



THE FORTUNE JOURNAL

EDITOR'S VIEWPOINT

Birgit Mondesir



Life has a way of pointing you in the right direction, if you're open to the possibilities. I have written all my life, both prose and poetry. It's always been therapy for my soul and my most effective mode of communication in connecting with others. So, I am 'heart-happy' to be able to serve The T. Thomas Fortune Foundation as editor of this newsletter.

In addition to writing, I am a wife, mother of two teenagers and a 'Red Banker' for 24 years. I am a business owner and also an Office Manager for a local church. I have a degree in biology & fine arts and a deep-rooted interest in social justice and anything that affects 'The Village'.

I am mostly unconventional so I love to think outside the box. (Anyway, it's a bit crowded in there.)

As readers, you can expect an outspoken viewpoint, peppered with a bit of humor. Truth is often hidden in humor and truth is what we're after; particularly in these days of 'alternate facts' and the supposition of 'fake news'.

President Theodore Roosevelt once said of Fortune, "Tom Fortune, keep that pen of yours off me".

It is a request I will happily oblige of anyone, unless otherwise warranted. I will keep you informed on topics of concern to a conscientious community like ours.

I am humbled by the opportunity to serve in this capacity.

FEBRUARY 2018

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T. Thomas Fortune Quote of the Month

*"I believe in the divine right of man,
not of caste or class..."*



"FORTUNE COOKIES": Up & Coming @ The Center

"A Tour of the T. Thomas Fortune Cultural Center": A visit to The Fortune Cultural Center opens the door to a historical treasure trove from primary sources such as letters of correspondence with President Theodore Roosevelt and Booker T. Washington to formal invitations requesting his presence at prominent affairs. This controversial journalist

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“WHAT’S GOOD IN FORTUNE-HOOD” - Community News



*“We’re better
together than apart.”
Our Village Motto*

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the T. Thomas Fortune Foundation is to preserve and further the civil rights and social justice legacy of T. Thomas Fortune through community outreach, education and public programming.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH EVENTS

-
- February 17** **“Just Saying”**
Black History Multi-Medium presentation.
Neptune High School Performing Arts Center
12 noon - Info: 732 776-2200
- “The Arc of Brown Bodies”**
Art Exhibit and discussion.
Court Street School Education Community Center, Freehold
4-7pm - Info & tickets: 732 841-4712
-
- February 21** **“Reading Fortune: A Voice for the Ages”**
Featuring the words of T. Thomas Fortune, journalist and social justice advocate, voiced by members of our community.
Red Bank Public Library; 84 W Front Street, Red Bank; 7pm
-
- February 24** **“Black History Celebration”**
Sponsored by Court Street School Education Community Center, featuring a tribute to African American Veterans Reform Church of Freehold - 67 West Main Street, Freehold
Info: 732 303-8724
- “Reading Fortune: A Voice for the Ages”**
Featuring the words of T. Thomas Fortune, journalist and social justice advocate, voiced by members of our community.
Long Branch Library; 328 Broadway, Long Branch; 3pm
-
- February 25** **“A Forum on Social Justice: Race”**
Guest Speakers: Rev. Gil Caldwell, Gilda Rogers, Sid Bernstein, Moderator, Rev. Jessica Naulty;
United Methodist Church, 247 Broad Street, Red Bank; 3-5pm
-



“HIDDEN FORTUNE” - ‘Shoulders We Stand On’ Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson

As we celebrate African American History Month, it is most fitting to recognize the person who ‘shouldered’ the responsibility for its enactment. These shoulders belong to Dr. Carter G. Woodson. Never heard of him? You’re not alone. Precisely why Dr. Woodson founded African American History Week in February of 1926, which today has evolved into African American History Month.

Born in New Canton, Virginia, on December 19, 1875, to former slaves. Woodson realized early on, that African American history was being devalued and ignored, much as it still is today.

His accomplishments cannot be overstated, considering that he did not attend any formal schooling until he was 20 years old. Thereafter, he graduated from Berea College in 1903 and earned a Ph. D from Harvard University in 1912. He then went on to become a historian, journalist and founder for The Association of African American Life and History. Recognizing the importance of knowing one’s history, he created the observation of African American History we now celebrate in the month of February. As Dr. Carter G. Woodson said, *“Those who have no record of what their fore-bearers have accomplished lose the inspiration which comes from the teaching of biography and history.”*

Dr. Carter G. Woodson... we salute you for being 'the shoulders we stand on'.



“FORTUNE-TEER” - ‘Grant Maker’

MONMOUTH COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION GRANT SPURS PUBLIC HISTORY PROJECT

By Sarah Klepner

The inauguration of the T. Thomas Fortune Cultural Center will include a public history project aimed at revealing African American life in Monmouth County. With support from the Monmouth County Historical Commission, volunteers will digitize memorabilia such as letters, photos, newspaper clippings, books and any other two-dimensional artifacts, of early time periods, that illuminate the experiences of African Americans in the county.

In 2019, we will begin to incorporate these materials into displays at the Cultural Center. The purpose of this project is to call forth privately held materials, to enhance our collective picture of African American life in all of Monmouth County, with a special focus on Red Bank.

In our work to raise awareness of the National Historic Landmark status of the T. Thomas Fortune House and the significance of T. Thomas Fortune, we have encountered people with knowledge of the west side of Red Bank going back 50 years and more. This raises the question: What kinds of heirlooms and memorabilia does the public-at-large have tucked away in their attics, shoeboxes and other safe havens that would shed light on African American heritage in Red Bank and Monmouth County, in the last 100 years?

While Black History Month is now celebrated in schools, churches and other institutions throughout society, this project is inspired by the recognition that Monmouth County is not exempt from the type of racial exclusion that permeates the historic record of the United States. The project seeks to illuminate

the humanity of the African American experience, amid racial strife during that time.

In addition to gathering visual and written material, we will ask those bringing their memories to the T. Thomas Fortune Cultural Center to fill out a short survey explaining the item, while giving consent to have it featured at the Center.

If you would like to participate in the project and help bring history to life, please email

sarah.klepner@gmail.com; in subject line: Building African-American History or call 312-388-2011.

“Thank you Sarah, for all your efforts in bringing this grant to fruition.”

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“Fortune Cookies” - What’s Up & Coming

and former resident of Red Bank, made unprecedented social change in America. This two hour presentation reveals a compelling legacy of struggle and an insightful look at the evolution of racial equality in America, through a historic timeline. It explores the life of T. Thomas Fortune, featuring a digital experience of the Fortune archives and interactively brings the past into the present. To schedule tours please email:

info@thomasfortunefoundation.org

“A VALENTINE’S MESSAGE”

"Love's Divinest Power"

*Let mad ambition strive to gain
The cherished wish that yields but pain;
Let others seek for wealth alone,
And with its cares their lives atone;
But let me live my fleeting hour
The slave of Love's divinest power*

By: T. Thomas Fortune

“FORTUNE-MINDED”: ORGANIZATION SPOTLIGHT

New Jersey Institute for Social Justice

The Institute for Social Justice was founded in 1999, by Alan and Amy Lowenstein, with the mission of empowering residents of urban communities to reach their full potential by creating just, vibrant and healthy urban environments. Headed by President and CEO, Mr. Ryan P. Haygood Esq., the Institute holds 3 Pillars of Social Justice sacred: Economic Mobility, Criminal Justice Reform and Civic Engagement.

Mrs. Retha Onitiri, who manages their Youth Decarceration Campaign, is presently directing several projects, to aid incarcerated youth, who are disproportionately arrested (30 times more likely, if black; 15 times more likely, if brown) than their white counterparts. Mrs. Onitiri is working to create a new commission for the correction of youth incarceration. Studies have shown that black youth make up 75% of incarcerated youth, even though they engage in similar offenses as their white counterparts, at the same rate. Moreover, in New Jersey the state spends \$537 per day to keep them incarcerated, rather than \$75 per day to provide community-based, wrap-around rehabilitative services, for the mostly non-violent offenders.

The Institute is currently looking to reform 3 juvenile prisons into facilities that would provide youth rehabilitation services; among them, The Hayes Prison for girls. This prison occupies the former site of The Bordentown School for African American youth, once known as the ‘Tuskegee of the North’. To that end, the Institute has also undertaken the ‘The 1844 No More’ Project which seeks to restore voting rights to those formally incarcerated or on probation, enacted in New Jersey in 1844; in efforts to preserve the ‘purity of the electorate’. Although revised in 1970, the basic premise of this law remains, prohibiting mostly people of color from voting, effectively resulting in democratic exclusion, ‘The New Jim Crow’ and prison-based gerrymandering.

The T. Thomas Fortune Cultural Center has formed an alliance with the NJISJ and looks forward to advocating and partnering with the Institute in the near future.



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