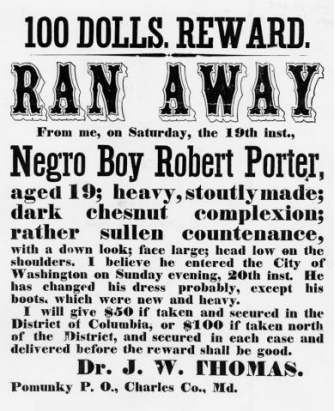
AWESOME stories

HUMAN SPIRIT PREVAILS



100 DOLLS. REWARD.

RAN AWAY

From me, on Saturday, the 19th inst.,

Negro Boy Robert Porter,

aged 19; heavy, stoutly made; dark chesnut complexion; rather sullen countenance, with a down look; face large; head low on the shoulders. I believe he entered the City of Washington on Sunday evening, 20th inst. He has changed his dress probably, except his boots, which were new and heavy.

I will give $50 if taken and secured in the District of Columbia, or $100 if taken north of the District, and secured in each case and delivered before the reward shall be good.

Dr. J. W. THOMAS.

Pomunky P. O., Charles Co., Md.

0. HUMAN SPIRIT PREVAILS - Story Preface

1. SLAVES IN THE NEW WORLD

2. KIDNAPPED AFRICANS

3. PASSAGE TO THE NEW WORLD

4. FREEDOM - BUT NOT FOR SLAVES

5. POWERS OF THE MIND

6. REBELLION

7. ESCAPE

8. TRIPS ON THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

9. TRICKS AND DETERMINATION

10. FUGITIVE SLAVE LAWS

11. PUNISHMENT for HELPING RUNAWAYS

12. FORMER SLAVES BECOME ABOLITIONISTS

13. BUYING AND SELLING PEOPLE

14. A TERRIBLE TIME

15. PLANTATION LIFE

16. SPLIT-UP FAMILIES

17. LAST FREE LABOR

18. WHAT WAS IT LIKE?

19. HUMAN SPIRIT PREVAILS

Robert Porter, a slave, ran away. Dr. J.W. Thomas, from Charles County (Maryland), wanted him back. This 19th-century broadside describes the reward Thomas would pay for Porter's return. Online via Slavery Images, sponsored by Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the University of Virginia Library.

American slaves, despite all the horrors, were not merely defined and shaped by what others did to them. Their human spirit still prevailed, as Ira Berlin notes in *Many Thousands Gone*:

> *Slaveholders severely circumscribed the lives of enslaved people, but they never fully defined them.*

The people defined themselves, as their dogged determination to escape constantly proved.

But their struggle continued:

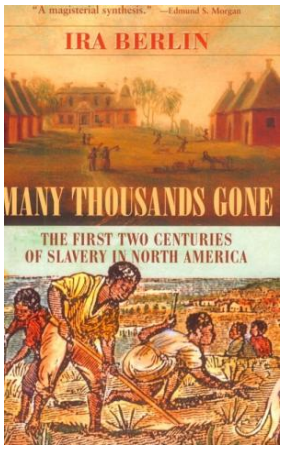
- From trial courts where African-American slaves had not been allowed to testify in their own defense,
- To the highest court of the land where a disgraceful post-slavery decision permitted "legal" segregation and "Jim Crow" laws.
- From the words of Rosa Parks to a white man who wanted her seat on a Montgomery bus,
- To the deeds of Dorothy Height and the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. who used powerful oratory and non-violence to force long-needed changes to American law.

Today - if we listen - we can hear those long-silenced slave voices. They speak to us still, showing us what the human spirit can overcome, despite the most horrific and appalling circumstances.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/HUMAN-SPIRIT-PREVAILS-Slave-Voices

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/HUMAN-SPIRIT-PREVAILS-Slave-Voices

Media Stream



Many Thousands Gone - by Ira Berlin
Image online, Harvard University Press and Google Books.
View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Many-Thousands-Gone-by-Ira-Berlin

Rosa Parks - Civil Rights Leader
Photo online, courtesy U.S. Library of Congress.
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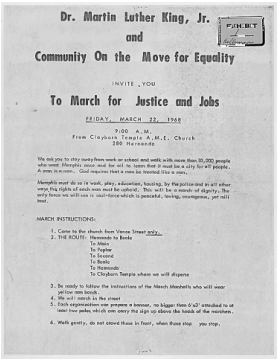
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
and
Community On the Move for Equality

INVITE YOU

To March for Justice and Jobs

FRIDAY, MARCH 22, 1968

9:00 A.M.
From Claybourn Temple A.M.E. Church
200 Hernando

We ask you to stay away from work or school and walk with more than 10,000 people who want Memphis once and for all to learn that it must be a city for all people. A man is a man. God requires that a man be treated like a man.

Memphis must do so in work, play, education, housing, by the police and in all other ways the rights of each man must be upheld. This will be a march of dignity. The only force we will use is soul-force which is peaceful, loving, courageous, yet still real.

MARCH INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Come to the church from Vance Street only.
2. THE ROUTE: Hernando to Banks
   To Main
   To Poplar
   To Second
   To Banks
   To Hernando
   To Claybourn Temple where we will disperse
3. Be ready to follow the instructions of the March Marshalls who will wear yellow ties in back.
4. We will march in the street
5. Each organization can prepare a banner, no bigger than 6'x2' attached to at least two poles which can carry the sign up above the heads of the marchers.
6. Walk gently, do not stand those in front, when those stop you stop.

Dr. King - Notice to March for Jobs and Justice
Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.
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View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Dr.-King-Notice-to-March-for-Jobs-and-Justice

Dorothy Height - Civil Rights Leader

Dorothy Height learned about discrimination at a very young age.
As a straight-A student, with a scholarship to support her university education, she was invited to interview at Barnard College. She could hardly wait to get there, and her train (which was twenty minutes behind schedule) made her late.

As it happened, the lateness of the interview did not matter. Things would not go well for Dorothy that day, despite Barnard's invitation.
In her book, *Open Wide the Freedom Gates*, she tells us what went wrong:
When I arrived, breathless, in the office of the dean, I was asked to have a seat. It seemed an eternity before the dean finally came to speak to me. I apologized for being late. It didn't matter, she said. Although I had been accepted, they could not admit me.
It took me a while to realize that their decision was a racial matter: Barnard had a quota of two Negro students per year, and two others had already taken the spots. "You are young enough to wait for next year," said the dean, meaning, I suppose, to be encouraging.

But I couldn't believe my ears. I was devastated. Since childhood, school had been my love, my life. I wanted to get on with it. I peaded with her, but she was adamant. Rules were rules, and two young women named Belle Tobias and Vera Joseph were holding the only two precious places for Negro woman in Barnard's class of 1933. (Height, Open Wide the Freedom Gates, page 31.)
Dorothy Height did "get on with it," but not at Barnard.
She was accepted, on the spot, at New York University. Providing the letter from Barnard's dean, Height met with NYU's Dean Schaeffer:
I'll never forget her eyes as she looked up. She said, "A girl who makes these kinds of grades doesn't need an application to enroll at NYU." (Height, page 32.)
Dorothy blossomed at NYU. As she noted, later in life:
...I can bear witness to the potential over a life experience. Barnard College did not let me in, but New York University welcomed me. (Height, page 296.)
Mari Evans wrote a poem about Height. It is quoted in Maya Angelou's Foreword of Open Wide The Freedom Gates:
I
am a black woman
tall as a cypress
strong
beyond all definition still
defying place
and time
and circumstance
assailed
impervious
indestructible
Look
on me and be
renewed.

(Evans, quoted in Open Wide the Freedom Gates, page xi.)
Seventy-five years after she was turned away from Barnard - and after a lifetime of service to others as a psychologist, social worker and respected voice of the civil rights movement - Dr. Dorothy Height was welcomed to Barnard as an "honorary alumna."
She had already received the institution's highest honor, twenty years previously, as noted by Barnard's President, Judith Shapiro:
More than two decades ago, Dr. Height accepted the college's highest honor, the Barnard Medal of Distinction . . . This was a gracious and forgiving gesture on her part and one for which we are most appreciative. (Jet Magazine, Jun 21, 2004, page 9.)
Dr. Height was the president of the National Council of Negro Women for forty years. In 2004, she also received the Congressional Gold Medal for her lifetime of leadership and achievements.

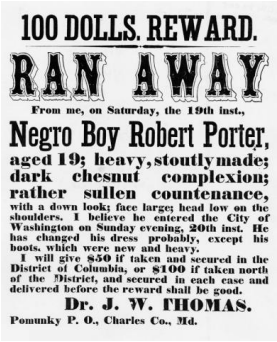
She was always known as a great speaker, and even when she faced discrimination, she persevered.
Growing up in Pennsylvania, she won several speech contests at Rankin High School. As a finalist, she was entitled to compete in the state oratory contest in Harrisburg, the state's capital.

Excited, the teenager drove to the finals with her Latin teacher. However, she faced a humiliating situation when she arrived at the hotel where the finals were taking place:
It was hard to keep her head high when she was stopped at the door of the hotel where the contest was being held. It never occurred to them that Dorothy had come as a contest entrant. They took one look at the black child who stood before them and dismissed her without taking the time to ask why she'd come.

But Dorothy was there to speak her piece in front of the contest judges. She went back out to the car and changed into the special dress her mother had hung there for her. Then, despite the disrespect she'd faced, she went right into the contest.

Dorothy was the only black participant. And she was the last entrant to speak. All the judges were white. Still, she gave a rousing speech about the importance of peace among people. Then she added a special message to her speech. She recounted the story of Jesus' birth and told everyone that just as Mary and Joseph could not get into the inn on that special night, she, too, had been shunned by the people at the hotel - but she was denied because of her skin color.

The contest judges awarded Dorothy first prize. (Let it Shine: Stories of Black Women Freedom Fighters, by Andrea Davis Pinkney and illustrated by Stephen Alcorn, pages 62-63.)
Dr. Height fought for freedom and equality her entire life. She was at Dr. King's side, when he delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, and she died - aged 98 - on April 20, 2010.
Quoted passages from Dr. Height's memoir, Open Wide the Freedom Gates.
Photo online, courtesy U.S. National Archives. PD
View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Dorothy-Height-Civil-Rights-Leader



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Negro Boy Robert Porter,

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Pomunky P. O., Charles Co., Md.

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Rosa Parks - Mother of Civil Rights Movement

Clip from documentary on Rosa Parks.

PD

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