

**HARRIET TUBMAN: A NARRATIVE OF AFRICAN AGENCY FROM  
ENSLAVEMENT TO THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
FOR COLORED WOMEN**

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A Dissertation  
Submitted to  
the Temple University Graduate Board

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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May 2024

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this critical interpretive work is to demonstrate the leadership, guidance, and guardianship of Tubman as an Underground Railroad conductor, a soldier, a general, an herbalist, an organization founder, a women's rights campaigner, and a social worker. This study is a meta-interpretation and historical narrative account based on a montage of common facts about Tubman's life as re-examined in an Africological frame. By surveying the historical and social data related to Tubman's life this work lays the ground for an authentic account of the role Tubman played as an agent, in the Afrocentric sense, as she carried forward her self-given obligations to liberate her people. Using many of the commonly known experiences of Tubman's life, the author applied cosmological, epistemological, axiological canons and aesthetics, to reveal the critical core of an interpretive memorial narrative of Tubman as a social movement leader.

I dedicate this dissertation to my son Joshua.  
You have always been an inspiration for me.  
Thank you for all your love and valuable support  
throughout this process.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I thank God for giving me the opportunity to do this dissertation on Harriet Tubman.

I would also like to thank my committee members and my external reader.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This work aims to demonstrate the leadership, guidance, and guardianship of Harriet Tubman. Therefore, my dissertation is a narrative account of Tubman's montage of common facts about her life told through an Afrocentric framework. Tubman's birth name was Araminta Ross. Her family and friends called her Minty. Tubman was known for being compassionate and loyal to her family.

Ernestine Martin Wyatt, Tubman's great, great, great grandniece described her as being very caring and deeply connected to God. She always spoke to God, and she believed that he spoke to her also. Tubman would have one on one conversations with God. Tubman's faith was so innocent, and she believed whatever God told her. Tubman believed that God in her life helped her to be that woman that she grew in to be and be able to accomplish all the things that she was able to do throughout her life (Hof-Mahoney, 2021).

Tubman's courage and will to be free was evident when she was a child. When she was young, around five or six years old, her slave owner, overseers, and their wives would beat her continuously on the daily basis for the smallest things. They went out of their way to beat her because they wanted her to be submissive and to break her spirit and decrease her confidence. Fortunately, for Tubman, there was nothing that anyone could do to break her spirit. She always stood up for herself and she never wavered from her dream of achieving freedom (Woodard, 2022).

## **Statement of Problem**

Scores of articles and children's books have been published about Tubman's life. Each of them, in their own way, has sought to present aspects of her life experiences. Many of these resources focused on Tubman's work on the Underground Railroad, while others focused on her work during the Civil War. In this dissertation, I seek to discover more information about Tubman's achievements throughout her life. I will attempt to recover the symbolic role of Tubman and her achievements as a heroic agent in our historical and social imagination.

Hence, emphasizing her individual will in responding to the collective condition of Africans. Tubman was a liberator, an Army General and a movement leader. Tubman's ability to master so many careers without formal training and connect with so many people may come as a surprise to the average person. I will investigate her ability to inspire women and command an audience. Also, a careful examination of the iconic significance of Tubman as an example of liberation and freedom within an Afrocentric framework will be investigated throughout this dissertation.

## **Purpose**

This dissertation aims to produce an authentic account of Tubman as an agent, in the Afrocentric sense. I will explore Tubman's achievements through books, articles, journals, and videos. Did Tubman follow an Afrocentric framework when she conducted her self-obligated achievements? Research throughout this dissertation will examine Tubman's ability to fulfill the true meaning of Afrocentricity "is essentially a quality of perspective or approach rooted in the cultural image and human interest of African people" (Karenga, 1988, p. 404).

I will investigate Tubman's ability to educate and protect enslaved Africans during her journey's. Tubman became popular for her fierce ability to escape from slavery's chains and voluntarily go back to slave-holding states and lead many of her friends and family members to freedom through her work as a conductor on the Underground Railroad. I am seeking to account for Tubman's ability to incorporate the cultural and historical interests of enslaved Africans before and after she helped to free them. In this way we will be able to assess the social, political, and spiritual activities of Tubman. For example, I want to see if it is possible to write a narrative history, that re-invigorates the African American community's memory of Tubman.

### **Context and Orientation**

Tubman demonstrated the ability to independently act in the best interest of enslaved men and women as she liberated them from enslavement. She modeled safe and healthy practices, during her journeys. What I intend to do is to examine items that contributed to her national standing as a unique historical model in American history. There has been controversy over the number of enslaved Africans that Tubman assisted to freedom and there is still an unsettled idea about what image and place she should hold in our imagination. This issue is at the center of our own conception of American freedom.

### **Rationale**

Tubman is a singular hero, almost mythical, in the imagination of African Americans. She was the most threatening example of an economic and political assault on the system of enslavement in the American South. Tubman was willing to do everything she could to liberate herself from slavery, but that was not enough for her. After she liberated herself, she felt the need to go back to free her family and friends (Larson, 2004).

Historians refer to Tubman as Moses (Wendkos, 1978). To many Afrocentric scholars, she was the conductor of the Underground Railroad and the soldier-leader who fought against all enemies of enslaved men and women, not a replication of Moses. There is a long history of writers finding male leaders, heroes, and writers to serve as models for African and African American leaders. However, a plethora of resources will be reviewed to explore whether, African and African American women should be viewed in their own light with their own agency.

Female leadership has always been a debatable topic. Ivan Van Sertima author of *Black Women in Antiquity* maintains that since ancient times, women in Africa and the Diaspora have led civil operations, fought against outside military enemies, and oversaw building construction (Sertima, 1988). In recent years there has been a serious attempt on the part of scholars to consider the role that African woman played in history. Africologists have begun the process of unveiling the women who have been hidden or erased by the dominant historical narrative.

Nah Dove, a pioneer in African Womanism, not to be confused with Feminism, author a book titled *Afrikan Mothers: Bearers of Culture, Makers of Social Change* in which she undertook the task of demonstrating that women in Africa were the bearers of culture. Furthermore, Dove has argued that African female leaders represent the strongest historical example of agency centered leadership in ancient history. Queens in Africa were at the pinnacle of political leadership (Dove, 1998). Like female leaders in Africa, the achievements of women such as Tubman in this country has also been the topic of leadership among historians.

Janell Hobson, of “Harriet Tubman: A Legacy of Resistance” states that Tubman “is perhaps the most famous African American woman in the world, yet she is often overlooked or referenced as a mere footnote when events for which she is famous-abolitionism, women’s suffrage, emancipation, and the Civil War-are commemorated” (Hobson, 2014, p.1).

Tubman, whose name is significant in the role that she played in dismantling slavery, remains one of the most important people in the American nation. She is known for being the most iconic woman in American culture. Though Tubman is most famous for her successes along the Underground Railroad, many of her other achievements are less well known. Her work during the Civil War as a soldier and a General is often minimized. Thus, one of the objectives of this dissertation is to revitalize the memory of Tubman as a movement leader.

### **Historical Amnesia**

Tubman's legacy embodies many factors. She is and will always be known as a liberator and a leader. She was also a suffragist and a mentor. Therefore, my aim is to expose all heroic elements of Tubman's agency that contribute to the greatness and memory of Tubman, as expressed in the imagination of American history. Tubman exemplified the best example of agency, which is a person who can act efficiently on their own and for the interests of others.

One could say that in the first instance, running away to freedom was an act of self-interest agency but the overall course of Tubman's life was for the love of the people. Tubman's history can be traced back to her maternal grandmother whose name has disappeared from history. Her grandmother was taken from Ghana and brought to Maryland during the mid-eighteenth (Dunbar, 2019).

Kariamuw Welsh, author of *African Culture: The Rhythms of Unity*, referred to the enslavement of Africans in this country as the Maafa, or Great Destruction in Kiswahili language. As an enslaved African, Tubman's grandmother had to endure severe challenges when she was taken from her homeland and brought to Maryland in America. Like her grandmother, many present-day Africans in this country are the descendants of those who did not perish in the crossing. Other enslaved Africans died on transportation ships from dysentery and smallpox.

Their lifeless bodies were dragged to the top deck and viciously thrown into the sea (Welsh, 1989).

Tubman's grandmother fortunately did not succumb to death, but due to the germs in the air, her body became very weak. Her grandmother lost a lot of weight during that long treacherous journey from Africa to America. When she arrived in the United States, she did not physically look the same as she did since her departure from Ghana. Tubman's grandmother was forced into the institution of slavery. She was not alone. Unfortunately, other Africans like herself were forced to endure this brutal experience (Dunbar, 2019).

### **Life of the Enslaved**

Escape was at the top of enslaved Africans minds. Before the Revolutionary War, slavery was legal in all thirteen colonies and in Canada. A runaway enslaved African was just as likely to be captured or killed in the north and in the south. To avoid being captured, many enslaved Africans ran to Spanish Florida and lived with Seminole Native Americans. Others fled to Georgia and lived with the Yamasee Native Americans (Woodard, 2022).

Many of the Native Americans from various ethnic groups in the South, provided sanctuary for newly liberated Africans. There were also some enslaved Africans who decided to flee to Mexico, or the Caribbean (Woodard, 2022). Through the European slave trade, enslaved Africans were forced to take on a new identity and lifestyle that was unnatural for them. Before Africans arrived in America, they were captured and detained in dangerous slave dungeons. Many Africans perished in these slave dungeons and never made it to the New World (Cooper, 2009).

Everyday life for an enslaved African was a challenging experience. Most enslaved Africans such as Tubman experienced physical abuse, mental punishment, and family separation.

In addition to the abuse, that they had to endure, enslaved Africans also had to work long treacherous hours in the field and in the home. Plantation owners and overseers had different beliefs and responsibilities for enslaved men and women. Enslaved women worked as housekeepers and nannies for plantation owners and their children (Woodard, 2022).

In addition to these duties, enslaved women were forced to provide care for plantation owners spouses and children. Young, enslaved girls were often required to serve the demands of their slave owners. Enslaved women were humiliated and degraded on the daily basis. With little time they had, enslaved Africans also spent their evenings preparing food, tending to their own children, washing clothes, and trying to keep their living environment clean (Wendkos, 1978).

When Tubman's grandmother arrived in Maryland, she was sold to Atthow Pattison, a farmer who traced his roots back to his ancestors who lived in Dorchester County, Maryland. Pattison was a soldier in the Revolutionary War and a plantation owner. Often when slave owners purchased Africans, they gave them names of their own choosing. Tubman's grandmother had no control over her name nor her body. Thus, upon purchasing Tubman's grandmother, Pattison named her Modesty (Dunbar, 2019).

Modesty's courage and ability to withstand everyday life of enslavement was challenging. Modesty unfortunately, did not live to experience the joy of seeing Tubman free herself and so many other enslaved Africans. She would never know that little young Tubman would become an American champion who fought and demolished the institution of slavery (Dunbar, 2019).

When Modesty arrived in Maryland, there were many enslaved Africans living in the state. Historians do not know exactly when Modesty came to the United States, but it was sometime during the late eighteenth century. Though Modesty did not produce an autobiography

about her life, her story was passed down through the African oral tradition. Like thousands of other enslaved men and women who were taken from Africa to Maryland, Modesty most likely arrived with British rulers (Dunbar, 2019).

Enslaved Africans had to adapt to a foreign culture and a new name. Fortunately, many held on to memories from their African culture, by giving their children names of their African relatives. Modesty most likely lived with the Pattison family when she gave birth to her daughter Harriet (Rit). There is no information about Rit's father, but he could have been Modesty's slave owner (Dunbar, 2019).

Sexual abuse was customary during American enslavement. Plantation owners often impregnated their slaves without taking on the responsibility as fathers of their children. Slave owners did not want to acknowledge illegitimate children. Enslaved Africans were treated as property. They had no rights (Dunbar, 2019).

Rit worked on the plantation along with other enslaved Africans. While on the plantation, she met Benjamin Ross, another enslaved African and married him in 1808. During their marriage, they had nine children. Tubman was their fifth child. She was born around 1822 on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. There is a record of a payment used to pay a midwife who helped Rit give birth to Tubman in 1822. Tubman's siblings were Linah, Mariah Ritty, Soph, Robert, Ben, Rachel, Henry, and Moses (Hof-Mahoney, 2021).

In 1797, Atthow Pattison died, leaving Rit and her children to his granddaughter, Mary Pattison. He left instructions indicating that Rit must be given her freedom when she was forty-five. Rit's new owner, Mary Pattison, had no intention of ever losing her human property (Hof-Mahoney, 2021).

Mary Pattison married Joseph Brodess in 1800. Four male enslaved Africans lived at the Brodess farm. Rit toiled alongside them, never knowing that she and any children she might have in the future, had the legal right to exit slavery's unrelenting clutch. Mary gave birth to a son, Edward, before becoming a widow in 1801, when Joseph Brodess died. Welcoming baby Edward was a joyful experience for his parents, but that joy did not last too long because, shortly after, Joseph Brodess suddenly passed away in 1803, leaving Mary to raise the child as a single mother. Life without a husband and a child was particularly challenging for Mary (Hof-Mahoney, 2021).

By the time Rit was a preteen, Europeans considered her to be old enough to complete the tasks that were typical for grown women (Hof-Mahoney, 2021). Rit was given the responsibility of completing daily tasks of cooking and cleaning. It was also customary for Rit to cook daily meals for the Pattison household. She baked bread and plucked chickens every morning. She also had to do laundry, which typically took a couple of days to complete (Dunbar, 2019).

Laundry was a strenuous task for Rit. There were no washing machines or dryers available for her to use. She had to wash clothes by hand. Rit had a lot of domestic duties on her plate. As an enslaved woman, she was expected to complete these duties while also trying to find ways to tend to the Brodess family while struggling to spend time with her own family (Wendkos, 1978). Mary decided that getting remarried was necessary to properly take care of his family and manage her farm. She decided to marry Anthony Thompson. He came to this union with three young sons and nine enslaved Africans (Dunbar, 2019).

Rit had to tend to Mary, Edward, and now their extended family. Like many other enslaved women, she reluctantly, had to adjust to the Thompson's ways of life, hoping to avoid

any physical and mental abuse. Thompson's entrance to the family led to Rit meeting Benjamin Ross, one of his enslaved workers. Just when Rit began to adjust to the new blended family, Mary died. She never told Rit about her father's instructions to free her and any of her biological children when she reached age forty-five (Dunbar, 2019).

After Mary died, Anthony took over the property until Edward turned, twenty-one years old. In 1808, Rit and Benjamin were married. Marriage between enslaved men and women was not legally recognized. At times, they were required to receive permission to marry from their plantation owner. One ceremony that offered enslaved couples the opportunity to publicly celebrate their union was called jumping the broom (Parry, 2020).

The jumping the broom ceremony usually took place with other members of the enslaved community. Tyler D. Parry author of "Seven Every Black Person Should Do It: The Rise of the "Heritage Wedding" adds that the broomstick wedding's cultural importance skyrocketed by the 1990s. Not only were African Americans actively embracing the custom, but some entrepreneurs also established businesses that manufactured, crafted, and designed matrimonial broomsticks for Black couples using heritage weddings. The ritual's popularity coincided with a variety of cultural moments that helped garner more interest in ancestral traditions, including Afrocentrism, genealogy, a rising Black middle class, and a rapidly growing and financially robust wedding industry" (Parry, 2020).

The custom of jumping the broom varied slightly from place to place. Sometimes, the bride and groom held hands and jumped together to the sound of beating drums over brooms placed on the ground. Another approach was to have the bride and groom jump separately over a broom held about a foot off the ground. If either the bride or groom missed the jump, the other

would rule the household. If both partners cleared the jump, they would be equal decision makers (Wendkos, 1978).

In 1824, Edward married Eliza and moved to Bucktown, ten miles away from his stepfather's plantation. He set out to become a farmer in his own right and took his property, including Rit and her children, with him. When given permission, Benjamin Ross would have to travel ten miles on foot or wagon to visit with his family. Regrettably, the Ross family fell victim to family separation. Rit was called away from her children for long hours in the home. She was forced to serve her owner from the early morning hours until late in the evening. With her attention and energy directed elsewhere, she had to rely on her children to raise themselves in her absence (Dunbar, 2019).

During the early nineteenth century, most enslaved men and women who lived above the Mason-Dixon Line were free. Half of the formerly enslaved population in Maryland were free. Unfortunately, the other half of the population was enslaved. Slavery had always been a normal life in Virginia and Maryland. At least 60 percent of the entire U.S. slave population lived in these two states alone (Bradford, 2004).

Edward married Eliza Ann Keene in March 1824. They had eight children over a twenty-year period. Rit and the family had to learn to adapt to the demands of Thompson's growing family. Edward and his stepfather were not on good terms when he came of age, and these difficulties made it impossible for their slaves to live together. Rit and the family were forced to move away from Anthony's plantation to Edward's plantation when he turned twenty-one (Larson, 2004).

Though slaves had no power, they protested their condition in various ways, including flight, suicide, arson, murder, and mass rebellion. It may have been that the most frequent

individual response to enslavement was sluggishness and passivity. A more hopeful form of protest against enslavement was flight, either individually or in groups. The rates of flight usually depended more on the likelihood of success than on individual slave-owner relations (Karenga, 2010).

Nothing enraged and terrified slaveholders as much as outright rebellion; however, there were noticeably few slave revolts in North America and most of these involved only a handful of participants. Among the slave revolts in North America were the New York revolt of 1712, the Stono rebellion of South Carolina (1739), and the Gabriel plot in Richmond, Va. (1800). Because of the absolute certainty that they would be brutally repressed, southern slave uprisings were especially uncommon and small. Three slave rebellions stand out among all others in this country (Karenga, 1993).

The Denmark Vesey conspiracy in Charleston, S.C. (1822) was Vesey's plan, which may have involved as many as nine-thousand enslaved Africans. He called for the rebels to attack guardhouses and seize their weapons. He also told his followers to kill white plantation owners and overseers. Vesey also wanted his followers to burn down the city, and free enslaved Africans. However, his plan failed because a house servant reported him to their slave owner. Upon hearing about Vesey's plans, slave owners went on a mission arresting over one-hundred and thirty enslaved Africans. Sixty-seven of them were tried and convicted of trying to raise an insurrection. Vesey and thirty-four others were hanged (Karenga, 1993).

Nat Turner, an enslaved African, led an uprising in Jerusalem, Virginia (1831). Turner was born on the property of a prosperous small-plantation owner in a remote area of Virginia. His mother was an African native who shared a passionate hatred of slavery with her son. He learned to read from one of his master's sons, and he eagerly absorbed intensive religious

training. In the early 1820s he was sold to a neighboring farmer of small means. During the following decade, his religious attitude tended to approach fanaticism, and he believed that he was called upon by God to free enslaved Africans (Karenga, 1993).

He began to exert a powerful influence on many of the nearby Africans, who called him a prophet. A sign in the form of an eclipse of the sun caused Turner to believe that the hour to strike and lead a rebellion was near. His plan was to gather recruits, and then to proceed to the Dismal Swamp, thirty miles to the east, where it would be difficult to capture his force. On the night of August 21, 1831, along with seven fellow enslaved Africans, Turner launched a campaign of total annihilation, murdering his owner and his family in their sleep (Karenga, 1993).

Turner's insurrection was doomed from the start. A total force of three-thousand armed men (made up of local whites and the state militia) provided the final crushing blow. The insurgents were either killed or captured within only a few miles of the county seat. Many innocent slaves were massacred in the hysteria that followed. Turner eluded his pursuers before he was caught six weeks later. After Turner's was captured, he was arrested and lynched (Karenga, 1993).

Despite its defeat, Turner's rebellion ended the white southern myth that slaves were uninterested in or unable to mount an armed revolt. Moreover, for many years in African American churches across the United States, the name Jerusalem came to refer not only to the Bible but also covertly to the place where Turner was killed. The slaughter of hundreds of enslaved Africans in Virginia after the capture of Turner sealed in the minds of many African children the essential dream of freedom (Karenga, 2010).

While it is true that Turner was one of the most memorable anti-slavery heroes in history, it is worthwhile to mention that enslaved men and women fought against their enslavers in different ways. Women resisted slavery in different ways based on their roles during enslavement. For example, enslaved women poisoned plantation owners and overseers. They would also pretend to be sick, fake pregnancies, or destroyed crops (Karenga, 2010).

Fugitive advertisements would feature more enslaved men than women. The assumption was that enslaved men were more likely to escape or organize revolts against their enslavers. Enslaved women were less likely to leave because they did not want to leave their children behind. Tubman often worried about the journey's she made with enslaved women and children, because traveling with young children made it difficult to move as quickly and quietly during their journey's. Thankfully, Tubman and her passengers always made their way to the north. Or they would relocate to Canada safely (Larson, 2004).

Economics, culture, and law all combined and maintained the slave system. It was a white owned business centered on white supremacy. The slave system was at the heart of social relations in the colonial South. The cotton industry became very profitable when Eli Whitney patented the cotton gin in 1793 (Gates, 2020).

There were fewer women and children than men and some traders may have felt that women could be physically detained without using shackles. Africans were treated terribly. White ship crews abused them. Men, women, and children suffered with little or no food, water, or fresh air during the Middle Passage (Gates, 2020).

In the Americas, slavery started during the late fifteenth century, when the Spanish colonized islands in the Americas. Due to the success of the cotton gin, slavery expanded throughout the Deep South and the West. Africans from different ethnic groups arrived in

America aboard various slave ships. Their lives changed drastically, and they were not truly aware of European intentions. The life of enslaved men and women was certainly a barbarous experience. It was customary for plantation owners and overseers to whip enslaved men, women, and children on the daily basis (Gates, 2016).

The official launch of the Middle Passage began in 1518 to supply laborers directly from Africa to satisfy the new demand for labor created by the commercialization of the Caribbean sugar industry. The first voyage from Africa directly to the Americas destined for the Caribbean occurred in 1525. Over the whole period of the transatlantic slave trade, thirty-six percent of people transported were women, and they were used primarily as field hands, domestics, and sources for sexual gratification or partnership (Gates, 2020).

It started with sugar. Europeans' quest for sugar, led to the enslavement of Native Americans to work on plantations throughout the Caribbean and Brazil. This nation was a wilderness made by white enslavers rather than Native Americans looking for financial gain. Africans were sent to work on sugar plantations, particularly in the Caribbean and Latin America (Gates, 2020).

The English dominated the North European slave trade and supplied the English and Spanish colonies and plantations with labor. The Portuguese dominated the southern slave trade and supplied the plantations in Brazil. Initially, Europeans and then Indigenous peoples of the Americas supplied the bulk of labor in the early years. But by the 1560s, the enslavement of Africans for labor increased in the Spanish Empire due to the declining availability of Indigenous peoples (Gates, 2020).

Historians estimated that between 1450 and 1850 over fifteen million people survived their kidnapping in Africa brought to labor in the Americas. Less than five percent came to the

United States. Though the United States Congress outlawed the transatlantic slave trade in 1807, the law did not entirely stop the flow of Africans into the country. By 1825 the southern states had the largest enslaved population in the world. The population of Africa stagnated at one-hundred million between 1650 and 1850, while that of Europe and Asia doubled and tripled (Gates, 2020).

Fertile and productive areas of West Africa were empty as people were stolen and killed through military devastation. Women from West African communities became those most likely to be enslaved. The main victims were the healthy robust population ages fifteen to thirty, the strongest of the community and the next generation of leaders, scientists, nation builders, healers, and teachers, impacting the development of African society and its continent. This process also began the devaluation and exploitation of women in African societies. As Europeans enforced a new capitalist system, they also enforced a new gender and status system (Karenga, 1993).

In America, enslaved women were doubly burdened. By 1662, African slavery was firmly established in Virginia, with other colonies to follow. There the nature of slavery in America was distinctly gendered, and that year all children, regardless of patrimony, born to enslaved women were held in bondage, or free only according to the conditions of the mother (Welsh, 1989). It is believed that the first New World sugar mill was created during the early sixteenth century in Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic), and the first enslaved Africans were taken there during this period (Gates, 2020).

In England, sugar became a popular product. Between the seventeenth and nineteenth century, sugar consumption in England increased significantly. By the early eighteenth century, England natives were eating over thirty thousand barrels of sugar a year. To comply with the

need for this product, a continuous demand for more enslaved Africans was mandatory to cultivate sugarcane (Karenga, 1993).

Slavery in the United States started during the seventeenth century. The most quoted arrival date is 1619, when many enslaved men, women, and children were forcibly taken from Africa and transported on ships and taken to Virginia. It is also possible that Black men, women, and children came to the United States around 1608. There is also some confusion about the position these Africans had when they first arrived (Karenga, 1993).

Historians believe that these enslaved Africans were indentured servants. In the beginning, indentured and enslaved men and women were forced to work as domestic servants in the north and field hands in the south. Occasionally, as skilled artisans in both regions. Many people question whether Africans were directly involved in the transatlantic slave trade. It is true that Africans were participants in the transatlantic slave trade, and they did enslave each other before Europeans arrived. But it is also important to mention that African enslavement was different from European enslavement (Karenga, 1993).

Enslavement between Africans was considered an institution based on servitude, which took place because of them becoming victims of prisoners of war or as a form of discipline for a crime. This form of slavery was similar but more severe than slavery during the Middle Ages in Europe. African slavery was, however, different from slavery in North America. In Africa, it was customary for Africans to live with their slave owner's families and many of the men married their slave owner's daughters. Enslaved Africans also had the ability to enhance the political and economic status and they did not experience the degradation that occurred during European enslavement (Karenga, 1993).

The number of mortality rates were much higher under European enslavement. There were also higher levels of brutality against Africans during European enslavement. Also, European enslavement led to the loss of skilled workers, leading to a decrease in scientific, technological, economical, and cultural progression in Africa. In addition to high levels of mortality rates and economic reduction, European enslavement also led to a decrease in economic and political development in Africa and an increase in development of Europe (Karenga, 2010).

In the Diaspora, enslaved men, women, and children were forced to work as domestic workers in plantation houses. Others tended gardens, maintained the grounds, and cared for the livestock. Most, however, toiled long days in the fields. Plantation owners employed overseers and drivers to supervise enslaved Africans as they worked throughout the day. Large plantations needed the work of enslaved Africans to remain successful (Karenga, 1993).

Tubman spent most of her enslaved years working in the fields, on corn, wheat, and rye plantations. She also did domestic work in the home, for the Brodess's, and their children. In addition to working for the Brodess family, Tubman was often hired out to work for other slave owners. These slave owners were abusive and negligent (Wickenden, 2021).

Drivers usually were enslaved men who had demonstrated an ability to lead others. They most often worked as assistants to overseers, especially on the larger plantations. On smaller farms, drivers managed enslaved men, women, and children on their own. Profit at any cost was the landowners' goal. Overseers and drivers had the power to discipline enslaved men, women, and children in any way that would make them docile yet highly productive.

Tubman was sent away to work for other slave owners when she was six or seven years old. Tubman often talked about how she missed her mother very much during this period and she

cried every night. Tubman was also hired by an abusive woman known as Miss Susan. This woman was raised to believe and to act upon the belief that an enslaved child could be taught to do nothing and would do nothing except under the sting of the whip (Larson, 2004).

At the time, Tubman was a young girl taken from the field and her family into the plantation home to do housework for Miss Susan and her family without being told how to do the work appropriately. Miss Susan had her move chairs and tables into the middle of the room, sweep the carpet clean, dust everything, and put them back in their places on several occasions. These were the directions given, and Tubman was left alone to do her work. If Tubman fell asleep from exhaustion, and the baby woke up and cried, Miss Susan would grab the nearby whip and beat her again. The whip was in sight on the mantelpiece, as a reminder of what was to be expected if the work was not done well (Bradford, 2004).

Tubman had to set the table for breakfast, in the mornings, and do other housework. While she attempted to complete her chores, dust settled on the chairs, tables, and the piano. Miss Susan became very upset, and she punished Tubman with more severe beatings. Miss Susan wanted Tubman to work for her, but she did not want to treat her properly. She was barely allowed to eat, and she often had to share table scraps with Miss Susan's dogs to survive. Working for Miss Susan was an example of the type of abuse that Tubman was forced to endure during enslavement (Larson, 2004).

While working inside the plantation home, Tubman would get sick very often, and return home to her mother so that she could nurse her back to health. Upon her recovery, Edward never missed a chance to hire her out to work for cruel slave owners, to earn extra money. These separations from her family left a heavy toll on her. She suffered from sadness and terror throughout her childhood (Larson, 2004).

In addition to working in the home, Tubman enjoyed working in the field. She never missed an opportunity to collaborate with her dad. While collaborating with Ben, she learned the ways of the woods. Benjamin told her that if she ever got lost, to look for trees with moss because those trees always grow on the north side of town. This experience taught her how to survive in the woods. Also, while collaborating with her father, Tubman learned how to drive an oxen, carting, lifting wood, plowing, and pulling boats filled with products (Larson, 2004).

Tubman experienced various forms of hardship throughout her childhood years. When she was twelve years old, an overseer threw a two-pound weight at Tubman, causing a severe head injury. The overseer intended to hit the enslaved male but hit Tubman instead. Fortunately, she was wearing a head covering, which was embedded deep into her skull after she was struck. Tubman told an interviewer that the object broke her skull. Fortunately, Tubman was wearing a shawl at the time of the incident and a piece of the shawl was ripped from her head. But Tubman believed that the shawl saved her life because it covered her forehead. If her forehead was not covered, she could have died (Larson, 2004).

The head covering protected her from total brain damage. Her injury from the incident left her with recurring unbearable headaches that never went away (Dunbar, 2019). Tubman believed that her head injury opened a direct line of communication with the spiritual world. The injury also brought Tubman closer to God. She often prayed to God for guidance and assistance when making important decisions (Hof-Mahoney, 2021).

Tubman had frequent headaches and seizures, due to her injury. She would often doze off to sleep during conversations. She had a scar on her temple from the iron weight. During the long, painful months of recovery that followed, Edward tried to sell Tubman. No one was interested in purchasing a disabled enslaved man, woman, or child (Woodard, 2021).

She was in a coma for a while after the incident. As time passed, Tubman improved significantly, but she never fully recovered from this injury. For the rest of her life, she suffered from seizures, headaches, and narcoleptic episodes that would repeatedly overcome her. Tubman worried about the sleeping spells that she experienced. The sleeping spells were sudden, and it was a constant part of her life (Hof-Mahoney, 2021).

Despite experiencing such a severe injury, Tubman would often discuss details of her injury through storytelling. She could tell a tightly structured, entertaining story of adventure and quick-witted problem solving that charmed and disarmed the listener, thus resisting editorial interference. We might recognize Tubman's resistance to her listener's interference when she retells the story of the origins of her disability through muted humor and irony. As she reminisced, Tubman believed that her hair and a shawl saved her life (Hof-Mahoney, 2021).

Also in 1840, Tubman convinced Brodess to allow her to hire herself out while she paid him sixty dollars per year. Tubman was able to pay him his fee, while generating dependable income for herself. After paying Brodess, she kept any additional funds to herself. Tubman earned enough money to buy two oxens. The oxens increased her earning potential because she could plow more fields and drag more timber (Wendkos, 1978).

Edward was financially irresponsible. He made dreadful business decisions, and he needed money. Other than leasing Tubman out to abusive owners, to make extra money, he alleviated his financial burden, by selling some of his enslaved Africans. The first person he sold was Tubman's sister Mariah. Within twenty years, he sold two more of Tubman's sister's Linah and Soph to a chain gang. This devastated Tubman and her family. Unfortunately, she never saw her sisters again (Larson, 2004).

Tubman could remember the cries of her sisters as they were pulled away by a chain gang. She never wanted to experience having any of her loved ones sold away. In addition to Edward, other slave owners sold their enslaved Africans at slave auctions. They were advertised and purchased when they first arrived or periodically by plantation owners, who no longer saw a need for them (Wendkos, 1989).

Other than selling enslaved Africans, many slave owners would also rent them out to make a profit at a slave auction. A popular holiday for these auctions was on January 1<sup>st</sup> (New Year's Day) used to be widely known as "Hiring Day" or "Heartbreak Day," by African American abolitionist journalist William Cooper Nell because enslaved men and women spent New Year's Eve waiting to see if their owners were going to rent them out to someone else (Waxman, 2019, p.1).

Accounts of the cruelty of Hiring Day come from records left by those who gained their freedom, hoping and praying that whoever hired them would allow their families to stay together. Enslaved men and women physically resisted being rented out on this day. Those who resisted going were beaten and arrested until they agreed to be rented out. Enslaved Africans were well dressed respectably when they attended these auctions. This style of dressing was a tactic used to make enslaved men and women look more attractive to buyers looking to purchase enslaved Africans (Waxman, 2019).

If Tubman suddenly fell into a deep sleep, she needed to be hidden from view. Despite her precarious situation, Tubman would not let fear change her purpose. Yet her memory was remarkable. She was physically strong from years of hard labor in the fields. Tubman was also determined to make her dream of freedom come true. Without warning, she would fall into a

deep sleep, during which she could not be awakened. These episodes varied in length, from several minutes to more than an hour (Hof-Mahoney, 2021).

Sudden deep sleeping occurred frequently throughout the rest of Tubman's life. Typically, after a while, she would awaken on her own and continue with what she had been doing or saying before falling asleep. Tubman also began having prophetic dreams and visions. Modern medical knowledge indicates that Tubman's sleeping spells may have been seizures. However, she believed these dreams and visions were signs from God to help guide her through her journey's (Hof-Mahoney, 2021).

Tubman felt that these dreams were God's way of communicating with her. Whenever Tubman had an issue, she would always call on God for help. Tubman told a friend that she had a vision about enslaved men, women, and children soon becoming free. She often dreamed of flying over fields, rivers, mountains, and towns, looking down on them. Tubman also experienced visions and heard music during her dreams (Wendkos, 1978).

The performance of history was always at the center of Tubman's life. In 1844, she changed her first name from Minty to Harriet in honor of her mother, when she married her first husband John Tubman at the age of twenty-two. She also changed her last name to Tubman. John was born to free parents. He and all his siblings were free. Half of the Black population in Dorchester County was free from 1830 forward. Others bought their freedom after years of demanding work (Hof-Mahoney, 2021).

Enslaved men and women were granted their freedom when their masters died. Other owners would manumit, or free, them after they had worked a certain number of years. Slavery followed the status of the mother. If a woman could prove that a mother or grandmother had been free, she could prove herself free. Enslaved Africans in the south usually would typically

obtain their freedom on their forty-fifth birthday. This rule did not apply to Rit because she was now fifty-seven and still enslaved. After investigating the will, Tubman and Benjamin questioned Brodess about his refusal to comply with the will, but he became offended and refused to grant Rit her freedom (Lemmons, 2019).

Unfortunately, since Rit had been passed as property from owner to owner, it was unclear whether she could still be free. The will was considered an unofficial document in Brodess's eyes. In 1849, he experienced a terrible fever and passed away. Due to poor business decisions, he left his wife and children with a huge amount of debt. His death made it likely that property would be sold, especially since enslaved families were often broken apart to cover financial burdens (Wickenden, 2021).

John was born to free parents. He and all his siblings were free. Half of the Black population in Dorchester County was free from 1830 forward. Others bought their freedom after years of hard work. Some enslaved men and women were granted freedom when their masters died. Other slave owners would manumit, or free them after they had worked a certain number of years. Slavery followed the status of the mother. If an enslaved woman could prove that a mother or grandmother had been free, she could prove herself free (Karenga, 1993).

During the antebellum period there were many free Africans in the north. Tubman worried that Eliza would sell her and other members of her family. Tubman found out from other enslaved Africans that she and two of her brothers, Harry, and Benjamin Jr., were going to be sold to another plantation. After hearing this news, she attempted to escape with her brothers in 1849. She wanted John to go with her, but he was afraid. When Eliza realized that they were gone, she posted a three-hundred-dollar reward for their capture. She also posted an advertisement for Henry, Ben, and Tubman in hopes of finding them (Wickenden, 2021).

Eliza was willing to give a hundred dollars for each of them if they were caught out of state and fifty if they were caught in Maryland. However, her brothers quickly had second thoughts about continuing their escape. The brothers did not agree with Tubman about which direction to run. After several days, they were afraid of being caught. They were lost and wanted to go back. Since many enslaved Africans were hired out to work on other plantations, their absence had not been noticed right away, which would reduce the amount of time they had been missed.

Also, enslaved men and women were hard workers. They hoped that if they provided a believable explanation for their absence, the consequences would not be too severe. Tubman did not want to turn back. She argued with her brothers, but they forced her to return. They went back, and Tubman returned with them (Wickenden, 2021).

Escaping from slavery was a scary experience. Whenever an enslaved Africans attempted to run away, they would have been whipped or beaten to death in front of other enslaved men, women, and children. In addition to this vicious act, there was always a possibility that they could be sold to another slave owner who lived far away from Maryland. Tubman's life could be even worse and more confining than before. However, she believed that she had a right to be free or die. Tubman was willing to die rather than being enslaved for the rest of her life (Lemmons, 2019).

Tubman planned her escape around October or November in 1849. She asked herself many questions about how her mother and brothers and sisters would get along in her absence. Would the entire family now be split up? Tubman asked herself, would she have been sold and separated from her husband if she stayed? Tubman knew she had to take an active role in her own destiny (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman was not certain how to leave word about her plans. She decided to confide in a friend named Mary. Mary worked in the Big House and she was trustworthy, but Tubman could not find a way to be alone with her friend. She finally began to walk toward the house. She would sing a spiritual religious song, with words that described that she was leaving for the Promised Land (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman had a beautiful, distinctive voice. She grew up attending religious services on Sundays. There was in Tubman a streak of obstinance that allowed her to be relentless if she wanted to achieve an objective. Tubman could not take the risk of telling anyone that she was leaving again, especially after the recent incident with her brothers. She wanted to tell her mother, but she knew her mother's grief might draw attention. Unable to tell anyone directly about her plans, she managed to leave a message to friends at the plantation by singing a spiritual that carried a secret message (Wendkos, 1978).

Tubman sang a goodbye song to let them know that she was leaving. Tubman was successful in her escape due to the skills she learned from her father on the timber field. Benjamin also taught her how to read landscapes. Tubman learned the skills necessary to make her a successful conductor on the Underground Railroad. She learned how to survive outdoors and how to read the landscapes.

Tubman left her husband in the fall of 1849 and traveled at night on foot. Having left a message for the people she cared most about, Tubman ran away that night, moving as swiftly as she could and staying well hidden. Tubman knew her way through parts of the woods. She managed to make her way through that first night without encountering anyone. To stay in the right direction, she followed the light of the North Star that shone dimly through the cloudy sky (Wendkos, 1978).

Tubman worked with many abolitionists who were very beneficial to her. Average Black and white citizens who opposed slavery facilitated their escape to freedom. They offered them food, shelter, clothing, and valuable information to ensure their safe travels northward. Tubman learned how to work quietly and study the stars in the sky. She was an astronomer (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman was also an expert at walking quietly through the fields and woods, surrounded by darkness without any guidance. She created a map in her mind, remembering safe routes from Maryland to Delaware and Pennsylvania. Tubman relied especially on the Black community to protect her while she conducted her rescue missions. Tubman also got assistance from members of the Underground Railroad as she traveled north (Karenga, 2010).

### **The Underground Railroad**

The Underground Railroad was the first Civil Rights Movement in this country. It was the first-time whites and Blacks came together to support a common goal. Members of this movement were determined to do everything possible to end slavery. No one knows for certain, but it is believed that at least one-hundred thousand enslaved Africans traveled the invisible rails of the Underground Railroad. Many enslaved Africans made it to freedom, however, most did not (Woodard, 2022).

The Underground Railroad was real, although it was neither underground nor a railroad. It was a system of freeing and transporting formerly enslaved Africans to the north. Tubman also learned survival skills from Black watermen, sailors, and river workers. The Underground Railroad adopted railway terms. Enslaved Africans were given the title or cargo. Routes were called lines. Stopping places were titled stations (Karenga, 1993).

Underground Railroad members who helped runaways obtain freedom were called conductors. Tubman's parents were also agents on the Underground Railroad. They worked with other agents to develop escape routes, leading to freedom. She spent her entire childhood and young adult years absorbing information from them about how the Underground Railroad worked. Tubman mentally developed a map about how to find different escape routes (Wickenden, 2021).

Underground Railroad agents were breaking the law by helping enslaved Africans escape to freedom. If they were caught, they faced beatings, torture, and even murder. There are many stories about how the title Underground Railroad came about. Some believe that the Underground Railroad began as early as 1810. This was an organized escape system that operated by word of mouth, the railroad helped slaves from the south escape to northern states and Canada (Woodard, 2022).

Underground Railroad members were writers, publishers, speakers, and politicians, but most of all, they were people of action, just like Tubman. She became their fierce ally and lifelong friend. The title Underground Railroad could have come from an enslaved Black man from Kentucky who escaped in 1831. His master believed that he had taken a road underground during his escape (O'Neal, 2021).

Another story about the Underground Railroad appeared in 1839 when a Washington, DC reporter wrote in a local newspaper about a tortured slave who revealed he was supposed to go north on a railroad that ran underground to Boston, Massachusetts. Slaveholders, of course, looked upon the Underground Railroad as organized theft (O'Neal, 2021).

The skills Tubman learned from Black watermen sailors and river workers were beneficial to her. She relied on their assistance to get messages to shelter her and her passengers.

These connections spread to Philadelphia, New York, Boston and beyond. There was a large fugitive community of free Black men and women on these ports. They prevented slave catchers from re-enslaving Africans. The day that Tubman escaped she her life was at risk, but she was a woman on the run, and she was determined to achieve freedom (Larson, 2021).

The Preston area in Caroline County had a large community of Underground Railroad workers. This may have been Tubman's first stop. From there, she made her way north to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. When she arrived in Philadelphia, Tubman felt relieved, but it did not last long because her family and friends were still enslaved (Wickenden, 2021).

She sang a goodbye song to let them know that she was leaving. Tubman was successful in her escape due to the skills she learned from her father on the timber field. Benjamin also taught her how to read landscapes. Tubman learned the skills necessary to make her a successful conductor on the Underground Railroad. Skills such as outdoor survival, reading the landscape, and learning how to adapt to life in the woods (Larson, 2004).

Rit also taught Tubman skills to help her successfully lead enslaved Africans to freedom. She had a lot of strength and courage. Tubman most likely adopted this trait from her mother. Rit was never afraid to speak up for herself and her family. When nearby slaveholders wanted to buy Tubman's brother, Rit hid her son in the woods for about a month but eventually, the slave owners found Harriet's brother (Dunbar, 2019).

Rit stood up to the slave owners and told them that they could not take her son and she threatened to physically fight back. After her courageous efforts, the slave owners left and did not take her son. This act of resistance requires a lot of strength and courage. Tubman worked with many abolitionists who had connections and led enslaved Africans to free towns and cities, involving very few underground tunnels and actual railroads. Instead, average Black and white

citizens who opposed slavery facilitated slaves' escape to freedom, offering them food, shelter, clothing, and information to ensure their safe travels northward (Dunbar, 2019).

Tubman secret network was created by individuals who were unhappy with the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793. Whatever the origin, the Underground Railroad was real, although it was neither underground nor a railroad. The Underground Railroad was a system of freeing, transporting, and placing formerly enslaved Africans in the North or Canada, (Karenga, 2010).

The Underground Railroad adopted railway terms. Enslaved Africans were given the title, cargo. Routes were called lines. The stopping place was titled station. And people who helped the runaways along the Underground Railroad were called conductors (Woodard, 2021).

There are many stories about how the title Underground Railroad came about. The title could have possibly come from an enslaved Black man from Kentucky who escaped in 1831. His master believed that he had taken an Underground Road. Another account appeared in 1839, when a Washington, DC reporter wrote in a local newspaper about a tortured slave who revealed he was supposed to go north on an underground railroad to Boston, MA. Many slaveholders, of course, looked upon the Underground Railroad as organized theft (O'Neal, 2021).

The Preston area in Caroline County had a Quaker community which was probably Tubman's first stop. From there, she made her way north to Philadelphia, PA. She crossed into Philadelphia with a feeling of relief and awe and recalled the experience years later. She missed her family dearly and she decided to become a conductor for the Underground Railroad and go back and free her family friends (Wickenden, 2021).

Underground Railroad agents were breaking the law by helping enslaved Africans escape to freedom. If they were caught, they faced beatings, torture, and even murder. At that time, slavery was legal in the south. Agents were writers, publishers, speakers, and politicians, but

most of all, they were people of action, just like Tubman. She became their fierce ally and lifelong friend (O’Neal, 2021).

Tubman learned how to work quietly and study the stars in the sky. She was an astronomer. Her rescue mission cost between thirty to one hundred dollars for each mission. Tubman was an expert at walking quietly through the fields and woods, surrounded by darkness without any guidance. She created a map in her mind, remembering safe routes from Maryland to Delaware and Pennsylvania (Larson, 2004).

Whenever an enslaved Africans attempted to run away, they would have been whipped or beaten to death in front of the other enslaved men, women, and children. In addition to this vicious act, there was always a possibility that they could be sold to another enslaver who lived far away from Maryland. Tubman’s life could be even worse and more confining than before, and she would never see her family again (Larson, 2004).

Tubman knew how to free her passengers from enslavement by protecting them from danger, and using techniques that would work in their best interest, during her rescue missions. While leading them to freedom she provided psychological and cultural resources to ensure their freedom. Psychologically, Tubman would often remind them about the importance of their freedom and motivate them to continue with her through their journeys. The skills that she learned from Black watermen, sailors, and river workers were of great benefit to her. Tubman relied on their assistance to get messages to shelter her and her passengers (O’Neal, 1992).

There was a large fugitive community of free Black men and women on these ports. They prevented slave catchers from re-enslaving formerly enslaved men and women. The day that Tubman escaped her life was at risk. However, Tubman was a woman on the run, and she was determined to achieve freedom (Larson, 2004).

Achieving freedom was a wonderful experience for Tubman, she could not enjoy it without her family and friends. In 1850, Tubman became a conductor for the Underground Railroad. She went to Maryland and freed many enslaved Africans. While leading them to freedom Tubman provided psychological and cultural resources to ensure their freedom. Tubman would often sing to her passengers to keep their spirits up and she would tell them interesting stories about her life during her journeys (O'Neal, 1992).

Tubman liberated at least seventy enslaved Africans, and she made at least thirteen rescue missions, freeing her family and friends. She also gave them instructions to at least fifty other enslaved women and men giving them a rubric on how to free themselves. Tubman also provided additional resources so that they could provide for themselves and their families after their escape (Hill, 2020).

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Tubman was remarkable in her quest for freedom and liberation. In addition to risking her life freeing enslaved men, women, and children, she was also a soldier and a nurse during the Civil War. Tubman was also a spy, and a scout, during the war. She became the first woman to lead a major military operation in the United States when she successfully rescued more than seven-hundred fifty enslaved men, women, and children during the Combahee Ferry Raid in 1863 (Lemmons, 2019). Many of these formerly enslaved men became soldier and helped the Union win the war (Hof-Mahoney, 2021).

#### **Major Historical Accounts**

There are also many monuments to Tubman throughout the country. In Manhattan, New York, there is a Harriet Tubman Memorial statue. The statue was created by Alison Saar in 2008. The statue displays Tubman as escaping even though there are roots pulling on the back of her skirt. These roots represent the remnants of slavery. Her skirt is covered with images representing enslaved men, women, and children who may have been passengers during her rescue missions.

There is another statue of Tubman in Ypsilanti, Michigan, which displays Tubman and an enslaved child. This depiction is an example of how she led her passengers to Ypsilanti along the Underground Railroad. The statue was created by Jane DeDecker, in 2006. She traveled north, to Ypsilanti, which was a popular stop along the Underground Railroad, helping enslaved Africans escape from the South to freedom. In addition to paintings and statues, there are also murals of Tubman throughout the country.

In Cambridge, MD, there is a mural of Tubman created by Michael Rosato in 2019. The mural shows Tubman reaching out her hand towards enslaved Africans, encouraging them to join her on a journey to freedom. There is a mural of Tubman in Oak Park California created by Shane Grammer in 2020. There is an Underground Railroad statue displaying Tubman leading enslaved Africans to freedom in Battle Creek, Michigan. Ed Dwight created this statue, in 1993. There is a statue of Tubman in Boston. This statue was created by Fern Cunningham in 1999. It shows Tubman leading a small group of enslaved Africans up north.

Each year on Memorial Day weekend in May, people go to the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in Auburn to honor Tubman's life and her achievements. The Harriet Tubman House is a museum and education center. Another museum has been erected in Cambridge, MD.

### **Harriet's Personal Memory**

In addition, the church Tubman attended in Canada placed a historical marker to remember her. Many public schools bear Tubman's name. Year after year, schoolchildren learn about her by watching the plays and movies about her life. This statue in the south end of Boston honors Tubman in her role as an emancipator of slaves. Tubman's legacy is evident in paintings and mural depictions.

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The methodology used in this dissertation is Afrocentric in the sense that I am seeking to discover how African American people have viewed the role of Tubman in history. She made an Afrocentric commitment to African Americans throughout her life. This is not merely a study of Tubman's life, but rather an examination of her public memory in the lives, experiences, and ordinary pursuits of African Americans.

I will use written materials that were created by Black and non-Black authors. For example, if a statue of Tubman exists, I would like to discover not only the creator of the statue but the public record of responses to the statue. My specific method will be to apply cosmological, epistemological, axiological, and aesthetic concepts to Tubman's narrative life.

The epistemological issue in the narrative performative includes how we assess truth and knowledge from the standpoint of virtue and value. The axiological issue allows me as the researcher to uncover from books, articles, papers, and rituals the record of sages, wise women, and men, to ascertain the value of human exchanges that Tubman engaged in. One knows that the leadership of scores of different personalities and characters must have been difficult at times. This is where the quest for good and right conduct becomes important.

Finally, as part of the methodological procedure I shall seek to find any representational forms that reflect Tubman's human behavior. This is the aesthetic issue that lies at the bottom of all measures that seek memory. Kariamuwelsh called these senses. Welsh's version of senses has been exhibited in her choreography through polyrhythms and repetition (Asante and Welsh, 1989).

One rarely thinks of Tubman in an aesthetic sense, yet the work of Welsh can be used as a lens through which we can view Tubman. The total sum of Welsh's ideas of aesthetics is that in the African American community there may be multiple levels of rhythms, numerous social and cultural centers, various dimensions of activity, repeated events, curved, rounded, and indirect actions rather than linearity. Finally, Welsh argues for holism, and epic memory (Asante and Welsh, 1989).

### **The Africology Discipline**

As an Africologist, I made an Afrocentric inquiry into the historical phenomenon of Tubman from the standpoint of African people's agency. What, for example, is the purpose of Tubman's representation in the history of the Civil War and how she is represented within the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) movement. Key issues that frame the Africological enterprise are cosmological, epistemological, axiological, and aesthetic issues (Mazama, 2001). These four issues also frame the life and experiences of Tubman.

Cosmological issues are those phenomena that are expressed in literature, myths, and legends of achievement. Thus, one weaves the entire phenomenal experiences of Tubman throughout the textured discussion of her life. Tubman is an important person in the history of America and her status as a near mythical heroic figure falls properly in line with the aim to see her as a cornerstone of discipline. Looking towards the cosmological issues in my study I demonstrated how Tubman represents a cosmological phenom (Mazama, 2001).

Epistemology deals with the question of knowledge and how we ascertain how to evaluate what is true in our experiences. Tubman's search for freedom was itself the lifeline for an epistemologically correct assessment of her role in liberating Black people. Here I showed that Tubman's narrative of agency lines up with ancient African female leaders (Mazama, 2001).

## **Afrocentric Approaches to Collecting Data**

Dove has argued that location is a principal arena for Afrocentric discovery. Where is the creator of an object located? Where is the viewer, or user of an object located culturally or psychologically? Questions such as these are at the foundation of my approach to the physical and material evidence of Tubman's life. In this regard methodology falls within the general category of being qualitative rather than quantitative.

I proposed questions of the documents and experiences that forced me to see if the response, the memory, of reviewers will be dislocation, disorientation, or relocation. This means that I examined each case for centering or decentering. Hence, this is a contextual examination dealing with who, what, where, and why. Afrocentric methodology requires me to understand the three transcendental themes of human relations and supernatural relations, and human relations to self. I will see how these themes relate to the memory of Tubman.

My observations and readings have already produced general ideas about approaches to study. For example, the field of historical memory relates specifically to someone like Tubman whose work and image inspired the African American community. One area examined is the role of Tubman as a leader. There are elements in her direction, authority and knowledge that suggest something about the theories of womanism (Dove, 1989).

Nah Dove, one of the leading authorities on African womanism, has said in "Defining a Mother-Centered Matrix to Analyze the Status of Women," (2002) that women in traditional African societies were bearers of culture. Thus, in this dissertation I examined how certain characteristics of women as leaders were expressed in Tubman.

## **Samples of Women Leaders**

Harriet Tubman's heritage recalls the great achievements of her junior African woman leader, Yaa Asantewaa, who was born eighteen years after Tubman in 1840. Yaa Asantewaa, as a young woman, may have heard from some of the foreigners who had entered the Gold Coast, about the exploits of the Black woman in America who had led many men and women to freedom. Like Tubman, Asantewaa was an inspirational leader among the Asante people (Sertima, 1984).

Queen Nanny from Jamaica, a maroon leader, was born in 1686 was also from the Asante people. Any opinion on this aspect of the legacy of Tubman would only be speculation but it is obviously a convenient way to see Tubman's Asante's heritage of courage. In addition to Asantewaa and Queen Nanny, there were other African women worthy to be mentioned. For example, Kandake (Queen) Amenirenas of Meroe fought against the Roman empire. Kandake Amenirenas was a great leader who ruled from 40 to 10 BC over the Kush Kingdom of Nubia (Karenga, 2010).

Relations between the Romans and Kandake Amenirenas were confrontational. After the Romans invaded Egypt in (30 B.C.E.), the Meroites took statues of the Roman Emperor, Augustus, and sacked Philae and Aswan. As a form of revenge, the Romans sacked Napata in B.C.E. but," Kandake Amenirenas fought back and drove the Romans out of her empire. Kandake Amenirenas changed the borders between Egypt and Nubia, winning back Nubia until the "conquest of Nubia by Axum in 325 C.E.," (Karenga, 2010).

## **Memory**

Memory is a foundational concept in this study. It is generally accepted that in African culture ancestral respect is at the core of memory. Some people refer to Tubman as a motherly

figure because there is something in her performative history that relates to nurturing of the masses. Memory has helped to create a common vocabulary of action, a standard of excellence, and a theme for discourse. Afrocentrists have developed a line of memory that puts Tubman at the center of African American culture. She has become not just a legendary leader, fighter, and strategist, but a metaphor for heroism, public discourse, and social morality. Despite her warrior spirit she is a symbol of peace in the African American community.

Tubman's name and history of speaking up for the poor and destitute added to her memory. The memory of Tubman serves as a site to reflect on other issues in the Black community. I think the power of Tubman's life as a metaphor is that our current political reality is about the resistance to social and political authorities. I believe that the Afrocentric lines of inquiry will reveal how Tubman performed these activities in her life.

Self-reliance was her doctrine. Escaping may be said to be a radical demonstration of what an individual could do. Tubman's work and memory, created in oral conversations, and through the circulation of texts during and after her natural life, became the fighting standard.

### **Creating a Legacy**

Tubman was able to achieve many things during her life. After experiencing a devastating head injury, her family and friends were worried about her health. However, Tubman was able to defeat the odds and accomplish her goals despite her head injury. In fact, Tubman developed a closer connection to God after her injury (Bradford, 2004).

Tubman believed that God came to her through visions. One vision depicted a man on horseback galloping to round up slaves. Ear-piercing shrieks and the clapping of horse hooves filled her ears. It was an unforgettable nightmare. But she also had vivid visions of flying across

fields and mountains, seeing women in white who would pull her across the landscape (Bradford, 2004).

Another addition to her legacy was when she made a bold move to escape from slavery. Tubman feared that she might be sold to a new slave owner. The idea of being separated from her family forever frightened her. When her sisters were taken away and sold to another slave owner Tubman and her parents were terribly upset. Tubman did not want to experience that terrible feeling again. She prayed her owner would be more Christian and set her and her family free (Lemmons, 2019). She believed he had no legal right to keep her and her family in slavery. However, her slave owner refused to give them their freedom.

Tubman believed that escaping would be necessary to maintain her dignity and independence. She was bold enough to escape and she never got caught. African spiritual traditions were passed down from a community of African men and women on these landscapes. Tubman studied the canals, rivers, and streams in these landscapes (Larson, 2004).

Black Jacks navigated throughout Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic seaboard. With their assistance, she studied the night sky and most importantly, the placement of constellations. She used all those skills to navigate on the water and land. Tubman learned how to navigate through the landscapes at night. The landscapes were her school (Larson, 2004).

Shifting the scope of inquiry into this topic is Barbara Brooks Tomblin's *Bluejackets and Contrabands: African Americans and the Union Navy*. Rather than concentrate exclusively on Black men who joined the Union navy, Tomblin examines the broader interaction of the Union navy with smuggled slaves who sought freedom within Union lines during the Civil War.

Tomblin also seeks to connect the study of African Americans and the Union navy more broadly

with the scholarship on freed people in the Civil War South. Decades before the Civil War, desperate for personnel, the navy, unlike the army, enlisted free Black men (Brooks, 2009).

With assistance from her parents, other abolitionists, Black Jacks, Black watermen, sailors, and river workers, Tubman successfully escaped and followed the North Star constellation. There are many myths about Tubman's journeys on the Underground Railroad. Some captains initially refused freed people refuge on their ships. The Union navy was much quicker than the Union army to recognize African Americans as an asset to the war effort and adopt policies to engage them (Larson, 2004).

Runaways were familiar with the Big Dipper. The shape of this cluster of stars reminded them of a long-handled utensil, made from a hollowed gourd, that they used to collect and drink water. Enslaved Africans would study the gourd in the night sky, paying particular attention to the two stars at the edge of the cup. Runaway slaves traveled north, toward a free state or Canada. Many would find several ways to locate the North Star. This helped them travel in the right direction and successfully achieve their freedom (ONeal, 1992).

Her other networks were free and enslaved African women on the markets on the waterfront, and vendors. These women carried passes to leave Maryland and they would give the passes to freedom seekers like Tubman, who would make their way to Philadelphia. Free African female abolitionists were very instrumental in providing support to Tubman not only during her journey to freedom in the north, but also during her years as a conductor on the Underground Railroad, it's crucial to address the role of the numerous African female abolitionists on the docks who often were not given due recognition and credit for their work (Larson, 2004).

Many free African Africans lived in Philadelphia and became members of the abolition movement. Philadelphia had such a large African community. Formerly enslaved Africans would

make this city their first destination when they escaped from slavery. Though newly free Africans were happy to finally experience freedom in northern cities like Philadelphia, there were also many enslaved Africans who never left the plantation because they were afraid of getting caught (Woodard, 2022).

Some historians believe that she led enslaved Africans through Delaware County during her route to Philadelphia. During this period, Tubman was an abolitionist and active conductor on the Underground Railroad. She was a leader known for her ability to escape from enslavement and fearlessly go back to the south and lead her friends, parents, and many others to freedom stands out among many of her peers for her ability to escape from slavery's chains and to voluntarily return to the south and lead dozens of her friends and family members to freedom (Larson, 2004).

Between her travels, Tubman continued to do domestic work. She also took tailor jobs, to earn money for these missions. When the Fugitive Slave Act was enacted in 1850, Tubman had to take extra precautions during her missions to avoid getting caught. During her journeys, Tubman reminded her passengers of the danger that they may face if they were caught (O'Neal, 1992).

Tubman carried a gun during her journeys to the south for protection and to keep her passengers in line. During one of her journeys, an enslaved African decided not to continue, and he wanted to go back to the Plantation. Tubman refused to let him go back. She could not let fearful people who insisted on going back to the plantation jeopardize the lives of everyone else in her group (O'Neal, 1992).

Tubman believed that if she let one passenger go back, their slave owner would beat them until they could easily pry this information from his lips. Tubman believed that if one enslaved

African was scared and weak enough to give up and go back, he would certainly be weak enough to give bounty hunters information regarding her escape trail (O'Neal, 1992).

Free Black men and women were required to carry a pass to leave Maryland. Freedom seekers would turn those passes in, and the passes would be returned to the market women, and the passes would say Baltimore on them. Tubman's friends and family worked and lived on the waterfront and other communities on other port communities throughout the Chesapeake. Tubman stayed with an abolitionist the first night of her escape who gave her a written document with a couple of names on it (Bradford, 2004).

During her journey to freedom, abolitionists had Tubman do chores to distract bounty hunters. She was also told to clean the yard, to distract anyone from noticing her as they walked by. During the evening, they would cover Tubman and hide her in their wagon, as they made their way to the next Underground Railroad station. Typically, she would sleep during the day and resume her journey to freedom during the night (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman continued to travel in this fashion. She walked mostly at night in order to avoid being captured. The people at whose homes she stopped gave her food, shelter, and a place to rest. Some were able to provide transportation for a small distance. Each abolitionist gave her the name and directions to another place to stop. When traveling alone, Tubman glanced up at the night sky to maintain her northbound progress (O'Neal, 1992).

On her journeys, Tubman had to trust people she had never met. She was amazed at the kindness of those who would help strangers even while placing themselves in danger. Traveling alone through unfamiliar land was difficult, but Tubman kept heading north, talking, and praying to God to help her find the way to the next safe place (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman rejected the teachings of the New Testament that urged enslaved men, women, and children to be obedient and she found guidance in the Old Testament tales of deliverance. She remembered a recurring dream she had before her escape. In this dream, Tubman was flying over large areas of unfamiliar landscapes (Wickenden, 2021).

After traveling many miles by foot, Tubman reached a river she needed to cross. Tubman did not think she had enough strength left. Before sinking into the river, Tubman realized that she remembered seeing this landscape in a dream she had (Bradford, 2004).

The ladies who helped her along the way looked like those she had seen in the dream. One obvious similarity was that they wore white, but she also believed that the women wore the same white clothing and resembled those she had seen in her dreams. These similarities had a profound effect on her as she traveled north. She walked from a slave state into Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a free state. When she arrived safely in Philadelphia, she started a new life of freedom (Bradford, 2004).

Philadelphia was a place known for providing jobs and schools for free Africans. Though racism was prevalent, Philadelphia had the largest population of free Africans in the country. She later described the moment when she finally crossed into free territory: When she crossed that line, she looked at her hands to see if I was the same person. There was such happiness over everything; the sun came like gold through the trees, and over the fields, and she felt like she was in Heaven (Wickenden, 2021).

When Tubman arrived in Philadelphia, she went to the Philadelphia Vigilant Committee (PVC), founded by abolitionist Robert Purvis. The PVC provided clothes, food, medical, money, and legal help to free Africans in need of assistance. Tubman considered herself to be a woman

of purpose. She made herself known to every freedom fighter in Philadelphia. Philadelphia was a prominent national center for the abolitionist movement (Wickenden, 2021).

Enslaved Africans born elsewhere, who had come to Philadelphia seeking freedom and raise their families. Tubman was familiar with the abolitionist and Underground Railroad networks in not only Philadelphia, but also throughout Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, and Maryland. Abolitionists such as William Still, and many others were fascinated by the story of her life. After achieving freedom, Tubman was determined to find ways to financially support herself (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman took jobs working as a cook and a house cleaner at hotels in Philadelphia, and Cape May, NJ. She also used her expertise as a major source of fundraising, both to support her daily livelihood which included a variety of entrepreneurial endeavors. All the wages she earned when she was working were poured into her rescue operations (Hobson, 2014).

Tubman compared herself to a prisoner being released after decades behind bars, who returns to find that his house has been pulled down and replaced with another. Her next goal was to free her family and friends. Abolitionists felt that Tubman's plan to go back was suicidal. She told Still about her plans to join the other abolitionists on the Underground Railroad. There were conductors working to liberate enslaved families and Tubman wanted to join them. However, unlike the Underground Railroad, none of them were as outstanding in legend of reality as Tubman (Wickenden, 2021).

Though some formerly enslaved Africans from Maryland successfully escaped from slavery, very few returned to the plantation, risking capture and enslavement, even lynching, to help others seek their own emancipation. When she decided to become a conductor, many abolitionists tried to dissuade her from doing it because they thought that Tubman would be

captured and killed, but she was deeply religious, and she believed that God would protect her during her travels (Hof-Mahoney, 2021).

Still tried to talk her out of it, but Tubman missed her family and friends, and she was determined to free them. She went back to Maryland in 1850, for the first time after her escape. Tubman created a communication technique to notify her family and friends that she was coming (O'Neal, 1992).

In ill health, and with a forty-thousand-dollar bounty on her head, she returned to the south several times, leading many enslaved families to freedom. Tubman could not remember how many times she had risked her own life to save others. To date, every enslaved African that she agreed to help escape made it to their destination safely (Dunbar, 2019). Tubman seldom appeared on plantations without enslaved men and women having knowledge of her arrival (Larson, 2004),

Tubman often pretended to be elderly and walked bent over or with a cane in public. She learned how to avoid attention as she made her way through enemy territory. On one occasion, after buying two chickens at a market, she noticed that a former overseer was in the area. To avoid the possibility of getting caught, she quickly released one of the chickens she was carrying, and pretended to chase it, creating a comic kerfuffle that allowed her to get away unnoticed, even though many people were looking for her (Bradford, 2004).

During her journeys, Tubman was often faced with the possibility of being captured. To avoid getting caught, she would pray, and God would protect her. As a child, she had been told Bible stories by her mother, and developed a passionate faith in God. Poems, books, and articles include Tubman's undaunted experiences often speak of her work as a conductor on the Underground Railroad and her strong resistance to enslavement (O'Neal, 1992).

Tubman preferred to organize ways to let enslaved Africans know that she was on her way to free them by singing a spiritual hymn, as a relatable form of communication. Tubman would also use communication with enslaved and free men and women, by letting them know that she was coming and to prepare for those who wanted to leave (Lemmons, 2019).

Tubman conducted a rescue mission to free her niece from the auction block in Dorchester County. Kessiah and her two children, six-year-old James Alfred, and baby Araminta were supposed to be sold at an auction in Cambridge, Maryland in December. Her husband, a free African man named John Bowley, made the winning bid for his wife. When night fell, Bowley took the family in a small boat, up Chesapeake Bay, sixty miles to Baltimore. Tubman was waiting for them in the city and escorted them to Philadelphia (Bradford, 2004).

Tubman successfully rescued her niece from being auctioned off. During another mission, slave owners were hunting for her and a baby by one of her passengers was crying. To avoid getting caught, Tubman and her passengers often hid in swamps, to avoid being captured. During one incident, Tubman put a baby under water for about ten to fifteen minutes. Tubman and her passengers thought the baby had died, but miraculously, the baby survived (Johnson, 2021).

Tubman's next mission was also to rescue her brothers, Benjamin Jr. and Henry. Somehow, she got word that they may be sold to another plantation, and they needed her help. Tubman immediately devised a plan to free them. It is possible that Benjamin Jr. and Henry may have even tried to negotiate their freedom with Eliza, but their attempts had not succeeded. For enslaved Africans, this prospect was terrifying (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman decided that a letter would be the best way to contact her brothers. She found someone to write a letter on her behalf and send it to someone who knew her. Tubman's brothers

received the letter and they prepared themselves for her arrival. Tubman sent two of the runaways, John Chase and Peter Jackson, to alert her father to their presence. Benjamin did not want to see his children, knowing that if the authorities questioned him about the whereabouts of his missing children, Benjamin could honestly say that he did not see them (Wendkos, 1978).

Benjamin gave the group of runaway's food and clothing while keeping his eyes closed. Tubman did not want her mother to know that she was helping her brothers escape because she believed Rit would not be able to hide her emotions about their secret. Tubman's brothers and several other enslaved men, women, and children were waiting for her near Benjamin and Rit's cabin. Tubman arrived by boat on the banks of the Choptank River, after having traveled through Baltimore (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman rescue missions lasted for a few days at a time, but if she was being followed, it could take several weeks. Her passengers followed her through the woods and marshes during the days, living on berries, chicken, cow's milk, and vegetables. Rit prepared food for Christmas, while other slaves hid in a small outbuilding, waiting for the safest time to get away. To elude anyone looking for her, Tubman traveled in the small rivers, streams, swamps and farms in Maryland (Bradford, 2004).

The waterways were like train tracks for Tubman and other fugitives. On Christmas day, 1854, she freed Benjamin Jr. and Henry. Tubman also wanted to rescue her only sister Rachel and her two children, Andrew and Ben, during this mission. Tubman was determined to bring Rachel and her children to freedom, and she waited all night in a blizzard for them.

Unfortunately, she could not connect with them because Rachel died before she arrived (Larson, 2004).

Adding to her loss, she could not take Andrew and Ben because there was a fee of thirty dollars that Tubman had to pay for someone to bring them to her. Tubman was upset because she could not afford to pay the fee. She did manage to take two young children with her. Tubman traveled in the winter when the nights were longer, and she organized her escapes on Saturday nights. She knew their escape news would not be published in the newspapers until the following Monday (Wickenden, 2021).

There was always a danger of being apprehended by slave catchers or bounty hunters who were armed with guns, whips and trained sniffer dogs. Wading in the water helped to throw off their scents and confuse the hound dogs. The waterways were like train tracks for Tubman and other fugitives. There was a reward offered for Tubman, who they felt was constantly appearing and taking enslaved men, women, and children away from their masters (Bradford, 1869).

To ensure that no one would find her, she often concealed her name. For instance, at one talk in Boston in 1859, she used the name Harriet Garrison, fusing her name with that of the well-known abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. Tubman used songs to relay messages. She appeared mysteriously out of the night at slave cabins on plantations where anxious freedom-seekers awaited her. Tubman would sing different spirituals, letting them know that she was coming to free them (Lemmons, 2019).

Tubman would often give different signals to her passenger, letting them know that she was coming to save them. Sometimes she had to leave a group she was leading north and have them hide and wait for her signal. If she came back and sang one song two times, they would know it was safe to come out of hiding. But if there was danger, she would sing another song (Wendkos, 1978).

To avoid getting caught, Tubman's passengers told them to stay in hiding until she sang a song with further instructions. She would sing with her passengers as they traveled north. Music was an important part of Tubman's escape plans, particularly spirituals, and religious folk songs. Tubman used music as a calming method during her missions (Wickenden, 2021). Over the next ten years, she went to Maryland and freed her family and friends. She went back for her husband but, at that time, he had married another woman and had four children. She was very upset, but with a heavy heart, but she kept moving forward with her journey (Wickenden, 2021).

She often articulated the words for which she is perhaps most remembered that was a successful conductor on the Underground Railroad, and she never lost a passenger. During her rescue missions, she took on many roles as caregiver, protector, and storyteller (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman's faith in God, her family, and her future motivated her activism. Her ability to connect with an existing and expanding network of like-minded activists that ensured her success was also important to Tubman. Her next mission was to free her parents, who were at risk of being arrested for helping other enslaved Africans escape (Larson, 2004).

In the spring of 1857, Tubman made one of her most difficult rescues, leading her elderly parents out of Maryland. Benjamin was also in danger of being arrested for helping fugitive slaves escape. There was much suspicion of Benjamin's participation in the Underground Railroad. Eastern Shore slave owners, particularly in Dorchester County, were desperate to stop the exodus of slaves (Larson, 2004).

According to Thomas Garrett, Benjamin's was suspected of aiding the Dover Eight. The Dover Eight were a group of eight formerly enslaved Africans who escaped from their slave

owner's plantation in Bucktown Maryland. Members of the Underground Railroad assisted members of this group. Benjamin was suspected to be one of them (Larson, 2004).

Believing that her parents' freedom, and possibly their lives, were in danger. Tubman had not seen her mother in six years and had missed her terribly. She did not dare to let the older woman know she was nearby. The less Rit knew, the better; such dangerous knowledge about the location of her fugitive daughter could get the older woman in trouble (Wendkos, 1978).

To get her parents out of Caroline County, where they were living, Tubman hobbled together a buggy from spare parts and bought a horse. She took her parents to Thomas Garrett, another abolitionist in Wilmington, who arranged for their journey to Ontario, Canada, to join her brothers. The journey was treacherous, especially because of their ages. Tubman had been living in North Street in St. Catherines, Ontario, Canada West since 1851; that was her home and her base of operation. She made a trip down to Caroline County to escort her aging parents to safety (Wendkos, 1978).

Tubman found a group of enslaved men, women, and children who wanted freedom and brought them back with her. Her courage and strength were tested every time she traveled back to Maryland on a rescue mission, but she believed in herself and her ability to free enslaved Africans, but most importantly, she believed in God (Dunbar, 2019).

When asked how she got the courage to constantly risk her life and make so many journeys to the South on the Underground Railroad, she would reply by explaining by saying that it was not her, it was God working through her. She believed that he was guiding her as she made these journeys. Tubman had a close relationship with God, and she followed his instructions after every prayer (Hof-Mahoney, 2021).

There were conductors working to liberate enslaved Africans. However, unlike the Underground Railroad, none of them were as outstanding in legend of reality as Tubman. Though many enslaved African men and women from Maryland successfully escaped from slavery, very few returned to the plantation, risking capture and enslavement. When Tubman decided to become a conductor, many abolitionists tried to dissuade her from doing it because they thought that Tubman would be captured and killed, but she was very religious, and she believed that God would protect her during her travels (Hof-Mahoney, 2021).

During her journeys, Tubman was often faced with the possibility of being captured. To avoid getting caught, she would pray, and God would protect her. As a child, she had been told Bible stories by her mother, and developed a passionate faith in God. Poems, books, and articles include Tubman's undaunted experiences often speak of her work as a conductor on the Underground Railroad and her strong resistance to enslavement (O'Neal, 1992).

Tubman rejected the teachings of the New Testament that urged enslaved men, women, and children to be obedient. She found guidance in the Old Testament tales of deliverance.

Historians believe that she led enslaved Africans through Delaware County during her route to Philadelphia. During this period, Tubman was a successful abolitionist and she studied different routes to guide her passengers to freedom (Bradford, 2004).

Between her travels, she continued to do domestic work. She also took tailor jobs, to earn money for these missions. She was remarkably successful at raising funds for these missions based on not only support from other people, but also because she was a professional cook, which provided her with a much-needed source of money in her long and poverty-stricken life. Tubman was skilled at using food and herbs to make healthy meals for herself and her

passengers. Tubman got her cooking skills from her mother. She was given many titles due to her courage and tenacity (Bradford, 2004).

When the Fugitive Slave Act was enacted in 1850, Tubman had to take extra precautions during her missions to avoid getting caught. During many of her journeys, Tubman had to remind her passengers of the danger that they may face if they were caught. Countless numbers of them wanted to go back into enslavement, but Tubman was quick to remind them that they could not go back to the plantation (Lemmons, 2019).

She carried a gun during her journeys for protection and to keep her passengers in line. Tubman could not let fearful people who insisted on going back to the plantation jeopardize the lives of everyone else in her group. She believed that if she let one passenger go back, their slave owner would beat them until they could easily pry this information from his lips. Tubman believed that if they were scared and weak enough to give up and go back, they would certainly be weak enough to give bounty hunters information regarding her escape trail (O'Neal, 1992).

Now faced with the consequences of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, Tubman and her followers were in greater peril than ever. She had to reroute her efforts from New York, her usual destination, to Canada. Tubman had to take extra measures to keep everyone in her care safe. During her missions, she learned how to disguise herself as an elderly woman or as a man.

She loved telling stories about how gullible enslaved owners were. They thought that because a large majority of enslaved Africans could not read or write, they were not intelligent (Bradford, 2004).

Tubman would sing in front of plantation owners, and they could not recognize her. When leading slaves to freedom, Tubman insisted on their absolute obedience to her instructions. She carried a pistol and a rifle with her. Tubman would often let it be known to the people she

guided that she was more than willing to use these weapons against anyone who jeopardized the safety of others. She forced them to pull their weary bodies from the ground and continue the long, treacherous journey (Bradford, 2004).

As mentioned previously, Tubman was often given the widely known title as Moses. She was given the name in connection with her conductor duties. When Hebrews in Egypt were held against their will, God appeared to Moses in the desert and commanded him to lead the Hebrews out of bondage. Moses returned to Egypt and gathered his people. He led them through the desert and across the Red Sea toward the Promised Land of Canaan. This journey to freedom was called the Exodus, and the part of the Bible that records the story is called the Book of Exodus (Nelson, 2017).

Though some people may disagree with the idea of Tubman being referred to as Moses, there were similarities between Moses and Tubman. They both served as models of liberation. Tubman was said to have had a beautiful singing voice. Music was an important part of Tubman's escape plans on the Underground Railroad, particularly spirituals religious folk songs. Spirituals were rooted in the traditional rhythms and melodies of the music (O'Neal 1992).

The groups traveled by night. They often found food and temporary shelter at the homes of anti-slavery sympathizers in the region. Many people began to hear about someone called Moses, who was leading enslaved Africans to freedom. They never suspected it was a woman. Because she was a woman, Tubman's mission to lead others to freedom was not a customary practice. With her assistance, enslaved Africans who managed to reach free states remained there and they took careful precautions to ensure that they maintained their freedom (O'Neal, 1992).

Tubman possessed rare courage, a belief in her dreams and visions, and a deep faith in God. As a conductor, she risked not only her freedom, but also her life. Tubman became

successful at disguising herself to avoid getting caught. Sometimes she dressed as a man. Other times, she wore loose-fitting clothes and large bonnets that covered her face (Dunbar, 2019).

Tubman often pretended to be elderly and walked bent over or with a cane in public. She learned how to avoid attention as she made her way through enemy territory. On one occasion, after buying two chickens at a market, she noticed that a former overseer was in the area. To avoid the possibility of getting caught, she quickly released one of the chickens she was carrying, and pretended to give chase, creating a comic kerfuffle that allowed her to get away unnoticed, even though many people were looking for her (Larson, 2004).

Tubman's next mission was also to rescue her brothers, Benjamin Jr. and Henry. Somehow, she got word that they may be sold to another plantation, and they needed her help. Tubman immediately devised a plan to free them. It is possible that Benjamin Jr. and Henry may have even tried to negotiate their freedom with Eliza, but their attempts had not succeeded. For enslaved men and women, this prospect was terrifying (Wickenden, 2021).

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The waterways were like train tracks for Tubman and other fugitives. On Christmas day, 1854, she freed Benjamin Jr. and Henry. Tubman also wanted to rescue her only sister Rachel and her two children, Andrew and Ben, during this mission. Tubman was determined to bring Rachel and her children to freedom, and she waited all night in a blizzard for them. Unfortunately, she could not connect with them because Rachel died before she arrived (Larson, 2004).

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the small rivers, streams, and swamps that wound through farms and woodlands in Maryland. The waterways were like train tracks for Tubman and other fugitives. There was a reward of twelve thousand dollars offered for Tubman, who they felt was constantly appearing and taking enslaved men, women, and children away from their masters (Bradford, 1869).

To ensure that no one would find her, she often concealed her name. For instance, at one talk in Boston in 1859, she used the name Harriet Garrison, fusing her name with that of the well-known abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. Tubman used songs to relay messages. She appeared mysteriously out of the night at slave cabins on plantations where anxious freedom-seekers awaited her. They waited for Moses, Tubman's code name, letting them know that she was coming to free them (Wendkos, 1978).

One of her signals to friendly was singing, "Oh go down, Moses, way down into Egypt's land, tell old Pharaoh, let my people go," (Lemmons, 2019). Sometimes she had to leave a group she was leading North and have them hide and wait for her signal. If she came back and sang one song two times, they would know it was safe to come out of hiding. But if there was danger, she would sing another song. This would mean that the group had to stay in hiding until they sang a song with further instructions (Lemmons, 2019).

She had seven core values, faith, freedom, family, community, social justice, self-determination, and equality. She followed these values throughout her life (Hill, 2020). Tubman would sing to her passengers as they traveled north. Music was an important part of Tubman's escape plans, particularly spirituals, and religious folk songs. Tubman used music as a calming method during her missions. She was a successful Underground Railroad conductor for eight years. During her rescue missions, she took on many roles as caregiver, protector, and storyteller (Larson, 2004).

During a storytelling session with a group of children, Tubman described an incident in Troy, New York and how she pulled Charles Nalle, a former enslaved African, away from the police officers who were trying to force him back into slavery. Nalle escaped from slavery in Virginia and traveled north on the Underground Railroad. Tubman found out about the incident, she described vital details of this story to children, telling them that she pulled Charles away from the authorities, a policeman clubbed her, but she fought back. Tubman then attacked the marshal's deputy, offering a graphic demonstration of how she choked him. As she fought, she said, Nalle was hit so hard that he lost consciousness. The children shouted with relieved laughter as she told them that she threw him across her shoulder like a bag (Wickenden, 2021).

Nalle, who had escaped to upstate New York from Virginia in 1858. The slave catcher caught up with him in 1860 and now he was being held by federal authorities in Troy. Tubman hatched a plan. She disguised herself as an elderly woman to gain access to Nalle and help him flee from custody when he was brought out into the street where a large crowd had gathered. Despite receiving several blows to her head from officers, she ushered Nalle through the crowd into a boat waiting nearby. After achieving freedom, he got a job at a carpenter shop (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman's courageous work on the Underground Railroad opened a window into a world inhabited by many enslaved men, women, and children. Tubman often told stories to her passengers to educate them and keep their spirits up. This was a gift that she got from her mother. Rit was also a storyteller. She often told Tubman stories about events from the past. As time went on, it became more difficult for former enslaved African Americans to keep their freedom (Woodard, 2022).

The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 made it mandatory that a fugitive enslaved African American or suspected fugitive enslaved African Americans had to be turned over to the local federal commissioner and a hearing was held and the fugitive or suspected fugitive person would be sent back into slavery (Woodard, 2022).

As a result of the Fugitive Slave Act, free people who were viewed as suspected fugitives were often re-enslaved. When Tubman found out about the Fugitive Slave Act, she told her first biographer I decided I could not trust Uncle Sam with my people any longer and I decided from that point on to take them clear off to Canada (Wickenden, 2021).

It was Tubman's faith in God, her family, and her future that motivated her activism, but it was also her ability to connect with an existing and expanding network of like-minded black and white activists that ensured her success. Her next mission was to free her parents, who were at risk of being incarcerated for helping other slaves escape (Larson, 2004).

In the spring of 1857, Tubman made one of her most difficult rescues, leading her elderly parents out of Maryland. Benjamin was also in danger of getting arrested for helping fugitive slaves escape. There was much suspicion of Benjamin's participation in the Underground Railroad. Eastern Shore slave owners, particularly in Dorchester County, were desperate to stop the exodus of slaves. According to Thomas Garrett, Benjamin's was suspected of aiding the Dover Eight (Larson, 2004).

Believing that her parents' freedom, and possibly their lives, were in danger. Tubman had not seen her mother in six years and had missed her terribly. She did not dare to let the older woman know she was nearby, however. The less mother Rit knew, the better; such dangerous knowledge about the location of her fugitive daughter could get the older woman in trouble.

Tubman made a trip down to Caroline County to escort her aging parents to safety (Larson, 2004).

To get her parents out of Caroline County, where they were living, Tubman hobbled together a buggy from spare parts and bought a horse. She took her parents to Thomas Garrett, another abolitionist in Wilmington, who arranged for their journey to Ontario, Canada, to join her brothers. The journey was treacherous, especially because of their ages. Tubman had been living in North Street in St. Catherines, Ontario, Canada West since 1851; that was her home and her base of operation (Wendkos, 1978).

She had brought her parents and her entire family to St. Catherines where they lived safe from slave catcher. In Canada, American laws could not be enforced. Former enslaved men, women, and children would be safe and free. Tubman herself settled in Ontario, Canada, for a while, until her next duty called her into action. When Tubman returned to Canada, she realized that life in St. Catharines was too difficult for her parents. She needed a home farther south (Wendkos, 1978).

Tubman's courage and strength were tested every time she traveled back to Maryland on a rescue mission, but she believed in herself and her ability to free enslaved families, but most importantly, she believed in God (Dunbar, 2019). When asked how she got the courage to constantly risk her life and make so many journeys to the South on the Underground Railroad, she would reply by explaining by saying that it was not her, it was God working through her and guiding her as she made these journey's. Tubman had a close relationship with God, and she followed God's instructions after every prayer, and/or dreams she experienced (Hof-Mahoney, 2021).

## **Doctor Tubman and Wounded Soldier**

In 1860, on the eve of the Civil War, there were over four million enslaved men, women, and children in the South. free and enslaved Black sailors. Many of these sailors were also called Black Jacks. A vibrant and engaging work of rediscovery, Black Jacks were an important part of the historical record with African American seamen's contribution to the Atlantic economy and the contribution of seafaring to the construction of African American identity (Bolster, 1998).

In 1796, the federal government issued Seamen's Protection Certificates to merchant mariners, defining them as citizens of the United States, a nicety to which African American leaders pointedly referred during debates on Black people's citizenship status. No meaningful African American maritime history has linked prominent mariners like Captain Paul Cuffe, the driving force behind the first black-led back-to-Africa movement, and Denmark Vesey, the mastermind of the largest slave conspiracy in South Carolina's history (Karenga, 2010).

In 1861, after the Civil War began, with the immense contribution of both Union and Confederate women to the war effort. Despite common belief, American women did not sit passively while their men fought in the most destructive and deadly war in American history. They dressed as men and volunteered as soldiers, raised money and collected supplies to be sent to the front and often went themselves as nurses, spies, soldiers, and more. Governor John Andrews needed Tubman's assistance to win this war (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman had over ten years of experience as an Underground Railroad conductor, so he asked her to go to South Carolina to serve as a spy and a scout for the Union Army. Tubman accepted Governor John Andrews' offer and headed down to South Carolina. Before she left, Tubman told Martha, an abolitionist, that she was going to go on a secret mission to South Carolina. Tubman knew better than most military men how to maneuver her way through enemy

territory. Biographers say that she would go on scouting missions behind Confederate lines. Her courage and the intelligence she collected led to one of her most dangerous, and most famous, missions (Wickenden, 2021).

The Christian Science Monitor Army Generals typically did not ask for favors; they usually give orders instead of asking for a favor. For him to specifically ask The Christian Science Monitor Army to lead this raid, it is apparent that the Union Army needed her assistance so that the Union could win the war. Tubman raised funds for the war, and she convinced many abolitionists and military Generals in South Carolina she would without a doubt be very useful to them (Wickenden, 2021).

She was determined to end slavery by helping the United States win this war. The Christian Science Monitor Army went to a village where she saw one of the slave owners to whom she had been hired, when she was enslaved. He went to a market and bought a pair of live fowls. Tubman went along the street, away from the store, with her sunbonnet well over her face to avoid being recognized. Suddenly after turning a corner, she saw her old master coming towards her (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman pulled the string which tied the legs of the chickens; they began to flutter and scream, and as her old master passed by her. The old master went on his way, without thinking that he was brushing the very garments of the woman who had dared to steal herself, and others of his belongings. Tubman continued to disguise herself, while collecting vital details about the confederate military and slave plantations. She watched people, learned their habits, watched their movements all without them noticing. Also, she knew how to distinguish between those with good and bad intentions (Larson, 2004).

Tubman's survival depended on her ability to remember every detail. As a scout, her deceptive appearance was a great asset. Who would have thought that this short, Black woman would participate in such a bold venture as entering confederate territory for the purpose of spying on naval defenses, their location, quantity of supplies, provisions, and livestock. Tubman led spying trips into Confederate territory, and she brought back information about the troop's movement and strengths. This kind of information about Confederate troop movements came from enslaved blacks who knew Tubman (Larson, 2004).

During this period, President Abraham Lincoln, did not allow Black men to enlist in the Army. Tubman disagreed with Lincoln, and she felt that Black men should be allowed to participate in this war. Sojourner Truth, a former enslaved Black woman and abolitionist, asked Tubman to go with her to the White House to meet with Lincoln, but Tubman declined because she didn't believe that Lincoln was dedicated to abolishing slavery. She believed that Black soldiers would help the Union Army defeat the South (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman was never given the title of veteran; however, she recruited over five hundred formerly enslaved Black men to join the Army because the Union was desperately in need of assistance during this war. Military veteran, Congressman Edolphus Towns introduced legislation in the House of Representatives to grant the Black heroine veteran status up South Carolina's Combahee River. He gave her permission to go behind military lines in Port Royal. Tubman got to know all the officers and the local population in Port Royal, which consisted of ten thousand newly freed contraband newly freed slaves (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman paid eight scouts to provide her with any information they had on the confederates. She conducted a series of raids along the rivers in South Carolina. The narrow, blackwater river and marshes were bordered by rice plantations and swamps. Tubman used her

knowledge from the landscapes during enslavement to navigate her way through the Combahee River. As the sun set on June 2, 1863, Tubman guided Colonel Montgomery and her fellow soldiers along the river and past the Confederate lines (Lemmons, 2019).

Tubman became the first woman in the United States to demand and lead an armed military raid. She guided Colonel James Montgomery and his 2nd South Carolina Colored Volunteers Regiment to the Combahee River. Tubman led Union soldiers into the territory and destroyed Confederate plantations and supplies. Throughout the raid, she torched plantations, freeing over seven hundred fifty slaves, and sailing away on gunboats (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman was also paid for her spying efforts and her ability to recruit informants. She in turn paid local enslaved Black people who knew the region and could help her with her operations. Tubman prophesied that if Black men were allowed to fight, the north would win the war. And that is exactly what happened. In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which allowed the Union Army to enforce the freedom of slaves in the states of the Confederacy (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman's Underground Railroad missions ended early during the war when her efforts shifted to support for the Union Army during the war. Under the terms of the proclamation, free Black men were permitted to join the Union Army and Navy. With her assistance, many of these formerly enslaved men from South Carolina became soldiers in the Union Army. Tubman personally led many Black soldiers into the Civil War and the north started winning due to the support of Black men (Wickenden, 2021).

Despite this disproportionate representation of enlisted Black men in the Union Navy, much of the American public and the larger popular culture are often unfamiliar with this history. Around two-hundred thousand Black soldiers fought in the war. During the war, approximately

seventeen thousand Black men served in the Union Navy. The Navy at that time, almost doubled the proportion of Black soldiers who served in the U.S. Army during the Civil War (Larson, 2004).

The Union Navy recruits sprang from a long maritime tradition of free Black men serving as seamen on merchant and whaling vessels throughout the port cities of the northeast and among skilled enslaved workers serving on small vessels throughout the many waterways of the Chesapeake region and the Carolina low country. This robust tradition of Black seamen extended as far back as the colonial era and throughout the post-Revolutionary antebellum period (Bolster, 2017).

During the nineteenth century, serving as a merchant seaman or whaler was one of the few occupations that offered free Blacks a relative level of independence and self-sufficiency, along with the opportunity to travel the world. Tubman relied on the services of local Black mariners and sailors who were intimately acquainted with the coastal Carolina waterways. Tubman was also very involved in the war, supporting the Union. In addition to leading the soldiers directly into battle, she was a spy, scout, and a cook (Wickenden, 2021).

During the war, Tubman was also given the title of nurse. Rather than being the title of a nurse, Tubman performed the duties of a doctor to wounded soldiers throughout the war.

It was very uncommon for a woman to be a doctor during the nineteenth century. Especially a Black woman. Tubman did not have the formal training that a doctor was given, but she had the special ability to treat and heal the soldier's wounds and illnesses, using herbs. She put an herbal concoction together and created a cure for Dysentery. Dysentery is an infection in the intestines. Many injured soldiers were hospitalized in South Carolina and Florida died from Dysentery (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman was sure she could cure Dysentery if she could find some of the same roots and herbs that grew in Maryland. In 1904, Tubman conducted an interview with her friend Emma Telford. She explained how she searched through the woods and foraged rummaged through swamps, looking for herbs to cure various medical diseases. The woods and swamps were familiar to her. While doing her research, she came across lily roots and Cranesbill (Geranium). She boiled water lily roots and Cranesbill to make a tea that she gave to a soldier who was on his deathbed, and he was cured (Larson, 2004).

Tubman also cured infections with herbs from a sweetgum tree. She learned about the sweetgum tree from her father, who was knowledgeable about the herbs from this tree. She told people who knew her about how she made slingshots out of oyster shells, and she used cobwebs to wrap the soldier's injuries (Larson, 2004).

African American doctor Sarah Loguen Fraser aka Miss Doc, from Syracuse, NY (1850) was one of the few Black female doctors during the nineteenth century. Dr. Fraser was inspired to become a doctor after witnessing Tubman perform surgery on a Civil War soldier. Fraser married a pharmacist named Charles Fraser from Puerto Plata, Santo Domingo in 1882 (later the Dominican Republic), and she became the first female doctor in that country (Luft, 2000).

With Dr. Tubman, there were many Black women who worked at veteran hospitals as nurses for the military throughout the war. Sojourner Truth from Rifton, NY (1883), also served as a volunteer nurse, caring for Union soldiers during the war. Most people connect Sojourner Truth as an abolitionist to end slavery. However, Truth also served as a nurse during the Civil War also. After she liberated herself, she worked ardently through the National Freedman's Relief Association in Washington DC, advocating for nursing and training programs for free Black women (Larson, 2004).

Many Black women like Tubman worked as nurses for the military throughout the war. In addition to Sojourner Truth, Susie King Taylor from Liberty County Georgia (1848), also served as a nurse during the Civil War, providing care to injured Union soldiers. She specialized in providing care to soldiers who had been quarantined due to smallpox. She ignored orders to care for these young men, providing the necessary care when the specialty of infectious diseases did not exist (Larson, 2004).

She also helped to create the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses. This history is inspirational when discussing the achievements of Black female nurses during the Civil War. Their achievements are worthy of being recognized and their photographs should be displayed throughout the halls of nursing school in every learning institution (Singleton, 2019).

These women serve as models of leadership and service despite the challenging times in which they practiced. Future and practicing nurses should aspire to meet the challenges these women once did, helping the profession grow by fostering the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion. Many Black nurses worked for the Union during the war (Hof-Mahoney, 2021).

Many doctors did not have access to formal training programs during the Civil War era. They learned how to care for patients by completing a two-year apprenticeship working under a seasoned doctor. Black nurses learned how to care for people during enslavement, and they used their experiences to care for wounded soldiers during the war (Larson, 2004).

In addition to soldiers, she also provided health care to many free Black people who were sick in the Union camps. Tubman's skill curing soldiers stricken by a variety of diseases became legendary. Tubman was called on to treat smallpox, a disease with no cure. During enslavement, she healed sick and dying enslaved men, women, and children on the plantation with herbal concoctions, some of which may have been passed down to her from her mother. We do not

know exactly how Tubman mastered the healing properties of plants and herbs, but she would later use these remedies throughout her life (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman learned how to search for food by using a botanist and a chemist approach to knowledge of safe and/or poisonous plants. She used the ingredients that she acquired to create medical treatments. Soldiers as well as fugitives were dying; some of the most common illnesses were typhoid, cholera, malaria, yellow fever, chicken pox and dysentery. She created a cure for dysentery with cunning skill to extract from roots and herbs, which grew near the source of the disease, the healing draught, which allayed the fever and restored numbers to health. She had acquired quite a reputation for her skill in curing this disease, through a medicine which she prepared from roots which grew near the waters (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman was considered by many to have special knowledge about how to heal the sick. Tubman was an expert herbalist and wildcrafter who used her knowledge of plants to heal soldiers in the Union army during the Civil War and kept her passengers safe on the Underground Railroad. She was knowledgeable in local roots to treat diseases; her healing powers became legendary among soldiers. Tubman had never had these diseases, but she seems to have no more fear of death in one form than another. One Union general even let her have bourbon whiskey to help ease the pain of her patients (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman found thousands of sick soldiers, and immediately gave her time and attention to them. Though Tubman was a successful nurse, scout, and spy for the Union Army, she was not recognized as a veteran. It took Congress more than thirty years before they finally awarded Tubman a pension of thirty dollars a month. Tubman used the pension to support her home for the aged (Larson 2004).

Disabled from injuries, Tubman experienced difficulties providing for her needs and the most basic needs of elderly parents and other kinfolk, refugees, and boarders who became her dependents. The end of the war did not bring an end to her concern about the welfare of others. For the next half century, she actively raised funds for schools, collected and distributed clothing, provided housing, gave assistance to the sick, and disabled (Larson, 2004).

The Tubman legacy is incomplete without the recognition of her immense contribution to the field of social work and elderly housing. Her efforts to foster self-help and empowerment are worthy of inclusion in practice courses. She faced the multiple challenges of being poor, female, and uneducated. Her historical perspectives and determination allowed her to achieve much in her lifetime despite these considerable obstacles and challenges (Crewe, 2006).

Tubman was an herbalist and a healer. She nursed soldiers in the hospitals, and she knew how, when they were on the verge of dying from a malignant disease. At another time, we find her nursing those who were down by hundreds with small-pox and malignant fevers. But by the spring of 1864, Tubman requested to leave and return home. Her health was failing, and she worried about her elderly parents. After several months at home, she was refreshed and ready to return to military duty. She joined Union forces in Virginia again tending to the injured and sick (Wickenden, 2021).

## CHAPTER 4

### INDEXICALITY: PROPOSING RECOVERY

Molefi Kete Asante has articulated five minimum characteristics of Afrocentric analysis. He claims in *The Afrocentric Manifesto* (1) an interest in psychological location; (2) a commitment to finding the African subject place; (3) the defense of African cultural elements; (4) a commitment to lexical refinement; and (5) a commitment to correct the dislocations in the history of Africa. (Asante, 2007 p. 41). Indeed, based on the idea of lexical refinement Asante has argued that Afrocentric analysis of narratives must include indexicality.

According to Asante, “indexicality relates to an event, personality, action, or expression whose significance depends upon the context” (Asante, 2023). What Asante’s Afrocentric technique encourages is that the analyst outlines the phenoms that are to be indexed, that is, denoting their location in time and place.

Hence, as I will show in my narrative of Harriet Tubman’s life, all of her activities can be characterized by a search for centrality of the African experience. She refused to be enslaved, and she chose to act out of her own agency. One can see that despite Tubman’s extraordinary military service in the Civil War, her status as a woman and a black American continued to present obstacles. The war had ended, yet her dignity was still being challenged. Tubman helped the Union Army tremendously as a healer, nurse, scout and soldier, but despite her efforts, she still experienced racism in the United States after the war (Edmonds, 2006).

For example, Tubman tried to get compensation when she worked as a spy, but the United States Congress dismissed her request. It seems the members of Congress did not believe Tubman could have so many accomplishments. This sentiment of incredulity must be indexed to the period of segregation and racism in American society when whites did not believe African American could do anything of importance (Larson, 2022)

Indexicality relates to an event, personality, action, or expression whose significance depends upon the context. According to Dove, there are different characteristics of an Afrocentric analysis. The first characteristic is an interest physical location. The physical location would be Africa, the birthplace of humanity. Another interest would be psychological location characteristics. The psychological location would interrogate all things that effects to African people in this country. The third characteristic of indexicality is a commitment to correct the way that African history is taught in schools (Dove, 2020).

I will show in my narrative of Harriet Tubman's life, all her activities can be characterized by a search for centrality of the African experience. She refused to be enslaved, and she chose to act out of her own agency. One can see that despite Tubman's extraordinary military service in the Civil War, her status as a woman and a Black woman continued to present obstacles. The war had ended, yet her dignity was still being challenged. Tubman helped the Union Army tremendously as a healer, nurse, scout, and soldier, but despite her efforts, she still experienced racism in the United States after the war (Crewe, 2006).

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the period of segregation and racism in American society when whites did not believe African Americans could do anything of importance (Crewe, 2006)

### **A Soldiers Nightmare**

Later in life, Tubman met Nelson Charles, later known as Nelson Davis, a brickmaker and Civil War veteran. He showed up at her home in Auburn after the war. He was in search of a new residence. She invited him to stay at her home. Despite the age difference, Nelson asked Tubman to marry him. In 1869, Tubman accepted his offer and the two got married in 1869 (Crewe, 2006).

When he passed away, Tubman received his pension of eight dollars per month. The government did not want to pay her for her contributions to the Civil War. She was a spy, scout, nurse, and a veteran during the war. Tubman experienced another form of racism when she was returning from the war, with her pass as a hospital nurse, she bought a half-fare ticket. When the conductor looked at her ticket, he refused to let her travel under half-fare (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman explained to him that she was employed by the Government and was she was entitled to transportation as the soldiers were. The conductor took her forcibly by the arm and tried to remove her from the train. Since Tubman was strong, he had to get three men to assist him in getting her to move. The car was filled with emigrants, and no one took part in helping her. The conductors nearly wrenched her arm off, and at length threw her, with all their strength, into a baggage-car. She thought that her arm was broken. Tubman's humanitarian duties did not stop after the war (Wickenden, 2021).

She held Christmas fairs to raise money for Black families in South Carolina. Tubman moved to Auburn, NY, in 1857, where she turned her attention to the plight of the needy, opening her home as a sanctuary for elderly, sick, and poor Black men, women, and children. In

Auburn, New York, she found a circle of antislavery advocates, too. The city served as a station for the Underground Railroad (Wickenden, 2021).

### **Women's Suffrage and the NACW**

The women's suffrage movement was an organization of women who fought for the right to vote during the nineteenth and twentieth century. Women from all branches of 19th-century reform created the first women's rights movement in the United States when they met at Seneca Falls, NY, in 1848. Their "Declaration of Rights and Sentiments" is the founding document of the first women's rights movement. Black women played an increasingly significant role in both the women's rights and abolition movements (Ansah, 2018).

Tubman had risen from the bottom of the slave society in Maryland to become a leader, a soldier, a master of nature, and a hero among African people, yet she could not vote in any election because she was a woman. Women had no legal rights. They were treated like second-class citizens. Many women disagreed with this horrible level of treatment and decided to form a movement that would allow them to gain legal rights (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman worked to improve the rights of women and she was an instrumental leader in this movement. "she's remembered, as she should be, as a heroic conductor on the Underground Railroad, but her achievements in women's suffrage and in the Civil War are rarely remarked upon," (Dunbar, 2019, p.11). She organized meetings with Martha Coffin Wright and Frances Steward to develop different strategies to help women gain the right to vote. She rose above the societal limitations imposed by being enslaved and a woman and made unparalleled contributions to the cause of social justice (Crewe, 2006).

Tubman was a dedicated supporter of women's rights, yet her contributions to gender liberation go unnoticed and unrecognized in much of present-day women's studies scholarship.

She fought for equal rights between the sexes and for the right to vote as a free Black woman for more than half a century after the war ended (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman continued to do everything that she could to liberate enslaved men, women, and children after slavery ended. She took her agency as an African woman and thrust herself directly into the fight for women's suffrage. Male dominated culture had created an inaccurate public view by giving the world different codes for men and women. These codes excluded women from attaining legal rights (Wickenden, 2021).

In this regard, also which allowed her to fight for all women regardless of how they were classified by racial categories. After working with many female abolitionists over the years, Tubman decided to support the women's suffrage movement. The women's suffrage movement was a very controversial organization. Tubman expressed what Dove calls "culture and life" (Dove, 2020).

Dove's main "focus is on culture and all humans produce culture" (Dove, 2020). Dove also listed the following elements to support her views on "culture and life one "human endeavor to make sense of life and bring order (Maat) to society" (Dove, 2020). A second element is a "powerful purveyor of ideas, values and beliefs" (Dove, 2020). A third element "aids in shaping the thinking of human thoughts and behaviors" (Dove, 2020).

A fourth element is the "glue that binds people in ways that they choose" (Dove, 2020). The fifth element is history, language, spirituality, and psychology, are the pillars of culture (Dove, 2020). Dove's elements of "culture and life is a human endeavor to makes sense of life and bring order to society" (Dove, 2020). These elements also directly affect laws and justice in relation to women's history and their legal rights.

Very few scholars speak about the important history of Tubman's involvement in the women's suffrage movement in details. Tubman's fight for women's suffrage was also honored at the Church of Scientology National Affairs Office celebration. She was an active supporter of this cause because she believed in freedom for all oppressed people and women were oppressed by a patriarchal system that did not accept women as equal to men (Hof-Mahoney, 2021).

The National Association of Colored Women (NACW) is one of the oldest organizations in the Black community, the NACW was an early advocate of suffrage for women. NACW members began to set an agenda to confront, study, and address the myriad problems facing Black local communities. A series of events facilitated the emergence of the NACW (Wesley, 1984).

In 1895 a national convention of Black women was called to respond to a racist letter sent by James Jacks, a southern journalist, to a British reformer. Jacks wrote that Black people lacked morality and that Black women were prostitutes, natural liars, and thieves. Because of the local clubs and women's magazines that were in existence, Black women were able to respond quickly and effectively to the slanderous letter (Wesley, 1984).

The 1895 convention led to the call for a national meeting of African American women issued by Mrs. Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin (1842–1924), an organizer of one of the first black women's clubs, the Women's Era Club of Boston. This is an important point of departure for interpreting the movement. Shortly thereafter the National League of Colored Women broke from the federation because of differences about how to deal with segregation at the Atlanta Exposition (Wesley, 1984).

When the American journalist and reformer Ida B. Wells-Barnett spoke out against rape and lynching during her 1894 lecture tour in England, the president of the Missouri Press

Association, James W. Jacks, tried to discount her charges by publishing an open letter in which he denounced all black women as At this point, Black women leaders recognized the urgent need to counter this portrayal through a national organization.

Shortly before this attack, Black women's clubs had already started to form regional associations like the Colored Women's League of Washington, DC, in 1893, which invited Black women's clubs in all parts of the country to affiliate, when their efforts to represent their race at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago were turned down by the Board of Lady Managers. Black women's efforts to organize were recognized in 1894, when the National Council of Women invited the Colored Women's League to become a member and send delegates to its 1895 convention (Oretel, 2015).

The league acted as a national organization at this convention, although other Black women's associations sought similar national roles and no national convention of Black women's clubs had yet taken place. Due to the concerns about the lack of unity, the two organizations merged in 1896 to form the National Association of Colored Women. Shortly after it was founded, the NACW had five thousand members. Twenty years later, it had fifty thousand members in twenty-eight federations and over a thousand clubs. By 1924 it had reached thousands of members. It was the primary organization through which African American women channeled their reform efforts (Oretel, 2015).

Tubman co-founded the NACW. The NACW sought to unify various Black women's clubs in this country, during the Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court ruling earlier in May of that year, which had legalized racial segregation. Tubman not only appeared at this important convention, but she was greeted with standing ovations when she gave a lecture about her history, memorializing her legendary achievements (Oretel, 2015).

No African American woman had ever lived to see such full admiration by her community as Tubman. What she meant in an Afrocentric historical sense was the fulfillment of personal sacrifice for collective freedom. Fortunately, she was able to live long enough to know that many African people appreciated and respected her work (Crewe, 2006).

The purpose of the NACW was to unite Black women in the fight against lynching and against racial discrimination in education, employment, and in public places. It also focused on issues of special concern to Black women, including the voting rights and improvements in health care and home life. Faced with segregated financial institutions, medical facilities, fraternal organizations, and an omission from any form of organized labor, African Americans sought their own remedies to social welfare and economic inequality within their communities (Oretel, 2015).

The NACW network of African American women's clubs facilitated member involvement in such social-reform measures as the establishment of community hospitals and of shelters for young women that catered to an African American clientele. The NACW established these institutions not only to assist their communities but also to provide Black women with increased educational opportunities (Oretel, 2015).

Committed to eliminating the racial double standard that held white women to a higher sexual morality than their Black counterparts. The NACW believed that these stereotypes endangered African Americans, both women and men. False allegations regarding rape charges from white women were given as the primary justification for the lynching of African American men during this period, and the growing problem of lynching soon became the primary focus of the NACW as it moved into the 20th century (Oretel, 2015).

The NACW grew rapidly, and, within twenty years, the organization had fifty-thousand members in more than one-thousand clubs around the nation. Black women organized themselves around the need to uplift the race, better their communities, defend the morality of Black women, and improve the lives of poor Black women and children. The NACW has continued to provide fellowship for Black women and social welfare benefits to African Americans around the country (Wesley, 1984).

Leaders of the NACW argued that women had to uplift the race by helping African Americans gain respectability through improved morals, especially for women. Clubwomen's emphasis on morality stemmed from the lack of respect accorded Black women. They focused on proving the morality of Black women; promoting middle class norms for homes, children, education; cleanliness; and improving social and economic conditions that would protect women. The NACW In the early years created a journal to get their message out to the public titled, *National Notes* (Wesley, 1984).

It was printed at Tuskegee Institute under the direction of Margaret Murray Washington. The first president of the NACW was Mary Church Terrell. Terrell believed that colored women faced severe forms of discrimination in a country ran by white people. She also believed that it cannot possibly be like a story written by a white woman. Terrell felt that a white woman has only one handicap to overcome that of sex. A colored woman had two both sex and race (Wesley, 1984).

The NACW also conducted classes in domestic service and child rearing to teach the poor proper health and hygiene. The classes also taught how to maintain a household, and techniques to raise their children. The NACW maintained that women could play a key role in reforming society by using their virtuous qualities and superior moral sensibilities to create a safe

and comfortable home. NACW members focused on instilling racial pride in Black Americans and change negative images about Black women. They opposed segregation and the brutal convict-lease system. In 1910, they had expanded their goals and added women's suffrage to their platform (Wesley, 1984).

After the Red Summer of 1919, the NACW, under the leadership of Mary Talbert, joined the crusade against lynchings and mobilized Black women, raised money, and educated the public. Mary B. Talbert made plans to purchase and restore the home of the abolitionist Frederick Douglass in Washington, DC. While never a militant organization, the NACW made verbal protests of racial injustice and advocated boycotts of segregated facilities (Wesley, 1984)

Using their own money and raising funds, women purchased and rented facilities to establish schools, nursing homes, day nurseries, and clubs for mothers. The NACW's motto, "Lifting as We Climb," emphasizes their goals. When women in the NACW worked to aid Black women, they believed that they worked to benefit the entire race because they believed that the perceived immorality of Black women held back all African Americans. Furthermore, they argued that because men had lost power through disfranchisement, women had to take the lead (Wesley, 1984).

Such a dominant role for women in race uplift occasionally caused tensions with Black men who wanted women to yield such leadership to black men. The NACW first convened in 1897 in Nashville, where, in addition to emphasizing women, children, and the home, they discussed the convict lease system, Jim Crow conditions, especially in railroad travel, and lynching (Wesley, 1984).

Many projects spearheaded by local clubs were related to education and children's issues. In addition to social welfare, the NACW also promoted Black history and literature, evident in

the inclusion of Black literature on the program of one of the earliest conventions, in Buffalo, NY in 1901. They made a significant contribution to public history when, in 1916, the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association (FDMHA) requested the aid of the NACW in raising funds to save the former Washington DC home of 19th century abolitionist and civil rights leader Frederick Douglass. The NACW raised enough to pay the mortgage at the 1918 meeting in Denver, and NACW members worked to continue to raise money for the home's upkeep (Wesley, 1984).

The women's clubs did not embrace feminism as an ideology; rather they were concerned with promoting activities that advanced the interests of the race (NACW, 2021). Tubman was a prominent speaker at the inaugural meeting of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (NACWC) in 1896. In July 1896, at the first National Federation of Afro-American Women's conference in Washington, DC, Tubman used her celebrity status to talk on the theme of more homes for the aged (Crewe, 2006).

Many social workers are aware of her acts of courage as a conductor of the Underground Railroad and a Civil War veteran. Much less is known about her service as a caregiver and a houser for older people. Tubman also would break out occasionally into spontaneous singing-but she also participated in a provocative rite that coalesced past and present forces of Black women's resistance during that era. At the convention, Tubman held up above her head the firstborn infant of Ida B. Wells-Barnett, who had given birth earlier that year, and presented the young Charles Barnett to the audience so that everyone could see him (Wesley, 1984).

In 1896, Tubman co-founded the National Federation of Afro-American Women (NFAAW). NFAAW merged into the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) during that same year, in 1896. Tubman was the keynote speaker at its first meeting. The NACW

attracted a lot of African American women who were not allowed to attend women's suffrage meetings and other white women's club movements (Wesley, 1984).

The NACW was a suffrage organization that fought for equal voting rights for both African American men and women. The NACW not only fought for voting rights, but they also fought for better schools, nursing homes, and hospitals for African Americans. They also wanted to abolish lynching's, convict leasing, and Jim Crow Laws. In addition to Tubman, Frances Harper, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and Mary Church Terrell, were also leaders of the organization (Wesley, 1984).

These women were some of the most distinguished African American leaders in the United States. The NACW original intention was to reveal evidence of the moral, mental and material progress made by people of color through the efforts of our women. During the next ten years, the NACW became involved in campaigns in favor of women's suffrage and against lynching and Jim Crow laws. They also led efforts to improve education, and care for both children and the elderly (Wesley, 1984).

At the NACW meetings, Tubman was known to triumphantly recount her enslaved years and Civil War tales as Tubman to her Black female audience. The NACW leaders were willing to work with white women's suffrage organizations, but many of their attempts were met with racial discrimination. When leaders of the NACW attended women suffrage marches, they were told to march behind white women. Apart from Tubman and a few others, many other Black people were barred from white suffrage organization meetings (Wesley, 1984).

After attending the NACW convention, Tubman later went on to a women's suffrage meeting in Rochester, New York, in November of 1896. Led onstage by Susan B. Anthony, the elderly Tubman declared to another appreciative audience how. In crafting a narrative

emphasizing her role as an Underground Railroad conductor, Tubman validated the struggle for women's rights. She also conducted meetings with other women suffrage leaders and battered women (Wesley, 1984).

Battered women children often stayed at Tubman's home. Tubman participated in women's suffrage conventions around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the end of the century many suffragists also advocated for equal social, political, legal, and economic rights. In 1848, a group of white women and male suffragists came together to fight for this cause, in Seneca Falls, NY to discuss the importance of women's rights (Wesley, 1984).

The meeting was very successful and their fight for the right to vote was finally granted when the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified on August 26, 1920, granting white women full voting rights after many years of fighting for their rights. It was a major milestone for white women. Though Tubman was not alive to see the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, her hard work led to this enactment. With the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment, white women were given the right to vote, but African American women were not granted full voting rights until 1965. The women's suffrage movement includes a long history month of March (Wesley, 1984).

March is National Women's History Month and a time to celebrate the history of women and their fight for the right to vote and the right to vote. When the U.S. was first established a woman did not have equal rights and they were considered a man's property. Women were silenced, discriminated against, and deprived of their civil rights. It took decades of persistent work and sacrifice by Tubman to change her home. Her home was always open to those in need. She and Nelson took in boarders, and Tubman often worked as a domestic to support herself. For

the first time in her life, Tubman had a steady and reliable income. However, the application for her services in the Civil War was stuck in the bureaucracy pipeline (Crewe, 2006).

Tubman applied for the pension and its usual amount of eight dollars a month. The US Congress debated her application. Both the House of Representatives and the US Senate wanted to give her more, but they had trouble agreeing on the amount.

Tubman also worked to raise money for the Freedmen's Bureau, which had been established to provide education and relief to millions of newly liberated enslaved Africans. Throughout her life Tubman exemplified courage as fortitude, and the self-discipline to endure hardship. In rescuing her family members from slavery, she became the single person to whom they constantly looked for material, as well as emotional, support. She organized self-help initiatives and established housing for formerly enslaved persons (Wickenden, 2021).

Today, the disproportionality in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and child welfare programs is evidence of the long-standing effects of this trauma. The Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged and Infirm Negroes, at 180 South Street, opened to fanfare on June 23, 1908. Tubman had a parade down South Street with a Black marching band from Ithaca at the parade. Tubman also had a formal dinner, and speeches to celebrate this event. At her home, she provided housing for ten residents in a brick building. Her family, friends, and anyone in need stayed at the Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged (Crewe, 2006).

One of the important contributions the venerable Harriet Tubman made to the field of housing was her ability to embody the role of a social worker. She mastered the duties of a social worker without any formal training. On her property, Tubman also provided medical treatment to everyone in Auburn. For over twenty years, she worked tirelessly using self-help, mutual aid, and partnerships to fulfill her dream of the home. Tubman wanted to expand her home by

purchasing two houses at an auction on twenty-five acres of land across from her home in Auburn (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman's home became a nursing home for her parents, siblings, nieces, nephews, friends, associates, homeless people, and eventually her second husband and a score of unrelated acquaintances, depended upon her for their upkeep. Her target audience was anyone in need (Crewe, 2006).

Tubman wanted to provide a refuge for the young and the old, the sick and the healthy, and the blind and the sighted. Freed women and men were deprived of the economic benefits of generations of their work; therefore, many had to start anew and required the support of leaders like Tubman to survive in their new status and rebuild fragile families who were traumatized by government-sanctioned practices that separated women from their husbands, children, and siblings (Crewe, 2006).

Today, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and child welfare programs is evidence of the long-standing effects of this trauma. Tubman wanted to make meaningful the promise of freedom by caring for those unable to care for themselves. She had used her own home since the end of the war. During the decade that Tubman managed the home, she lived next door and continued to support the home from her farming operations. Tubman primary focus was destitute elderly women (Crewe, 2006).

Tubman thought about turning the home over to the National Association of Colored Women (NACW). Her offer was not accepted because the property was not free of debt. In 1908, the home had five bedrooms and it housed twelve to fifteen people of all ages and conditions. Her parents also lived in the home with her. Benjamin stayed with her until he passed away, which most likely occurred in 1871 (Oretel, 2015)

Tubman also hired herself out to clean, cook, and care for her neighbors' children, as well as making food baskets. She accepted his proposal, and they were married in 1867, at the Central Presbyterian Church in Auburn. From this time, she was known as Mrs. Harriet Tubman-Davis and the couple adopted an infant girl named Gertie in 1874. They had a wonderful marriage that lasted for twenty years, until Nelson died of tuberculosis in 1888. She had to fight to get her veteran widow pension. (Wesley, 1984).

Nelson suffered from tuberculosis and could not work on a consistent basis. The couple opened a brick-making business on Tubman's property. Nelson probably did not work regularly because of his illness. Financial difficulties continued to be a part of Tubman's life. Tubman spent a lot of time tending to the needs of residents at her home (Larson, 2004).

She felt that doing something beyond her own initial benefit propelled her to go to lecture halls and speak to audiences that included many African American men who had their right to vote taken from them. Tubman also provided free healthcare for the residents at the Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged. It is likely that she accepted as many speaking invitations as she did primarily for the purpose of fund-raising and raising awareness about issues in the African American community. Freed women and men were deprived of the economic benefits of generations of their work. After escaping from slavery, many black men and women had to learn how to live independently (Crewe, 2006).

This required the support of leaders like Tubman to survive in their new status and rebuild physically and mentally abused families who were traumatized by slavery, Jim Crow laws, and government-sanctioned laws. Many of these laws separated free women from their husbands, children, and siblings. Tubman wore many hats. Though she never had any biological children, she did help other women give birth to their children by working as a midwife. Tubman

has always been known for her work on the Underground Railroad. Unfortunately, her work as a suffragist often goes unnoticed. Before there was a women's suffrage movement, it is important to mention that Tubman was a voice for women who did not have a voice (Crewe, 2006).

Due to her reputation and undisputable commitment to freeing enslaved men, women, and children from the system of enslavement, many white suffragists became inspired by her courage. Tubman's activism was an inspiration after the war to many women in the suffrage movement, women who frequently had labored shoulder to shoulder with her for the abolition of slavery. By 1902, women could not yet vote, but with Tubman's support in the movement, they could attend college, become doctors, ministers, and lawyers (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman's postwar participation in the women's suffrage movement was a natural outgrowth of her prewar abolitionism, because it was the antislavery movement that especially mobilized women to protest their own lack of enfranchisement in U.S. culture. After emancipation, suffragettes lobbied for equal rights and opportunities under the law. Most suffragists were abolitionists (Oretel, 2015).

To encourage an open exchange, the suffragists excluded men from the first day's proceedings. Elizabeth Cady Stanton introduced the suffragists' mission and goals. They held annual conventions around the country to support their goal of achieving equal rights between men and women (Crewe, 2006).

Many suffragists would also mention their dissatisfaction with the Fifteenth Amendment, when it was adopted in 1870. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments gave Black men citizen rights and the right to vote over women. Susan B Anthony was furious about the legal rights that African American men were supposed to get through these Amendments. In 1866 Anthony

stated that she would rather “cut off her right arm before she ever fought for black men having the right to vote and not the women” (Ansah, 2018, p.1).

Anthony’s comments may come as a surprise to many people, especially since Black men experienced racial discrimination when they tried to exercise their rights under the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. In addition to Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton who was also a women’s suffragist and abolitionist responded unfavorably to Black men voting before white women and she felt that white women are more worthy of the vote, than African American men. She believed that by allowing African American men the right to vote, they would behave worse than white men. Frederick Douglass became very upset with these women because he didn’t like their comments toward African American men. He called out Elizabeth Cady Stanton for calling Black men Sambos, but Elizabeth continued to disrespect Black men by calling them names (Hill, 2020).

It had to be hard for Tubman to make the decision to advance the right for women to gain the right to vote, even though it would not include her despite being a property owner (Hill, 2020). Though many suffragists respected Tubman for her strength and leadership, many of them, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B Anthony, Martha Stewart, and many others disagreed and expressed their views over Black Americans having full legal rights. Especially after the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments were passed (Wickenden, 2021).

The suffragists produced a Declaration of Sentiments, patterned after the Declaration of Independence, outlining their demands. Written primarily by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the declaration called for voting rights, property ownership for women, reform of divorce laws, and equal opportunities for women in business and religion (Hill, 2020). Frederick Douglass and many other African American men supported the women’s suffrage movement, and they

believed that women should have the right to vote. In his report on the convention in *The North Star* magazine, Douglass said the meeting was the basis of a grand movement, and asserted, without the slightest caveat, that all political rights which it is expedient for man to exercise, it is equally so for woman (Wickenden, 2021).

Women's rights were nonexistent in marriage, divorce laws, church state governance, education, and in all professions. When women got married, they were considered their husbands property. If they were wealthy, their money belonged to their husbands. Women could not sign a contract, create a will, or sit on juries. Divorce was considered abnormal and if they divorced their husbands, they would lose their children (Wickenden, 2021).

Attendees debated and crafted a list of grievances concerning educational, vocational, economic, and religious inequality. Changes in the law would be necessary to balance the equality between women and men. This convention launched the women's rights movement that lasted into the twentieth century. Women were not expected to have such a role in society. After emancipation, suffragettes, as they came to be called, continued to lobby for equal protection and opportunities under the law. Their involvement eventually led to a rupture in the American Anti-Slavery Society.

Liberator editor William Lloyd Garrison, sided with the women against critics, Arthur and Lewis Tappan, wealthy businessmen who underwrote the abolitionist movement. Tubman made steady efforts to have her ideas of improving the African American community be the focal point at most of these women's suffrage meetings and other white women's club organizations. Many of these suffragists were inspired by Tubman's courage to free herself. She was the embodiment of everything they believed about evolution. White women would donate to

Tubman in exchange for her storytelling. She worked very frequently in Boston (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman thought that by telling her story she could get these women to assist her in obtaining political rights for African Americans. She frequently gave lectures in many states throughout the country. It's likely that she accepted as many speaking invitations as she did primarily for the purpose of fund-raising to support. These women were impressed by her courage and determination. They liked hearing how she left on her own by liberating herself from slavery when she was around twenty-seven (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman was a genius and a great planner. Suffragists were impressed by Tubman's ability to leave her husband, get remarried, and move on with her life. They were motivated by these examples and many of these women realized that they had to act on their beliefs also Tubman wanted women to have the right to vote, but she also joined this movement as a vehicle to fight against racial discrimination and improve conditions that African American women and men were facing in housing, education, employment, and healthcare (Wickenden, 2021).

Tubman believed that her support within the women's suffrage movement would eventually benefit the entire Black community. Tubman's flawless escape and leadership through the Underground Railroad was encouragement to many women in the suffrage movement. She was often invited to speak at their gatherings and conventions. Tubman would give speeches about her experience as a conductor on the Underground Railroad. She would also speak about her duties during the Civil War. It is little wonder that in our own time, Tubman has become an icon for everyone (Hill, 2020).

Many women became active abolitionists during the antebellum years. This included women such as Angelina and Sarah Grimké, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Margaret Chandler, Lydia

Maria Child, and Abby Kelly. Their public speaking surprised many men. Susan and Elizabeth were often booed at their conventions. There were Black men in the audience fighting for their opportunity to vote also (Hill, 2020).

Susan and Elizabeth needed support from a dynamic speaker. This is where Tubman came into focus. Tubman's courage to free herself motivated many of the suffragists. She was the product of everything they believed about evolution. In her late sixties, Tubman became a property owner, when she purchased land to provide housing and supportive services for elderly and destitute blacks in 1859 (Hill, 2020).

It had to be hard for Tubman to make the decision to advance the right for white women to gain the right to vote, despite being a property owner. The suffragists wanted Tubman's support to advance their cause, but unfortunately, these women did not want African American women to have the right to vote. Tubman was an outstanding speaker. She often gave speeches at a women's suffrage meetings, hoping that her contribution would lead to all women having the right to vote (Hill, 2020).

She often transfixed audiences with stories of her rescue missions (Larson, 2014). Tubman's strength and tenacity encouraged white women to protest their own lack of enfranchisement in the United States. Tubman inspired many suffragists, including Lucretia Mott and Martha Cottin to fight for women's rights. These suffragists were amazed by Tubman's accomplishments. They asked her to speak at suffragist meetings so that she could tell her story to others. The suffragist attitude towards the uplifting of the Black community led Tubman to help create another organization that would support her goals (Hill, 2020).

In 1896, she was the keynote speaker at the second annual Washington-based meeting of the National League of Colored Women (NLCW). The NLCW had been founded the preceding

year as an alternative to the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), an organization that contained some decidedly racist elements which, despite rhetoric about sisterhood, tended to sideline the concerns and interests of Black women. In July 1896, at the first National Federation of Afro-American Women's conference in Washington, DC, Harriet Tubman used her celebrity status to talk on the theme of More Homes for Our Aged. Many social workers are aware of her acts of courage as a conductor of the Underground Railroad and a Civil War veteran, yet much less is known about her service as a caregiver and houser for older persons (Crewe, 2007).

Tubman was a person committed to improving the quality of life and access to shelter for low-income families. It embraces Tubman and her collaborators and acknowledges their contributions to the rich legacy of community social work practice and its sage principles of empowerment and self-help. During the Civil War, she assisted formerly enslaved people to adapt to a new life of working for wages. For example, she used her own money to erect a wash house and she personally spent time teaching freed women to do washing to avoid dependency on governmental aid (Crewe, 2007).

Being Black and old in the United States has historically resulted in challenges for many African Americans. They faced both the expected vicissitudes of aging with the added burden of racial discrimination. Evidence of this problem can be seen in the census data that reveal that forty-four percent of the Black population as compared to seventy-two percent of whites had a high school degree or higher (Crewe, 2007).

In addition to the differences among married couples, seven percent of Black people, compared to two point seven whites, lived with non-relatives. Poverty rates are highest among minorities, especially Black women. In 1999 the net worth of older Black households was

thirteen thousand compared to one-hundred eighty-one thousand for older white households.

With a rich legacy of self-help in the Black community, there was no time more important than today to rekindle the earlier efforts of pioneers in housing such as Tubman (Crewe, 2007).

Tubman traveled the country speaking on behalf of votes for women. Susan B. Anthony introduced Tubman to a cheering assembly at a convention in Rochester, New York in 1869.

Tubman and Anthony shared the podium as speakers at several meetings. During her speeches, Tubman always displayed confidence and sincerity. Tubman's postwar participation in the women's suffrage movement was a natural outgrowth of her prewar abolitionism (Oretel, 2015).

Tubman felt that it was important to give informative details about her enslaved years and her rescue missions. She would often start by reminding people that she successfully freed many enslaved Africans. Tubman would also give the audience important critical information about the skills she learned during her enslaved years and how these skills helped her achieve success during her rescue missions and the Civil War (Bradford, 1969).

White women welcomed Tubman, but they did not welcome her ideas. She wanted women to have voting rights, including African American women. However, the suffragists could never explain why they did not want African American women to have the right to vote. In 1869, many southern women's suffragists did not believe in full equality, and they fought against African American women having the right to vote.

Many suffragists held racist views. Elizabeth Cady Stanton referred to African American men as Sambos. For example, the relationship between Stanton and abolitionist Frederick Douglas was difficult because he did not agree with such degrading language. Stanton referred to Frederick as a good African American man, but she would use the word Sambo very frequently during her conversations with Douglas to refer to other African American men. Douglas would

often reject the wording she used to refer to African American men, in hopes of getting her to understand that her language was inappropriate and inaccurate (Hill, 2020).

Unfortunately, Stanton would continue to use this language towards African American men for the rest of her life. Three major points in the declaration for women's suffrage were especially stirring. They charged that male-dominated culture had created a false public sentiment by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women. The moral delinquencies which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated but deemed of little account in man (Hill, 2020).

At these conventions, women stressed that their natural rights had been trampled in marriage, divorce laws, in church, state governance, in education, and in all the professions. As late as 1905, when Tubman was over eighty years old, she traveled to Rochester to attend a suffrage meeting, selling a cow to pay the train fare (Wickenden 2021).

When she and her traveling companion, a white woman named Emily Howland, reached the station, they went their separate ways for the night, Howland to a comfortable lodging room and Tubman to a hard bench in the train station's waiting room because she knew that no public house hard bench in the train station's waiting room because she knew that no public house would offer lodgings to an African American woman (Wickenden, 2021).

On August 26, 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment was passed, giving women the right to vote. It came a full half century after the abolitionist movement, in which Tubman worked tirelessly to improve the African American community. Few women of Tubman's generation had done more to demonstrate the tenacity, courage, and dedication that were not white male-specific virtues. Nonetheless, Tubman's role in the Women's Suffrage Movement ought not to be

exaggerated. While it is certainly true that she was more than willing to speak at suffrage gatherings, available records of her remarks indicate that (Hill, 2020).

She always focused on her experiences as a conductor and her service during the war. Freed women and men were deprived of the economic benefits of generations of their work. Therefore, many had to start anew and required the support of leaders like Tubman to survive in their new status and rebuild fragile families who were traumatized by government-sanctioned practices that separated women from their husbands, children, and siblings (Hill, 2020).

She helped newly freed African Americans adapt to a new life working for wages. More impressive was the report that she invested two-hundred dollars from money that she earned for her governmental service to build a wash house to assist the women in supporting themselves. Tubman gave up her wages to avoid ill feelings from other African Americans who were not receiving this privilege and support (Crewe, 2006).

To support herself and others during this period, she made and sold homemade pies, gingerbread, and root beer. Scarcely ten years after her home opened, funds were starting to run out. The AME Zion Church had ownership of the Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged, but they did not want to pump any more resources into what struck church elders as a money trap. The house and a few other buildings on the property sat empty and decaying for two decades until finally put up for auction by town officials, eager to recoup taxes (Crewe, 2006).

The prospect of erasing a visible link to a woman who, in her day, had been praised for her ability to liberate the African American community from slavery. Alarmed and awakened church officials, and they raised money to retain ownership of the site, even though the buildings were falling apart. Tubman was one of the greatest African American women to ever live (Hill, 2020).

## **Conclusion**

Tubman was said to have had a beautiful singing voice. Though she never had any biological children, she helped other women give birth to their children by working as a midwife. Tubman had great intuition and she knew how to read others. She had excellent communication skills. Gaining a reputation as a fearless conductor on the Underground Railroad, Tubman returned several times to Maryland and freed many enslaved Africans (Wickenden, 2021).

She led more family members and other enslaved men, women, and children to freedom. Tubman was considered a woman of considerable strength, even though she remained physically disabled for most of her ninety-one years (Hobson, 2014). She used her own money to erect a wash house and she personally spent time teaching freed women to do washing to avoid dependency on governmental aid. When she died from pneumonia on March 10, 1913, she was believed to have been ninety-one years old and had been fighting for gender equality and the right to vote as a free Black woman for more than fifty years after her work during the Civil War. Later in life, Tubman continued to experience debilitating headaches from her head injury (Crewe, 2006).

To get some type of relief from her condition, Tubman decided to have brain surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital. She got the surgery done naturally, without any anesthesia. “As the surgeon sawed upon her skull, Tubman laid motionless as a log, mumbling prayers through teeth clenched on the bullets. Historians believe that Tubman may have been ninety-one years old when she died. After becoming a valuable scout and soldier, Tubman still faced the racism and sexism of America after the Civil War (Dunbar, 2019).

Historians now believe that Tubman’s journeys were more complicated and dangerous than originally thought. However, she did not travel throughout the South saving enslaved

Africans. She returned only to Maryland and to plantations she knew. Many stories describe Tubman using quilts with codes sewed into them to guide enslaved Africans to the north (Larson, 2004).

Instead, the wily Tubman used her wits, the shape of the rivers, and the stars to show her the way. She also altered the tempos of spiritual songs to deliver messages to passengers on the Underground Railroad. Making the sound of an owl was another one of her signals. Another myth is that she started the Underground Railroad. While she did not start it, Tubman helped expand the network and became its most famous conductor (Larson, 2004).

Tubman herself, however, was prouder of her work with the Union Army. Unfortunately, when she died, she was not recognized as a veteran. Congressman Edolphus Towns's proposal to recognize Tubman as a veteran. Tubman was inducted into the United States Army Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. She is one of two-hundred seventy-eight members, seventeen of whom are women, honored for their special operations leadership and intelligence work (Larson, 2004).

To dedicate this garden in 2000, people made a pilgrimage from Maryland to New York to commemorate Tubman's many journeys. In Ontario, Canada, where she and her parents lived for a while, there is now a research facility at York University named the Harriet Tubman Resource Centre on the African Diaspora. In addition, the church Tubman attended in Canada placed a historical marker to remember her. Many public schools bear her name. Year after year (Larson, 2004).

By 1910, Tubman was wheelchair-bound; she was so frail that she had to be admitted into the home named in her honor. Built on property she donated to her church; Tubman lived to see the home built. She died there on March 10, 1913. She hoped that the Harriet Tubman Home

would be her enduring legacy. It was the culmination of a dream that she had cherished for years (Larson, 2022).

The Harriet Tubman Home was almost destroyed during a fire, but fortunately, Nelson Davis had the skill to rebuild their home. Tubman died in her home the same year that Rosa Parks was born (Crewe, 2006). The home began to falter after Tubman's death. It was finally closed and abandoned for almost twenty years. The AME Zion Church eventually organized a major fund drive (Larson, 2022).

The restored Harriet Tubman Home was dedicated in 1953. Today, the home is a museum and education center that honors Tubman's enduring legacy. The significance of Tubman's work on the Underground Railroad was recognized in 2013, when President Barack Obama assigned a portion of the Eastern Shore in Maryland as the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Monument, which was the first national monument to honor a Black woman, (Larson, 2004).

In June 2021, the United States Army Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame inducted Tubman in their Hall of Fame as a full member. They had originally brought her an honorary member, but many historians reject the idea of Tubman being listed as an honorary member. They felt that she should be a full member. The United States Army Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame members wanted documentation to prove that Tubman was a spy and a scout to include Tubman as a full member (Loucks, 2021)

So, they pulled the documentation together and the United States Army Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame agreed and now Tubman is on the wall as a full member of the United States Army Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame in Fort Huachuca, Arizona. Although perhaps a mythical figure to many, Tubman was a real-life leader for many enslaved

and free Black Americans, and white women. Thousands of African Americans today can trace their families' freedom to her. There are also those who are descended from soldiers she helped while serving in the Union Army and those she housed at the Auburn shelter (Loucks, 2021)

Tubman's fierce determination helped her beat the odds against her, whether she was facing a bounty placed on her head by slave owners, the threat of Confederate capture, or the financial challenges involved in her later efforts to provide for others and stand up for what was right. Tubman is proof that one woman can make a tremendous difference and change the course of history. Hundreds of people attended Tubman's service at AME Zion Church. She was given a military burial at Fort Hill Cemetery in Auburn (Crewe, 2006).

One year later, a bronze plaque with Tubman's image and a small list of her accomplishments was unveiled at a special ceremony. Booker T. Washington spoke about Tubman as a heroic role model for people of all races and spanning all generations. Today, the bronze plaque is attached to the Cayuga County Courthouse building in Auburn New York.

Built on the property she donated to her church; Tubman fortunately lived to see the home built. After her death, the home began to falter. It was finally closed and abandoned for almost twenty years. The AME Zion Church eventually organized a major fund drive to raise money for the Harriet Tubman Home. The restored Harriet Tubman Home was dedicated in 1953. Today, the home is a museum and education center (Crewe, 2006).

The elderly, sick, and those with disabilities also stayed at her home. It's important to mention that even before the Civil War, Tubman was fighting for the rights of women, children, disabled, and the aged. She also volunteered at the Home for Destitute Colored Women and Children in Washington. Tubman's health continued to plague her, yet she worked to support two schools for freed Blacks in the South. About a week before she died, Tubman delivered a

message through Black suffragist Mary B. Talbert during the national women's suffrage march on March 3, 1913 (Hobson, 2014).

Tubman's life struggle to achieve freedom, equality, and opportunity for herself and others influenced succeeding generations of Black Americans. Regarded as an early icon of civil rights, Tubman served as an inspiration for leaders and supporters of the modern American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Courageous African Americans such as Rosa Parks, John Lewis, and Martin Luther King, Jr. among many others, echoed Tubman's cry for equality from more than a century later.

Tubman lived a remarkable and heroic life as a slave, abolitionist, nurse, scout, spy, family caretaker, humanitarian, activist, and free woman of faith and character. Her life story stands as a shining reminder of what anyone can accomplish against all odds. The bronze plaque unveiled at a special memorial service for Tubman a year after her death, bears witness to the tremendous impact of her work (Crewe, 2006).

Estimates of the number of Black people who reached freedom vary greatly, from forty thousand to one-hundred thousand people. Although only a small minority of Northerners participated in the Underground Railroad, its existence did much to arouse northern sympathy for the lot of enslaved Africans in the antebellum period, at the same time convincing many Southerners that the North would never peaceably allow the institution of slavery to remain unchallenged (Woodard, 2022).

When Ben was freed in 1840, he purchased Rit in 1855. Tubman's aged parents died between the 1870s and 1880. It was not until 2003 that Senator Hillary Clinton requested payment of the full pension for Tubman. Tubman is often portrayed solely as a leader in the United States, but she was also a leader in Canada (Sadler, 1997).

Tubman lived in St. Catherines, Canada between 1851 and 1858. She spent time in both St. Catherines and Philadelphia working to gather funds for her journeys to the south. Tubman was a mobile liaison between those struggling for Black liberation and equality in America as well as Canada. The Colored Village of St. Catherines was a respectable section of town, with nearly half of the population from the United States (Sadler, 1997).

The greater Auburn area possessed a modest Black settlement called New Guinea that held a constituency of Maryland Eastern Shore runaways and transplants. Tubman established the Fugitive Aid Society of St. Catharine's, an interracial relief organization, which provided support to low-status American escapees in the early 1860s. Although Canada was not free from bigotry, free Africans enjoyed greater legal and political rights there (Sadler, 1997).

Tubman's legacy has always been celebrated by many historians over the years. Despite her hypervisibility as a historic icon, Tubman, who is renowned for her status as an Underground Railroad conductor, Civil War hero, and women's suffragist, remains invisible as a person with a disability. Tubman will be the first African American to appear on the United States currency note. There has never been a Black American to appear on the United States currency and there hasn't been a woman to appear on the United States currency in the modern era, despite repeated requests to change the currency (Sadler, 1997).

Many activists have been fighting and pushing to have Tubman's face on the twenty-dollar bill, however, there are many others who believe that Tubman should not be placed on the twenty-dollar bill because they feel that she fought against capitalism. According to Larson, Harriet fought against enslavement slavery, she believes that Tubman would want to be on the twenty-dollar bill (Larson, 2019).

Maybe, by 2030, her face will grace the twenty-dollar bill. People who are visually disabled will be able to tell what the note is because it will have a distinctive texture (Larson, 2019). The idea to have her appear on the twenty-dollar bill came about during Obama's Presidency when a young girl wrote a letter to former President Obama asking him why there was not a woman on the United States currency (Larson, 2019). President Obama investigated her inquiry and the Treasury Department stated that Tubman will be replacing Jackson on the twenty-dollar bill.

As we review the strengths, and leadership of women such as Tubman, nurses, doctors, social workers and military leaders can look with pride to Tubman for her service during slavery, and the Civil War. I am inspired not only by Tubman's Underground Railroad service but also by her contributions to the field of social work, most importantly to her service during and after the war.

Tubman promoted peace and tranquility for soldiers of war and racial injustice. She risked her life countless times to end slavery. She also dedicated her time and expertise to lead the Civil War during a time when women were not allowed to participate in wars. Like the North Star and wisdom guided her, Tubman is a wonderful inspiration for social workers, nurses, doctors, and soldiers.

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