

# The Phyllis Wheatley Times

"I AM COME THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE LIFE AND THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE IT MORE ABUNDANTLY." JOHN 10:10 KJV

Winter 2021

## Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, Inc. Leaders in African American and Women's History For over 116 years



Betty G. Francis, 1905-1915\*

Frances Boyce, 1915-1930\*

Julia West Hamilton, 1930-1958\*

Grace Hill Jacobs, 1958-1963\*

Florence Radcliffe, 1963-1966\*

Rosetta Mitchell, 1966-1973\*

Portia Bullock, 1973-1975\*

Ellen Epps Brown, January – June 1976\*

Rhuedine Davis, 1976-1977\*

Cirtie Mae Turner, 1978-1982\*

Victoria T. Street, 1982-1986\*

Alma C. Hawkins, 1986-1993\*

Lois B. Branich, 1993-1995\*

Shirley G. Mitchell, 1995-2004\*

Dorothy P. Patton, 2004-2007

Ernestine D. Lyon, 2007-2012\*

Patricia L. Plummer, 2012 – Present

\*Deceased

17 magnificent women who have led and continue to lead the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, Inc., through challenging times.

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DC One Fund #9033



### Our Mission

The mission of the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA is "to provide affordable housing and programs to women regardless of race, creed, or color." We provide permanent supportive housing to woman in need. We also provide outreach services to children in the community. Phyllis Wheatley YWCA operates as an independent living facility.

The PWYWCA continues its work as we march proudly into 2021. We thank you for continuing to support our efforts and invite you to visit our website [www.pwywca.org](http://www.pwywca.org) for more information.

## Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, Inc.

### Administrative Staff

*Director of Administrative and  
Clinical Services*

Pamela D. Hill, MSW LGSW

*Director of Community Relations*

Darlene I. Gripper

### Board of Directors

*President*

Patricia L. Plummer

*Vice President Residence*

Jessica Brewster-Johnson, Esq.

*Vice President Programs*

Brenda T. Fortenberry

*Vice Presidents Membership*

Karen M. Holliday

*Recording Secretary*

Tammy L. Hagin

*Corresponding Secretary*

Stephanie Minor-Harper

*Financial Secretary*

Vacant

*Treasurer*

Imogene Akins Hutchinson

*Chaplain*

Janet M. Vernon

*Historian*

Judith A. Webb, Ph.D.

*Members*

Turkessa L. Brown

Farita Davis

Alaina M. Harper, Ed. L.D.

Ambia Harper, J.D.

Alesha Holliday

Linda Irizarry, LGSW

Bernadette White

### Honorary Board Members

Reba M. Diggs

M. Frances Frazier

Theresa B. Leeke

Barbara J. March

Dorothy P. Patton

*"When black women stick together,  
we are the most powerful force in  
the universe."*

Alfre Woodard



# President's Message

Dear Friends:

Last year was one for the record books! We celebrated our 115<sup>th</sup> anniversary, endured a Pandemic of epic proportions, witnessed, and participated in a civil rights re-awakening (Black Live Matter), and voted in a historical election! Electing the first female, woman of color to the office of Vice-president of the United States of America! Since our establishment in 1905, the women of the Phyl-

lis Wheatley YWCA have shown resilience and perseverance in the face of change and 2020 was no different! In this issue of the PW Times, you will read about PWYWCA's place in African American and Women's history, become acquainted with one of PWYWCA's phenomenal women, and find out what we have planned for the coming year. While COVID-19 has decimated lives and communities all over the world, PWYWCA continues to provide a safe-haven for the women of Washington DC. Finally, I want to formally thank Julia Whitworth and Alex Feldman for their \$500 donation in memory of their daughter.

Thank you in advance for your continued support and we look forward to seeing you later this year.

Sincerely,

*Patricia L. Plummer*

Patricia L. Plummer

## Future Events

<b>May 2021</b>	<b>Fundraising Activity</b>
<b>July 2021</b>	<b>Virtual Mid-Summer Soiree</b>
<b>September 2021</b>	<b>Annual Prayer Event (Public Invited)</b>
<b>October 2021</b>	<b>Annual Meeting and 115<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration</b>

For additional information about upcoming events, visit us on our website, [www.pwywca.org](http://www.pwywca.org), Facebook or Twitter.

*Make a Difference!*  
**DONATE**

### MEMBERSHIP AND DONATION INFORMATION

- INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE PHYLLIS YWCA, INC.?
- ARE YOU A LIFE MEMBER WISHING TO PAY YOUR ANNUAL SUSTAINING FEE OF \$25.00?
- ARE YOU A PATRON WISHING TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP?
- ARE YOU INTERESTED IN MAKING A DONATION TO SUPPORT THE PHYLLIS WHEATLEY YWCA, INC.?

IF THE ANSWER IS YES, PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT [WWW.PWYWCA.ORG](http://WWW.PWYWCA.ORG) AND DO SO TODAY!

## 2020 Year in Review

- February 29, 2020 - Black History Month Program; A panel of distinguished educators from Howard University, D.C. Public Schools, and the D.C. State Board of Education discussed the novel, *The Water Dancer*, by author extraordinary and journalist, Ta-Nehisi Coates

- July 19, 2020 – Inaugural virtual Mid-Summer Soiree Talent Showcase; Awarded a total of \$11,500 in scholarships to six seniors who graduated from a D.C. public, charter, or private high school, and the Board's President awarded another \$1,000 in book awards to two students with a promising future

- Launched the *Reading Through the Pandemic Program*, gifted books and book lists to PWYWCA residents and Seaton Elementary Students

- Received donations to commemorate the 115th Anniversary, and support from the Combined Federal Campaign, D.C. One Fund, Giving Tuesday, and the scholarship program

- Distributed donated food and clothing to residents donated by Board Members and friends of the PWYWCA

- The Fresh Start Campaign provided bedding, pots, small kitchen tools and personal care items to residents

We thank all our partners, members, and contributors for making 2020 a successful year.

*"Be Passionate and move forward with gusto every single hour of every single day until you reach your goal."*

Ava Duvernay

## African American History Month

A January 16, 2016, Time magazine article, describes Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson's displeasure with the blatant underrepresentation of "black people in books and conversations that shaped the study of American history." To address this inequity Dr. Woodson and Jesse E. Moorland founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, now the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, (ASALH) on September 9, 1915.



Carter Godwin Woodson, 1910

ASALH's mission is to "promote, research, preserve, interpret and disseminate information about Black life, history and culture to the global community." In 1926, Woodson and ASALH launched "Negro History Week" to bring attention to his mission and help school systems coordinate their focus on the topic. Woodson chose the second week in February, as it encompassed both Frederick Douglass' birthday on February 14 and Abraham Lincoln's birthday on February 12. In 1976, President Gerald Ford Decreed Black History Month as a national holiday.

Dr. Woodson lived at 1538 Ninth Street, N.W., across the park from Phyllis Wheatley YWCA and regularly visited the cafeteria for his meals. He was also a regular fixture at many PWYWCA programs and events.

## Women's History Month

Women's History Month originated in 1981 when Congress passed PL 97-28, which authorized and requested the President to proclaim the week beginning March 7, 1982 as "Women's History Week".

After being petitioned by the National Women's History Project, Congress passed PL 100-9, which designated the month of March 1987 as "Women's History Month." President Reagan then issued Presidential Proclamation 5619 proclaiming March 1987 as "Women's History Month" and calling upon all Americans to mark the month with observances to honor the achievements of American women. *Source: Library of Congress Website.*

In honor of Women's History Month, the PWYWCA recognizes the contributions of the amazing women who are crucial to the PWYWCA's success. This month, we recognize, PWYWCA Historian, Board Member and Program Committee co-chair, Dr. Judith Webb. The following are highlights from an interview conducted by Alesha Holliday, PWYWCA Public Relations Chair, with Dr. Judith Webb in January 2021.



**Alesha Holliday:** Dr. Webb, please share with me your background, both personal and professional.

**Dr. Webb:** Having grown up within the shadow of the Howard University community and having been impacted greatly by its history of stellar Black graduates I chose the Mecca for my first two degrees. I chose the Catholic University of America to complete my doctorate. I was an educator in DC Public Schools for 30 years, beginning as a secondary teacher, moving to positions as citywide liaison for the new African-centered program, curriculum writer, school administrator and a central team leader. I have also served as the DC State Director of the International Thespian Society, a drama association.

## Phillis Wheatley's Poetry



### *A Hymn to the Evening* By Phillis Wheatley

Soon as the sun forsook the eastern main,  
The pealing thunder shook the heav'nly plain;  
Majestic grandeur! From the zephyr's  
wing,  
Exhales the incense of the blooming  
spring.  
Soft purl the streams, the birds renew  
their notes,  
And through the air their mingled music  
floats.  
Through all the heav'ns what beauteous  
dies are spread!  
But the west glories in the deepest red:  
So may our breasts with ev'ry virtue glow,  
The living temples of our God below!  
Fill'd with the praise of him who gives the  
light,  
And draws the sable curtains of the night,  
Let placid slumbers sooth each weary  
mind,  
At morn to wake more heav'nly, more re-  
fin'd;  
So shall the labours of the day begin,  
More pure, more guarded from the snares  
of sin.  
Night's leaden sceptre seals my drowsy  
eyes,  
Then cease, my song, till fair Aurora rise.

Source: *A Hymn to the Evening* by Phillis  
Wheatley | Poetry Foundation

*"History, despite its wrenching pain  
cannot be unlived, but if faced with  
courage, need not be lived again."*

Maya Angelou

**AH:** When did you start doing volunteer work and why?

**Dr. Webb:** I can recall being a teacher's helper in elementary school and enjoying it. I can also recall looking forward to assisting my Mother on the weekends as she volunteered at the church or a community festival. My penchant for volunteer work continued through college modeling H.U.'s motto, "In Truth and Service" and as a teacher sponsoring clubs and after-school activities.

**AH:** How and when did you become involved with the PWYWCA?

**Dr. Webb:** A next-door neighbor introduced me to the PWYWCA by involving me in several of its earlier youth activities. Much later, I learned more about the work of the Y from several of my teachers at Dunbar High School who were either officers or members. Throughout my career, I continued to meet those awesome ladies of the Y at work, church, city gatherings and even during a trip abroad. Ultimately, I became one of those awesome ladies and joined the Board of Directors and their Program Committee working with the Y residents, nearby students, and the Shaw neighbors.



**AH:** Why is it so critical to maintain the organization and continue its legacy of service to women in the Shaw Community?

**Dr. Webb:** Lady Truth speaks proudly to the legacy of the Y as it continues to provide service to women in the Shaw Community. History, too, has shown the remarkable strength and perseverance of the Y for 116 years. It is my hope that the historic PWYWCA will remain not only as a visual representation of what can be achieved but as a beacon of light providing hope for all!

**AH:** What are some of your favorite initiatives/programs that the Y sponsors now, or has sponsored in the past?

**Dr. Webb:** My new favorite educational initiative, is the publication and distribution of Places to Go and Things to Do, an activity and informational booklet created to help keep the students we serve academically engaged during the summer months. My favorite programs are the following seasonal events, **Winter** - New Year's Day Open House, **Spring** - Afternoon of Smooth Jazz, **Summer** - Mid-Summer Soiree, and **Fall** - Prayer Breakfast. Some of my favorite past programs include the Artsy Ladies, Women Alive, the Smoke Cessation Sessions and Music at the PWYWCA.

**AH:** Tell me about the Booklovers Club and your affiliation with the Seaton Elementary School Young Readers Program.



**Dr. Webb:** It is interesting to note that it was a late 19<sup>th</sup> century literary club, the Booklovers, who organized the PWYWCA in 1905. The Booklovers continued its tradition of providing an open forum for thoughtful discussion of selected works from current bestsellers to the great classics covering all subjects.

For over 15 years, our major goal for students in the Seaton Afterschool Program has been to promote independent readers who can respond to what they have read in writing and speech using creative and critical thinking.

**AH:** What is your vision for the future of the PWYWCA?

**Dr. Webb:** My vision derives its strength from a simple charge issued to the Y Board of Directors as the third President, Mrs. Julia West Hamilton, took office. "Let us know each other better, understand each other and work together in the spirit of unity effectively. Let us form a real bond of fellowship among ourselves and thus be more able intelligently and competently to carry out the purpose of the association." As our Y ancestors answered the call, we can do the same today. I share my vision with conviction that we become new age ambassadors of good will continuing to lead, and to honor our legacy of providing needed housing, community service and fellowship!