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### Adult Chapter Meetings

Monthly, 3rd Thursday, 6PM  
Virtual Meeting  
*(except in December)*

### Youth Council Meetings

At Lincoln High School

### Business Name

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P.O. Box 81322  
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## Message from the President

Summer has meant a traveling frenzy for many in our Branch. It seems that some of us have been waiting to just go someplace in order to take a break. However, when we returned there was still work to be done.

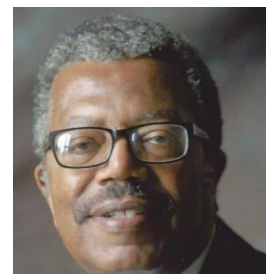
**Racial Impact Studies:** An item that floated to the top of a stack on my desk was the importance of racial impact studies. Sen. Terrell McKinney of Omaha sponsored a 2023 bill that would have required such statements on some legislation, especially criminal justice bills that could disproportionately affect racial minorities. A good attempt, but it didn't go forward. Have you thought about the difference it would make if decisions of the Nebraska Legislature or the Lincoln City Council were based on such deliberations? This is not to say that individuals don't sometimes do that, but a deliberate effort to be better informed for a fairer decision would be helpful.

**Get Out The Vote (GOTV):** Encouraging people to vote looms high in many of our thoughts as General Election Day grows near. I hope you began to implement your voting plan by casting your ballot in the May 14 primary election and that you have started to contact your five persons to urge them to VOTE in on November 5. Work your voting plan!

**Science of Reading:** Thank you to Dr. Thomas Christie and Education Committee members who met with Nebraska Education Commissioner Dr. Brian Maher and his staff members on June 5. We are continuing our dialogue with them on topics such as literacy, multicultural education and elimination of derisive expressions of bias at school events. We learned that Gov. Jim Pillen has signed a revision of the department's Administrative Rule 20 that the Branch supported. Among other things, the revised rule requires educator preparation programs to instruct students in the science of reading. How NDE will hold those programs accountable for this is a question we continue to explore. We believe that reading is a civil right and that improved reading outcomes can affect many other areas, including special education, disciplinary issues and employment prospects.

**Juneteenth:** At this enjoyable celebration at Woods Park we shared a welcoming table with the University Chapter and to inform the public about our activities, including potential memberships and voting information. Thank you to all involved.

**Justice in Action Summit:** This coalition of Lincoln faith groups held a very inspiring gathering **cont'd on page 2**



Dewayne Mays, PhD  
President

### Message from the President, con't.

in May that drew 1200 persons, including about 10 members of the Lincoln Branch. The coalition is urging local officials to take these actions: (1) increase participation in pretrial diversion programs, (2) create a mediation process that precedes eviction proceedings and (3) create a navigation system for community mental health services. We are planning to have more interactions with Justice in Action in the future.

**Legislation:** Two notable laws affecting people of color passed in the 2024 Legislature. Sen. Justin Wayne of Omaha sponsored the law that would immediately restore voting rights to people who have completed their felony prison or probation sentence. Sen. Terrell McKinney of Omaha pushed through a parole reform law that included attendance requirements for State Parole Board members. Spotty attendance by board members has sometimes led to parole-eligible Nebraskans staying in prison longer.

**Nebraska Summit on Justice and Disparities:** August 9 is the date and Creighton University is the site for the first Nebraska Summit on Justice and Disparities, modeled after a similar NAACP effort in Iowa. Our keynote speaker will be Dr. Yusef Salaam, a member of the exonerated Central Park Five (See Ava DuVernay's

Netflix mini-series, "When They See Us."). The Lincoln Branch NAACP is one of the key sponsors of this Summit. The \$149 registration fee is well worth the cost, which covers lunch, breaks, and many workshops and panels. Please come and invite friends who need to know about the justice system in Nebraska. You can find more information at: [Nebraskajusticesummit.org](http://Nebraskajusticesummit.org).

Russell Lovell and David Walker, co-chairs of the Iowa-Nebraska State NAACP Legal Redress Committee, have prepared and submitted a draft document that suggests strategies for **diversifying juries**. We are hoping that these efforts will prove productive in the Nebraska justice system.

**Reminders:** Don't forget our annual **Freedom Fund Banquet** on October 26 at the University of Nebraska's Innovation Campus. Also, your membership is important to the success of the Lincoln Branch NAACP. Please support our Branch through your **membership and donations**. Thank you for all you do for our Branch and our community.

**Dewayne Mays**  
President, Lincoln Branch NAACP

## Malcolm X Inducted into Nebraska's Hall of Fame

Wednesday, May 22, was a very special day. And it will remain so in Nebraska. The people who gathered in the old Warner Senate Chamber as well as those in the overflow area at the Nebraska State Capitol felt the crackle of excitement in the air. The day had finally arrived. Nathan Murray's bust of Malcolm X was ready to be unveiled; Dr. Ilyasah Shabazz, third daughter of Malcolm X and Betty Shabazz, had arrived from New York; JoAnna LeFlore-Ejike, executive director of the Malcolm X Foundation in Omaha was on hand; and Governor Jim Pillen was ready with his Proclamation. Before the ceremony started, people could be seen admiring the mosaic ceiling of Warner Senate Chamber designed by Hildreth Meière. She designed the four large panels depicting Native American Life on the Plains. But now it was time to induct Malcolm X, El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, into Nebraska's Hall of Fame.

Malcolm X is the 27th person and the first African American to be inducted into the Nebraska Hall of Fame and joins the likes of Susette La Flesche Tibbles, George W. Norris, Standing Bear, Willa Cather, William Jennings Bryan, and Red Cloud, among others.

Bilal Nosilla of Omaha and Rebeen Kareem of the Islamic Foundation of Lincoln gave the invocation in keeping with Malcolm X's Islamic faith. Nosilla mentioned the Shahada, the Islamic declaration of faith Malcolm X had to make before embarking on his Hajj to Mecca. Kareem read the Muslim prayer (surah) that opens the Quran, the Surat Al-Fatihah, in Arabic, and Nosilla translated it into English.

The ceremony was conducted by Dr. Sara Crook, Chair of the Nebraska Hall of Fame Commission. She stated that Malcolm X was the 27th person to be inducted but did not mention he was the first African American to be so inducted. She did highlight the importance of diversity: "[h]aving an array of Nebraskans officially recognized in the Hall of Fame is fitting given the diversity of people living in our state, both now and throughout our past."

Governor Jim Pillen then declared and signed the Proclamation that May 22, 2024, was Malcolm X Day for the state of Nebraska. Pillen in reading the Proclamation stated that "Malcolm X was an American human rights advocate, and to many one of the most reknowned figures in civil rights history." He presented Dr. Ilyasah Shabazz and JoAnna LeFlore-Ejike each with a signed



The artist Nathan Murray stands next to his sculpture of Malcolm X (Courtesy of Nathan Murray).

Proclamation.

Dr. Sara Crook then introduced LeFlore-Ejike who stated how important it was to tell the whole story of Malcolm X's transformation in which he embraced the whole of humanity. Dr. Ilyasah Shabazz, introduced by LeFlore-Ejike, expressed her gratitude to the Commission for her father's induction into the Hall of Fame and said, "[t]his is such a wonderful day!" She went on to say that her father "challenged us to be better human beings as he introduced a human rights agenda to the civil rights movement."

She also mentioned that Senator Ernie Chambers met Malcolm X in Omaha in 1964; it was the first time Malcolm X had returned to his birth city after his family was driven out by the Ku Klux Klan. The return visit must have been on June 30 when Malcolm X spoke at a public meeting in the City Auditorium's Assembly Hall sponsored by the Citizens' Co-ordinating Committee for Civil Liberties (4CL). Chambers, a Creighton University law student at that time, was a member of the 4CL. Senator Chambers may have met Malcolm X at the end of the question-and-answer period which occurred after Malcolm X's speech. The question-and-answer period was moderated by Rev. Kelsey A. Jones, president of the 4CL.

Nathan Murray, sculptor of Malcolm X's bust, spoke next. He thanked everyone who worked so hard for so long to make the Black leader's induction a reality.

**cont'd on page 3**



## Malcolm X con't.

The most important goal for Murray was to depict Malcolm X respectfully. Before Murray could step away from the podium, Governor Pillen stepped up to declare that Nathan Murray was now an admiral in the navy of the state of Nebraska.

Together, Dr. Ilyasah Shabazz and Nathan Murray then unveiled the bust of Malcolm X to the delight and applause of the audience.

In a moment of enthusiasm, Senator Ernest Chambers, the longest serving state senator in Nebraska history who is running again in North Omaha's 11th District, dashed to the podium and stated the following words: "I spent 46 years in this place. I never thought in my wildest dreams that I would live long enough – July 10, I will be as old as the number of keys on a piano, 88. I had a reason to stay alive and it's been recognized. When you speak, stand up so people can see you, speak up so people can hear you, shut up so people will like you; and I want to say, I never thought I'd live long enough to see a white, conservative, Republican governor in a white, ultra-conservative state like Nebraska, participate in the induction of Malcolm X into the Nebraska Hall of Fame." The audience gave its approval with boisterous applause. People in the chamber and in the overflow area streamed toward the podium to get a closer look at the marvelous bust of Malcolm X.



Moments after the unveiling of the bust of Malcolm X: Dr. Ilyasah Shabazz (daughter of Malcolm X) is standing to the left of the bust; sculptor Nathan Murray is standing to the right of the bust; on Murray's right is Senator Ernie Chambers and next to him is JoAnna LeFlore-Ejike, executive director of the Malcolm X Foundation. Dr. Sara Crook and Governor Jim Pillen are in the background clapping. (Courtesy of the *Lincoln Journal Star*, photograph by Justin Wan.)

## Voters Likely to Get Their Say on Tax Dollars for Private Education

*Kathleen Rutledge*

Opponents of a law that gives tax money for private schools turned in what appears to be enough petition signatures to allow voters in the November election to decide whether to repeal that law.

Support Our Schools turned in more than 87,000 signatures to the Secretary of State on July 17. Petition drive leaders are confident that's enough to meet the required 62,000 signatures of registered voters to get it on the ballot.

If enough signatures are verified, the battle will be on: On one side, those who say tax money should not go for private elementary and secondary schools and on the other side, those who say "school choice" is best for children.

This has been a confusing issue because it has come up for two years in a row, with two petition drives. Last year's law gave dollar-for-dollar tax credits for donations for private school scholarships. Opponents couldn't stop it (LB753) from passing the Legislature, but they got enough signatures to refer the question to voters. But then Sen. Lou Ann Linehan of Elkhorn decided to do what she herself called an end-run around that first petition drive. She pushed a law through the 2024 Legislature that repeals the first law and instead, directly grants \$10 million a year in tax money for private school scholarships.

Sen. Jen Day of Omaha argued against this tactic, saying, "We are jumping in the middle of what was a well-done referendum process." Nevertheless, the Legislature passed LB1402 on a 32-14 vote in April, and Gov. Jim Pillen signed it. Opponents then had until July 17 to gather about 60,000 signatures of registered voters to get it on the November ballot.

So you have a procedural argument: Is it fair to wipe out a successful petition drive with a similar law that forces opponents to mount yet another petition drive? The League of Women Voters of Nebraska termed it "a blatant, inappropriate power grab." Jenni

Benson, president of the Nebraska State Education Association, declared, "LB 1402 is a slap in the face to Nebraska voters who have made clear that they want to decide whether to use taxpayer dollars to pay for private schools."

There's also a constitutional argument. Section VII-11 of the Nebraska Constitution says: "Notwithstanding any other provision in the Constitution, appropriation of public funds shall not be made to any school or institution of learning not owned or exclusively controlled by the state or a political subdivision thereof ...."

Linehan contends that the measure is constitutional and that it will help families pick the best school environment for their children. She also points to recent increases in funding for public education in pooh-poohing concerns that LB1402 could deplete funds for public education.

Sen. Justin Wayne, who represents part of North Omaha, supported the law. "My district can't hope for things to get better tomorrow," he said during legislative debate.

Another supporter heads an organization that was formed to take advantage of last year's law. "In the short time since it's been in effect, (it) has been a beacon of hope for hundreds of families across the state of Nebraska," said Jeremy Ekeler, executive director of Opportunity Scholarships of Nebraska.

Support Our Schools, the coalition that launched the repeal effort, argues that taxpayer money should be invested in strengthening public schools. It points out that public schools are open to all children and subject to state curriculum standards, unlike private and faith-based schools. SOS also cites surveys that show a majority of Nebraskans do not support using public funds to pay for private schools.

## Roots of Justice History Goes Video

*Kathleen Rutledge*

If you're curious about what the Roots of Justice history project is up to, you can get a preview from video interviews with the authors that are being produced this summer.

Root of Justice is a history of race and racism in Nebraska that was started three years ago by NAACP Lincoln Branch and Nebraskans for Peace as part of a Truth & Reconciliation project. The history focuses on Native peoples, Latinos, African Americans, Asian Nebraskans and recent refugees to the state.

The video interviews are intended to pique people's interest in these histories. In the first one, Dr. Marty Ramirez interviews Dr. Ness Sandoval, a sociologist and demographer who wrote the Latinos chapter of the history. That video is posted on the project website: [rootsofjusticene.org](http://rootsofjusticene.org).

Soon to come is a second interview with Dr. Sharon Ishii-Jordan. It features broadcast journalist Andrew Ozaki interviewing her about the chapter that she and Dr. Heather Fryer wrote about the history of Asian Americans in the state.

On July 10, two more interviews were taped at the UNL College of Journalism and Mass Communication studio under the direction of Professor Barney McCoy. Journalist Kevin Abourezk and Dr. Gabriel Bruguier spoke with KU Assistant Professor Rebekka Schlichting about their work on the chapter that addresses the

history of Native peoples in Nebraska. Also on that day, Drs. Emira Ibrahimpašić and Julia Reilly talked with independent journalist Jazari Kual about their chapter on refugees in Nebraska. These two videos are expected to be ready for viewing by the fall.

Finally, author and community advocate Preston Love Jr. will sit for a video interview this fall about his work on the chapter covering the history of African Americans in Nebraska.

We are grateful to Professor McCoy and the College of Journalism and Mass Communication for their help and expertise in producing these short videos.

Meanwhile, representatives of Roots of Justice Nebraska have presented the project at two recent conferences: the Lincoln Human Rights Commission conference in May and an Empowering Families conference in Gering in June.

We get this question often: When can we read the history?

A: By the end of this year, we hope.

The five chapters, plus a conclusion by Dr. Paul Olson in consultation with Dr. Dwayne Mays, are slated to be posted on UNL Digital Commons, an online archive that is freely open to anyone. Although some chapters are complete or nearly complete, a couple are still works in progress. We have recently learned in talks with Digital Commons that the history will be posted in its entirety, rather than a chapter at a time. Once the book is online, people will be able to order on-demand copies either of the full book or of individual chapters in which they have a particular interest.

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## Justice in Action – A Productive Year

*Judy Kelly*

More than 1,200 people of faith congregated at St. Mark's United Methodist Church on Thursday evening, May 2, at the second annual Justice in Action Nehemiah Action Assembly for the largest Lancaster County nonpartisan gathering this year. The assembled people included several members of the NAACP Lincoln Branch, including Dr. DeWayne Mays, Jareldine Mays, Ricki Barber, Frank Edler and others.

Justice in Action is an interfaith, grassroots coalition of 24 faith communities representing 14,000 congregants in Lancaster County. Justice in Action strives to harness the power of organized people to address big community problems.

The purpose of each Nehemiah Action Assembly is to demonstrate to public officials that there is people power in support of specific actions proposed to improve the lives of community members. In May, Justice in Action presented three reports that were researched and proposed as specific solutions to issues raised by community members at a series of listening sessions held last fall. The three broad issues were: affordable housing, access to mental health services, and criminal justice reform.

### **Affordable Housing**

Through interviews with experts and a review of available research, the Affordable Housing Research Team discovered that 46% of Lincolnites who rent are paying more than they can afford (as defined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, affordable housing is that which costs no more than 30% of an occupant's gross income). Although representing only 5.3% of Lancaster County population, African American and Indigenous people represent 31% of those represented by the Tenant Assistance Project in Lancaster County Court in 2023.

Many factors are influencing the lack of affordable housing in Lincoln and Lancaster County, with increasing economic pressure felt across the board. Rising rents have led to economic strains on tenants, and eviction cases in Lancaster County increased by 76% from the end of 2021 to the end of 2023. Just last year, 1,309

children were evicted from their homes in Lincoln.

The solution proposed by Justice in Action is a Pre-Filing Eviction Mediation program such as those that have been successful in other communities. With the help of a neutral third-party mediator to help resolve disputes outside the courtroom, these programs save time, money, and stress for landlords, tenants, and taxpayers.

Lincoln City Council Chair Sandra Washington and Council Member Bennie Shobe—both of whom are involved in Lincoln's Affordable Housing Action Plan created in 2023—attended the Nehemiah Action Assembly and agreed to meet with Justice in Action to investigate Pre-Filing Eviction Mediation program models; that meeting is scheduled for mid-August.

### **Mental Health Navigation**

Six in ten Lancaster County households surveyed said mental health is their top health concern, with "healthcare system difficulty" cited as one of the top three barriers to accessing appropriate care.

Access to mental health care was first identified as an issue by Justice in Action from listening sessions in 2022. Community members continued to list it as a top concern in 2023. The proposed solution is a Mental Health Navigation system to assist individual who are not in a crisis with accessing appropriate care matched to their needs. A navigation system would provide a centralized and up-to-date database of resources as well as trained patient navigators who connect with their clients and loved ones. Systems such as this are proven to prevent crises and help clients achieve recovery.

Justice in Action hosted a Mental Health Navigation Summit that brought together health and human service providers from across the community in February 2024, which resulted in the formation of a Working Group to accomplish a shared success in helping Lancaster County residents navigate the mental healthcare system. The first Working Group meeting was held in June 2024.

### **Adult Pre-Trial Diversion**

The Lancaster County Jail is the front door to mass incarceration; no one is incarcerated in a prison without first stepping into a county jail. A growing number of people are locked up in the Lancaster County jail—many for nonviolent **cont'd on page 5**



## Justice in Action con't.

offenses—while community-based alternatives are underutilized. The overpopulation of the jail results in expensive, unnecessary costs to taxpayers (\$100+ per person per day), creates a crisis for the poor, and overwhelmingly affects the African American and Indigenous populations the hardest. This is an issue Justice in Action has been addressing since 2022.



On the morning of May 3 Justice in Action members gathered outside the Hall of Justice in Lincoln where Lancaster County Attorney Pat Condon was in meetings and challenged him to expand Adult Pre-Trial Diversion programs.

Diversion Programs take many forms, providing com-

munities with an alternative to jail while addressing defendant accountability. Lancaster County has several successful Diversion Programs in place, but they are woefully underutilized. Lancaster County Diversion Programs are proven to reduce recidivism and result in significant cost savings for the public compared to holding

someone in jail.

Adult Pre-Trial Diversion programs have a trifurcated responsibility/authority structure with funding by the Board of Commissioners, program operation by Community Corrections, and eligibility determination by the Lancaster County Attorney, Pat Condon. Both Commissioner Rick Vest and Community Corrections Director Jeff Kilpatrick support the solutions proposed by Justice in Action.

Condon has met several times with Justice in Action but has yet to agree to any expansion of eligibility. The County Attorney was unable to attend the Nehemiah Action Assembly so about 75 representatives of Justice in Action—including several NAACP Lincoln Branch members—staged an action the next day outside the County City Building where Mr. Condon was attending a meeting. This continues to be a challenging priority for Justice in Action.

The next Justice in Action cycle of Listening/Researching/Direct Action begins again in September 2024, with at least one Listening Session to be held for members of the NAACP Lincoln Branch. Please get involved by letting Dr. Mays or Ricki Barber know you'd like to attend a Listening Session, or contact one of the branch member Justice in Action Team Leaders: Judy Kelly (jak@judith-kelly) Dick and Eileen Vautravers (dvautravers@neb.rr.com). For more information, visit [justice-in-action.org](http://justice-in-action.org).

## Black History: Booker T. Washington, Oscar Micheaux, and Lincoln, Nebraska

Frank H. W. Edler

Imagination and the ability of making the past present are crucial for bringing Black history to life. So much of it has been erased, made irrelevant, or simply ignored. How many of us ever think of a Booker T. Washington or an Oscar Micheaux strolling down Lincoln streets? Yet they did. Washington, of course, was famous for being the first president of the Tuskegee Institute, now Tuskegee University, and one of the most prominent African American leaders during the end of Reconstruction and the rise of southern "Redemption." Oscar Micheaux continually reinvented himself starting as a railroad porter, then as a homesteader in South Dakota who turned into a novelist, and finally went into making Black films to become one of the most important makers, producers, and directors of early Black cinema

But I want to talk about how they came to take their walks in Lincoln and for Micheaux many towns in Nebraska.

As a young Black man, Oscar Micheaux was taken with Booker T. Washington. His mother, Bell Michaux (without the "e"), revered Washington as one of her heroes. Small wonder since Washington after his "Atlanta Compromise" speech in 1895, was hailed as the "New Negro" and held up as a role model. Micheaux, born in Metropolis, Illinois, on 2 January 1884 in a family of six daughters and five sons, left his family and moved to Chicago when he was 18. After working on an assortment of jobs, he saved enough money as a railroad porter in 1904 to buy a relinquishment, a forfeited homestead claim, on the Rose Bud reservation near Gregory, South Dakota. In this he was indeed emulating Booker T. Washington who made the following remarks in his 12 June 1902 commencement address at the University of Nebraska: "I believe that at present and during a number of years to come our people will find their greatest usefulness and their most secure foundation in the ownership and cultivation of the soil; for that reason in our education we emphasize especially agricultural training." He went on to say, "[t]hose who would save my people should use their influence to keep them on the soil and out of the large cities, especially the

large cities of the north. 'Back to the soil,' 'Back to the soil,' should be our constant motto."

The *Lincoln*

*Evening News* (*Lincoln Journal Star*) claimed it was the first time "in the history of the west, a colored orator has held the center of the stage at a state university commencement" (12 June 1902, p. 1);

however, that wasn't quite accurate. It is true that the University of Nebraska's senior class was the first to invite Washington to give a commencement address in February 1902, and, shortly thereafter, Washington accepted the invitation; however, the University of Iowa later in April also invited him to give a commencement address on June 11, the day before the graduation in Nebraska. University of Iowa Regent Parker K. Holbrook reassured everyone in a *Sioux City Journal* article (April 17, 1902) that "[t]here will be no trouble such as was experienced at Nebraska over Mr. Washington's selection as a commencement speaker."

The "trouble" that Regent Holbrook referenced was the story, covered nationally, that Nebraska seniors were "inclined to revolt" (*The Courier* in Waterloo, Iowa, February 15, 1902) in protest because of a Black commencement speaker. Some racist students at the University of Nebraska did object to the selection of Washington as speaker, but the senior class held a meeting on February 18 (Washington had already accepted the invitation) and ratified the selection of Booker T. Washington with a unanimous vote.

As it turned out, Washington gave both commencement addresses, one on June 11 at the



This is an advertisement in the *Atlanta Journal* (June 12, 1919) for Micheaux's motion picture

*The Homesteader* based on his novel by the same name. His novel *The Homesteader* was a revision of his first novel *The Conquest: the Story of a Negro Pioneer* (1913). "Photo-play" is an early word for a silent motion picture.

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## Black History con't.

University of Iowa and another on June 12 at the University of Nebraska. The difference between the two addresses is that the Iowa address was given later after the commencement ceremony while the one in Nebraska was given during the ceremony.

In Lincoln Washington's commencement address, entitled "The Race Problem" which lasted "over an hour" (*Omaha Daily Bee*, 13 June 1902), was a substantial presentation. It was given before a large, packed audience at the new Lincoln Auditorium at 13th and M streets. He was also feted later by Lincoln's Black community with a banquet attended by 125 guests including Nebraska Governor Ezra P. Savage and University of Nebraska Chancellor E. Benjamin Andrews at the Grand Hotel.

Let me return to Oscar Micheaux who, after his early success homesteading, bought another relinquishment north of Gregory,



Booker T. Washington in 1905

South Dakota. His holdings now totaled 320 acres. In 1910 he published his first article in the *Chicago Defender* entitled "Where the Negro Fails" encouraging African Americans along the lines of Booker T. Washington and Horace Greeley to "Go West, young man, and grow up with the country." He married Orlean McCracken, daughter of a well-known Chicago minister who disliked Booker T. Washington, and brought her to South Dakota; however, after experiencing the devastation of grasshoppers and drought, the birth of a stillborn child, and the desertion of his wife who fled back to Chicago, he gave up homesteading and began writing.

The summer of 1912 proved to be something of a dark night of the soul for Micheaux, and writing provided a way not only of staving off the darkness, but also of working through the trauma of loss in order to reinvent himself. Biographer Patrick McGilligan in his book *Oscar Micheaux: The Great and Only: The Life of America's First Black Filmmaker*, says Micheaux used James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (published anonymously in 1912) and Jack London's novel *Martin Eden* (1909) as guides for writing his own autobiographical novel.

In Nebraska the *Springview Herald* (Dec. 19, 1912) published an article about an early version of Micheaux's novel entitled the "Story of the Rosebud." The article stated that his work would be published in the *Saturday Evening Post* in serial form. The plot of the story, according to the *Herald*, would involve the "development of the Rosebud country from the time it was opened to settlement up to the present time;" however, nothing came of it. This was very likely an early version of what would become Micheaux's first novel *The Conquest: the Story of a Negro Pioneer* (1913) which is dedicated to "the Honorable Booker T. Washington." Finding a publisher, however, proved difficult, and all his attempts were rebuffed.

There was still the option of self-publication. Micheaux may have learned about it from a Chicago acquaintance whose father, John Hamilcar Hollister, a physician, paid for the publication of his autobiography *Memories of Eighty Years: Autosketches, Random Notes and Reminiscences* (1912). But what printing company to use? To make matters worse, he was out of money.

Biographer Patrick McGilligan says that Roy M. Harrop who

was "kicking around Gregory County [South Dakota]" directed Micheaux to "an established printing, lithography, and bookbinding firm in Lincoln, Nebraska, that would manufacture his novel for a price." Harrop, however, wasn't just "kicking around" Gregory County. He was the son of John Harrop, proprietor of the Capital Hotel in Lincoln, Nebraska, and involved in establishing the Capital Gold Mining and Milling Company in 1903 in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Joseph W. Wolfe, owner of the Lincoln Farmers' Meat Company, was president of the mining company. Roy Harrop, a graduate of the South Dakota School of Mines, was superintendent of the mines and later secretary and general manager of the company. He steered the Black homesteader to the Woodruff Press in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Micheaux, who had become friends with Ernest A. Johnson, president of the Dallas Bank in South Dakota, had to borrow fifty dollars from Graydon Jackson, Ernest's brother, to make the trip to Lincoln. Micheaux arrived at the Woodruff Bank Note Company in a new suit and struck a deal to print a thousand copies of *The Conquest* at seventy-five cents a copy, although he would have to provide one third of the amount prior to printing.


A shrewd businessman, Micheaux returned to Gregory and in April of 1913 began soliciting advance orders for his book at \$1.50 a copy. He knew how to use the press to help spread the word about his novel. For example, the *Saturday News* (Watertown, South Dakota) carried a short article on April 17 stating that Micheaux, "a colored resident of Dallas is having his book, 'The Conquest' published in Lincoln, Neb. It is a story of homestead life on the Rosebud lands, and is said to be very readable and entertaining." Amazingly, he gathered about 1,500 orders in a few weeks and was able to bankroll the printing of his book.

Ernest A. Jackson bought a fair number of the books and sent complimentary copies to friends and newspaper editors not only because he liked the story but also because the Jackson brothers, appearing as the Nicholsons in the novel, play a part in the South Dakota town rivalry between Dallas and Gregory. For example, Frank A. Kennedy, editor of *The Western Laborer* in Omaha, Nebraska, mentioned in his column "Kennedy's Dream Book" (May 31, 1913, p. 1) that he "received [the book] complimentary from Ernest A. Jackson, of Jackson Bros., Dallas, S. D., two weeks ago." He praised *The Conquest* and said "[i]t is worth a place in the library as an inspiration to young men, white or black, who have ambition and are willing to struggle and work and suffer in order to win." As McGilligan says of Micheaux, "[b]y August 1913 he was already running advertisements for the third printing of *The Conquest* in many black newspapers besides the *Chicago Defender*."

As it turned out, Micheaux did most of his own publicity, sales, and distribution not only of his first novel, but also for his second, *The Forged Note: A Romance of the Darker Races* (1915) published by the Western Book Supply Company in Lincoln, Nebraska. This was now his own

**THE  
FORGED NOTE**

AN UNUSUAL NOVEL



By OSCAR MICHAUX

Foremost Negro Novelist  
who also wrote  
"THE CONQUEST"

A story of the Negro and  
the South Today

Try a copy as a change  
from the usual line  
of Fiction.

On Sale in Tekamah This Week  
by the Author

Cloth 541 Pages    PRICE \$1.50

Advertisement for Micheaux's second novel *The Forged Note* in the *Burt County Herald* (Tekamah, Nebraska), September 22, 1916.

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### Black History con't.

company that he moved to Sioux City, Iowa, in 1916 to reside there. He placed advance advertisements in the newspapers of towns he visited for a few days or a week where he would sell his books. A few of the Nebraska newspapers where his ads appeared and Micheaux visited include *The Frontier* (O'Neill), the *Neligh Leader* (Neligh), the *Albion Weekly News* (Albion), *Newman Grove Reporter* (Madison), the *Crofton Journal* (Crofton), the *Hartington Herald* (Hartington), the *Nebraska Journal-Leader* (Ponca), the *Oakland Independent and Republican* (Oakland), *Tekamah Journal* and the *Burt County Herald* (both in Tekamah), and the *Blair Democrat* (Blair).

Micheaux was very successful in selling his novels. His third novel, *The Homesteader*, finalized in 1916-1917 in Sioux City, turned out to be an extensive revision of his first autobiographical novel *The Conquest*. The new novel was still autobiographical, but it now included more fictionalized parts, and it began to outsell his first novel.

In 1915 Noble Johnson, an early Hollywood Black actor who "specialized in cowboys and Indians," established the Lincoln Motion Picture Company in Omaha, Nebraska, one of the first all-Black film production companies in America, although it relocated to Los Angeles soon thereafter to be closer to the film industry. The *Omaha Monitor* hailed him in 1917 as "the world's greatest Colored Screen Star." Much of the motivation for early "race films" was to counteract Hollywood's negative racial stereotypes, especially D. W. Griffith's racist film *Birth of a Nation* (1915). Noble's brother, George P. Johnson, who worked as a postal clerk in Omaha, discovered Micheaux's novel *The Homesteader* and wrote a letter to Micheaux in May 1918 suggesting the novel as the basis for a film starring Noble. After extensive discussions and attempts between Micheaux and the Johnson brothers to work out a contract to make *The Homesteader* into a motion picture, the contract fell through.

It isn't clear why the deal fell through. Perhaps the Johnson brothers were uncomfortable with Micheaux's desire to come to Los Angeles to oversee the filming (Micheaux had no filming



The staff of the Lincoln Motion Picture Company (c. 1921); Noble Johnson, president of the company, is the figure in the center.

experience) or perhaps Noble gave in to pressure from Universal Studios that he work only for them and stop appearing in Lincoln Motion Picture productions – either way, the merger never happened.

This led to an amazing decision: Micheaux took it upon himself to produce the film. To make a long story short, the film version of *The Homesteader*, according to McGilligan, opened on February 20, 1919, in Chicago at the Eighth (Colored) Regiment Armory that could seat eight thousand, and the house was packed!

Micheaux went on to produce more than 44 films (a number are lost), successfully making the transition from silent to sound films. There's even more: later in the Forties he went on to write four more novels.

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## The Malone Center Celebrates Juneteenth at Woods Park

After the last Confederate army surrendered in Galveston, Texas, on April 9, 1865, Major General Gordon Granger of the Union army arrived in the same city on June 19 and issued General Order Number 3 which stated

[t]he people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation [Emancipation Proclamation], from the Executive of the United States all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired labor.

June 19 became Juneteenth, Freedom Day. It was officially recognized as a national holiday in 2021 when President Joe Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act; although, it was celebrated among African Americans long before it became a national holiday.

This year the Malone Center celebrated Juneteenth on Saturday, June 15 (noon to 4 pm), at Woods Park instead of Trago Park because the Malone Center is being rebuilt near Trago Park. The



Tristian Swift, vice president of UNL NAACP Chapter, asks a mom and her daughter a history question after spinning the wheel. Frank Edler is standing at the right. Micaela Fikar (with cap), who is an associate editor of this Newsletter, is standing at the Linked2Literacy table helping promote Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.



Rebecca Gonzales at the NAACP table with Jareldine Mays' spin-the-wheel game to answer questions about Juneteenth and Black history. Jake Kirkland, Jr. (with cap) is behind the wheel talking to a colleague.

change of location, however, did not dampen the enthusiasm of the celebrants.

Tables for service organizations from all over Lincoln were sheltered under a line of tents that formed a big "L." The sunny day made the food, entertainment, and games enjoyable for everyone. The celebration opened with a prayer by Pastor John Harris of Encouragement Kingdom Outreach. Brooklynn Lee England belted out songs; Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird joined in the dancing; and games like tug of war, red light-green light, and hula hoop relay provided fun for all.

As it does every year, the Lincoln NAACP Chapter set up a table at the Malone Juneteenth celebration to sign people up for the NAACP, inform people about the work of the Lincoln NAACP, and register people to vote. Rebecca Gonzales, vice president of the Lincoln NAACP Chapter arrived early to set up the NAACP table; Frank Edler, Newsletter editor, helped with the setup. NAACP members who participated at the table were Dr. Jake Kirkland, Jr., Dr. Thomas Christie, Daryl Fikar, and Neenah Queen. This year the table was shared with the NAACP University Chapter whose president is Linda Kuku and vice president is Tristian Swift.

## NAACP Lincoln Branch Community Scholarship Awarded to Josephine Alesio

*Jareldine Mays, Scholarship Chair*

Josephine attended Lincoln East High School and the Science Focus Program and was active with the NAACP Youth Council during the school year 2023-2024. She was a key participant for the NAACP Youth Council's candy bag donation for Malone Center, the Lighthouse, Bryan East and West and the 7th grade LPS Honors Cadre. All donations included a historical fact about the NAACP or Civil Rights Movement and the NAACP Lincoln Youth Council meeting details to encourage recruitment purposes.

Josephine will be attending the University of Nebraska- Lincoln and majoring in Chemistry.



Josephine Alesio

## Lincoln NAACP Committee Members

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