

Heritage Newsletter

California African-American Genealogical Society



March 2020

Volume 32, Number 3

Ten Issues Published Annually
ISSN 1083-8937

California African American Genealogical Society
P.O. Box 8442
Los Angeles, CA 90008-0442

General Membership Meetings

Third Saturday monthly, 10:00a.m. (dark July & August)
LDS Church, 10625 S. San Pedro, Los Angeles, CA

2020 Board of Directors

Elected Officers

Cartelia Marie Bryant – President
Corrine Hill – First Vice President
Carolyn Conway – Second Vice President/Membership
Ronald Fairley – Corresponding Secretary
Christina Ashe – Recording Secretary
Shirley Hurt – Treasurer
Charles Hurt – Parliamentarian

Committee Chairs/Appointed Officers

Peggy Powell – Books and Acquisitions
Open – Public Relations/Fundraising
Betty Whitson – Librarian
Edna Briggs – Historian
Lanetta Lyons – Newsletter Editor
James Murray – FGS Delegate
Akosua Hobert – Volunteer Chairman
Website – <http://www.caags.org> 📞 (323) 806-5634

DR. GLADYS WEST: THE BLACK WOMAN BEHIND GPS TECHNOLOGY



GPS or the Global Positioning System is something that we use every day. From finding your local supermarket, checking directions if you get lost or mapping out your daily commute to avoid traffic, GPS is with us everywhere we go. It has literally changed the way we work, play and live.

While billions of people use GPS in their car or on their phone, many don't know that a Black woman is behind the creation of it. That's right, Dr. Gladys West, a Black woman from Virginia was instrumental in creating the [system].

And now, she's finally getting long overdue recognition.

Neither the newsletter editor nor CAAGS guarantees publication of any submission. Submissions are due by the third Saturday of each month.

Dr. Gladys West (cont.)

On December 6, the 87-year-old West was inducted into the Air Force Space and Missile Pioneers Hall of Fame by the United States Air Force in a ceremony at the Pentagon.

As a girl growing up in Dinwiddie County, south of Richmond in the late 1930's early 1940's, all Gladys (maiden name, Brown) knew was that she didn't want to work in the fields, picking tobacco, corn and cotton, or in a nearby factory, beating tobacco leaves into pieces small enough for cigarettes and pipes, as her parents did.

When she learned that the valedictorian and salutatorian from her high school would earn a scholarship to Virginia State College (now University), she studied hard and graduated at the top of her class.

She got her free ticket to college, majored in math and taught two years in Sussex County before she went back to school for her master's degree.

In 1956 West began to work at Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren Division, where she was the second black woman ever to be employed. West began to collect data from satellites, eventually leading to the development of Global Positioning System. Her supervisor Ralph Neiman recommended her as project manager for the Seasat radar altimetry project, the first satellite that could remotely sense oceans. In 1979, Neiman recommended West for commendation. West was a programmer in the Dahlgren Division for large-scale computers and project manager for data-processing systems used in analysis of satellite data.

In 1986, West published "Data Processing System Specifications for the Geosat Satellite Radar Altimeter," a 60-page illustrated guide. The Naval Surface Weapons Center (NSWC) guide was published to explain how to increase the accuracy of the estimation of "geoid heights and vertical deflection," topics of satellite geodesy. This was achieved by processing the data created from the radio altimeter on the Geosat satellite which went into orbit on 12 March 1984. She worked at Dahlgren for 42 years, retiring in 1998. Her contributions to GPS were uncovered when a member of West's sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, read a short biography West had submitted for an alumni function.

West's humble nature actually kept people from knowing how instrumental she was in the development of the device for decades. West admits that she had no idea, at the time, when she was recording satellite locations and doing accompanying calculation that her work would affect so many.

"When you're working every day, you're not thinking, 'What impact is this going to have on the world?' You're thinking, 'I've got to get this right,'" she says.

blackdoctor.org > dr-gladys-west-gps

CAAGS Reporter: Carolyn Khadija Connor, Member since 1992

MARCH IS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

The 2020 Women's History Month theme is "Valiant Women of the Vote." The theme honors "the brave women who fought to win suffrage rights for women, and the women who continue to fight for the voting rights of others."

Although women demanded the vote as early as 1848 at the Seneca Falls convention, it was in 1913 that five thousand women commanded national attention by marching on Washington the day before the inauguration of Woodrow Wilson, the 28th president of the United States.

White and Black women fought among and between themselves over the best [strategy] to obtain the vote. The vast majority of American women, Black and White, were less invested than the suffragists and seemed to accept society's claim that they truly were apolitical beings and belonged not in the voting booth, but at home....Some housewives denounced female suffrage, claiming that if women were to vote differently from their husbands, domestic unrest would surely follow.

Among Black women who remained unwavering in support of women's rights was Sojourner Truth. In 1867, when female suffrage was still very much being debated she said: "I feel that I have the right to have just as much as a man." Another staunch suffragist was Anna Julia Cooper, who said "Only the BLACK WOMAN can say when and where I enter ...then and there the whole Negro race enters with me." Cooper was effective in emphasizing to Black women that they required the ballot because Black men's experiences and needs were not the same as theirs.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, White and Black women did return to their role as social reformers. The largest and best known group was the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, (WCTU) founded in 1874. Their policies encouraged separate Black and White unions. At least one White woman, however, Amelia Bloomer, owner, editor and publisher of the first newspaper for women campaigned against racism within the movement. She also was known for popularizing and wearing the pants and tunic outfit dubbed "the bloomer." Despite the rampant racism of the time, some Black women did rise to positions of prominence. Frances Harper, for one, was most effective in recruiting Black women to the cause and was eventually appointed to the national office.

Despite the racial divisions, Black women were collective in their courage in the fight for equality. Ida B. Wells-Barnett, the journalist who led an anti-lynching campaign in the late nineteenth century, organized the Alpha Suffrage Club among Black women in Chicago and brought members with her to participate in the 1913 parade. The organizers of the march asked the Chicago Black delegation to walk at the end of the parade. Wells-Barnett, however, tried to get the White Illinois delegation to support her opposition [to] this segregation, but found few supporters. The [Blacks] either would march at the end or not at all. Refusing to march, Wells-Barnett emerged from the crowd and joined the White Illinois delegation, marching between two White supporters. She refused to comply with the segregation.

Modified from Excerpts from *One of Divided Sisters: Bridging the Gap Between Black and White Women* by Midge Wilson & Kathy Russell, Anchor, 1996— and PBS.org

PLUGGED IN

THANKS TO NORMA BATES for a successful Stay-At-Home Tea that earned \$630 for CAAGS.

Remember to pay your dues- \$15 for students, \$30 for individuals, \$35 for families, \$40 for organizations and libraries, \$15 for newsletter via USPS.

A Website committee is needed. Contact Edna Briggs if you can help.

RESEARCH TRIP to Family Search Library in Salt Lake City, UT will be on May 3-9, 2020. Select the round trip airfare package from LAX with 6 nights single and double occupancy at the Salt Lake Plaza Hotel or other available packages.

FamilySearch has formed an African Heritage team focused solely on helping people of African Descent around the world discover their homeland. You can opt-in to the "new" quarterly African Heritage email newsletter at [FamilySearch African Heritage Quarterly Email Opt-In](#). Your personal information will not be shared or sold.

CAAGS INTRODUCES THE GENEALOGY NOTEBOOK to keep your research in pristine condition for you, your family and the future. This coil-bound treasure is available with a donation of \$12.50 by members and \$15.00 by nonmembers.

SUPPORT CAAGS

Boost your meals appeal with recipes from the CAAGS cookbook (\$10 donation).

FINDING YOUR ROOTS- HENRY LOUIS GATES

Check local listings for showings of season 6 on PBS.

NATIONAL GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY (NGS) offers two new courses: African American Roots: A Historical Perspective and Federal Land Research. For information, go to <http://www.ngsgenealogy.org/>

GENEALOGY MAGAZINE

This You Tube series offers advice and tips for the family historian. <http://www.genealogymagazine.com/>

CAAGS FINANCIAL SUMMARY Month Ending January 31, 2020

BEGINNING BALANCE.....	\$10,510.35
INCOME.....	695.00
DISBURSEMENTS.....	631.50
DESIGNATED FUNDS.....	131.22
ENDING BALANCE.....	\$10,573.85

Shirley Hurt, Treasurer

Richest Colored Girl In The World

Sarah Rector was born in 1902 near the all-black town of Taft, then Indian Territory. Her parents, Joseph and Rose Rector, were African descendants of the Creek Nation, and they and their descendants were entitled to land allotments as Dawes Roll freedmen under the Treaty of 1866. The treaty, made by the U.S. with the Five Civilized Tribes, granted 160 acres of land each to nearly 600 black children, or Creek Freedmen minors, in what is now the state of Oklahoma.

The parcel allotted to Sarah Rector was located in Glenpool, considered inferior infertile soil, not suitable for farming. Better land was reserved for white settlers and members of the tribe. The family lived simply but not in poverty; however, the \$30 annual property tax on Sarah's parcel was such a burden that her father petitioned the Muskogee County Court to sell the land. His petition was denied because of restrictions placed on the land, so he was required to continue paying the taxes.

To help cover this expense, Joseph Rector leased Sarah's parcel to the Standard Oil Company. In 1913, an independent oil driller discovered a "gusher" on the property which began to bring in 2,500 barrels of oil a day. Rector began to receive a daily income of \$300 from this strike. The law at the time required full-blooded Indians, black adults and children who were citizens of Indian Territory with significant property and money, to be assigned "well-respected" white guardians. Thus, as soon as Sarah began to receive this windfall, there was pressure to change her guardianship to a local white resident. Sarah's allotment subsequently became part of the Cushing-Drumwright Oil Field and she received royalties of \$11,567.

As news of Sarah's wealth spread worldwide, she began to receive requests for loans, money gifts, and marriage proposals, despite the fact that she was only 12 years old. Given her wealth, the Oklahoma Legislature declared her to be a white person, so that she would be allowed to travel in first-class accommodations on the railroad, as befitted her position.

In 1914, rumors began to fly that Sarah was a white immigrant who was being kept in poverty, that her estate was being mismanaged and that she was uneducated and had a poor quality of life. This caused Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois to become concerned about her welfare. A special agent for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) who had been corresponding with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the U.S. Children's Bureau sent a memo to Dubois regarding Sarah's situation. He wrote of her white financial guardian: Is it not possible to have her cared for in a decent manner and by people of her own race, instead of by a member of a race which would deny her and her kind the treatment accorded a good yard dog?

This prompted Dubois to establish the Children's Department of the NAACP, which investigated claims of white guardians who were suspected of depriving black children of their land and wealth. Washington also intervened to help the Rector family enroll Sarah in the Children's School, a boarding school at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.

Sarah was already a millionaire by the time she turned 18. She owned stocks, bonds, a boarding house, businesses, and 2,000 acres of prime river bottomland. At that point, she left Tuskegee and, with her entire family, moved to Kansas City, MO where she purchased a house on 12th Street, that is still there and known as the Rector House.

cast of *Good Times*, received *The Impact Icon Award* at the 2006 *TV Land Awards*.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ja'Net_DuBois

Richest Colored Girl (cont.)

Sarah lived a comfortable life, enjoying her wealth. But with a bad business venture by her husband and the onset of the great depression, she lost the majority of her wealth, as did many wealthy Americans. Sarah died in 1967 at the age of 65 and was buried in the city cemetery of her hometown of Taft.

Postscript: The book by David Grann, *Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI* is an account of what happened to some of the wealthy Osage Indian families of Oklahoma. Martin Scorsese's film based on the book is in production.

CAAGS Reporter: Charles Hurt, Member since 2016

FOREVER REMEMBER

Kobe B. Bryant

August 23, 1978 – January 26, 2020

He was an American professional basketball player who entered the National Basketball Association (NBA) as a shooting guard directly from high school. He played his entire 20-season professional career in the league with the Los Angeles Lakers. He won many accolades: five NBA championships, 18-time All Star, 15-time member of the All-NBA Team, 12-time member of the All-Defensive Team, 2008 NBA Most Valuable Player (MVP), two-time NBA Finals MVP winner. Widely regarded as one of the greatest players of all time, he led the NBA in scoring during two seasons, ranks fourth on the league's all-time regular season scoring and all-time post season scoring list.

Bryant began playing basketball as a three-year-old. When he was age six, his father retired from the NBA and moved the family to Rieti, Italy to continue playing professional basketball. When Bryant was thirteen, he and his family returned to Pennsylvania. Recognized as the top high-school basketball player in the country, upon graduation he declared for the 1996 NBA draft and was selected by the Charlotte Hornets, then traded to the Lakers. Bryant and Shaquille O'Neal led the Lakers to three consecutive championships from 2000-2002. At 34 years of age, Bryant became the youngest player in league history to reach 30,000 career points. Also, he became the all-time leading scorer in Lakers franchise history in 2010. Bryant retired after the 2015-16 season. He died at age 41, along with his 13-year-old daughter Gianna and seven others, in a helicopter crash in Calabasas, California.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kobe Bryant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kobe_Bryant)

Ja'Net DuBois

August 5, 1945 – February 17, 2020

Born in Brooklyn, New York, she was an American actress, singer-songwriter and dancer. She was best known for her portrayal of Willona Woods, the neighborhood gossip and friend of the Evans family on the sitcom *Good Times* (1974 to 1979). Also, she co-wrote and sang the theme song "Movin' on Up" for the sitcom, *The Jeffersons*.

DuBois began her acting career in theater during the early 1960s, appearing in *Golden Boy* with Sammy Davis Jr. and Louis Gossett Jr. In 1995 she won a *CableAce Award* for Best Supporting Actress for *Other Women's Children*. In 1999 and 2001 DuBois won *Emmy Awards* for her voice-over work on the animated program *The PJs*. DuBois, along with the

CALENDAR

May 3-9, 2020

Research Trip to Family Search Library in Salt Lake City, UT

May 20 - 23, 2020

National Genealogical Society Conference
Salt Lake City, Utah; www.ngsgenealogy.org

July 7 - 9, 2020

Midwest African American Genealogy Institute (MAAGI) Conference; Allen County Public Library Ft. Wayne, IN; <http://www.maagiinstitute.org/>

October 14 -17, 2020

Afro-American Historical & Genealogical Society (AAHGS) Conference; Hampton, VA
<https://www.aahgs.org/conference>

Southern California Genealogical Society

Offers many webinars and user group meetings
<https://www.scqsgenealogy.com>

ON-GOING

March 14, 2020

Writers Group

(monthly, 2nd Saturday)

10a.m.– noon, A.C. Bilbrew Library
150 East El Segundo Blvd; Los Angeles, CA

March 19, 2020

CAAGS Board Meeting (monthly, 3rd Thursday)
7p.m. call-in to 1-712-775-8972, pin 830090

March 21, 2020

CAGGS General Membership Meeting

(monthly, 3rd Saturday)

LDS Church of Jesus Christ

10623 South San Pedro; Los Angeles, CA 90003

May 23, 2020

CAAGS DNA Interest Group 9:00a.m.- 12:00p.m.
LAFHL, 10741 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles
Bring your account username and password

The calendar is subject to change without notice.

Please check our website for current information.

<http://www.caags.org/> ☎ (323) 806-5634