We hear a great deal about the founding fathers of America. But how about the Black mothers of America and the role they played in shaping the destiny of the nation? Phillis Wheatley’s verses lamented the institution of slavery in America. Wheatley was an accomplished poet who wrote her memoirs and published a number of poems on a variety of subjects. Her history is most interesting, Wheatley was born in Senegal and was captured and taken to the shores of America when she was seven years old. She was purchased by John Wheatley as a gift to his wife and they gave her the ‘Wheatley’ title. It was observed that the young lady was talented and she was encouraged to read and to write. Wheatley received lessons in the classics and she wrote a poem at thirteen. In 1773 she published her book of poems and created a number of records. She was the first slave in America to publish a book of poems and only the third woman to do so at the time. In 1776 Wheatley accepted an invitation to visit George Washington and she read a poem that she had written for him. Wheatley even traveled to London to publicize her poems.

Who has ever heard of Mammy Kate and Daddy Jack? Are they included in the history curriculum in schools? Mammy Kate was a slave that gave birth to nine children. She went about her duties with her husband Daddy Jack for the Heard family. Stephen Heard was the Governor of Georgia. He wanted to take part in the Revolutionary War and got his chance in 1779. In February of that year Governor Heard and 22 other patriots were captured by the Loyalists during the Battle of Kettle Creek.

After a trial Governor Heard was sentenced to hang. It was at this point that Mammy Kate decided to act. She put together a brilliant plan. She traveled to Augusta some fifty miles away on horseback and was able to get a job as a cleaner at Fort Cornwallis. This brought her in contact with Governor Heard. Mammy Kate was able to place the Governor in her basket and smuggle him out of the prison, the day before he was to be executed. Daddy Jack was waiting in the woods and they made good their escape. Mammy Kate won her freedom and was given some land as well. In 2011 she was honored as a patriot of the American Revolution.

Elizabeth Freeman is one of the unsung heroes of America. She was born into slavery in 1742 and served the Ashley family in Massachusetts. Elizabeth was married on the plantation and took pride in raising her daughter, Betsy. In 1780 an incident occurred that would change her life and that of Massachusetts Mrs. Ashley became incensed and attempted to hit Betsy with a heated shovel. Elizabeth raised her arm to shield Betsy and was cut in the process. But this was not the end of the matter.

Elizabeth heard at a public gathering the words of the Massachusetts constitution that stated, ‘all men are born free and equal, and have certain natural, essential, and unalienable rights.’ These words struck a chord with Elizabeth and she sought to apply them to her situation. She requested attorney Theodore Sedgwick to help her fight for her freedom. The case was Brom and Bett v. Ashley and it was heard in August 1781. The court made a historic ruling. Since ‘all men are born free and equal’ there was no reason why Elizabeth should remain a slave. The judge ruled that Elizabeth should be set free. This meant that keeping with the constitution all slaves in Massachusetts had to be freed as well.

Elizabeth Freeman was among the first slaves in Massachusetts to sue for and win her freedom. Elizabeth took the name ‘Freeman’ after the verdict and said, ‘Any time, any time, if one minute’s freedom had been offered to me, and I...have taken it.’ She could not read or write but Elizabeth struck one of the biggest blows for Black freedom in America.

One of the most contradictory Presidents in the United States was Thomas Jefferson. This learned man wrote brilliantly about the message of equality while in his private life he abused Hemings. After Jefferson’s death Sally Hemings left Monticello and died in obscurity.

Sojourner Truth was one of the earliest human rights campaigner and she did it with style and attitude. In 1844 an angry mob threatened to shut her down and Sojourner calmly walked in their midst and put them to flight. Sojourner was born in New York as a slave in 1797 and she was known as Isabella Baumfree. She was separated from her family at the age of nine and was sold several times into slavery before she eventually ended up working for John and Sally Dumont.

Sojourner described incidents in which Sally Dumont was terribly cruel to her and not knowing better Sojourner believed that slavery was ordained by God. In 1827 she threw cautio...