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# THE COALITION OF UNITED PROGRESSIVES CHARMECK CHRONICLE

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*Greetings!*

We truly appreciate everyone's involvement.  
This War on Oppression will only be won as one  
mass movement.

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## Sections

- Spotlight - by DonnaMarie Woodson
  - Editorial - by Tarik Kiley
    - Announcements
    - Happenings Gallery!

## Our Mission Statement

The continual unification of as many organizations as possible starting at the local level and branching out to both the state of North Carolina and then the entire nation.

# Spotlight

## Phillis Wheatley



**(c. 1753 – December 5, 1784)**

**By DonnaMarie Woodson**

## **“Incredible Black Women You Should Know About”**

If I hear “Critical Race Theory” one more time, I’m going to scream! Teaching a class on this scholarly investigation of the intersectionality of law and race is not a thing.

Since 2020, conservative US lawmakers have sought to ban or restrict studies of America’s Racial History citing “Critical Race Theory” instruction along with other anti-racism programs as the problem.

My criticism of these efforts is that the goal of the laws is to more broadly silence discussions of racism, equality, social justice, and the history of race.

We need to tell the whole story and not just the parts conservatives feel are permissible to teach.

So, in the spirit of all American History, I’ll be featuring the stories of Black Women who you may or may not know about.

These worthy trailblazers, excelled in fields that, until they made their mark, had been off-limits to black women.

I hope you enjoy this series.

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### **The First Published Poet**

#### **Phillis Wheatley**

Although the date and place of her birth are not documented, scholars believe that Phillis Wheatley was born in 1753 in [West Africa](#), most likely in present-day [Gambia](#) or [Senegal](#). She was sold by a local chief to a visiting trader, who took her to Boston in the British Colony

of Massachusetts, on July 11, 1761. On arrival in Boston, she was bought by the wealthy Boston merchant and tailor John Wheatley as a slave for his wife Susanna. John and Susanna Wheatley named her Phillis, after the ship that had transported her to America. She was given their last name of Wheatley, as was a common custom if any surname was used for enslaved people.

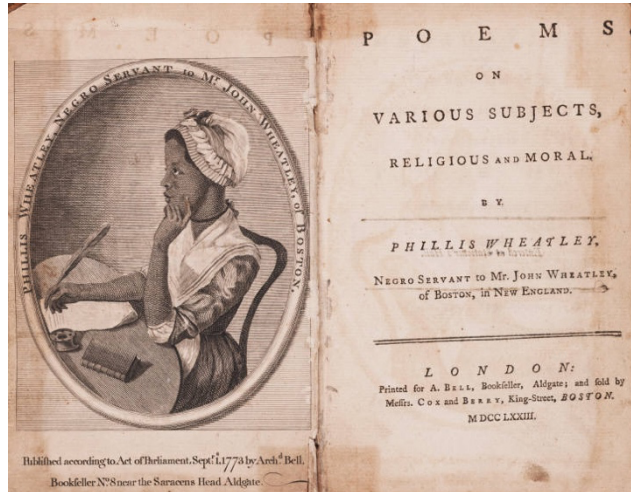


The Wheatleys' 18-year-old daughter, Mary, was Phillis's first tutor in reading and writing. Their son, Nathaniel, also helped her. John Wheatley was known as a progressive throughout New England; his family afforded Phillis an unprecedented education for an enslaved person, and one unusual for a woman of any race.

By the age of 12, she was reading Greek and Latin classics in their original languages, as well as difficult passages from the Bible. At the age of 14, she wrote her first poem, "To the University of Cambridge [Harvard], in New England". Recognizing her literary ability, the Wheatley family supported Phillis's education and left household labor to their other domestic enslaved workers.



The Wheatleys often showed off her abilities to friends and family. Strongly influenced by her readings of the works of [Alexander Pope](#), [John Milton](#), [Homer](#), [Horace](#), and [Virgil](#), Phillis began to write poetry.



Publication of [“An Elegiac Poem, on the Death of the Celebrated Divine George Whitefield”](#) in 1770 brought her great notoriety. In 1773, with financial support from the English Countess of Huntingdon, Wheatley traveled to London with the Wheatley's son to publish her first collection

of poems, [Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral](#)—the first book written by a black woman in America. It included a forward, signed by John Hancock and other Boston notables—as well as a portrait of Wheatley—all designed to prove that the work was indeed written by a black woman. The Wheatley's emancipated her shortly thereafter.

Wheatley's poems reflected several influences on her life, among them the well-known poets she studied, such as Alexander Pope and Thomas Gray. Pride in her African heritage was also evident. Her writing style embraced the elegy, likely from her African roots, where it was the role of girls to sing and perform funeral dirges.

Religion was also a key influence, and it led Protestants in America and England to enjoy her work. Enslavers and abolitionists both read her work; the former to convince the enslaved population to convert, the latter as proof of the intellectual abilities of people of color.

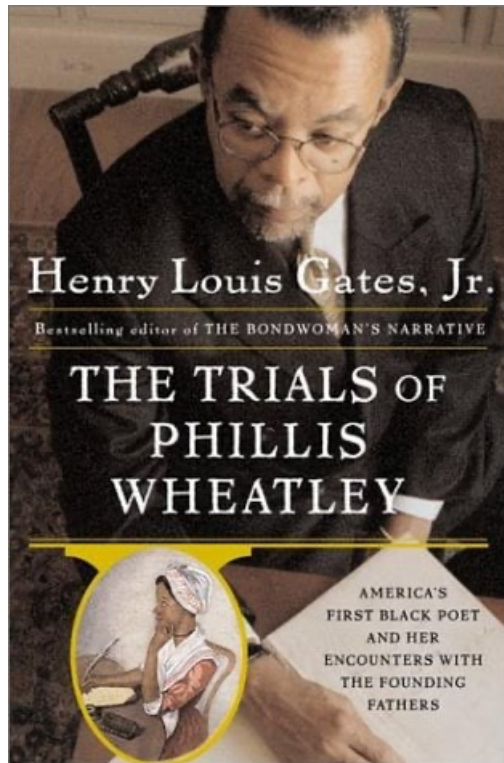
During the American Revolution, Wheatley's opposition to slavery heightened. She wrote several letters to ministers and others on liberty and freedom. During the peak of her writing career, she wrote



a well-received poem praising the appointment of George Washington as the commander of the Continental Army. However, she believed that slavery was the issue that prevented the colonists from achieving true heroism.

In 1778, Wheatley married John Peters, a free black man from Boston with whom she had three children, though none survived. In 1779 Wheatley issued a proposal for a second volume of poems but was unable to publish it because she had lost her patrons after her emancipation; publication of books was often based on gaining subscriptions for guaranteed sales beforehand. The [American Revolutionary War](#) (1775–1783) was also a factor. However, some of her poems that were to be included in the second volume were later published in pamphlets and newspapers.

To support her family, she worked as a scrubwoman in a boardinghouse while continuing to write poetry. Wheatley died in December 1784, due to complications from childbirth. In addition to making an important contribution to American literature, Wheatley's literary and artistic talents helped show that African Americans were equally capable, creative, intelligent human beings who benefited from an education. In part, this helped the cause of the abolition movement.



In the **Trials of Phillis Wheatley: America's First Black Poet and Her Encounters with the Founding Fathers** by [Henry Louis, JR. Gates](#), he writes about how Phillis Wheatley literally wrote her way to freedom when, in 1773, she became the first person of African descent to publish a book of poems in the English language. The toast of London, lauded by Europeans as diverse as Voltaire and Gibbon, Wheatley was for a time the most famous black woman in the West.

Though Benjamin Franklin received her, and George Washington thanked her for poems she dedicated to him, Thomas Jefferson refused to acknowledge her gifts. "Religion, indeed, has produced a Phillis Wheatley," he wrote, "but it could not produce a poet." In other words, slaves have misery in their lives, and they have souls, but they lack the intellectual and aesthetic endowments required to create literature.

The book explores the pivotal roles that Wheatley and Jefferson have played in shaping the black literary tradition. He debates the issues that fermented around Wheatley in her day and illustrates the peculiar history that resulted in Thomas Jefferson's being lauded as a father of the black freedom struggle and Phillis Wheatley's vilification as something of an Uncle Tom.



On July 16, 2019, at the London site where A. Bell Booksellers published Wheatley's first book in September 1773 (8 [Aldgate](#), now the location of the Dorsett City Hotel), the unveiling took place of a commemorative blue plaque honoring her, organized by the [Nubian Jak Community Trust](#) and Black History Walks.

(NJCT) is a commemorative plaque and sculpture scheme founded by [Jak Beula](#) that highlights the historic contributions of [Black and minority ethnic](#) people in Britain. The first NJCT heritage plaque, honouring [Bob Marley](#), was unveiled in 2006 with an intention to commemorate and celebrate the diverse history of modern [Britain](#), its objectives include the promotion of social [equality](#) and to encourage activities that promote [cultural diversity](#) in society.

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## Editorial

# The New American Worker and Self-Care

By

Tarik Kiley

August 31, 2021

Since we have tried to adjust to the COVID-19 pandemic, and attempt to re-open the USA for business, some businesses have had a hard



time getting people to come back to work for them. Some people say it is because unemployment benefits are a disincentive to working. Others say that it is because of low wages.

While both points are factors in this equation, I would argue that the pandemic gave the average worker a lot of time to reflect on the quality of their lives. Workers who used to work for low wages—sometimes at more than one job just to make ends meet—are realizing that their lives were unbalanced pre-pandemic. Many workers were kept in a constant state of desperation, pre-pandemic, believing that they had to work themselves ragged to survive.

But, COVID-19 came, people worked less, or remotely, began to spend more time with their families, and then began to realize that there is no reason to work yourself to death. Many workers' lives were out of balance, believing that the stressful existence, which is capitalist



USA's society, was normal and how it was supposed to be.

I personally grew up with the idea of the Protestant work ethic. I was taught as a child, that a man should never be idle, and that achievement was paramount. I was highly goal-driven and believed that idleness was a sign of

weakness or evil. I was always told at church that "idle hands are the devils workshop." So, as a result, I made sure that I was always busy.

But, through the years, my life became unbalanced. I didn't know about self-care. I would have called that selfishness. But, Moira Lawler, on [Everydayhealth.com](http://Everydayhealth.com), explains that "Self-care is not synonymous with self-indulgence or being selfish. Self-care means taking care of yourself so that you can be healthy, you can be well, you can do your job, you can help and care for others, and you can do all the things you need to and want to accomplish in a day."

So, for all those years where I associated productivity with busyness, it was a false concept. Just because you are busy doesn't mean you are productive, and your productivity can increase when you are rested, and happy. I would also argue that constant meaningless activity is detrimental to mental health. I'm saying this because the



mind searches for meaning, and when you are doing meaningless tasks, it makes the mind want to escape and live in a more vital and vivid existence.

For example, would you want to split rocks with a hammer for a living? Or would you want to be Sisyphus, and roll a rock up a steep hill, only to have it roll back down again, for eternity? No, the mind rejects labor that is fruitless.



Also, the most important part of the word “self-care” is “care.” I believe care to be a social construct, where society provides various mechanisms and behaviors for a person to be better able

to survive in an uncertain world of various obstacles, and impediments to success.

Care is something meant to alleviate suffering, and something meant to encourage social survivability. Infants receive care. Doctors give care. Do you see where I’m going with this? Care reduces stress, bolsters the immune system, results in greater self-esteem, and yes, my point here, increases productivity.

This relates to the idea of living in an enriching environment. It is my personal belief, though I am not a neuroscientist, that things like music, art, poetry, sports, and reading great books help keep the brain healthy. Probably more esoterically, they help keep the mind healthy. If this is the case, then having an enriching work environment is good for workers, their well-being, and for their quality of life. This also

leads to concepts such as mindfulness, which I will leave the reader to research on your own.

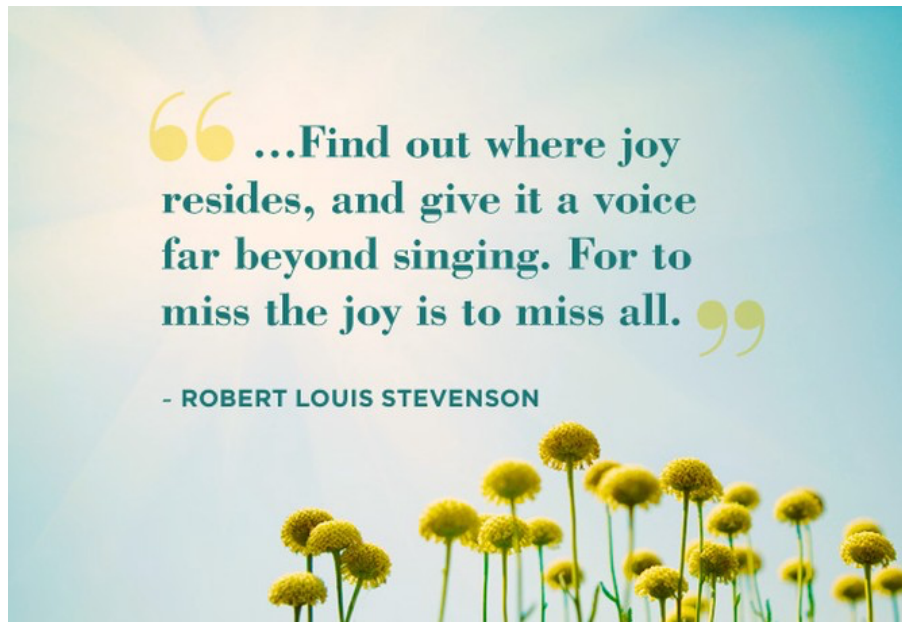


Here, I would like to link the concept of joy. When people are doing the work that they enjoy, it in fact ceases to be work and then instead becomes a form of play. For, example, I don't work at piano, I play the piano. This also links to the idea of purpose.

I personally believe that every person on this earth has a purpose for their lives. When you find your purpose, you find the meaning that makes your life's work, not only enjoyable, but makes you more productive as well. Mindfulness, joy, and purpose brings balance to your thoughts, emotions, and actions.

I recall learning from a college biology class, that the human organism tends toward homeostasis. According to Britannica.com, "Homeostasis is any self-regulating process by which an organism tends to maintain stability while adjusting to conditions that are best for its survival. If homeostasis is successful, life continues; if it's

unsuccessful, it results in a disaster or death of the organism.” So, in a similar vein, the mind seeks out patterns, principles, and laws, that keep the mind organized. Since the mind, consists of thoughts and emotions, among other things, any extreme condition can be detrimental. Therefore, balance is so important.



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# Announcements



## Democrats of North Mecklenburg:

### Monthly Meeting

Thursday, September 2nd at 7:00 PM

Zoom

## Democratic Women of Mecklenburg County

### Paint the Town Blue Gala

Wednesday September 8th at 7:00 PM

Zoom

Buy a ticket or become a sponsor today! 💙

[www.paintthetownbluedwmc.com](http://www.paintthetownbluedwmc.com)

## N. Meck Progressives

### Monthly Meeting

September 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM

Speaker – Briana Brough – All On The Line

Zoom

# Announcements



- EFFECTIVE AUGUST 31st - FACE COVERINGS WILL BE REQUIRED IN INDOOR PUBLIC PLACES, REGARDLESS OF VACCINATION STATUS per PUBLIC HEALTH RULE IN MECKLENBURG COUNTY.

- GET INVOLVED... APPLY TO AN ADVISORY BOARD!

It's never been simpler to apply to an advisory board. There are dozens to choose from and you can apply to up to 3 with one application.

- Here's a link to check them out...

<https://www.mecknc.gov/CountyManagersOffice/BOC/C/Clerk/Pages/Advisory-Boards.aspx>



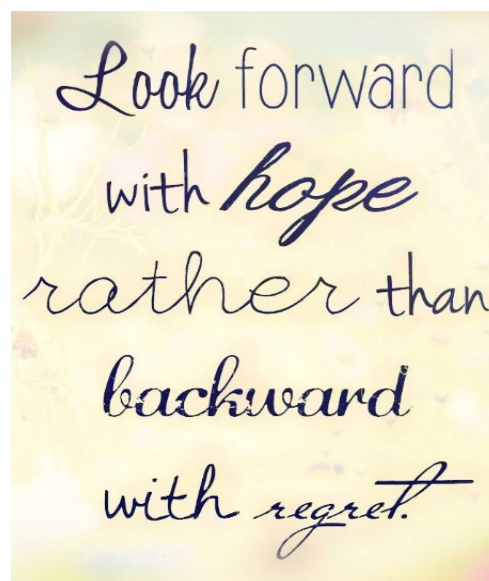
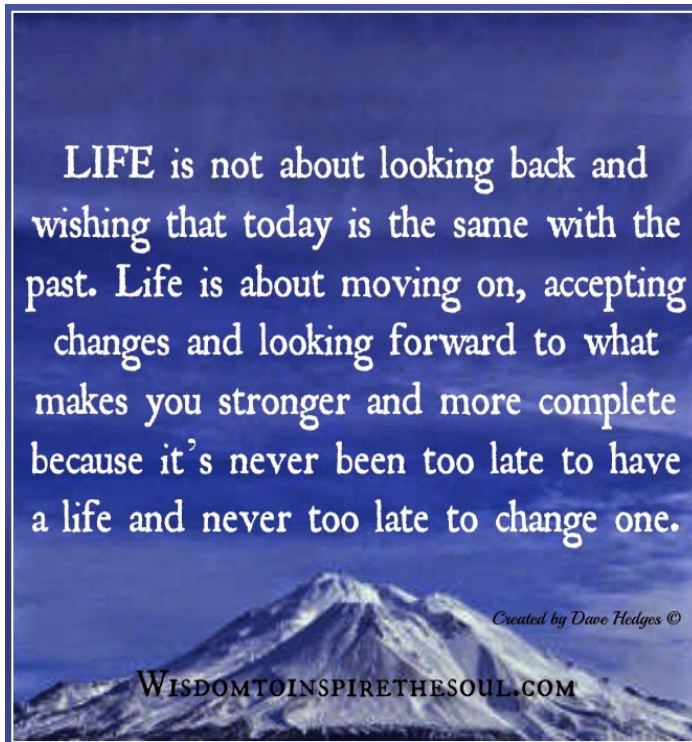
Please submit your group events to [donnamarie93@gmail.com](mailto:donnamarie93@gmail.com) by

the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month for inclusion in the Announcements.



# Happenings Gallery!

## Food for thought...





**The Executive Corner:**

**Executive Director - Jade X. Jackson**

**Rev Rodney Sadler, Joel Segal, DonnaMarie Woodson**

**Rev Glencie Rhedrick**

**Coalition of United Progressives-CharMeck Chronicle**

**Editor: DonnaMarie Woodson**

**Contributor: Tarik Kiley**