

Your Resident Historian

V I S I T U S A T Y O U R R E S I D E N T H I S T O R I A N . C O M

3 FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- American slavery was unlike any other form of slavery in the history of the world.
- The first slaves that arrived in Jamestown were not legally considered slaves for life.
- John Casor was the first legally recognized "slave for life". His owner was Anthony Johnson, one of the original 20 African slaves brought to Jamestown.

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FEATURED REVIEW: THE BLOOD OF EMMETT TILL

"From 1882-1968, 4,743 lynchings occurred in the United States. Of these people that were lynched 3,446 were black. The blacks lynched accounted for 72.7% of the people lynched. These numbers seem large, but it is known that not all of the lynchings were ever recorded." (Excerpt from "History of Lynching". <https://www.naacp.org/history-of-lynchings/>)

These statistics are harrowing, however, they were the reality of life for many African Americans following the end of the Civil War and through the Civil Rights Movement. One lynching in particular has been called the catalyst to the Civil Rights Movement, and it was that of 14 year old Emmett Till of Chicago. His brutal murder at the hands of two white men in Mississippi in 1955 shocked the world. His mother Mamie Till's decision to have an open casket for her son sent the Civil Rights Movement into overdrive.

The plight of African Americans during that time period was hard to hide when photos of Emmett Till's brutally massacred body were on the front pages of many local, national and international newspapers. His story has been told over and over again and has become even more relevant today as many African Americans have been killed at the hands of police or regular citizens

usually without just cause, and just as concerning, without justice.

Timothy B. Tyson's *The Blood of Emmett Till* sheds new light on this heart-wrenching story. He draws from an exclusive interview, and the only known interview with Caroline Bryant, the woman who accused Emmett Till of whistling at her in a convenient store setting off a chain of events that would spark change in this country. His book is thought-provoking and difficult to read because of the tragic details of Emmett's story.

The idea that a young boy from Chicago visiting his grandfather in Mississippi could be such a dangerous and life altering event shows how deep the evils of racism and bigotry ran in this country—and tragically still appear all too often. Tyson encourages us all to remember what a dark past this country has and to be careful as we are only mere steps away from repeating some of history's worst offenses. Furthermore, he warns us that "We are still killing black youth because we have not yet killed white supremacy." His purpose for revisiting this tragic story seems to be to incite action to finally end the centuries old legacy of racial hatred fueled by white supremacy. Readers will be inspired to step up and speak out against injustices of any kind.

UPCOMING ARTICLES AND REVIEWS

Coming up in July/August...

- Review of Stagville State Historic House in Durham, NC
- Review of the Culture Galleries at the National Museum of African American History and Culture
- Article: Slavery in the Chesapeake Region
- Article: Selective Independence: African Americans and the American Revolution

INTERVIEW WITH DR. TIFFANY KING PEOPLES

I cannot remember the first time I actually met Tiffany. I am sure it was at my Uncle Greg and her cousin Natalie's wedding. We were five years old. We ended up in the same kindergarten class that fall, and we became instant friends, or cousins by marriage, as we started to refer to each other. Somehow at five, I knew this girl was special. She was smart and I honestly just loved being around her.

When I decided that I wanted to feature stories of black excellence and/or people who have made contributions to the African American community in the monthly newsletter, I knew right away that I wanted to interview Tiffany first. When I think of what black excellence or black girl magic means, Tiffany embodies all of the characteristics that would be used to define either of them. I was really excited that she agreed to do the interview, especially because I know that she is very busy!

Dr. Tiffany King Peoples attended Spelman College and graduated in 2009 with a bachelor's degree in Biology. She attended Rutgers University – Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and defended her thesis in December 2014, receiving her PhD in Cell and Developmental Biology in 2015.



“Having a variety of different people in the workplace brings different perspectives and skills to make that environment thrive.”

DS: What sparked your interest in science as a young child?

TP: I believe what sparked my initial interest in science at a very young age was growing up in a small, semi-rural town where we went outside a lot to play and discovering all the living things that turned up in the backyard. So, I would say my first introduction to science before any formal science education was by way of exploring living things around me—like bugs or animals, whether I was afraid of them or just plain curious.

DS: How did your parents help to cultivate your interest or passion for science?

TP: I remember begging my mother to stop the car in the middle of the street after a hard rain to rescue a turtle that was crossing the street. She apprehensively indulged me. At this time, it was still legal to do stuff like this, so she stopped the car and put the turtle in some form of temporary shelter that we had in the car. We went home and I made it a home out of an old shoebox. She also inspected the little guy to make sure it wasn't the kind that snapped at you. I also remember finding frogs around the yard and becoming obsessed with keeping them and being sad to learn that they were better left outside because I couldn't keep them alive. Fortunately, I had parents that supported this type of curiosity, so I had several pets as a kid. As I got older and began taking science classes in school, I think trying to come up with answers to questions through experimenting caught my attention and I knew I wanted to study science when I got older. I looked forward to doing science fair projects with my Dad or older cousin. Overall, they were supportive of my curiosities, even when they were tired, or didn't want to have my “pets” in the house. My father was often the parent who helped with my science fair projects. This became a yearly bonding time for us, especially when I got into middle and high school. I took it seriously by then and won science fair ribbons. I even competed in the county science fairs.

DS: Why is it important to have diversity in the fields of science and medicine?

TP: I think, just with any field, organization, or institution, diversity is super important and even vital. I look at the diversity issue from a scientific perspective. If you think about thriving ecosystems around the world, they fair best when they are rich in diversity of life. Different species of living things ranging from the microbes to the larger animals all live together in a delicate balance, where each thing has its own role and contribution that helps the ecosystem work and sustain itself. If things are missing or start to decline, or if certain species start to overpopulate drastically, then this balance in the ecosystem suffers. Diversity in the fields of science and medicine can be looked at in the same way. If this happens naturally in the wild, then there's something to it. Having a variety of different people in the workplace brings different perspectives and skills to make that environment thrive. I also think of diversity as more than just the “college brochure” type of

diversity where there's one token person represented from different minority groups. Real diversity would not only include people from varying ethnic backgrounds, but also include diversity of thought, lifestyle, age, sex and gender. Having diversity in the types of people who work in the area of science and medicine is also important so that young people can see themselves represented there and believe that is a career that is obtainable for them. Lastly, diversity in clinical trial enrollees and patient samples in databases when developing drugs and therapies is also an important aspect to the field. Representation of people of color is often grossly underrepresented or absent altogether in certain clinical trials and drug development and this is a problem because these therapies and drugs may work differently, or not at all, in people with different genetic backgrounds.

DS: Do you feel more pressure to excel in your field because you are not only a woman, but a black woman?

TP: This is an honest feeling that I do experience often. During my undergraduate training I didn't really feel this way because I attended an all-women's historically black college. I was surrounded by so many beautiful black women who were excelling. However, this pressure surfaced while in graduate school when I was only 1 of maybe 5 black faces in my entire program. I often felt this undue pressure, which totally could have been self-imposed, but still real, to represent people like myself because this may be one of the few times these people in this place experience a young black woman in my position. I feel that pressure even more now in my current position as a post-doctoral fellow at the ivy league University of Pennsylvania. At this level of academia, and in this field in particular, there are not many faces that look like mine. I try not to obsess over this fact though because it will put undue stress on myself that my peers don't have to go through and it will put me at a disadvantage. I just reassure myself that I've come this far because of the hard work and time I have put in, so I deserve to be here!

"Just my existence in this space is enough to shatter certain stereotypes."

DS: Have you experienced racism or discrimination in your journey to pursuing your degree or in your career? If so, how did you handle that?

TP: I have been fortunate enough to not have experienced blatant racism during my career so far. However, microaggressions are all around. When these things happen, I usually use that experience as a teachable moment to change the narrative around certain negative stereotypes often bestowed upon people of color. Just my existence in this space is enough to shatter certain stereotypes.

DS: There is a legacy of mistrust of doctors in the black community. Some of which is due to the U.S. Public Health Service's Tuskegee study of untreated syphilis that spanned 4 decades. What would you say to members of the black community that still feel mistrust towards doctors or the medical profession?

TP: I would first acknowledge that what happened is something to be upset about because it was gross medical misconduct. I would then explain that like many things that happened to our ancestors in this country for many years, we have to move past that to excel and overcome our rough beginnings. We have done so much in this country with so little for a long time. If we don't continue to contribute, including going to the doctor when we need to, signing up for clinical trials if they will help our ailments, and become more trusting and open with our doctors, then we won't benefit from treatments and it will be to our detriment. I also charge our healthcare professionals with this burden as well to go out and canvass those communities and help to rebuild that trust. Meet them in the middle. I also charge our own youth to continue to pursue careers in the medical field to help change this narrative.

DS: If you could give one piece of advice to someone considering pursuing a terminal degree, what would you say to them?

TP: Keep going and never give up because if you have the drive, the passion, and the commitment you will finish that degree. I tell my mentees all the time, you don't have to be a genius to get a PhD in science, but you have to be relentless in your commitment to the science.



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**African American History
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Message From the Founder

The creation of this website and newsletter was born from a love of history and more importantly a love for our people. In studying African American history for the last five years I have come to learn that we are one of the strongest, most resilient people. The journey from Africa to present day America proves that when we work together and understand our strength, we can accomplish anything. I look forward to continuing to share my passion for our history and culture with all of you!

Thank you for taking the time to visit!

JUNETEENTH: OUR INDEPENDENCE DAY

Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, which was officially issued on January 1, 1863, did not actually free the slaves. Lincoln's hope was that by declaring that all slaves were free in states that were still in rebellion it would force those states to end the war and rejoin the union. This proclamation did not apply to the border states, nor did it apply to the states that were all or partly occupied by Union troops, because they were not considered in rebellion.

Although this proclamation did not free the slaves, it did transform the Civil War from a war to preserve the Union, to a war for freedom. If the Emancipation Proclamation was issued in 1863, why then do we celebrate African American liberation on June 19th? Well, that answer is simple. On June 19, 1865, Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, and announced that all enslaved persons were now free. There are several theories on why it took two years for news to arrive, and the most widely accepted explanation is that news travelled very slowly during that time.

Over the years, this day became known as Juneteenth. It has become a widely celebrated holiday across the United States, marked by family gatherings, speaking engagements, and other forms of celebration. The recognition of Juneteenth is becoming more and more popular. If you would like more information on Juneteenth, please read "What is Juneteenth?" by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., at <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/what-is-juneteenth/>.