

# VOICES OF COURAGE

Profiles of 19<sup>th</sup> Century African-American Women



Storytelling Presentation  
by  
Queen Nur

# Voices of Courage: Study Guide

## On the Cover : “The Voices”

Counterclockwise from left:

**Sojourner Truth (1797?-1883):** an abolitionist with courage and wit. Isabella was born in captivity., and spoke Low Dutch. Eventually Sojourner came to render powerful speeches to the American ear. Her songs and lectures quieted riots and were lauded in newspapers. Although she could neither read nor write, she published an ethnobiography, “Narrative of Sojourner Truth.”

**Maria W. Stewart (1803-1879):** the first American woman to speak to an assembly of mixed gender. Biblically inspired, she spoke about discriminatory practices against African-American women as she lectured within the black community.

**Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825-1911):** an abolitionist, suffragist and writer. Known to some as the mother of African-American journalism, Harper is also the first African-American to have a short story published, and is among the first black women in the US to have published a novel.

**Cathy Williams (1844-1892) :** the only documented female Buffalo soldier. In a desire to make her own living , she enlisted under the name William Cathey and served in the 38th U.S. Infantry from 1866-1868.

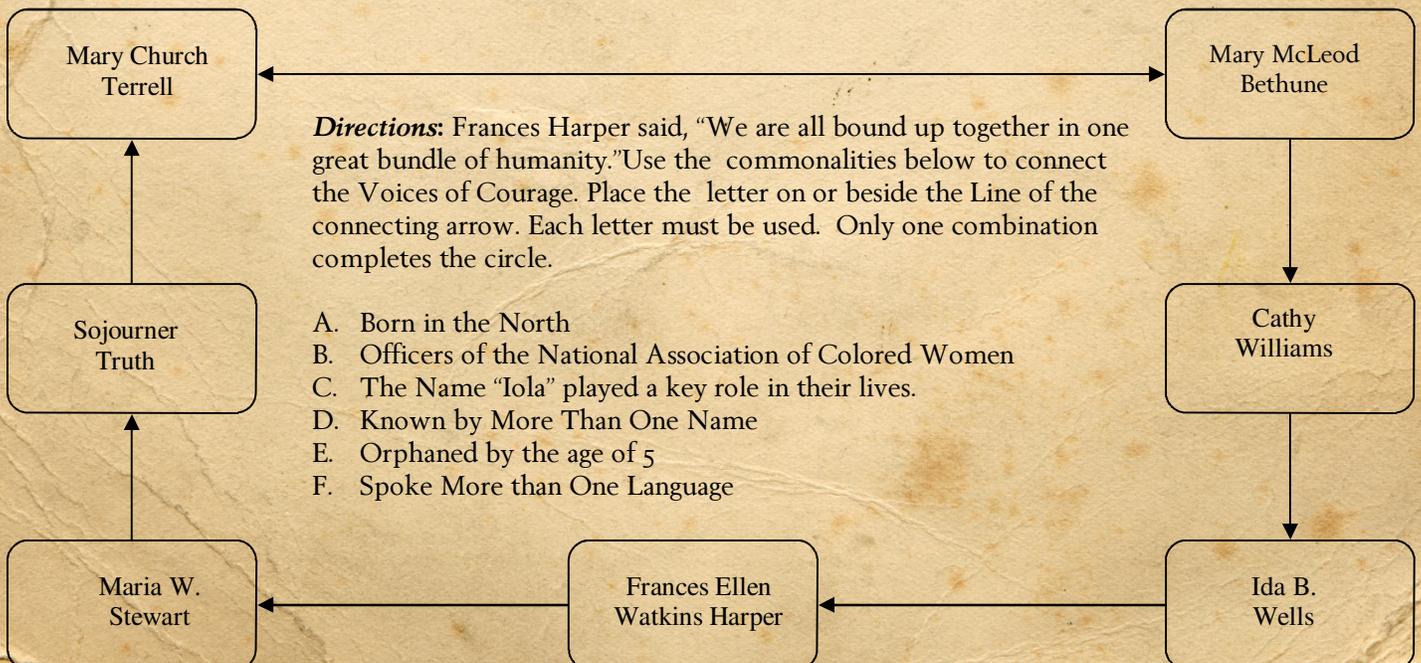
**Ida B. Wells Barnett (1862-1931):** an anti-lynching activist and suffragist. Wells used her pen to highlight the problems the nation faced in the reconstruction era. Well’s took her issues to the international stage delivering civil rights lectures in the United Kingdom. Her column, “Ida B. Wells Abroad” was published in a mainstream Chicago newspaper, making her the first Black woman to be a paid correspondent to a white newspaper.

**Mary Church Terrell (1863-1954):** civil rights pioneer. Terrell was an internationally known women’s and civil rights activist. An educator by profession, Terrell was appointed to the District of Columbia’s Board of Education, becoming the first Black woman to hold such a position. Active until her 80’s, she led the charge to integrate restaurants and theaters in Washington, DC.

**Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955):** an educator, entrepreneur, and civil rights leader. Bethune was the Founder of the Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School for Girls, that eventually became Bethune-Cookman College. Mrs. Bethune was instrumental in the formation of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “Black Cabinet”, advising the president on issues affecting the African-American community.

Center: Queen Nur (see back cover)

## Seven Degrees of Separation



# Voices of Courage: Match the Quote

Directions: During the course of the performance Queen Nur will profile the character of each of these women. Can you match each quote with its "Voice of Courage" (speaker/writer)? Listen carefully!

1. Sojourner Truth
2. Mary Church Terrell
3. Mary McLeod Bethune
4. Ida B. Wells Barnett
5. Cathy Williams
6. Maria W. Stewart
7. Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

## "Letters"

Letters and newspaper articles were the predominant mode of correspondence during the 19th Century. Even Sojourner, who was unable to read or write, had her words transcribed. Many of these letters are archived at the Library of Congress.

### Exercise I. Election '08

- 1) Choose a recent candidate for National Office, who until this election year would have been an unlikely candidate for President or Vice President. i.e. Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, or Sarah Palin.
- 2) Choose one of the above "Voices of Courage."
- 3) Write to the candidate. Explain how the actions of the "Voice" you have chosen has paved the way for their candidacy.
- 4) Select an issue that the candidate has vocalized. Relate to the candidate whether you believe your chosen "Voice" would agree or disagree with their position on this issue and why.

### Exercise II. The Courage of Your Voice

Write a letter of invitation to the "Voice" of your choice. The letter is a request for them to speak at your school or in your community about a cause you deem important. Explain how you intend to make your "voice" heard, and how you think they can help you make a difference.

**PROVERBS** are an integral part of the African Oral Tradition. Discuss how this 19th Century Ashanti proverb relates to the 19th Century African-American "profiles you heard today."

If nothing touches the palm leaves ~ they don't rustle.

- A. "When knowledge begins to flow, the chains of slavery and ignorance will melt like wax before flames.." \_\_\_\_\_
- B. "Make me a grave where'er you will. In a lowly plain, or a lofty hill. Make it among earth's humblest graves. But not in a land where men are slaves." \_\_\_\_\_
- C. "As we have been extended a measure of democracy, we have brought to the nation rich gifts. We have given you Paul Laurence Dunbar, Booker T. Washington, Marian Anderson and George Washington Carver. But even these are only the first fruits of a rich harvest." \_\_\_\_\_
- D. "I wanted to make my own living and not be dependent on relations and friends." \_\_\_\_\_
- E. "I am woman's rights. I have as much muscle as any man. I have plowed and reaped and husked and chopped and mowed, and can any man do more than that?" \_\_\_\_\_
- F. "One had better die fighting against injustice than die like a dog or a rat in a trap!" \_\_\_\_\_
- G. "In myself I am nothing, but with the loyal support of conscientious, capable women, all things are possible." \_\_\_\_\_

## Thinking Critically

### Performance Art

1. Observe how the methods below are used in creating the historical profiles:

Vocal Tones  
Facial Expressions  
Movement/Carriage

2. Summarize and reflect how storytelling preserves cultural heritage and influences contemporary art.

### Social Studies Vocabulary

Google the terms below. Relate your findings to the performance.

|                       |            |
|-----------------------|------------|
| Emancipation          | Orator     |
| Abolitionist          | Activist   |
| Buffalo Soldier       | Lynching   |
| Reconstruction        | Antebellum |
| Women's Suffrage      | Jim Crow   |
| Yellow Fever Epidemic |            |

### Oral Literacy

**Oral Tradition:** The verbal arts of a society and the creative activities that surround their production.

**Folklore:** traditional customs, beliefs, dances, songs, tales or sayings preserved orally among a people or a group. The term immediately signals a particular understanding of the relation between history and culture.

**Africanism:** those elements of culture found in the new world that are traceable to an African Origin.

**Ethnobiography:** the autobiography of those who do not write.

**Historical re-enactment** - a type of role play in which participants attempt to recreate some aspects of a historical event or period.

**Pinkster Festival:** a holiday that was celebrated over several days by African and Dutch New Yorkers throughout the 1700 and early 1800s. A folkloric celebration of food, stories, games, songs, and dances. The holiday gave enslaved Africans the opportunity to reunite with loved ones who often lived some distance away.

## VOICES OF COURAGE

### Selected Bibliography/Suggestions for Further Reading

Alexander, Amy, *Fifty Black Women Who Changed America*  
Swain, Gwennyth, *Civil Rights Pioneer: A Story About Mary Church Terrell*  
Sterne, Emma Gelder, *Mary McLeod Bethune*  
McMurry, Linda O., *To Keep The Waters Troubled: The Life of Ida B. Wells*  
Duster, Alfreda M., Ed., *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*  
Tucker, Phillip Thomas, *Cathy Williams: From Slave to Female Buffalo Soldier*  
Peterson, Carla L., *Doers of the Word: African-American Women Speakers & Writers in the North (1830-1880)*  
Titus, Frances W., Ed., *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*  
Stewart, Maria, *Meditations from the Pen of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*  
Green, Richard L., *A Salute to Historic Black Abolitionists* (An Empak "Black History" Publication Series Vol. V)  
Green, Richard L., *A Salute to Historic Black Women* (An Empak "Black History" Publication Series Vol. I)  
Logan, Shirley Wilson, Ed., *With Pen and Voice: A Critical Anthology of Nineteenth Century African American Women*  
Logan, Shirley Wilson, *We are Coming: The Persuasive Discourse of 19th Century Black Women*  
Harper, Frances E., *Sketches of a Southern Life*

Series: *The Black Achievement Series*, Chelsea House Publishers

### Web Resources

Library of Congress: [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)

African American Women Writers of the 19th Century [http://digital.nypl.org/schomburg/writers\\_aa19/](http://digital.nypl.org/schomburg/writers_aa19/)

Images of African Americans from the 19th Century: [http://digital.nypl.org/schomburg/images\\_aa19/](http://digital.nypl.org/schomburg/images_aa19/)

An Internet Activity: Webquest on 19th Century Artists & Writers

<http://oncampus.richmond.edu/academics/education/projects/webquests/women/#task>

(Note: For the webquest exercise, please include the Women from "Voices of Courage.")

### Queen Nur



Queen Nur is a nationally renowned storyteller and teaching artist. Sharing her gift, she has performed in venues from the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. to Equity Theater on Broadway, from the National Black Storytelling Festival to the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesboro. She has been the recipient of MidAtlantic Artist as Catalyst Grants for her work with Teens-at-Risk and Women's Shelters.

The mother of three and grandmother of one, Queen received her B.S. from Northeastern University, a Certificate in Dispute Resolution from Harvard Law School, and has taken post-graduate courses in African American Studies and Folklore at Temple University and the University of Pennsylvania. She teaches Storytelling at Rutgers Camden's Artist/Teacher Institute.

Queen has recorded 2 CDs. "Sweet Potato Pie and Such," is an IPar-enting Media Golden Award Winner. "Live and Storified," for teens an up, was recorded at the Walt Whitman Cultural Arts Center in Camden, NJ.

You may ask? "What is Queen's seven degrees of separation from the "Voices?" As a professional storyteller, she has performed oratory in each of their birth states, with her beginning in Maria W. Stewart's Bos-

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