

BLACK HISTORY:

What is your contribution to the next generation?

~ by Dr. Richard Hackney

We should never underestimate the value of History. It is said, "He who does not know his history, will be destined to repeat it." History is a valuable teacher to those who are willing to learn, and a haunting reminder to those who refuse to acknowledge the lessons it conveys. We must never ignore or fail to recognize our history.

In school I was not excited about history. To me, it was only about dates and stories relating to someone who, most of the time, did not look like me.

The second hand books issued to us did not include African Americans. There was

no mention of our contributions to the development of Texas, let alone this nation or the world. Then, after intergration, stories were written of Harriet Truman, W.E.B. Dubois, George Washington Carver, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Dr. Charles Drew and others. There were books by Ralph Ellison, James Balwin, and John Hope Frankin. Finally, African Americans were seen in print. However, their sightings were rare. Mentions of the great contributions made by African Americans were few and far between. Therefore, hearing of them still felt foreign. I came to realize that being aware of the numerous contributions of the many African American historical giants would have to be intentional.

In my pursuit to know more about African American history right here in Texas, I joined the Cherokee County Historical Society Commission. After joining the commission,

I recognized how much African American history has been left out or left unrecorded. Our ancestors were noble, God-fearing citizens of the United States who helped build our community - and they looked just like me.

Currently, I am writing a series of articles for a local newspaper as a guest columnist and I am planning oral history recordings to tell their stories.

It is exciting to see the growing enthusiasm and the responses to inspirational history makers of Cherokee County. It's exciting to have been given the opportunity to write and share our part in local history. As I campaign to become the first African American Representative of District 11, it is certainly a privilege to inspire this generation to become the next history makers of Cherokee County. We have been passed the baton to make a difference. We have no time to waste!

As we celebrate Black History, each year and every day, let's listen carefully and take to heart the valuable experiences that our elders have long been waiting to tell. We must allow all that they overcame and all they accomplished in spite of tremendous opposition, to serve as stepping stones to accomplish even more. Collectively we can produce more inventors, more leaders, more doctors, more fathers and more mothers equipped to raise champions! We are the next history makers. I ask each of you, what is your contribution to the next generation?

Be encouraged. No matter how much or how little you have. Each of us can leave a rich legacy of faith in God, integrity, and hard work. Hard work will open doors. Integrity will keep you and God will carry you on to the end.

- GOD BLESS!



Mr. James I. Perkins, Citizens 1st Bank President, received one of the greatest honors that can be bestowed upon an individual. January 29, 2008 the Stephen F. Austin College of Education was named the James I. Perkins College of Education in his honor. Seated here, Mr. Perkins and Indianapolis Colt, Cody Glenn, also former Citizens 1st Bank employee; Andrew Melontree of the Tyler Bank and Walter Session, Rusk city Councilman. They are viewing a thank you card to Mr. Perkins from Rusk State Hospital Employees and Superintendent Ted Debs for support given to RSH. The card is signed by each employee and has been framed and placed on display in the bank. RSH provides about 936 jobs to East Texas.

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