

CORE ENSEMBLE

Celebrating Diversity through Chamber Music Theatre

Ain't I a Woman!



Honoring four African-American women of remarkable achievement and invincible character: ex-slave and fiery abolitionist Sojourner Truth, renowned novelist and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston, exuberant folk artist Clementine Hunter and fervent civil rights worker Fannie Lou Hamer. Text is by Kim Hines. The musical score is drawn from the heartfelt spirituals of the Deep South, the urban exuberance of the Jazz Age and concert music by African American composers including Diane Monroe.

While a good deal of factual information is included in **Ain't I a Woman**, this one-hour program is intended to do more than merely "teach" a curriculum in social studies.

Instead, the program also focuses on how the lives and individual actions of these four inspiring women embody character traits that were anchors for the many ethical decisions at the heart of their compelling stories. The play demonstrates how these women overcame personal challenges and were able to achieve in an American society often unfriendly to social tolerance and acceptance.

Ain't I a Woman supports the work in your school of developing decision making skills so that student scan make healthy and safe personal choices and contribute positively to a safe learning community.

**RESPECT – RESPONSIBILITY – FAIRNESS
TRUSTWORTHINESS – CARING - CITIZENSHIP**

CHARACTERS THAT YOU WILL MEET IN AIN'T I A WOMAN!

SOJOURNER TRUTH (1797-1883)

She never learned to read or write, but became an extraordinary speaker for black freedom and women's rights -- to white audiences.

SOJOURN Function: *intransitive verb*

Etymology: Middle English *sojornen*, from Old French *sojorner*, from (assumed) Vulgar Latin *subdiurnare*, from Latin *sub* under, during + Late Latin *diurnum* day -more at UP, **JOURNEY Date:** 14th century : to stay as a temporary resident: STOP <sojourned for a month at a resort>

so-journ-er *noun*

NOTABLE FACTS ON HER LIFE AND LEGACY

1797 Born in Hurley, NY (exact date and year not certain, as no records of slave births were kept). She is given the name Isabella. She speaks Low Dutch, the language of her first master, Johannes Hardenburgh.

1806 Age 8, sold as slave to John Neely. She begins to learn English.

1808 Age 10, sold as slave to Martin Schryver.

1810 Age 13, sold as slave to John Dumont.

1817 On the Fourth of July, a New York state law goes into effect promising freedom to all slaves born before July 4, 1799.

1843 She changes her name to Sojourner and decides to travel west, preaching on religion, and speaking out against slavery and for the rights of women.

1850 Still unable to read or write she tells the story of her life to a friend who writes it down. *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* is published.

1852 Gives "Ain't I A Woman" speech in Akron, Ohio.

1857 Moves to Michigan.

1861 Civil War begins.

1864 She meets with President Abraham Lincoln.

1865 Civil War ends.

1865 The Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is ratified, freeing all the slaves in the United States.

1870 Met with President Ulysses S. Grant.

1875 *The Book of Life* is published.

1883 Dies November 25 in Battle Creek, Michigan

1919 The Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is ratified, giving women the right to vote.

1943 Detroit, Michigan. The Sojourner Truth housing project is completed. As blacks and whites attempt to take up their residences racial tension explodes and a fierce riot erupts killing 30 and injuring 600.

1987 NASA launches a small vehicle to explore the surface of Mars. A girl from Bridgeport, Connecticut wins a competition to give the rover a name. It is named after another intrepid American wanderer. It is called "Sojourner."



VOCABULARY

- **abolition:** Activity that took place in the 1800's to end slavery. Most abolitionist activity occurred in the United States and the United Kingdom, but antislavery movements operated in other countries as well.
- **A.M.E. Zion:** African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is a Protestant religious denomination formed in 1796 by a group of African Americans who withdrew from the John Street Methodist Episcopal Church in New York City. Many leaders of the movement in the 1800's to abolish slavery were members, including Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and Frederick Douglass. The church has more than 3,500 congregations and over 1,500,000 members in the United States and other countries.
- **emancipation:** to free from restraint, control, or the power of another; especially: to free from bondage.
- **orator:** one distinguished for skill and power as a public speaker.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Books

- Adler, David A. *A Picture Book of Sojourner Truth*. Holiday House, 1994.
- Bernard, Catherine J. *Sojourner Truth*. Enslow, 2001.
- Painter, Nell I. *Sojourner Truth*. Norton, 1996.
- Truth, Sojourner. *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*. 185. (expanded in 1875, and available in many editions)

Websites

- <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/truth/1850/1850.html>
- <http://www.pacifict.com/ron/Sojourner.html>
- <http://www.biography.com/people/sojourner-truth-9511284#born-into-slavery>



CHARACTERS THAT YOU WILL MEET IN AIN'T I A WOMAN!

ZORA NEALE HURSTON (1891-1960)

Although born in Alabama, she was so proud of her heritage as a black Floridian she claimed in her autobiography that she was born near Orlando.

RA · CON · TEUR Pronunciation: "ra-kan-'t&r~, -k&n- **Function:** *noun*

Etymology:

French, from Middle French, from *raconter* to tell, from Old French, from *re-* + *aconter*, *acompter* to tell, count - more at ACCOUNT **Date:** 1828: a person who excels in telling anecdotes

NOTABLE FACTS ON HER LIFE AND LEGACY

1891 Born in Notasulga, Alabama, although later in life she will insist that she was born in Eatonville, Florida. She attends schools in Eatonville and Jacksonville, then moves north she joins a Gilbert and Sullivan acting company.

1918 She attends Morgan Academy (now Morgan State University) in Baltimore where she develops a strong interest in literature.

1928 She graduates from Barnard College, having become the first black student to be awarded a scholarship. With a bachelor of arts in anthropology she then returns to Florida to collect material on African-American folklore for her four novels, and for "Mules and Men" which ethnographer Alan Lomax will later call the "greatest book of African-American folklore ever written."

1934 She establishes a school of dramatic arts based on "pure Negro expression at Bethune-Cookman College. She later works as a story consultant for Paramount Pictures.

1934 Her first novel *Jonah's Gourd Vine* is published.

1936 She travels to Jamaica and Haiti on a Guggenheim Fellowship.

1937 Her second novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is published to great acclaim and is chosen as a Book-of-the-Month Club alternate. But African-American novelist Richard Wright criticizes her work as not having themes or lacking messages as well. Other critics fault her heavy use of dialect as unfairly stereotyping blacks.

1942 *Dust Tracks On The Road* is published. An autobiography, this is her most commercially successful book.

1948 She is accused in New York of the sexual molestation of a sixteen year old boy. Publicity, especially within the African-American press, is sensationalist, and although the charge is eventually dismissed any further publication prospects are permanently damaged.

1948 Her career devastated, she returns to Florida and begins to fade into obscurity. All of her titles go out of print. She works as a maid.



1957 She survives on unemployment benefits, substitute teaching, and welfare checks.

1960 She dies of a stroke in Fort Pierce, FL. There is no money for a grave marker.

1970 Beginning in this year her work is gradually rediscovered, largely due to the attention and efforts of author Alice Walker.

1973 Walker has a stone placed on the grave.

2004 An estimated 20,000 people in Palm Beach County read *Their Eyes Were Watching God* after the novel is selected by Read Together Palm Beach: One Book, One Community, a countywide reading campaign.

VOCABULARY

- **anthropology:** The science of human beings; *especially:* the study of human beings in relation to distribution, origin, classification, and relationship of races, physical character, environmental and social relations, and culture.
- **dialect:** A regional variety of language distinguished by features of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation from other regional varieties and constituting together with them a single language.
- **Jim Crow:** Stereotype black man in a 19th century song-and-dance act Date: 1838 1: *usually offensive:* BLACK 2: ethnic discrimination especially against blacks by legal enforcement or traditional sanctions.
- **stereotype:** Something conforming to a fixed or general pattern; *especially:* a standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplification.
- **rural:** Of or relating to the country, country people or life, or agriculture.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Books

- Hemenway, Robert. *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography*. University of Illinois Press. 1977.
- Porter, A.P. *Jump at de Sun: The Story of Zora Neale Hurston*. Carolrhoda Books, 1992.

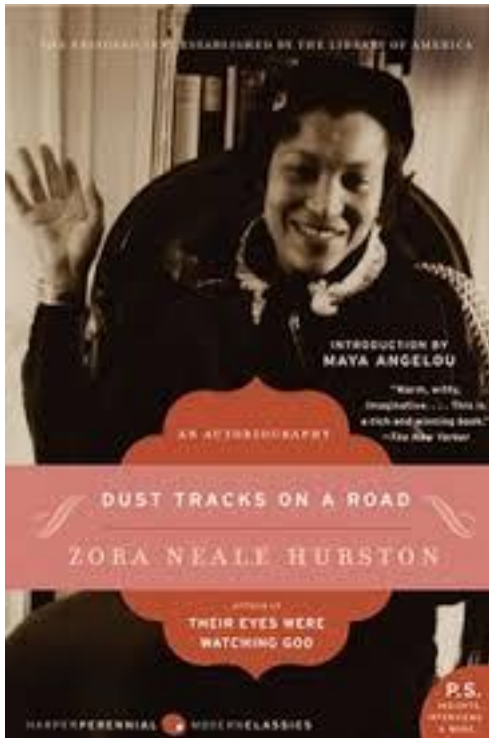
Websites

- <http://zoranealehurston.com>
- http://www.floridamemory.com/OnlineClassroom/zora_hurston/
- <http://chdr.cah.ucf.edu/hurstonarchive/>



"Sometimes, I feel discriminated against, but it does not make me angry. It merely astonishes me. How can any deny themselves the pleasure of my company? It's beyond me."

Zora Neale Hurston



CHARACTERS THAT YOU WILL MEET IN AIN'T I A WOMAN!

FANNIE LOU HAMER (1917-1977)

Resistance. Arrested. Beaten. 1964. Democratic National Convention. "We didn't come all this way for no two seats!" The rules changed.

GLASS CEILING: Pronunciation:

'glas, sE-li[ng] **Function:** noun

Date: 1984 an intangible barrier

within the hierarchy of a company that prevents women or minorities

from obtaining upper-level positions; also often used wider with metaphoric applications.



NOTABLE FACTS ON HER LIFE AND LEGACY:

1917 Fannie Lou Townsend is born in Montgomery County, Mississippi.

1944 Fannie Lou marries Pap Hamer.

1962 She hears James Bevel of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) speak at a mass meeting about black people's right as human beings and American citizens to vote. She is galvanized.

1962 At the age of 45 Hamer seeks to register to vote. She goes to Indianola, Mississippi to do so. Sixteen shots are fired at the home at which she is staying.

1963 She begins working for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. She is arrested and beaten at a bus station in Winona, Mississippi on her way back from a voter registration training.

1964 She organizes with others the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

1964 On national television August 24 she rivets the nation as she addresses the Democratic National Convention

credentials committee. MFDP delegates have been denied seating on the convention floor. The delegates refuse to accept two at-large seats offered, perceiving a token gesture. As a result of the publicity, the party is shaken by the exposure of its discriminatory practice.

1964 She runs for Congress. Although she loses, she receives 30,000 votes.

1965 Voting Rights Act passed.

1968 At the 1968 convention in Chicago, MFDP delegates return as the Mississippi Loyalist Democratic Party. A debate over seating again takes place, and this time MLDP wins. Fannie Lou Hamer is given her seat, and to a standing ovation she addresses the entire convention.

1969 She buys forty acres of farmland in Mississippi and founds the Freedom Farm Cooperative.

1969 She is awarded an honorary doctoral degree from Morehouse College.

1971 She is elected to the Central Committee of the National Women's Political Caucus.

1977 Hamer dies of cancer. United Nations ambassador Andrew Young speaks at her funeral. "None of us would have been where we are now had she not been there then."

VOCABULARY

- **cooperative:** An enterprise or organization owned by and operated for the benefit of those using its service.
- **grass roots:** 1: The very foundation or source 2: The basic level of society or of an organization especially as viewed from higher or more centralized positions of power.
- **protest:** a solemn declaration of opinion and usually of dissent.
- **resist:** To exert force in opposition; *passive resistance:* resistance especially to a government or an occupying power characterized mainly by noncooperation.
- **sharecropper:** A tenant farmer especially in the southern U.S. who is provided with credit for seed, tools, living quarters, and food, who works the land, and who receives an agreed share of the value of the crop minus charges.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Books

- Fiorelli, June Estep. *Fannie Lou Hamer: A Voice for Freedom*. Avisson: 2004.
- Lee, Chana Kai *For Freedom's Sake: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer*. University of Illinois, 2000.
- Mills, Kay. *This Little Light of Mine: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer*. Plume: 1994.

Websites

- <http://www.beejae.com/hamer.htm>
- <http://www.howard.edu/library/reference/guides/hamer/>
- <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/sayitplain/flhamer.html>



FREEDOM MEANS



**VOTE FOR
FANNIE LOU HAMER**

LYNDON JOHNSON PRESIDENT

HUBERT HUMPHREY VICE-PRESIDENT

AARON HENRY SENATE

FANNIE LOU HAMER CONGRESS 2nd DIST. ANNIE DEVINE CONGRESS 4th DIST.

VICTORIA GRAY CONGRESS 5th DIST.

FREEDOM VOTE, OCT. 31 - NOV. 2

REGULAR ELECTION NOV. 3

CHARACTERS THAT YOU WILL MEET IN AIN'T I A WOMAN!

CLEMENTINE HUNTER (1887-1988)

In 1964, with her artistic reputation finally secure, a white man in New Orleans is arrested for forging her works.

SELF-TAUGHT Pronunciation: 'self' tot **Function:** *adjective* **Date:** 1725 1: having knowledge or skills acquired by one's own efforts without formal instruction <a *self taught* musician>

PRIM-I -TIVE Pronunciation: 'pri-m&-tiv **Function:** *adjective* not derived: ORIGINAL, PRIMARY b: assumed as a basis;



NOTABLE FACTS ON HER LIFE AND LEGACY:

1886 Born on Hidden Plantation Hill, Louisiana. Clementine called the place "way down yonder at the end of the road. You don't see no bird, you don't see no nothin' down there where I was born."

1900 At age fourteen the family moves to Melrose Plantation where "Tebe" (as her family calls her) begins the many, many years ahead of picking cotton in the fields.

1924 She marries a woodchopper, Emmanuel Hunter. They have five children while she continues to pick cotton. "I picked cotton one morning just before I borned one of my babies. I remember how much it was - seventy-eight pounds. Then I went home, called the midwife, and borned my baby. It didn't worry me none. In a few days I was back in the fields."

1928 She leaves the fields and works in full-time domestic duties. She is noticed for her creative flair in imaginative cooking, sewing, making dolls, and weaving baskets and quilts.

1938 Francois Mignon, a native Frenchman, meets Clementine and recognizes her talent.

1940 Clementine begins to paint. Her supplies and "canvases" were unusual and innovative: cardboard boxes, the blank insides of soap cartons, brown paper bags, pieces of lumber, scraps of plywood, window shades, and other such found objects.

1949 After year of an increasing reputation, Clementine's paintings appear in the New Orleans Arts and Crafts Show. Art critic Carter Stevens writes, *"The most exciting discovery of the show, however, is Clementine Hunter, who lives up on Cane River. She is a primitive painter true and simple with a wonderful flair for colors and an intuitive grasp of composition. "*

1953 In the June issue of *Look* magazine, referring to Clementine and those of several other artists: *"Unlike most painters who come to their art after many years of work ... these natural painters rarely if ever sought art in museums or galleries. Self taught, they came to painting late in life and they work as though nobody had ever before put color on canvas. The source of their art is not art but their own inner vision.. They all paint real things but they paint them from memory."* This recognition assures Clementine's place in the history of American art.

1955 Northwest Louisiana State University holds an exhibition of her work, yet Clementine is not allowed to view her paintings with the white patrons. Instead her first gallery viewing takes place on a Sunday when the gallery is locked and no one else is present.

1971 Clementine illustrates a storybook, *The Joyous Coast*.

1974 Rumors abound of a forgery scare, including stories that her grandson or nephew is copying her paintings and selling them on the fly. In New Orleans an artist is arrested for trying to pass his copies of her work as originals. This is a testament to her reputation, and the price that her paintings can command.

1986 Thirty-one years after being barred from seeing her paintings in the presence of white patrons, Northwest Louisiana State University bestows upon Clementine the degree of Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts.

1988 Clementine Hunter dies. Fifty museums and galleries having shown her work over a forty-year period. Her legacy is a body of "memory" art that tells the southern laborer's story with joy, humor, and dignity.

VOCABULARY

- **domestic:** a household servant.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Books

- Lyons, Mary E., ed. *Talking with Tebe*. Houghton Mifflin, 1998.
- Wilson, James L. *Clementine Hunter: American Folk Artist*. Pelican, 1988.

Websites

- http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artistS/hunter_clementine.html





**"Nobody's
free
until
everybody's
free."**

Fannie Lou Hamer 1917-1977

Sponsored in part by the Cultural Council of Palm Beach County, the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture.



Made possible by funding from PNC Arts Alive. Funding has been provided to the Core Ensemble from the National Endowment for the Humanities through a grant from Florida Humanities as part of the 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020.

