

New York Beacon

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The Guiding Light to Truth and Justice

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Health

Mary Mahoney, the first Black nurse in America

Mary Mahoney made history by becoming the first Black woman to complete nursing training in America in 1879. The Boston, Mass. native was born May 7, 1845, although some sources state April 16 as her birthday. Mary Eliza Mahoney worked as a private-duty nurse at Boston's New England Hospital for Women and Children for many years ahead of her being

admitted into the hospital's nursing program in 1878. To bolster her income, Mahoney also worked as a janitor and cook at the hospital as well.

Of the women who entered the nursing program, Mahoney was one of just a handful to graduate. Mahoney worked for several decades as a private nurse for prominent Boston families as the perils of being a Black nurse and the rampant racism of the time were a dangerous mix.



Farewell to Earl Grant, a pan-African warrior

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(SNCC), he was going to spend six months building up the Organization of African American Unity (OAAU).

Earl's reaction to the assassination of Brother Malcolm on February 21, 1965 is clearly revealed in the following quotes from his essay "...As I stood by his coffin, I looked upon the face that I had loved so much. The tears were streaming down my face as I said 'As Salaam Alaikum' to him for the last time. I thanked him for allowing one, so unworthy as I, to share his life with him. I asked for forgiveness for my being unable to have done more for him."

Through the past 54 years Earl attended and/or participated in celebrations on May 19, Brother Malcolm's birth date and commemorations on February 21, the day he was assassinated by Negroes who willingly collaborated with proponents of white supremacy/racism. Besides conceiving and formatting the book, Malcolm X: The Man and His Times, in 2006 Earl and I, along with former OAAU secretary Sara Mitchell, pulled together a reunion of former OAAU members. Eighteen Brothers and Sisters and their

families experienced a powerful and memorable reunion.

In 2009, I traveled to Los Angeles and spent five days with Earl discussing ways to sustain and advance Brother Malcolm's critically important legacy. Tebuti Hughes, who basically looked after Earl during the last years of his life, interviewed us for nearly three hours. The last time I spoke with Earl was a few days before his death. I told him about a book I was doing that will focus on Brother Malcolm's international agenda. Earl couldn't speak but Tebuti said he was responding with body movement as I spoke. Earl and I will be listed as co-authors of the book since he has provided me with critical information and insight. Earl ended his "Last Days" essay with the following quote describing how he felt after the burial of Brother Malcolm. "I returned home and fell into a deep sleep. It was the first real rest I had been able to get in months. There was no longer any reason to jump when the phone rang or to sleep with a loaded gun. The best year of my life was at an end. But, I along with all of the brothers and sisters, would live it again, Allah willing."

Rest in peace, our warrior Brother.

No place like home for a Visiting Nurse

By Joanna Ignatiades, RN, VNSNY Choice Health Plans

May 6 through May 12 is recognized as National Nurses Week In New York, home care nurses in particular work to keep our aging population living safely and independently at home—avoiding unnecessary trips to the hospital. You might be surprised to learn about some of the ways home care nurses go above and beyond their standard "job descriptions" to help frail, elderly or disabled New Yorkers stay safe and healthy well into their golden years.

Teaching is Caring Too. Diabetes, Arthritis, High Blood Pressure, Heart Health—as we age most of us will face challenges related to chronic illness that require lifestyle changes. One of the most important things that home care nurses do to help those they care for is to educate them and their family caregivers about how to make dietary, fitness and medication changes safely. It helps to know why the changes are important, and it helps to have support as you work to make them part of your new wellness routine.

Tough as Nails and Grace Under Fire. Home care nurses are on the phones and in and out of different settings day in and day out. They must quickly adapt to a variety of stressful situations. Whether it's dealing with an emergency surgery or quickly treating a grisly wound, nurses can be some of the toughest people you know. They'll help you keep your



cool (and blood pressure under control) and are highly skilled at staying calm no matter what.

Care that Keeps on Giving. While patients may only see their doctors for a quick visit in the office, home care nurses coordinate care with their patients on an ongoing basis to form trusting relationships that support their care. They monitor patients outside the office and can inform doctors about health changes to help them stay well and avoid unnecessary trips to the hospital or ER. Home care nurses also coordinate care with physical therapists, social workers, home health aides and other resources that the physician orders or approves.

Home is Where the Health Is. By providing care right where someone lives, home care nurses help aging or homebound individuals stay rooted and engaged in their communities and live a safe and independent life for many years—avoiding the isolation and dependency

that can develop in a nursing home. Whether it's a voice on the phone or a knock on the door, nurses know that home is where most people feel safe and connected to their community.

When You Need Us, We're There. At some point in our lives, we all connect with a nurse. Maybe it's someone who was there when we were born, or gave birth to our own children. Maybe it's the steady skill of an RN who supervised care and helped us heal through a little laughter or noticed we weren't our usual chatty selves during a phone health check-in. National Nurses Week is a time to say thank you to nurses who are there when we need them. Whenever they might be!

To learn more about health plans that help elder New Yorkers live more comfortably, safely and independently in their own homes, visit www.VNSNYCHOICE.org or call 1-855-AT CHOICE (1-855-282-4642).

Guidance from wise, courageous ancestral warriors

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my hands and knees through mud and mire, to the feet of a learned man, where I would sit and humbly supplicate him to instill into me that which neither devils nor tyrants could remove, only with my life—for coloured people to acquire learning in this country makes tyrants quake and tremble on their sandy foundations.

Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune - If our people are to fight their way out of bondage, we must arm them with the sword and the shield and the buckler of pride—belief in themselves and their possibilities, based upon sure knowledge of the achievements of the past. That knowledge and that pride we must give them if it breaks every back in the kingdom!

Benjamin E. Mays - I hope we will make it clear to ourselves and our children—that whether we believe in integration, separatism or nationalism, there is no substitute for

a trained mind. For the future belongs, always has and always will belong, to the man who knows, and the man who has skills.

Martin Luther King, Jr. - Education without social action is a one-sided value because it has no true power potential. Social action without education is a weak expression of pure energy. Deeds uninformed by educated thought can take false directions. When we go into action and confront our adversaries, we must be as armed with knowledge as they are. Our policies should have the strength of deep analysis beneath them to be able to challenge the clever sophistries of our opponents.

Malcolm X - Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today... Just because you have colleges and universities doesn't mean you have education. The colleges and universities in the American system are skillfully used

to miseducate.

Carter G. Woodson - No systematic effort toward change has been possible, for, taught the same economics, history, philosophy, literature and religion which have established the present code of morals, the Negro's mind has been brought under the control of his oppressor. The problem of holding the Negro down, therefore, is easily solved.

When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go yonder. He will find his "proper place" and will stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit. His education makes it necessary.

W. E. B. DuBois - May God write us down as asses if ever again we are found putting

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