

Mockingbird Times



Building a world class foster care system while serving our neighborhood youth

February 2005

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak out Across the Nation

Volume V, Issue 2

Visit us online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org or call 206-323-5437 (KIDS)

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Tsunami Hits Young Victims Hardest

DARIUS REYNOLDS

ON SUNDAY DECEMBER 26 2004, an earthquake that measured 9.0 on the Richter scale hit the Indian Ocean. The earthquake was the largest in forty years, causing tsunamis with waves as high as fifty feet; destroying the coasts of Thailand, India, and Indonesia. The devastation even reached as far as the coast of Africa. Sri Lanka was one of the worst to be hit by the tsunamis. Hambantota, a city in Sri Lanka, was completely destroyed. Over 30,000 people were pledged dead and 850,000 are now homeless in Sri Lanka alone. The United Nations (UN) International Children's Emergency fund reports a total of 225,000 deaths.

The United States has given \$350 million in relief money to help. President George W. Bush and Presidents George Bush Sr. and Bill Clinton came together and held their own private fundraiser. The World Bank has given \$250 million. Many countries have given money to help and many private agencies are currently working hard to raise more money. Students from over 50 schools in the northwest are raising money for Sri Lanka.

An article in the *Christian Science Monitor* states that the people in Indonesia were too close to the epicenter to be warned early enough to be saved; stating that having a tsunami-alert system in the Indian Ocean could have saved thousands. Japan offered to help pay for a system to prevent this level of devastation should this kind of tragedy happens again.

TSUNAMI CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Tsunami Reflections

DARIUS REYNOLDS



CURRENTLY THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN in Sri Lanka living in camps and orphanages. The recent tsunami has made conditions much worse. After hearing about the conditions in Sri Lanka, I decided to sponsor a youth living there because I was particularly heartbroken to hear that kids are being abducted and sold for sex and that many of the children in the camps have no parents. I went to the Plan USA website and found a story about a 15-year-old girl who was trafficked and sold to a brothel in Bombay until a man came and took her home. The brothel owner paid her \$100 for four years of her life.

All of this was happening before the tsunami hit Sri Lanka but nobody heard about it. This reminds me of when people walk past homeless people in America who really need help but they act like they don't see or hear them. It took a tsunami happening for me to even know about the conditions in Sri Lanka; it took a tragedy so big that people couldn't ignore it anymore. What will it take to get people to help with the homeless issues in America? Do we need a tsunami to hit our coast to get people to pay attention to them? The National Coalition for The Homeless states that there are over 3.5 million people on the streets in America; I implore you to find out what you can do to help homeless people locally to calm the wave at home.

February is Black History Month

PRINCESS HOLLINS AND MBT STAFF

The Mockingbird Society is honoring hundreds of years of African-American history with compelling articles that will educate us about African-American culture and the many oppressive obstacles that have been overcome throughout the years.

In 1926, blacks were honored by "Negro History Week" which later evolved into Black History Month, although African-Americans have been in America since Colonial times. February is the month dedicated to educating people about the struggles and successes of African-Americans. Dedicating the whole month of February for African Americans to shine is a great accomplishment, but the *Mockingbird Times* wants to extend this by providing articles throughout the year that honor the many contributions made by African Americans over the last few centuries. Prepare yourselves for eye-opening, strength-building articles about African Americans and other under-represented cultural groups to be featured in the coming months. In this issue, read Rico Evans' piece on African American Inventors, and Echo Speed's account of former slave Margaret Garner.

In addition to the articles our reporting staff is busy preparing, we want to challenge you out there to send us articles, poetry and artwork that honors and celebrates the often unrecognized contributions that African-American and other underrepresented citizens have made to American history. Contact us at newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org or call 206-323-KIDS (5437).

Black Inventors

RICO EVANS



THERE ARE A LOT OF GOOD THINGS ABOUT THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY, but in my opinion the best thing about February is that it is Black History month. African-Americans are known for a lot of things, like being artistic and creative. They are not as well known for their inventions. African-Americans have made a lot of things that make our lives a lot easier; things that we take for granted, like the hairbrush or air conditioner to things that help save lives like the blood plasma bag and the gas mask. Let me tell you about two African-Americans whose inventions were so important that we still use them today. **Granville T. Woods** was born in Columbus, Ohio in April 1856. At the age of ten, he began work in a machine shop. In 1884, Woods received his first patent for the steam boiler furnace. In 1885, he invented a system called Telegraphony. This system allowed telegraph lines to carry voice signals. People used this device to send messages from train to train, but it wasn't until 1887 that he patented his invention. Woods owned his own company called Woods Electric Company. Through his company, Woods sold the invention that he made, but because of the color of his skin he had a hard time marketing his invention.

He later sold his patents to a general electric company. During his career he received 35 patents for his invention that made such an impact on the transportation and communication industry.

Another important African-American inventor is **Henry T. Sampson**. Sampson was born in Jackson, Mississippi. In 1956, he got a Bachelor of Science degree from Purdue University. He graduated from the University of California, Los Angeles with a Master of Science degree in engineering. If you ever wondered who made the cellular phone system, Henry T. Sampson is the man. Sampson invented the cellular phone system in 1983. This made portable phones available to more people. Before 1983, there were car phones and they only had one antenna with only 12 to 24 frequencies. That meant that there could only be that many calls happening at the same time, which resulted in people waiting for 15 to 30 minutes for a call to go through. With this invention, phones no longer depended on cords.

These are some of the many inventions that African Americans contributed. Without these inventions, life would be a lot harder. Just think, if Granville T. Woods didn't invent the telephone system, how you would talk to your friend who lives in a different city? We would be still writing letters back and forth. You would have to wait for up to five day just to get a reply. African-Americans and people from other ethnicities are very important to this country. Without their contributions, we wouldn't know half of the things that we do and our lives would be much harder.

READ ECHO SPEEDS ACCOUNT OF MARGARET GARNER INSIDE ON PAGE 4...

Letter from the Editor

JIM THEOFELIS



GREETINGS AND HAPPY FEBRUARY! February is Black History Month and as such you will find a number of articles in this issue related to the trials, tribulations and contributions of African-Americans in American history and culture. The connection of African-American children, adolescents and families within the foster care system is clear and not surprisingly somewhat disturbing. Children of color in general and African-American children in particular are as over-represented within the foster care system as they are in the juvenile justice system. For example, children of color constitute one-third of the King County child population but make up more than one half of all children currently in foster care in King County. African-American and Native-American children are over-represented at nearly every decision point in the child welfare system, which clearly suggests a systemic flaw.

There is a myth that African-American and other racial or ethnic groups have a higher rate of child abuse and maltreatment. However, this myth has been dispelled through a number of research projects including the National Incidence Study commissioned by Congress and conducted by the Department of Health and Human Services. After three studies ranging from 1980-1993, researchers reported that, "No significant differences in the overall rate of child

maltreatment between African-American and Caucasians were found..." The Mockingbird Society is dedicated to improving the current and future lives of the children involved in foster/kinship care and we are committed to building a system that provides services that are of the highest quality, timely and culturally relevant to the family.

Many of you have been following our progress regarding the Mockingbird Foster Family Constellation Project. The federal grant expired on December 31st however we have secured the funding necessary to continue this project with One Church One Child/UJIMA Community Services AND replicate the model in at least two new sites. As you may recall our outcomes for the test-piloting of the Mockingbird Model have been very positive including: minimal placement disruptions, siblings able to live together, services that are culturally relevant and competent, high satisfaction of caregivers including 24/7 respite availability AND nearly all of the participating children improved their academic performance in most subject areas.

Finally, we're hoping you will attend our Annual Fundraiser on February 6th. The youth at Mockingbird have been developing a video on foster care/youth homelessness and we plan to show a preview of this video due for release in March 2005. Come get a sneak preview, listen to youth speakers, enjoy great food and donate to a good cause!

Jim Theofelis

jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

Letter to the Editor

This letter is from a foster mom of two young women employed to distribute the Mockingbird Times.

Jim,

I want to say thank you to you and your staff for all you have done for us. I am willing to continue to deliver about 25 of the papers myself in an effort to continue to support everything you do. I would like to continue to promote your work in this area. You have been so gracious to us. The girls now have a first job they can put down on job applications and resumes. We are almost at that age where we can begin to look for summer jobs. [The girls] have been able to experience some of the responsibility of a real job. They have learned the in's and out's of how to establish a bank account, how to keep a balance, what it's like to save in order to buy something for themselves. These are lessons that build self esteem and life long real world skills. I do hope that things continue to go well for you and your endeavors to improve life for young people. I will encourage the girls to submit work from time to time. Once again **THANK YOU** for the ways you have supported us throughout the years.

Sincerely,
Glena Felker

Mockingbird Fundraiser

**Don't forget to join us at our
4th Annual Fundraiser on
February 6th from 4-6pm. Call
206-323-5437 for information.**

Quote of the Month



**YOU'RE NOT TO BE SO BLIND WITH
PATRIOTISM THAT YOU CAN'T FACE
REALITY. WRONG IS WRONG, NO MATTER
WHO DOES IT OR SAYS IT.**

-MALCOLM X (1925 - 1965)

All incoming Letters to the Editor should be addressed to Mockingbird Editorial Staff and will be opened by Editorial Staff. All incoming correspondence to reporting staff under 18 years of age will be opened first by Mockingbird Editorial Staff.

THANK YOU'S...

Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Sarah Henderson, Stella L. Pitts & Associates, PLLC, Al Hillel & Sue Wiedenfield, Picket Fence Real Estate, Barry Eben & Beverly Winter-Eben, C.R. & Kerry Anne Schuller, Daniel Keiner, Shawn Mintek & Elizabeth Ungar Mintek, Merck Partnership for Giving, Sherri Bloomer, William & Patricia Lavelle, James & Rosemarie Flaherty.

ABOUT US: The Mockingbird Society is a private non-profit organization dedicated to building a world class foster care system and improving the other systems that serve children and adolescents involved in homelessness and foster care. The *Mockingbird Times* is a monthly newspaper written and produced by youth who have experience in foster care and/or homelessness. All youth employees of Mockingbird Society are paid between \$7.50 and \$8.50 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, poetry and are compensated up to \$25 per published piece. The *Mockingbird Times* has a monthly circulation of 60,000 copies being distributed across Washington State and the U.S.A, through a private distribution list and as an insert in *Real Change*, *South Star* and *Seattle Sun* community newspapers. Youth involvement is the key to the philosophy, values, and success of The Mockingbird Society and, as such, youth are involved in all aspects of organizational development and decision-making. Donations to The Mockingbird Society may be tax-deductible and are greatly appreciated. No part of the *Mockingbird Times* may be reproduced without the written permission of The Mockingbird Society. All contents copyright 2005 The Mockingbird Society.

A Mockingbird Inside Your Mailbox

Make a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable youth and support the Mockingbird Society!

Donations may be tax deductible and all donors receive the *Mockingbird Times*. Enclosed, please find my check made payable to Mockingbird Society in the amount of: \$ _____

Suggested Donations:

\$ 1,000+..... Protector \$500-999..... Caretaker \$250-500..... Organizations
\$50+..... Supporter \$25..... Foster Parent

- Please bill me for the amount indicated.
- My employer will match my gift; enclosed is my matching gift form.
- I am interested in receiving information on the advantages of planned giving.

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____ EMAIL _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____ Please do not include my name on published donor lists.

Please fill out and mail this form with a check or money order payable to: The Mockingbird Society, 2100 24th Ave South Suite 350, Seattle WA 98144

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*All Graphics designed by Echo Speed.



COURTNEY KONIETZKO



Positive Power: Money Management 102

If you missed the first installment of Money Management 101 in the December 2004 issue of the Mockingbird Times, I recommend it if you are interested in learning more about money management; specifically, increasing your net income, budgeting, controlling variable expenses, cash flow, and managing paperwork. Most of the information in both articles comes courtesy of Kelly Port's Money Management class, offered at the Fremont Public Association in Seattle.

HI, I'M HERE TO HELP EXPLAIN THE MYSTERIOUS CONCEPT OF CREDIT in Part II of my series on Money Management. The concept of credit baffled me at first and I avoided getting a credit card because of not wanting to rack up debt. To this day I still don't own one but plan on building my credit six months before I become a vehicle owner so I can get lower insurance rates. I also avoided understanding credit because it seemed like an alien foreign concept that was just too hard to understand. One of the things I didn't understand about debit cards before I took Port's Money Management class was that if you chose the option of credit on your debit card when paying for a purchase you aren't establishing credit. The only difference between the two is how they are processed. If you want to start establishing credit, the first thing to do is get your credit report and start understanding your credit so you can see where you stand and fix anything that's going to get in the way of you buying something important, like a home. For example, because of lack of health care, homeless youth rack up enormous medical bills that can screw up their credit.

As of December 1, 2004 ANY person in Washington can get a free credit report from each of the major credit reporting agencies once a year: Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. Eventually everybody in the United States will be entitled to their free credit reports. This is slowly being put into effect to prevent an influx of requests. The way you go about getting your reports is to go to www.AnnualCreditReport.com or write or phone each company. It is also good to get your credit rating

along with your report. This is something you will have to pay for (should not be more than \$10) but it will help you understand what your credit reports mean. Once you have your report what do you do with it? The first thing to do is check it for errors. If you find an error contact the credit agency in writing and include any copies of documents you have to support your stance. Do not send originals! There will be an example error dispute letter online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org along with the addresses and phone numbers of the three credit reporting agencies. Port's money management booklet advises you to, "send your letter by certified mail, return receipt requested, so you can document what the CRA received."

Interested in building credit? It's an important thing to do before making a major purchase like a car or a house because insurance rates will be lower.

Port asked the class what some of the ways people in the class knew of to establish credit. I blurted out that the only way I knew of doing this is to get a department

"Be wary of advertising that promises to take away or erase bad credit. This can't be done."

store card. Port responded by saying that there are better ways to go about establishing credit. For example, there is a specific type of savings account you can get through your bank that offers a better way of establishing credit with lower Annual Percentage Rates (APR).


One of the most important things I learned in Port's class is that "pay day loans=costly cash." In other words, steer clear of places that offer quick and easy loans and check cashing options! These agencies have an outrageously high APR of 391 percent—meaning that if you roll over the loan (extend the time to pay it back) you will be paying back over 50% of the amount you borrowed. It makes me so mad to receive the flier from (one of the anonymous check cashing places) that says, "Your first loan on us is free, get a free dinner (a pizza) and a free movie rental!" I know there are probably a lot of poor people out there who will be suckered into this 'scam' thinking it's a 'deal.' The best advice is avoid these places all together and if you can't avoid them make sure to not roll over your loan and pay it back! There are other options!

According to the class booklet, "When you need credit, shop carefully. Compare offers. Look for the credit offer with lowest APR – consider a small loan from your credit union or small loan company, an advance on pay from your employer, or a loan from

family and friends. A cash advance on a credit card also may be a possibility, but it may have a higher interest rate than your other sources of funds: find out the terms before you decide. Also, a local community-based organization may make small business loans to individuals."

Rental companies are also places to steer clear of. They prey upon poor people by making the total amount paid in their rent-to-own program obnoxiously higher than the person would have paid at a store by the time the person owns the item. For example, a brand new Playstation 2 retails for approximately \$179. I have a friend who is renting a Playstation 2 through one of the rental agencies at \$40/month. He asked them how much it would cost to buy it straight out and it came out to over \$300.

Be wary of advertising that promises to take away or erase bad credit. This can't be done. Creditors score credit with something called FICO scores. According to Port's class, "Fico scores provide the best guide to future risk based solely on credit report data. The higher the score, the lower the risk. But no score says whether a specific individual will be a "good" or "bad" customer. There is no single "cutoff score" used by all lenders and there are many additional factors that lenders use to determine your actual interest rates." FICO scores are used by lenders a lot of the time by themselves or with the lenders own scores to determine what your interest rates are going to be and whether you are good candidate for a loan or not. Your FICO score at each of the three credit reporting agencies might be different because the information that each agency has on you differs. Equifax calls their scores Beacon. Experian calls their scores Experian/Fair, Isaac Risk Model. Transunion calls their score Empirica. As your data changes at the credit reporting agency your credit report changes too.

If you find yourself still wanting to know more, and/or if you have questions about credit or money management take Kelly Port's workshop and learn it all first-hand! You'll walk out of there with useful skills to apply to your life. Again, I know I've said it before but I'll say it again because it really is an EXCELLENT class that breaks it all down in an easy to understand format. Take the FREE financial education classes that Kelly Port offers at the Fremont Public Association! You can contact her to register for the class at (206) 694-6864. This class will help to demystify credit. 




Hey You! We are looking for articles, poetry, artwork and photography from our young readers who have experience in the foster care system and/or homelessness. If you want to be published in the Mockingbird Times, call us at 206-323-5437 or email newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org. Check out www.mockingbirdsociety.org for more information.

TSUNAMI CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

A fund raising group called Plan USA has been working in Sri Lanka for eight years to raise money, build schools and to help protect the children of Sri Lanka because of the many problems before the tsunami hit; problems like a shortage of drinkable water a lack of proper medicine. The tsunami has only made these problems worse. Plan USA is working with government agencies to make sure there are clean water tanks and bathing houses for people living in camps. There are also thousands of children being taken and sold for sex and labor. Plan USA's Marie Staunton, National Director, United Kingdom National Office (UKNO) writes in a January 12, 2005 article, "Our research shows that during a disaster the physical survival needs of children (safe water, food, shelter, clothing primary health care) are usually given a very high priority. However, other needs and rights, which are also essential for children; like protection from abuse and harm, education, rest, privacy and the right to participate in matters that effect them are too often overlooked."

Plan USA reports that children are top priority to their organization and state, "Children recover from disasters quicker when they are called upon to help to rebuild their community." To give them a chance to help, the children are given jobs like getting water and helping take care of infants. Because of the tsunami children are even more vulnerable to traffickers and other predators. Plan USA is helping to end the exploitation of children in Sri Lanka. The Child Protection Act was formed in Indonesia to protect children from sexual predators but Plan USA says that children are being penalized for prostitution rather than the traffickers. Plan USA is also working with local organizations to help locate trafficked children and make sure they are put in safe-houses and receive proper health care and counseling.

Sri Lanka and all the other countries hit by the tsunamis still need a lot of help; if you would like to help or donate money you can contact Plan USA at 800-556-7918 or visit www.planusa.org. There are many other programs that you can contact if you want to help. To find out the closest one to you visit www.usaid.gov. But please do not forget that there are people here in America who also need your help. 

CREATIVE CORNER



We are One

By Paige Felker

We are a family
of three, all girls, are we.
We unite.
We talk.
We fight.
But, all in all, we stay strong
through hurricanes and lost friends,
through depression and strong hate
we learn. To love.
To forgive.
We love each other no matter what
we say.
When obstacles are hard we come
together.
We are one.
One like the ocean.
One like the wind.
We will love each other till our end.
On and on for eternity.
I love my family.

The Dirt on Heroin Abuse

SHAY DENEY



HEROIN (DIACETYLMORPHINE OR DIAMORPHINE) IS PART OF THE OPIATE FAMILY, A GROUP OF PAIN KILLING DRUGS (ANALGESICS) DERIVED FROM THE OPIUM POPPY FLOWER. Heroin affects the user by activating many regions of the brain. The brain regions effected are responsible for producing both the pleasurable sensation an addict often gets when taking the drug and also the physical dependence that the user feels when becoming addicted. Together, these actions account for the user's loss of control and the drug's habit-forming action. It mimics certain chemicals in the brain that are already present; such as endorphins which block pain and induce feelings of pleasure and contentment.

Soon after using, heroin crosses the blood-brain barrier. In the brain, heroin is converted to morphine and binds rapidly to opioid receptors. The user will often feel a surge of pleasurable sensation, called a "rush." Heroin is particularly addictive because of how quickly it enters the brain—the effects are almost immediate when injected and the user may initially feel sick. A feeling of calm and warmth spreads throughout the body and any troubles or pains seem very distant and unimportant. At higher doses, the user slips into a dreamlike state where they are not asleep nor awake, but somewhere in between.

Other than being a very powerful painkiller, heroin also depresses the central nervous system activity, making the heart rate and breathing slow down, suppressing the cough reflex and depressing the activity of the bowels, causing constipation. Some blood vessels dilate, releasing heat through the body, giving a feeling of warmth. Opiates can change the brainstem, an area that controls emotions to increase feelings of pleasure and can block pain receptors transmitted by the spinal cord from the body.

Heroin is dangerous, although heroin itself does not damage any major organs (including the brain) when pure. Health problems can arise from the impurities that are added during the manufacturing process.

Death generally occurs when the user's breathing slows to a halt and/or the user's lungs fill up with liquid.

With intravenous drug use, the user should take extra care because a lot of diseases can be spread through sharing needles and equipment and using dirty needles and equipment. The user can contract HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C (which can progress to Cirrhosis) and many other blood transmitted viruses when sharing needles and equipment. By using dirty needles and equipment, the user can get abscesses and other infections of the veins, skin, and muscles.

Most of the time, when someone finds out that a loved one is addicted to heroin, they speak to the addict about stopping by threatening, pleading or begging. This won't work. Heroin is too strong of an influence over most addict's lives for them to be able to stop just because somebody wants them to. Heroin users will only stop when they are ready to stop. If they are forced to stop by being put into a detox center or by keeping them away from it, they will only go right back to doing it as soon as they possibly can. According to "Jane,"* an addict of six years, "you gotta know it's not an affront to you if a person relapses after you try to get them help...something has changed in their brain so it's not a choice anymore. It may have been a choice at first, but it takes more than willpower once you get hooked."

Jane goes on to say, "you can't play the role of saviour, therapist, mom, and friend all wrapped up into one. Most likely you don't have the energy to! As much as you may love and care deeply for your friend you have to let them take the first step and can't enable them by keeping them from feeling pain and sometimes that means stepping away." Here are some things you can do to encourage an addict to stop when they are still using:

Keeping in contact- don't break all contacts because your loved one is a user. They won't come to you when they need help and the best way to succeed in getting clean is with support. Let them know that they can turn to you and that you will do what you can.

Treat them the same as before- many people start treating users like children, speaking down to them and not trusting them with simple things. Unless they do something to break your trust, have some.

One of the major dangers of heroin is overdose, which mostly occurs through intravenous use and when the user gets a hold of a more pure form of heroin than what they are used to. Overdose symptoms are as follows:

- Blue lips
- Shallow breathing
- Clammy skin
- Pinpoint pupils
- Excessive fluid in the lungs causing raspy breathing
- Irregular heartbeat
- Death

Make a rule about money- It's okay not to lend them money if you think they are going to go get high with it. Remember, though, that they will find other ways to get high and you may be keeping them out of trouble and danger if you can afford to lend them a little bit.

Be honest- Speak to them about any worries you have without lecturing them. Let them know you are concerned- it will let them know you care about them and they might be able to reassure on some things you are worried about.

Be supportive and avoid suspicion- Appreciate that it is hard to detox from heroin and that not everyone is successful. If they fail, don't take it as a personal insult, offer support for the next time they try. Remember that most people relapse a few times before they make it. Don't keep asking them if they are still clean or lecturing about not starting again because if they do relapse, they will most likely keep it from you.

Remember the difference between lapse and relapse- after going through detox, trying heroin again is classed as a lapse, not a relapse. Try to encourage them to think of it as a minor mistake, one that is NOT to be repeated. Only if they continue to use is it considered a relapse.

The best way to encourage a junkie toward a safer lifestyle is to be understanding and supportive of them. You can't make decisions for them. Keep in mind that most heroin addicts do eventually get and stay clean and that the average length of time that someone stays addicted to heroin is about three years. If you have a loved one who is a heroin addict, try to be supportive as best you can but don't let them walk all over you. Remember to ensure that YOU come first. Always explain your reasons for things and be honest. Hopefully if you are honest about your feelings then they will be about theirs.

*Jane is a pseudonym for an anonymous source who has been battling a drug addiction for over six years. All other information for this article came from the following sources: <http://www.drugs.com/drug/heroin>, www.addictiontreatmentresource.com/heroin-treatment.html, www.herointimes.com, www.heroin.org

Black History Month Series: Margaret Garner's Story

ECHO SPEED



IN LATE JANUARY 1856, within the beautiful rolling hills and impressive mountains of the famous Bluegrass state, Kentucky, 17 slaves of neighboring areas designed a desperate plan of escape from the wretched life of slave labor. Among this fraught, somewhat forlorn group of prisoners was a young mother and domestic slave woman named Margaret Garner.

22-year-old Garner resided on the Maplewood farm laboring in the cookhouse. Maplewood was a very prominent farm in Boone County that was owned and controlled by Mr. Archibald Gaines. Margaret Garner was wife to Robert Garner and mother to four children (two boys; two baby girls) whom (many believe) she loved exceptionally.

On a cold Sunday evening buried in snow, Garner and her family, including her husband's parents, joined up with the group of slaves who had all been plotting the grand flight to freedom. The plan was to make it to Wester Row, Ohio by way of the Ohio River. With two horses stolen, the group used a sled and drove up the frozen solid waters of the Ohio River. They got to the river below Covington, opposite Wester Row, by daybreak. Here is where the band of travelers split up, considering the odds of being discovered were greater if people walking the streets noticed an assembly of 17 black slaves wandering about. The Garners headed to a cousin's place in Cincinnati's Mill Creek, whose name

so happened to be Mr. Kite. Kite had been a former slave from Garner's whereabouts, but was bought out of slavery by his father, Joe Kite. Mr. Kite's house was at the bottom of Mill Creek and so Margaret's party had to make several inquiries in town as to the locality of Mr. Kite's residence before they found it.

Ultimately these inquiries previously made in town are what led pursuers to Garner and others' position so quickly and easily. Masters of escaped slaves accompanied by officers and a posse of angry white men stormed Mr. Kite's house. The fugitives inside the house had the door and windows barred. They fought off the pursuers as hard as they possibly could. Garner swore she would not only take her own life, but the lives of her children before they'd go back to slavery. Soon, despite how bravely the fugitive slaves fought, it was clear they were going to lose this fight. Garner must have seen this when pursuers broke through the door and beat down her husband dragging him away outside. Garner got a hold of a nearby butcher's knife and in one stroke sliced her little girl's throat, from ear to ear they say. Before she could complete the desperate slaughter, she was overpowered and hampered before her next attempt to take another one of her children's lives. Everyone was thrown in jail.

The trial lasted two weeks. Garner's Council for Defense argued that she was brought there a number of years ago by her master to be a nurse girl (being pregnant at the time), and because of the law that unfettered slaves brought to free states with their owner's consent, Garner was free from that time and so were her children being as they were born after that time. The judge decided, however, that since Garner voluntarily went back to slavery after visiting a free state, the conditions of slavery were re-enacted.

Garner never made it back to slavery though. When the vessel that was taking her back shipwrecked, she and one of her other children sorrowfully perished.

Stories like Margaret Garner's are the kind that reminds us of how awful it could be to try and survive in a world that makes you a slave because of your skin color. All through history we can see how people who are viciously oppressed eventually react. It can even push someone to lose their sense of right from wrong and death becomes a blessing.

Sources: *Levi Coffin, Reminiscences (Cincinnati, 1876)*, rootsweb.com/~kypendle/slavemargaretgarner.htm, coax.net/people/lwfm/mar_gar2.htm, luminarium.org/contemporary/tonimorrison/muckley.htm

