

Political Grab Bag

By Steve Bagby, Sr., Political Action Committee Chair

This month of March is **Women's History Month** and we know that African American Women have a rich and accomplished history. We are blessed to have many accomplished women in our own church . . . in the past as well as currently, of whom we are proud. When we think about the history of Second Baptist Church, we think of women such as: **Daisy Alston, Kathryn Anderson, Esther Clever, Gertrude Dewey, Juanita Millender McDonald, Wanda Moore, Dolores Nehemiah, Rosentene Purnell, Audrey Quarles, Judge Maxine Thomas and Geraldine Washington**, to name a few. **Of course we know that there are many more women in the past who have contributed to our church and society at large. When we think about the women who currently help chart our course and keep us spiritually uplifted, socially connected, and who are community and social advocates, we cannot help but be proud of the dynamic women of Second Baptist Church.** As we focus on the contributions of women in this month's Political Grab Bag, **we acknowledge the leadership of our own accomplished and focused women in all areas that are pertinent to our congregation and beyond, and we thank them for their ongoing efforts, commitment and diligence.** Thank you! Happy Women's History Month to all.

NOMINATION OF KETANJI BROWN JACKSON FOR U.S. SUPREME COURT JUSTICE

As he stated he would, President Joseph R. Biden has nominated an African American woman, **Kentanji Brown Jackson**, to fill the seat that will be vacated by Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer. Prior to this Supreme Court nomination, President Biden had nominated **Kentanji Brown Jackson**, 51, to the *U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit* last summer. **Judge Jackson** had served as a District Judge in the *U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia* since 2013, previously working as a Public Defender, the Vice Chair of the U.S.

Sentencing Commission and as a clerk for Justice Breyer and two other federal judges. She attended Harvard University as an undergraduate and a law student, where she served as an editor for the Harvard Law Review and graduated *cum laude*. **Judge Jackson**, a native of Florida, was confirmed to her current post by the Senate in a 53-44 vote, with Republican Sens. Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina voting in her favor. Centrist Democratic Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, who've been at loggerheads with the White House on a number of key issues, were also yes votes on **Jackson** last year. *Yahoo News* (January 26, 2022)

While we know that the Supreme Court confirmation process will pit many Republicans against Democrats in an attempt to discredit the credentials of **Judge Jackson**, there is an interesting **Opinion** piece in *The Washington Post*, written by Jennifer Rubin on March 2, 2022, entitled “**Republicans’ Attempt to Demonize Ketanji Brown Jackson Isn’t Going Well.**” The article states that, “[t]he Republican playbook for opposing the Supreme Court nomination of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson has been a familiar one for women of color—paint her as radical, extreme, alien and a threat to American values. Fortunately, the effort is already collapsing thanks to Jackson’s explanation of her own values and the entirely unexpected praise from conservative legal gurus.” After referencing what **Judge Jackson** said as she accepted her nomination, the article goes on to state, “but if you do not take Jackson’s own words and record as evidence of her dedication to the rule of law and aversion to partisan ideology, you might listen to . . . [several] prominent Republican legal experts who have endorsed her.” William Burck, the GOP lawyer for former White House legal counsel Donald McGahn, came out in favor of her confirmation. Burck said of Jackson that “no serious person can question her qualifications to the court and to my mind her judicial philosophy is well within the mainstream.” This statement followed the endorsements of two former conservative judges. Former Federal Judge J. Michael Luttig, a mentor to many conservative lawyers, put out a laudatory written statement. “Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson is eminently qualified to serve on the Supreme Court of the United States. Indeed, she is as highly credentialed and experienced in the law as any nominee in history, having graduated from the Harvard Law School with honors,

clerked at the Supreme Court, and served as a Federal Judge for almost a decade.” He also wrote that “Republicans, in particular, should vote to confirm Judge Jackson.” Another former conservative judge also spoke favorably about **Judge Jackson**. Retired D.C. Circuit Judge Thomas B. Griffith, a George W. Bush appointee, wrote to the Senate Judiciary chairman and ranking member stating, “I write to you today to express my strong support for President Biden’s nomination of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson. Judge Jackson has a demonstrated record of excellence, and I believe, based upon her work as a trial judge when I served on the Court of Appeals, that she will adjudicate based on the facts and the law and not as a partisan.” He added, “Presidents should be entitled to their nominees provided certain levels of competence and qualifications are met; Judge Jackson clearly exceeds that bar.” The author of the **Opinion**, Jennifer Rubin, writes that even though conservative judges have supported **Judge Jackson**, “none of this will stop the like of Sens. Tom Cotton (R- Ark.) or Ted Cruz (R- Tex.) from smearing Jackson as a legal extremist and labeling her a beneficiary of affirmative action.” However, “their enmity for an extraordinarily qualified woman of color is a reflection of their own political ambition and never-ending thirst for the approval of a MAGA base that is driven by white grievance.” She further states that “they might just find themselves in over their heads if they attempt to go after one of the best-qualified nominees in recent memory, someone respected by **actual** legal experts.” (Emphasis added.) (Note: Jennifer Rubin is the author of *Resistance: How Women Saved Democracy from Donald Trump*.)

We know that Judge Jackson will be “challenged” during the confirmation hearings, but I believe that, based on how she handled herself in her response to the nomination and the positive comments from conservative jurists and lawyers who have **actual knowledge of her abilities**, as opposed to Republican Senators who may have no legal training and who are partisan in their approach, she will be “up for the challenge” and will ultimately prevail in being confirmed by the Senate by majority vote. The confirmation hearings begin on March 21st and conclude on March 24th.

OTHER ACCOMPLISHED AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN –

SELMA BURKE – SCULPTOR -



One of “our resident historians,” Gail Quarles, shared the following article about **Selma Burke** with me and I thought it was quite interesting and, thus, wanted to share the information with the congregation and others who may access the Political Grab Bag or our website. The article was written by Shirelle Phillips on February 17, 2021, and is entitled, *“Selma Burke: Reexamining the Dime.”* The information below is from the article.

Every day we look at the coins in our purses, pockets and wallets and never really think much about the artists who created the images on them. The dime is no different—or is it?

The dime is the smallest coin in U.S. circulation (in terms of size), but if you look closely, you’ll see the initials “JS” just beneath Franklin D. Roosevelt’s neck. The initials belong to John Sinnock, the U.S. Mint’s chief engraver from 1925 to 1947, who is credited with sculpting the profile of FDR, the 32nd President of the United States. However, many credit **Selma Burke** for the design, including Roosevelt’s son and the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Burke’s portrait of FDR, which

she spent two years working on, is only recognized as an inspiration and model for the final image used on the dime.

Background -- **Selma Hortense Burke** is an African American sculptor who was born on December 31, 1900, in Mooresville, North Carolina. She grew up in a large family, the seventh of 10 children of Rev. Neil and Mary Elizabeth Colfield Burke. As a child, she often played with riverbed clay near her home and loved how the clay felt. Inspired by her maternal grandmother, who was a painter, Burke's adoration of sculpture grew. As an adult, she earned several degrees and awards, including a Masters in Fine Arts and several honorary degrees. She traveled internationally, studying sculpting in France, Germany and Austria. While in Paris, Burke worked under Henri Matisse, whom she credits as one of her many influences. She later returned to the States due to the threat of the Nazis.

In 1943, Burke won a Commission of Fine Arts competition and a rare opportunity to sculpt the President's likeness for a plaque for the new Recorder of Deeds Building in Washington, D.C. While creating the image of FDR, she found it challenging, so she wrote to the White House to request a live sketch session. To her surprise, they agreed. In February 1944, Burke met with President Roosevelt and sketched his profile on a brown paper bag. He invited her back for another session the following day. About a year later, just months before the President's death, Eleanor Roosevelt visited Burke's home in New York to see the final draft. Mrs. Roosevelt didn't believe it represented him well because she thought FDR looked too young. Burke responded, "I didn't make it for today, I made it for tomorrow and tomorrow."

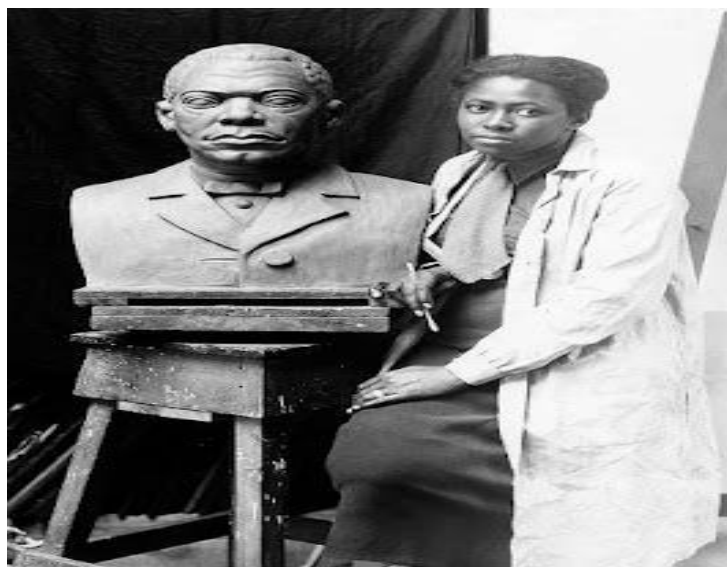
Unfortunately, President Roosevelt died before the official unveiling of the plaque. To commemorate his legacy and his founding of the March of Dimes, the U.S. Mint and Congress proposed engraving FDR's portrait on the dime. John Sinnock was chosen to sculpt the image, as he had experience sculpting presidents in profile while teaching at the Pennsylvania Museum School of Industrial Art. Sinnock also worked at the Philadelphia Mint as an assistant engraver. There, he designed presidential medals for Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover, and later Roosevelt's third inaugural presidential medal. Sinnock's dime was released to the public on January 30, 1946, which would have been Roosevelt's 64th birthday, but not without controversy.

The most vocal critic of the dime was **Selma Burke**. She claimed it bore a striking resemblance to her portrait, and many others agreed. Her sculpture is thought by many people to have inspired the profile found on U.S. dimes. Some people even

make the claim that the sculptor of the dime portrait, John R. Sinnock, "stole" or copied Burke's portrait. Burke thought she deserved credit for the portrait on the dime, but Sinnock claimed he was not in any way influenced by Burke's work. There are articles and maybe even a book or two that don't even mention Sinnock or the controversy, but instead state flat-out that Burke sculpted the profile portrait used on the dime. Some claim "Selma Burke never got credit for her portrait of FDR..."

When Burke demanded an investigation into Sinnock, she said the FBI investigated her instead. Sinnock denied Burke's accusations, and died just a year after the coin was issued. Years later, debate among numismatists (those who study coins, paper currency, and medals) continues. Some credit Burke unequivocally, while others have conducted side-by-side comparisons to suggest significant differences between the sculptures.

After the U.S. Mint officials gave credit to Sinnock for the dime, Burke continued sculpting. She founded the **Selma Burke School of Sculpture** in New York, the **Selma Burke Art Center** in Pittsburgh, and was honored by **President Jimmy Carter** with the **Women's Caucus for Art Lifetime Achievement Award** in 1979. Even without credit for the dime, Burke was great in her own right having created many sculptures, including one of Booker T. Washington, which was displayed in a Manhattan High School. She died in 1995 at the age of 94. She was also a trained nurse.



Selma Burke and her sculpture of Booker T. Washington

Below is Ms. Burke's sculpture of FDR and Sinnock's sculpture. What do you think?



THE "SIX TRIPLE EIGHT" -

6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion

Women of Distinction, Dedication, and Determination

A friend of mine recently heard about the "**Six Triple Eight**" and brought this information to my attention. It is great historical information and I thought that it should be shared with the congregation and others, especially during Women's History Month. The following information was obtained from public sources, including Wikipedia.

The **6888th Battalion** consisted of all African-American women who were assigned to Birmingham England, Rouen, France and Paris, France during World War II. Their mission was to clear several years of backlogged mail in the European Theater of Operations. They worked in cold, dirty, dark rat infested aircraft hangars with broken windows. It was the only all African American, all female battalion overseas during World War II, consisting of 855 women, both enlisted and officers, led by Major Charity Adams.

Background -- During World War II, there was a significant shortage of soldiers who were able to manage the postal service for the U.S. Army overseas. In 1944, Mary McLeod Bethune worked to get the support of first lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, for "a role for black women in the war overseas." Black newspapers, too, challenged the U.S. Army to "use black women in meaningful Army jobs."

The women who signed up went to basic training in Georgia. Women who were already in the Women's Army Corps (WAC), served at different locations, including the Pentagon, before they joined the **6888th**.

England - The **6888th** left the United States on February 3, 1945, sailing on *Île de France* and arriving in Glasgow on February 12th, where they were later transported by train to **Birmingham**. When the **6888th** settled in at Birmingham, "they saw letters stacked to the ceiling of the temporary post office." The temporary post office was located in converted hangars. Some letters had been in the makeshift offices for as long as two years.

Army officials believed that undelivered mail was "hurting morale." Many letters and packages were difficult to source, as they were addressed with only the first

name of the soldier, had a commonly used name or used nicknames. 7,500 pieces of mail they had to sort were addressed to Robert Smith and some just to Junior, US Army.

Early in the operation, a white general attempted to send a white officer to "tell them how to do it right," but Major Adams responded, "Sir, over my dead body, sir!" The battalion finished what was supposed to be a six-month task in three months in May 1945. Their motto was, "***No mail, low morale.***"

The **6888th** devised their own system to handle the backlog of mail. The women of the **6888th** worked in three different shifts, seven days a week, processing and delivering mail – a morale booster – to fighting troops in Europe. Each shift handled an estimated 65,000 pieces of mail. It was cold when they arrived, and women wore coats in the unheated buildings.

As a segregated unit, the members of the **6888th** slept and ate in different locations from the white, male soldiers. They were housed in a former school building, with officers quartered in houses nearby. Some women felt that European "locals" treated them better than people did in the United States.

France - Once the backlog in Birmingham had been dealt with, the **6888th** were shipped across the channel to **Le Havre** in May 1945 and then were entrained to **Rouen**. The **6888th** dealt with another backlog of mail in Rouen, some of the letters three years old. The military police in the WAC unit were not allowed to have weapons, so they used jujitsu to keep out "unwanted visitors." They also participated in a parade ceremony at the place where Joan of Arc died.

By October 1945, the mail in Rouen had been cleared and the **6888th** was sent to Paris. They marched through Paris and were housed in a luxurious hotel, where they received first-class treatment. During this time, because the war was over, the Battalion was reduced by 300 women, with 200 due to be discharged in January 1946.

Post-war -- In February 1946, the unit returned to the United States where it was disbanded at Fort Dix, New Jersey. There was no public recognition for their service at the time.

Legacy -- Members of the **6888th** Central Postal Directory Battalion were awarded the **European African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal**, the **Good Conduct Medal**, and the **World War II Victory Medal** during their service. On February 25, 2009, the Battalion was honored at the **Women in Military Service for America**

Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery. The event was attended by three former unit members of the **6888th**, including **Alyce Dixon, Mary Ragland** and **Gladys Shuster Carter**. Ms. Dixon and Ms. Ragland were also honored by **President Barack Obama** and first lady, **Michelle Obama** in 2009.

On March 15, 2016, the **6888th** Battalion was inducted into the **U.S. Army Women's Foundation Hall of Fame**. Battalion veteran **Elsie Garris** attended the **Induction Ceremony**.

On November 30, 2018, Fort Leavenworth dedicated a monument to the women of the **6888th** Battalion. Five women from the Battalion – **Maybelle Campbell, Elizabeth Johnson, Lena King, Anna Robertson and Deloris Ruddock** - were present at the dedication.

On February 12, 2021, U.S. Senator Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) introduced bipartisan legislation to award the **Congressional Gold Medal** to the members of the Women's Army Corps, who were assigned to the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion during World War II. U.S. Representative Gwen Moore (D-Wis.) introduced the companion legislation in the House of Representatives. Introduced during the 116th Congress (S.321 & HB1012), it unanimously passed the Senate. On Monday, February 28, 2022, over a year later, the Bill was passed by the House of Representatives. It will now go to President Biden to be signed into law.

6888th Central Postal Battalion



Members of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion take part in a May 1945 parade ceremony in honor of [Joan d'Arc](#) at the marketplace where she was burned at the stake.



Black Women's Army Corps Unit handling the mail. NATIONAL ARCHIVES

We have such a significant history as African American Women. Yes, we have so much for which to be proud!!

In addition to the information shared above, the **Memorial and Historical Commission** will be highlighting several notable African American Women in the newsletter and on the website during this Women's History Month, as will Dr. Lorn Foster in his **Black History Class**, which will take place via Zoom on Saturday, March 12th at 11:00 a.m. African American Women have contributed so much to their communities, this country and the world!! Just like for Black History, one month is not sufficient to share the accomplishments of African American Women. We need many publications and venues via which to share the accomplishments of our women. Continue to research and learn about our history and accomplishments. I sincerely thank Gail Quarles and my friend Lorna Laisure, who is a member of St. Andrews Missionary Baptist Church, for sharing the information about the sculptor, Selma Burke, and the 688th Battallion. . . the

“Six Triple Eight.” African American women have made and will continue to make a considerable impact on society! Thank you for reading!! (March 2022)