

Knowledge is power

by Trevor Burnett

Because of slavery and racism, Africans have been denied a true knowledge of themselves. This is an omission that no other race has suffered from as much as Africans.

Most Blacks have been made to believe that all their foreparents ever did was pick cotton as useless "niggers" on a plantation, "shucking," "jiving," saying "no suh" and "yes suh" and never contributing anything to the advancement of civilization.

A Black person studying their history is like someone believing for a long time that both parents were dead, then finding out they are very much alive and productive. The knowledge is empowering.

If knowing Black history is important for Africans it is also important for Europeans. This is not to say that we need their stamp of approval — we should already approve of ourselves, our history and our culture. Nevertheless, we live in a racist society dominated by white people. Many whites are racist because they have been mis-educated; if they were given a proper view of history and the contributions of Black people, perhaps they would be less racist in their attitudes.

How many people know that Hannibal, who was one of the greatest military minds of all time and whose methods have been used by countless armies through the ages, was a Black man? Or that ancient Egypt, often portrayed as a white civilization, was in fact predominantly Black for most of its 26 dynasties and achieved great advances in science, technology and architecture (the majority of the great pyramids and sculptures were undertaken or built during the years of the Black Pharaohs). By the time the Greeks and Asians



graphic • Derek Marshall

got to Egypt it was already in decline. Even king Tutankhamen was Black.

Another famous African who we have been taught was European was the wise slave Aesop.

It is not only things done in ancient Africa that need to be remembered. How many us know that Rock music originated from Negro Spirituals and Gospel Music?

Black contributions to sport should also be studied. Everybody

knows about Joe Louis, but how many people know of the great men of the old Negro League in Baseball?

Other famous Blacks include Garrett Morgan, the inventor of automatic traffic lights. Lewis Latimer improved on Thomas Edison's light bulb. And Dr Charles Drew was a pioneer of blood plasma preservation, the precursor to the blood bank. Drew died in an automobile accident in 1950 — the irony was that his life may have been saved if he had received immediate medical attention. However, white hospitals wouldn't allow him to receive the blood transfusions needed to save his life.

We could go on for a long time, because this is only a partial list of Black achievements that most people don't know about.

The point of the above illustrations is not to romanticize everything coming out of Africa, or to be disrespectful to things done by Europeans. All races have made contributions, and most Blacks are aware and appreciative of the great contributions of Europeans. However, it's time

"These people make me laugh the way they like to change up the past/ so when you're there in class learning his story/ learn a little bit of your story the real story."

KRS—One

HISTORY

"If you don't know your past, you don't know your future."

- unknown

Africans in history (What they didn't teach you in history class)

Contributions to Medicine
"During the millennia Blacks in Ancient Egypt made numerous contributions to medicine and were acknowledged as the inventors of the art of medicine. They produced the earliest physicians, medical knowledge, and medical literature. They contributed to the development of medicine in ancient Greece. Ancient Writers affirm this."
• Frederick Newsome M.D., *Journal of African Civilizations*.

Contributions to Art
"The first artist was Black. The oldest sculpture in the world, the 'Bas-Relief of White Rhinoceros with Ticks,' was found in South Africa."
• J.A Rogers, *Sex and Race Vol.1*.

Contributions to Science
"Socrates (an African) in the Phaidros, called the Egyptian god Thoth the inventor of writing, astrology and astronomy. Herodotus had a similarly high opinion of Egyptian science, stating that Greeks learned geometry from the Egyptians."
• Dr. John Papperdemos, Professor of Physics, University of Illinois

Contributions to Astronomy
"The complex knowledge of the Dogon of Mali about the Sirius star system is sending shockwaves around the scientific world. The West African people have not only plotted the orbits of stars circling Sirius, but have revealed the extraordinary nature of one of the densest and tiniest stars in our galaxy. What is most astonishing about their

revelations is that Sirius B is invisible to unaided eye."
• Hunter Adams III, *African Observers of the Universe*

"The Egyptians by their study of astronomy discovered the solar year and were the first to divide it into twelve parts — and in my opinion their method of calculation is better than the Greek; for the Greeks, to make the seasons work out properly, intercalate a whole month every other year, while the Egyptians make a year consist of twelve months of thirty days each and every year intercalate five additional days, so complete the regular seasons."
• Herodotus, *The Histories*

"As early as 300 B.C. Africans built an astronomical site at Namoratungua, in Northwestern Kenya and an accurate and complex prehistoric calendar, based on its astronomical alignments was developed in East Africa."
• Godfrey C. Bums M.D, *Journal of African Civilizations*

African Steel Making
"Researchers demonstrate evidence of a prehistoric iron smelting technology that produced steel 1500 to 2000 years before Europe."
• Godfrey C. Bums, *Early African Sciences*

"The temperature achieved in the blast furnace of the African steel making machine was higher than any achieved in a European machine until modern times. It was roughly 1,800 degrees Celsius, some 200 to 400 degrees Celsius higher than the highest reached in European cold blast furnaces."
• Ivan Van Sertima, *Blacks in Science*

that Europeans and others learned about us.

It is important we take more of an interest in our history. Too many of us think that learning our history is unimportant. Many think that if it doesn't make you rich then it's of no use.

The rulers of this society know that if we knew our history, we would be much more productive

and self-sufficient. That's why much of this knowledge has been hidden or brushed aside. But with each passing year more discoveries are made that bring Black people's place in history to the fore.

Brothers and sisters, the sooner we get to know our own history the better off we'll be as a people.

A history of slavery in the Great White North

By Gayann Browne, with selected information obtained from CUP Canadian University Press (Maxine Clarke, Ron Charles)

1606
Mathieu Da Costa accompanies the Champlain Poutimacourt expedition to North America, making him the first recorded person of African descent to settle in what is now Canada. Because he is a Mi'kmaq translator, he was probably in New France before 1636, possibly with Portuguese fishing expeditions. Da Costa dies at the Port Royal settlement in the winter of 1617.

1629
Olivier LeJeune is the first recorded African slave in New France. He is brought to the colony, along with David Kirke,

one of the English invaders who captured New France from Samuel de Champlain. Kirke sells LeJeune to a French clerk who collaborated with the English. When New France is given back to France, the clerk gives LeJeune away before fleeing.

1689
After continued demands by colonists, Louis XIV officially sanctions slavery in Canada, although France forbade slavery.

An official letter informed colonists on May 1: His Majesty finds it good that the inhabitants of Canada import negroes; there to take care of their agriculture, but remarks that there is a risk that these negroes, coming from a very different climate, will perish in Canada; the project would then become useless.

Despite concerns, by 1759, there are over 1,000 slaves owned by New France families, according to historian Marcel Trudel's book "L'Esclavage au Canada Français." Slaves are owned by religious orders, notaries and doctors. Among the slave traders is James McGill, the founder of McGill University.

1734
Marie-Joseph Angelique, a slave owned by a Montreal widow, Madame de Francheville, is executed for setting fire to her master's stable in an escape attempt. As a result, a quarter of the city catches fire.

In all the stable fire burns 16 buildings, including a church, Hotel Dieu and a convent. Angelique is arrested and convicted for arson. Her original sentence is to have her hands cut off and to be burned at the stake. In the

end, she is dragged through the streets bearing a sign "Incendary," tortured until she confesses her crime, and is then hung in the public square.



1778
Fleury Mesple starts the Montreal Gazette and declares that one of the newspaper's main functions will be to publish announcements about escaped slaves.

The following appears in the Gazette's fourth issue: Run away on the 14th a slave belonging to the widow, Duffy Desoumier, aged about 35 years, dressed in stripped linen of medium height and tolerable stoutness. Whoever will bring her back will receive a reward of six dollars and will be repaid any costs proven to have been incurred in finding her.

1783
Arrival of the black Loyalists from the United States. Many of them establish communities in Nova Scotia.

Although the Loyalists are promised 100 acres of farming land for supporting the British in the American War of Independence, black Loyalists receive varying amounts of poor quality land, and in some cases none at all.

1791
Loyalists settle in Upper Canada in the Niagara and Amherstburg areas. The British grant freedom to runaway blacks who become Loyalists and at the same time allow white Loyalists to bring other blacks as slaves. This policy leads to many incidents since local authorities have problems differentiating those who are free and those who are not. It also creates social tension in the black community between slaves and free people. (Of the Loyalists who come to Canada, more than 10 per cent are black.)

1793
With the influence of John Graves Simcoe, the first-parlia-