

# AAHM Sojourner

**Newsletter of the  
SPRINGFIELD AND CENTRAL ILLINOIS AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MUSEUM**

VOLUME 4, NO.2

SUMMER 2020

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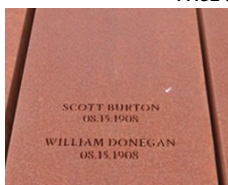
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## ILLINOIS AFRICAN AMERICAN INVENTORS

*By Nell Clay*

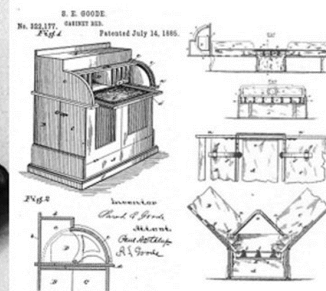
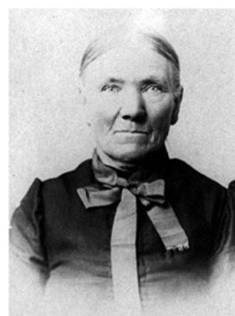
When you research and study African American history, so much of it is very dark. From Africans being captured, placed on slave ships in inhumane conditions, sold into unimaginable slavery, to the Black Codes, the Ku Klux Klan, the Great Migration, and suppression of the vote. I could go on.

However, there are always bright lights shining throughout all the darkness and I want to highlight a few successes in this article. African Americans have accomplished amazingly. With ingenuity, inventiveness, creativity, acuity, imagination, innovation, resourcefulness, and persistence African Americans have managed to accomplish so much while trying to contribute to our society since 1865.

**SOLOMON MCWORTER**, 1815-1891, of Barry, IL was granted Patent Number 70,451 on November 5, 1867. This was the first patent granted to an African American in Illinois. He was the son of "Free" Frank McWorter, the founder of the integrated town of New Philadelphia in Pike County, Illinois. Solomon was a resident of New Philadelphia and was a farmer,



cabinetmaker, and the inventor of an evaporator to extract syrup from sorghum. Business receipts indicate that he had a cabinetmaking firm with his white partner, James Pottle.



**SARAH E GOODE**, 1850 - 1905 of Chicago, IL, was the first African American woman to receive a United States patent, for her invention of a folding cabinet bed. Born into slavery in 1850, inventor and entrepreneur Sarah E. Goode went on to become the first African American woman to be granted a patent by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office for her the folding cabinet bed in 1885.

After receiving her freedom at the end of the Civil War, Goode moved to Chicago and eventually became an entrepreneur. Along with her husband Archibald, a carpenter, she owned a furniture store. Many of her customers, who were mostly working-class, lived in small apartments and did not have much space for furniture, including beds.

See INVENTORS, Page 5



## **OUR MISSION**

- \* We will tell authentic stories about African American life in Central Illinois, past and present, celebrating and sharing our history and culture while planning our future.
- \* We will do this through scholarship, oral history, exhibits, partnerships, our board of directors, our supporters and our friends. We are and will continue to be community builders.
- \* We recognize that our stories are unique but connected to those of other communities and we will support those interconnections. We will be integral to the cultural life of our area. We will partner with like-minded organizations. We will be proactive in our community. We will study and apply best practices in business, scholarship and communication.

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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**Address:** 1440 Monument Ave.,  
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**Telephone:** 217-391-6323  
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## ***from our President . . .***

Dear Museum Members, Supporters and Friends:

Over the last 12 months, hundreds of people engaged with the Springfield & Central Illinois African American History Museum to be informed, inspired, and to change what they knew or thought they knew about the contributions of African Americans.

Our Mission is to tell our truths clearly, unapologetically, honestly, and in a way that children to seniors will be inspired and hopeful. Our current exhibits include The Middle Passage, President Obama, Early African American Pioneers, Illinois African American Firsts, African American Women on US postal stamps, The Illinois Freedom Project, and an art and photographic exhibit by local artisans.

In the future, we will be working to document our exhibits so you can have a virtual tour of the current exhibits. We have begun work on a new exhibit, The Five Oldest African American churches started in Springfield, IL. In addition, we are doing research to complete our first ever completely digital exhibit. This exhibit will document the Underground Railroad routes through Illinois. Though our physical doors are closed, we have been working diligently to stay focused and in touch with you. On our website we have posted a quiz, information on famous African American quotes, a feature article on Matilda McCrear, and an informational film on the Negro Baseball League. Keep checking our website as we continue to inform, educate, and motivate through our website postings. Also check us out on our Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages.

We want to maintain our viable presence in your community, especially in our schools and your life. In order to do that, we need your support. Right now you can help by going to our website at [www.spiaahm.org](http://www.spiaahm.org) and become a member or if you are a member, donate.

## ***PLEASE DONATE NOW***

Due to COVID-19, federal and state guidelines, we have no idea when we will be able to open and what that will look like. With concern for your safety, we have cancelled our Fundraising Gala for 2020. As you are aware, bills do not stop just because we are closed.

I am extremely proud of what our small Museum has accomplished over the past few years. I think we are more vital and important than ever to our community. We pull from the past, but we are crucial for the present and essential to the future. Because of your support and with God's guidance and wisdom, we have accomplished everything we attempted.

God Bless!!!! Stay Safe!!!! And we look forward to seeing you when we open.

Nell Clay, President  
AAHM Board of Directors



is the quarterly newsletter of the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum, 1440 Monument Avenue, Springfield, Illinois. Sue Massie, editor

# ***AAHM Reschedules Events due to Pandemic***

## **2020 AAHM Gala Cancelled Due to COVID-19**

*By Gala Committee Co-Chairs  
Ernestine Lawrence and Ocheng Jany*

Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and for the safety of our supporters, we will not hold our 9th Annual Honoring Our Heritage Gala in October of 2020.

We thank you for the support that you have shown in previous years.

We are still accepting your generous donations, and we will be sharing other ways to contribute to the museum.

Remember that your support keeps our museum open and helps us honor our heritage.

Please consider becoming a member of the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History



## **The Negro Leagues Baseball Exhibit: *Beisbol* Postponed until 2021**

*By Carolyn Farrar*



The Negro Leagues Traveling Exhibit: *Beisbol*, a production of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, Kansas City, MO was scheduled to open last month at the African American History Museum but

due to the COVID-19 virus was postponed until April 2021.

**The *Beisbol* exhibit honors and explores the connections of African American baseball history to Hispanic cultures, communities, and countries.**

The professional "Negro Leagues" were a series of baseball business structures established in the face of segregation from Major League Baseball. These leagues produced some of the greatest baseball players in history, serving as the highest level of professional baseball available to African American and Hispanic players in the United States from 1920 to 1960. The Negro Leagues

Baseball Museum (NLBM) in Kansas City was designated by the United States Congress as America's Home for Negro Leagues history.

The AAHM will have an added feature for this exhibit, a display of information, player profiles, and memorabilia of Springfield and Central Illinois connections to the Negro Leagues which is supported by a grant from the Sangamon County Historical Society.

AAHM thanks all the sponsors and donors for the Negro Leagues: *Beisbol* exhibit: Memorial Health Systems, Ameren Illinois, Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau, Kevin Corbin/Edward Jones, Jim Lewis, Sheels, Springfield Electric Supply, Ruby Funeral Services and Ms. Judith Everson.

The AAHM is seeking Negro Leagues Baseball artifacts and memorabilia to display. Loaned items are insured and placed in secure display cases, contact AAHM 217-391-6323 or Carolyn Farrar, Board Member 217-638-8527. Please visit the AAHM website for updates on the Negro Leagues: *Beisbol* Exhibit and be sure to view the short video "The Untold Truth", a brief history of the Negro Leagues.



# Covid-19

## A New Nightmare for the Black and Minority Population

By Elizabeth G. Alexander

The Coronavirus Covid-19 disease came crashing into our consciousness early in 2020. The first news of multiple cases and deaths came to us out of a nursing home in Kirkland, Washington in February 2020, and by the middle of March there were 29 deaths at that nursing home from the virus. This Covid-19, which is new in the world and can spread from person to person, can range from mild, or no symptoms, to very severe illness and death. As of May 11<sup>th</sup>, almost 1/3 of all Coronavirus deaths are nursing home or assisted living residents or workers. Please note, the biggest problem with reporting numbers is that there are unreported illnesses from the virus throughout the world. The numbers are staggering in this Pandemic brought on by the coronavirus Covid-19. As of May 9, 2020, these statistics were reported.

Globally, there are 3,974,036 confirmed cases; 276,007 deaths; and 1,338,059 people recovered. The United States has 1,320,869 cases and 78,327 deaths with 183,111 recovered. Illinois has 73,760 confirmed cases and 3,241 deaths. Sangamon County has 253 confirmed cases and 19 deaths.

The percentage of cases and deaths for African Americans is shocking. Within the percentages, the disparity of races is revealed. It is stated in various reports that within the United States, 40% of the Coronavirus, Covid-19 deaths are African Americans who are only 13% of the U.S. population. In Chicago, Mayor Lori Lightfoot reports that African Americans, who are 1/3 of 2.7-million population, are 72% of the virus deaths. In Louisiana, 33% of the state is black but 70% of the people who died are black. In Michigan the population is 14% black but 40% of the deaths are black.

These numbers are repeated across the country; the reasons being varied and difficult to overcome at this time in this atmosphere of racism, disorganization, indifference of spirit, economic deficiencies and in the new-speak, "under served minorities". For African Americans there are disparities in the availability of healthcare access and affordable health insurance. Underlying illnesses are a huge factor in the recovery of any patient with Covid-19. African Americans are more unevenly burdened, with medical issues such as diabetes, heart conditions and high blood pressure. (These conditions and the causes should already be under a doctor's care). Often the individual has all of these and other medical problems, hampered again by inadequate healthcare. These factors unfortunately increase the possibility of death with this disease.

Other minorities are severely stressed with this pandemic

in the U.S. For example, along with illness and death, Asian Americans are suffering from job losses and racism plays a large part in the closing of their restaurants and staying home, avoiding the public. Their unemployment rate is as high as 20%. They, along with other U.S. citizens, suffer the unavailability of testing for the Covid-19 disease.

Other factors for African Americans' higher death rate can be the density of living conditions in some cities, multi-generational families living together, having to care for the young and the elderly together; therefore, social distancing is difficult to accomplish. Often times these crowded conditions especially in larger cities, are the result of segregated housing practices. Another element is the fact that minorities are often the critical workers in essential industries, without sick pay or health insurance. They are out working among others who could very well be asymptomatic and are unwittingly passing on the virus to the essential workers who might also be suffering with underlying medical conditions.

African Americans and others might themselves contribute to the spread of the disease among their constituents because of an unwillingness or stubbornness in complying with protective measures such as masks and social distancing.

It is important now, and in the future, that our people be informed of all pertinent issues surrounding their health in order to become knowledgeable, empowered and prepared for this or any future health crisis. It is important that any bias toward individuals or healthcare workers is addressed with diligence and wisdom. It is also vital to collect county and statewide data on coronavirus cases to determine patterns of infection, care, and mortality.

For now, we must be instructional and caring, helping people understand their responsibility in this pandemic crisis. We must wash our hands often, keep a social distance, not gather in groups larger than 10 people. We should wear a mask when around others, stay home when sick, cover our mouth with a tissue or cough into our elbow, and go to the doctor when we have emergency warnings. These emergency signs are persistent pain or pressure in your chest, trouble breathing, bluish lips or face, a fever, shortness of breath and/or persistent coughing.

The final message here is to help whoever you can - healthcare workers, essential workers, patients, suppliers of all goods, first responders, neighbors - wherever you can. Keep yourself and those close to you, safe, healthy and informed. Listen to the scientists and the medical experts and beware of myths and rumors. Stay ALERT!

## **Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett, leader in Covid Research**



*By Nell Clay*

As governments look for solutions to the coronavirus pandemic, Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett is leading a team to find a vaccine for COVID-19.

Dr. Corbett is a viral immunologist who trained at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). She is now a doctor at the National Institute of Health in Maryland.

Dr. Corbett began intensive research to find a vaccine in January 2020 when it was determined that the COVID-19 disease was similar to pneumonia.

While vaccines usually take two years or more to develop, Dr. Corbett is working to speed the process. Her team is swapping the genetic code of the SARS vaccine which comes from the same family. They are now running the first human trials of the vaccine in Seattle, just 66 days after the initial viral sequence was released.

She says in a tweet, it's *"a testament to rapid vaccine development for emerging diseases."*

Volunteers will receive two doses of the mRNA-1273 vaccine and will be monitored for 28 days in an effort to see how well the medicine reacts to humans. Forbes reports that Phase 1 will only be tested on 45 patients, but the second phase of the trial will require larger numbers.

Dr. Corbett's research interests entail elucidating mechanisms of viral pathogenesis and host immunity as they pertain to vaccine development. In 2008, Corbett graduated from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biological Sciences and another one in Sociology. She was a NIH scholar and a Meyerhoff Scholar. She went on to earn her PhD in Microbiology and Immunology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2014.

## **The Great Migration**

*By Gail Simpson*

Racism and social injustice in the southern region of the United States brought about the need for African Americans to leave and seek a better way of life. Segregation, racist ideology, lynching, and lack of social and economic opportunities in the South meant it was time to go.

The Great Migration, sometimes known as the Great Northward Migration or the Black Migration, was the movement of six million African Americans to the Northeast, Midwest, and West between 1916 and 1970.

During this Pandemic we should take the opportunity to read about this amazing and courageous journey and reflect on the circumstances we currently find ourselves. That COVID19 has a disproportionate impact on people of color, especially African Americans should give us pause.

Many authors have studied and written about the Great Migration, a few are listed and provide for some interesting reading:

"The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of Americas Great Migration" by Isabel Wilkerson.

"The Great Migration: An American Story" by Jacob Lawrence.

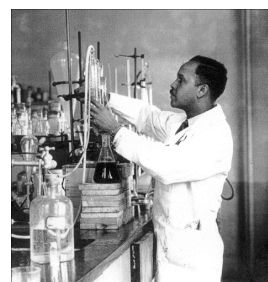
"The Long-Lasting Legacy of the Great Migration," Smithsonian Magazine by Isabel Wilkerson.

"Making Our Way Home: The Great Migration and the Black American Dream" by Blair Imani.

Enjoy the journey!

### **INVENTORS, From Page 1**

**PERCY JULIAN** is one of the most popular Illinois African American inventors with over 100 U.S. patents. Percy Julian (April 11, 1899 to April 19, 1975) synthesized physostigmine for the treatment of glaucoma and synthesized cortisone for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis. Julian is also noted for inventing a fire-extinguishing foam for gasoline and oil fires.



Dr. Julian developed patents from 1940 to 1974. His patents included creations like Process for Production of a derived Vegetable Protein, Procedure for Preparation of Progesterone, Preparation of 17 Ipha Hydroxy Steroids, and Preparation of Wool Wax Alcohol of Low Cholesterol Content Useful as a Dispersing and Emulsifying Agent.

Julian synthesized the female and male hormones, progesterone and testosterone, by extracting sterols from soybean oil. He received dozens of honors over the course of his career and after his death, all related to his scientific work.

# ***Dedication of the Rosenberg Home***

**This speech by Kathryn Harris, AAHM Board Member, was delivered at the February 12, 2020 Dedication of the Julius Rosenberg Home located in the Lincoln Home National Historic District in downtown Springfield.**

Good morning.

Thank you all for being here this morning as we unveil the signage for the Rosenwald House in the Lincoln Home Neighborhood. As has been mentioned earlier, this home, formerly known as the Lyon House and which now houses Park Service administrative offices, was once the home to the Henson Lyon family, a farming family, according to the 1860 census. However, by 1866, Lyon had moved and in 1868, Samuel Rosenwald, the father of the man we recognize and honor today, Julius Rosenwald, purchased the property.

Julius Rosenwald was born here in Springfield in 1862 and was raised in this neighborhood, in the shadow of the Lincoln Home. Lincoln had left Springfield in February 1861 after having been elected to the Presidency in the 1860 election.

Julius Rosenwald gained fame and his place in history as not only one of the founding members of Sears-Roebuck, but also, and more importantly, he gained fame as one of the leading philanthropists in American history. It was through his philanthropy that he reinforced the unity of our nation, elevated those who look like me to have the opportunity and accessibility to education, and in turn, he believed, to fulfill the promises of the Founding Fathers. Lincoln believed in "the right to rise": that every person, using his talents and hard work, could rise up the economic ladder and improve his lot in life.

Rosenwald was moderately successful in the clothing business in his early years as he had been apprenticed to his uncles in New York and Chicago. But it was when he bought partial interest in the mail order house of that his fortunes multiplied.

Rosenwald had been concerned with the welfare of blacks since the early 1900s and in 1917 he established the Rosenwald Fund with the chief purpose to improve the education of blacks, particularly in the segregated south. It was through the Rosenwald Fund that more than 5000 schools were built in the Southern United States. I note here that these 5000+ schools were built also with the support, funds and "sweat equity" of black citizens. Rosenwald's largesse did not end with the construction of schools as he established the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago in 1929 and he contributed heavily to the University of Chicago.

Rosenwald lived and exhibited the qualities and character traits of the man in whose neighborhood he grew up, Abraham Lincoln.

I must acknowledge here the Abraham Lincoln Center for Character Development at Lincoln College, Lincoln, Illinois and its Director, my friend and Abraham Lincoln Association colleague Ron Keller, for so succinctly identifying and naming the character traits of Mr. Lincoln which I have also identified in Julius Rosenwald.

***Honesty: dealing with individuals and situations with truth.***

In his interactions with business associates, colleagues and even adversaries, Rosenwald was upright and honest

***Empathy: understanding the feelings of others.***

His relationship with Booker T. Washington, a friendship that lasted for many years, helped him to understand the plight of the Negroes in the segregated South and afforded him the opportunity to be a force for improvement and change.

***Humility: not thinking too highly of one's own importance.***

Despite being one of the richest, wealthiest men in the nation, Rosenwald was able to appreciate and give some level of understanding to the position that the black man found himself in the racist, Jim Crow, and segregated era of the first quarter of the twentieth century. He had witnessed firsthand the hardships that were endured and that was thanks to the lifelong friendship he developed with Booker T. Washington of the Tuskegee Institute.

***Perseverance: determination in the face of defeats.***

Rosenwald was determined that despite the hardships that the Negroes faced, he would work hand in glove with his friend Booker T. Washington to ameliorate that situation. Education, Rosenwald believed, was the way out of poverty, discrimination, and inequality

***Courage: standing for what is right against opposition.***

Mr. Lincoln faced opposition when he was deciding about whether or not to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, but he decided that it was the right thing to do and he acted upon that decision. Rosenwald also decided that his work for educating the children and grandchildren the formerly enslaved was the "right thing" to do and would indeed achieve Mr. Lincoln's belief in one's ability "to rise."

***Intellect: emotionally learning all one can about the world.*** Rosenwald exhibited and demonstrated this character trait in the creation of the Museum and his support of education.

See ROSENWALD, Page 7



## ***Coalition works to bring Monuments to Springfield***

*By Jim Lewis*

On behalf of the African American History Museum, three Board members (Nell Clay, President, and Kathryn Harris and Jim Lewis) have been working with a broad coalition to bring some historic monuments to Springfield. The Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) in Montgomery, Alabama has a powerful exhibit that tells the terrible story of lynchings across this country, and EJI offers monuments to communities that are prepared to tell the story of tragic lynchings in their community.

In recent years, Springfield has acknowledged and commemorated the two lynchings of Scott Burton and William Donnegan that took place during mob violence in August

1908. This mob violence is considered to be the impetus for the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) that advocates for equal protection and equal opportunity.

These EJI monuments would further commemorate this 1908 tragedy, in hopes that we will gain additional understanding of our history--positive and negative--that will strengthen the positive and never repeat the negative. Before obtaining these monuments, we will have a broad community meeting with everyone who is interested, to discuss where to place them and how to use them to encourage better understanding of each other. Due to the COVID virus, we will have to wait until it is appropriate to have this broad community meeting.



### **ROSENWALD, From Page 6**

***Vision:*** *having firm and attainable ideas about the future.*

Rosenwald believed in the value of education and said when he introduced BTW to his business leader friends in Chicago in 1912: "Washington, in helping his own race to attain the high art of self-help and self-dependence, while simultaneously "helping the white race to learn that opportunity and obligation go hand in hand, and that there is no enduring superiority save that which comes as a result of serving."

***Responsibility:*** *working hard and doing one's duty.*

Rosenwald was a secure and grounded individual according to his biographers. One of whom said, "...the greatest thing about Julius Rosenwald is not his business, but himself, not what he has, but what he is, his character, his personality, his sincerity, his honesty, his democracy, his thoughtfulness, his charity of heart, his sympathy, and consuming desire to be responsible for and to help the less fortunate of his fellow creatures..."

***Leadership:*** *leading others with service, justice, and fairness.* Rosenwald worked diligently with Booker T. Washington and others to develop the more than 5000 schools in the deep South and it was his leadership in creating the Rosenwald Fund for the "well-being of mankind" that funded the schools in the South, that aided Jewish relief agencies in Russia in the 19-teens, that funded YW and YMCA buildings and programs, and that provided aid to needy countries around the globe.

Rosenwald believed that if his name was NOT attached to the many philanthropic projects he supported that those for whom the work was done would take ownership...."If no name is used, it will belong to the people." That was his mantra. Rosenwald combined philanthropy with business acumen and led successful and sustaining projects that truly benefitted citizens. His own Rosenwald Fund which he established had exhausted all of its funds by 1948, some sixteen years after his death. By his exemplary life and his belief in equality and living up to the ideals of the founding fathers, Rosenwald and Lincoln have much in common.

Thank you.

# INVENTORS FROM SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

RUDOLPH "RUDY" BOSWELL received patent #5,203,446 for a curling iron traveling case in 1993.

KENNETH BRAXTON received patent #4,141,006 on February 20, 1979 for a Security System for Centralized Monitoring and Selective Reporting of Remote Alarm conditions.

DAVID W. COX, JR. received patent #708183 and #414106 on September 19, 2006 for a verification system for the purchase of a retail item and method of using same.

FONDA EVANS received patent # D499,857 on December 21, 2004 for a t-shirt with removable sleeves convertible to a hat.

JULIUS R. WATTS received patent #493,137 on March 7, 1890 for a Bracket for a Miner's Lamp.



## MEMBERSHIP

Members receive membership cards, the *Sojourner* newsletter and museum communications. Members at the Sustaining level and above also receive invitations to previews, grand openings and special VIP events.

### Membership Categories

- |                                             |                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$ 25   | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting \$ 100-\$ 199 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$ 50       | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining \$ 200-\$ 499 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth/student \$15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Advancing \$ 500-\$ 999  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior \$20        | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member \$1,000      |
- ☐ Business Member \$500-\$999 (includes business listing at museum events)
- ☐ I would like to pay now for three years of membership . AMOUNT enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street address \_\_\_\_\_

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Your check should be made payable and sent to the African American History Museum of Springfield and Central Illinois (AAHM) , P.O. Box 301, Springfield, IL 62705-0301