel of History. A chosen student would spin the wheel and if they successfully provide some valuable information about the person that was selected by the wheel an award of fifty cents was given. The students really paid attention during the entire session as the legendary teacher, Yvonne Reed, looked on with an approving smile.

Yvonne C. Reed School

offers an excellent education for those that are serious about learning. They use the A Beka Curriculum which provides quality education that incorporates ethical behavior from a Christian perspective.

Mordecai Walker, a native of Citrus Park, FL received his early education in Citrus Park and Tampa. He enrolled at Tennessee A&I State College and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture Education in 1951. Walker also received a Master's Degree in Agriculture Education from Florida A&M University in 1970 and a guidance endorsement from the University of South Florida in 1982.

Walker served in the United States Army prior to entering Tennessee A&I State College. His numerous affiliations include Omega Psi Phi Fraternity; NAACP; Phi Delta Kappa; African-Council for Therapy and Rehabilitation through Horticulture; American Horticulture Society; and the American Hibiscus Society. He was also one of the organizers of the TSU Alumni Chapter in Tampa and is a member of the Saint Augustine Episcopal Church.

Charles Bolden's Story: 'From The Segregated South To Low Earth Orbit'

Publisher's Note: This post is a part of the Celebrating Black History Month series, which highlight the work of African-Americans who are contributing to the President's goals for winning the future.

BY CHARLES BOLDEN

WASHINGTON - It's a long way from the segregated south to low Earth orbit. But I am fortunate to have made the journey and to have had many opportunities to serve my nation in a 34-year career with the U.S. Marine Corps and in many roles at NASA, currently as head of the nation's space program.

When I was a young man, my service as NASA's first African-American Administrator under the Nation's first black president would have been nearly unthinkable. But through the efforts of many people of all races, our nation has changed. And, thanks to the Space Shuttle Program, and NASA's cross-disciplinary exploration missions, African-Americans and many others have had access to space and also to science and technological careers. The shuttle was really instrumental in breaking the color barrier for African-Americans in space, and it all happened without a single law being passed.

Today, African-Americans

are scientists, engineers, and astronauts. They're developing instruments for spacecraft to peer beyond the edge of our solar system and opening solar arrays on the International Space Station with just a tether holding them to a vehicle moving nearly 17,000 miles per hour. NASA is reinvigorating its focus on research and development to develop technologies that don't exist today. We will send humans farther and faster into space. We'll visit places we've never been, with people and robots, launch science missions to uncover unfathomable secrets of the universe, and make air travel safer and cleaner here on the home front. African-Americans have been, and will continue to be, key to all of these efforts.

I might never have had a chance in space were it not for the late great Ron McNair, another African-American pioneer in exploration who encouraged me to apply to the astronaut corps. I was being a naysayer, thinking there was no way I would be accepted. But Ron persisted, and I am grateful to him to this day and for all of the life and professional learning he shared with me in his too-short time before he was lost in the Space Shuttle Challenger tragedy. Ron was my "Sputnik moment."

Since America's "Sputnik



Charles Bolden

moment," when the nation stood up and took notice, and made a decision to commit to exploration and the technology development and innovation that would be required, many

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Quantum Opportunities Local Teens Win Medals

ST. PETERSBURG - A recent bonanza of prizes were won by sophomores from St. Petersburg and Gibbs High Schools who are "Associates" in the Quantum Opportunities after-school intervention program, run by a visionary local non-profit corporation, the Center for Community and Economic Justice, Inc. (CCEJ). CCEJ -Quantum coached two separate teams of 7 Quantum Program participants, who show-cased their computer technology skills and American history knowledge to win bronze medals, sophisticated electronic devices and even a new lap-top computer.

The competition in which Quantum's students won their electronic prizes and lap-top was the Technology Bowl, held on the Brandon campus of Hillsborough Community

College and sponsored by Computer Mentors Group, Inc. The Bronze Medals for third place were won at the Brain Bowl Challenge Race to Excellence, held on the Gibbs campus of St. Petersburg College and sponsored by the Florida Education Fund's History and Culture initiative.

The Quantum Opportunities Program has been operating at the CCEJ Headquarters at 2730 Central Avenue in St. Petersburg, for about one year.

According to Quantum's Executive Director, Dr. Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich, 30 students from Gibbs and St. Petersburg High Schools, were randomly selected for membership in Quantum, which boasts, "Once in Quantum, always in Quantum" as its motto. Financial support for the four-year long academic excellence,

civic responsibility and cultural enrichment program is being provided by the Washington, DC - based Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, a national operating foundation, with a grant from the United States Department of Justice's "Office of Justice Programs." Additional community support includes funding and in-kind contributions from Wal-Mart, Thompson Goodis law firm, CCEJ, Inc and other anonymous private sources.

A rich program of critical thinking, individual tutoring, specialized field trips to regional museums, active participation as Quantum and scholarship members of the YMCA and attendance at local theater productions, is augmented by internships at such institutions as St.



Dr. Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich

Petersburg's Little Theater and the Boys and Girls Club. One-on-one mentoring, both virtual and in person, is assigned to each Associate. Guest presenters at the CCEJ-Quantum Center have included a successful Columbia Records musician; a senior research engineer from McDonald Douglas and Boeing Aircraft, Inc.; a mentor from the local law

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COMMUNITY NEWS



**OUT & ABOUT
W/STEVE**

'Churchin' In The Park: You Still Have Time!

6th Annual Gospel Fest Kicks off next weekend

On the calendar, black history month ends at the end of February. We all know that black history is continuous and pertinent to history. Gospel music is a staple of black history and one of the foundations for strength, support, and sometimes survival historically and presently. Gospel is defined as good news.

Thousands of people will convene at Heritage Village for the 6th Annual GospelFest. The Pinellas County Commissioners would like to invite any group or choir to participate in this spirit filled event. This is one of the many components of the Twelfth Annual African-American Heritage Celebration. The event will be held next Saturday, Feb. 26, 2011 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Heritage Village in Largo, FL. The event is free. The event is open to any group/choir. First place is a \$1,000 cash prize. Second Place is \$750.00, and Third place is \$500.00. This is a wonderful opportunity for a group or choir to obtain money that could be used to further their career, some church project, or even studio work.

The event is open to groups and choirs around the state of Florida and has had participants from as far as Tallahassee and Miami. There have been many inquiries from groups and choir even outside of the state of Florida. Participants will be judged on their appearance, crowd, interaction, complexity of song, creativity,

intonation, enthusiasm, vocal clarity, song selection, diction, and overall performance. The event will be hosted by WRXB's Sis. Dianne Hughes. Judges will be a panel of qualified and established musicians, choir directors, radio personalities, educational professionals, and civic representation.

This event is one of the popular stages of the Florida African-American Heritage Celebration, and it's a place where people have church in the park! To register for event, participants can download application from www.pinellascounty.org/unity.htm and click on the gospel fest registration tab. Applications can be emailed to manonrise66@yahoo.com or faxed to 866-390-1262 or mail application to P. O. Box 46321 Tampa, FL 33646. You may also pick up an application from WRXB office at 9721 Executive Center Dr Ste 200, St. Petersburg, FL 33702. For more information regarding the gospel fest competition you may call 727-244-8119.

You still have time. If you know of a good choir or group who would benefit, get applications in as soon as possible. Space is very limited. You don't want to miss this day of spirit filled hand clapping, feet stomping and singing songs of inspirations

Thank you for reading, and I hope you have enjoyed your time OUT AND ABOUT W/Steve.

QUANTUM

continued from front page

firm of Thompson Goodis Groseclose Richardson Miller, P.A.; a young alumna of St. Pete High who enlisted in the U. S. Armed Forces; a well known local Community Development business professional; and, the technical director for stage productions at several local performance

arts venues including the Little Theater and Mahaffey Theater.

The Quantum group was formally invited and received by the St. Petersburg City Council and Mayor Bill Foster during the August 2010 regular publicly televised Council session.

Quantum also was visited by Florida's 11th Congressional District's Representative Kathy Castor

and her Staff in November, 2010; by Senator Bill Nelson's staff several times during the year; and by Pinellas County Commissioner Kenneth Welch, at the CCEJ-Quantum Center on Central Avenue. Rev. Edward V. Leftwich, CCEJ's President/CEO, also regularly provides individual life counseling and mentoring for Quantum Associates and their parents.

BLACK HISTORY

"Celebrating Our History Is An Everyday Thing"

Source: Wikipedia Free Library

Little Known Stories Of Blacks And The Civil War

**Black Union Soldiers Were the First to Triumphantly Enter
Richmond, April 3, 1865 By A. Peter Bailey**

When I accepted, in 1986, the Sports Information Director position at Virginia Union University, a historically black institution in Richmond, Virginia, I was not aware of the black history gold mine located in the former capital of the Confederacy.

For me, the most notable nugget was Thomas Morris Chester, the only black Civil War correspondent. From August 1864 through June 1865, Chester covered black Union troops for a newspaper called The Philadelphia Press. From his book, "Thomas Morris Chester, black Civil War Correspondent", I first became aware that black Union soldiers, Monday, April 3, 1865, were the first to enter into a defeated Richmond, which had been hurriedly evacuated by Confederate government officials the day before.

Those warriors must have been bursting with pride as they marched victoriously into the capital of the enslavers, a place from which some of them had been sold as children and teenagers. I was mesmerized when reading Chester's vivid and detailed account of that historic occasion. Excerpts from his dispatches are as follows:

"Brevet Brigadier General Draper's brigade of colored troops, Brevet Major General Kautz's division, were the first infantry to enter Richmond. The gallant 36th U.S. Colored Troops, under Lieutenant Colonel B.F. Pratt, has the honor of being the first regiment. Captain Bienenf's company has the pride of leading the advance...In passing over the rebel works, we moved very cautiously in single file, for fear of

exploding the innumerable torpedoes which were planted in front. So far as I can learn none has been exploded, and no one has been injured by those infernal machines. The soldiers were soon, under engineers, carefully digging them up and making the passage way beyond the fear of casualties. Along the road which the troops marched, or rather double quicked, batches of negroes were gathered together testifying by unmistakable signs their delight at our coming. Rebel soldiers who had hid themselves when their army moved came out of the bushes, and gave themselves up as disgusted with the service...For marching or fighting Draper's 1st Brigade, 1st Division, 25th Corps, is not to be surpassed in the service, and the General honors it with a pride and a consciousness which inspire him to undertake cheerfully whatever may be committed to his execution. It was his brigade that nipped the flower of the southern army, the Texas Brigade, under Gary, which never before last September knew defeat. There may be others who may claim the distinction of being the first to enter the city, but as I was ahead of every part of the force but the cavalry, which of necessity must lead the advance, I know whereof I affirm when I announce that General Draper's brigade was the first organization to enter the city limits. According to custom, it should constitute the provost guard of Richmond."

Chester's total contempt for what he called "man sellers" is reflected in his observation that "There were many persons in the better-class houses who were peeping out the windows, and whose movement indicated that they would need watching in the future. There was no mistaking the curl of their lips and the flash of their eyes. The new military Governor of Richmond will, no doubt, prove equal to such emergencies."

It is very disturbing that the anniversary of April 3, 1865 is not a day of great celebration for black folks in this country. Those black Union soldiers, who played a key role in the defeat of the Confederacy, are the greatest war heroes in our history.

The African-American Civil War Memorial lists the names of 209,143 black Union soldiers who joined President Lincoln to save the Union and keep it united under one flag. The monument, located at the corner of 10th and U Streets NW Washington, D. C., was built by a private foundation that operates a museum, directed by Dr. Frank Smith. April 12, 2011 will mark the 150th Anniversary of the firing on Ft. Sumter and the start of the American Civil War. The African-American Civil War Memorial Foundation will commemorate the beginning of the Civil War with celebrities reading from Civil War period newspapers, speeches, and other documents announcing the coming of the war and its profound effect on the ending of slavery in America. We will also have celebrities read from selected press responses to the election of President Lincoln and the anti-slavery platform of the Republican party of 1860.



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