

The Christian Griot

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Rev. and Mrs. Buchanan

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Happy Women's History Month

My Journey *by Patricia McKinney Lewis*

I was blessed to travel to Washington, DC to attend the inauguration of a new President of the United States. This was not by any means going to be a usual inauguration. Forty-three men had taken the same illustrious oath of office, and this time another man would join the elite club. Going to witness this inauguration of the 44th President of the United States of America was an exhilarating experience that would happen only once in a lifetime or in history. The experience was not just a trip, but a journey that started long before I was born. It started in 1619 when the first Africans landed in America as indentured servants. Their servitude lasted seven years, but things changed and many more Africans faced a lifetime of servitude after southern farmers and plantation owners needed continuous workers in order to maintain their lifestyle of southern genteelness. Capturing Indians to serve as slaves did not work because they knew the land too well and would escape. Plantation owners' need for workers and greed provided them the reason to engage in the practice of human bondage which lasted over 200 years.

Last July my sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, celebrated its centennial in Washington, DC. One vendor, among hundreds, was the African Ancestry. For a fee and your DNA, your ancestry can be traced back to Africa to determine the country and tribe your maternal or paternal ancestry began. I decided to pay the fee (small investment) to determine my ancestry. I sent cotton swabs with my cheek cells (DNA) to determine my mother's African ancestry. In order to determine my father's African ancestry which was traced through his paternal lineage, I had to talk my brother into sending in cotton swabs of his cheek cells. We waited six weeks for the results. At last the results for my mother came in the mail. My mother's ancestry traced back to the Bamileke people in Cameroon, Africa. My father's paternal

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ancestry did not trace back to Africa, but to Europe. No specific country was given. The revelation of knowing where part of my ancestry began is powerful. I began wondering in what year did the first member of my mother's family make the voyage of the middle passage? What were the conditions like on the ship? How old was she? Was she sold by another tribe or captured by slave traders? Many questions started running through my mind. With that little piece of knowledge—knowing that my mother's ancestry began in Cameroon, Africa generations ago—gave me a stronger connection to the motherland because I now know a specific country in Africa where part of my family originated. I now have an identity. I am not just African American, my family originated in the country of Cameroon in the continent of Africa.

Along with my new found knowledge of my African ancestry, I carried with me to the inauguration all the baggage produced by more than two hundred years of slavery.

Celebrating the inauguration of the first African American president was a monumental event that touched the lives of many Americans as well as the lives of people all over the world. Traveling to Washington, DC to witness first hand the inauguration was a pilgrimage that allowed all who gathered there a view of the America we would love to experience everyday. The energy was exhilarating, and the feeling of camaraderie was euphoric. We, as a nation, from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities, were united in a common cause to celebrate and participate in making these United States of America a more perfect union. Even if the feeling of unity lasted only one or two days, the journey was well worth it.

The inauguration of the first African American was an event that I thought I would never see during my lifetime. Tears of joy swelled in many eyes. We were probably remembering the African Americans who died trying to secure the right to vote; men and women who had been lynched; the marches for civil rights during the 1960s; the bombing of churches and homes in the South. We were probably remembering our ancestors who were attacked by dogs



Patricia Lewis (right) with nephew from Houston, TX, Jason Park and a new friend from Venezuela.



Patricia Lewis (right) with friends Linda Page, Hettie Collins and new friend, Shirley, from Tallahassee, FL.

while trying to register to vote and visions of people being water hosed with water forceful enough to literally knock down grown men. So many of our ancestors were maimed, killed, sexually violated and mentally abused as they were in search of their rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as guaranteed in the Declaration of Independence. November 4, 2008 and January 20, 2009 will be remembered as the days the pendulum shifted and the winds of change swept over our nation. The promissory note dealt to African Americans which became a bad check



"stamped insufficient funds", that Dr. King spoke of in his famous "I Have a Dream" speech given in 1963, is now making deposits instead of withdrawals. The singing of *America* and *My Country Tis of Thee* has a new meaning for many of us. However, poignant and historical the events seem, one thing is evident in my mind is the election of President Barack Hussein Obama was ordained by God. This man was destined to become president and to become a great leader. He is not God, but he is a man of God. Although he is a black man, he is also a great man who happens to be black. Although his father was an African from Kenya, President Obama's ancestors were not slaves in America. That is where he differs from many African Americans whose ancestors came here as slaves.

As I was looking at the inaugural coverage in Washington newspapers the day after the inauguration, there was a full page letter to our new president congratulating him and pledging full support from his country to President Obama's administration. Coincidentally, the letter was from Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon. Tears trickled down my cheeks as I read the letter. I searched through several Washington, DC newspapers to see if there letters from other countries. I did not find any letters from other countries.



Pictured is a Tuskegee Airman who traveled on the same plane I took to Washington. He was being honored at the inauguration.

While I was in Washington, DC for the inauguration, my baggage shifted and became a little lighter. In fact, I decided to leave some of it there, and my trip home was a little lighter and I felt freer.

The dream of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., has not been completely fulfilled, but we are on the path of realizing the possibility of its fruition. Our ancestors worked hard, persevered and had an unrelenting faith in God that change would come. We need to continue the course and follow their example. I would not take anything for the journey.

Patricia McKinney Lewis

CLEANING HOUSE FOR 2009

Last Week I threw out **worrying**, it was getting old and in the way.

It kept me from being me; I couldn't do things God's way.

I threw out a book on **MY PAST** (Didn't have time to read it anyway).

Replaced it with **NEW GOALS**, started reading it today.

I threw out **hate** and **bad memories**, (Remember how I treasured them so)?

Got me a **NEW PHILOSOPHY** too, threw out the one from long ago.

Brought in some new books too, called **I CAN, I WILL, and I MUST**.

Threw out **I might, I think and I ought**.

WOW, you should've seen the dust.

I ran across an **OLD FRIEND**, I hadn't talked to in a while.

His name is **GOD the Father**, and I really like **His** style.

He helped me to do some cleaning and added some things **Himself**.

Like **PRAYER, HOPE, FAITH and LOVE**,

Yes... I placed them right on the shelf.

I picked up this special thing and placed it at the front door.

I FOUND IT- it's called **PEACE**. Nothing gets me down anymore.

Yes, I've got my house looking nice.

Looks good around the place.

For things like Worry and Trouble there just isn't any space.

It's good to do a little house cleaning,

Get rid of the things on the shelf.

It sure makes things brighter; maybe you should

TRY IT YOURSELF.

BE BLESSED AND BE A BLESSING TO SOMEONE ELSE!!!!

Submitted by Marvarine Pirtle

Know Your History

CME Beginnings

From Tender Plant to Sturdy Tree

The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, or the CME Church as it is commonly called, came into existence as a result of the movement from slavery to freedom. During the years following the birth of Methodism, the denomination grew rapidly. The Methodist Episcopal Church South was an outgrowth of Wesley's Methodism. Some Blacks, converted to Christianity by slave masters, accepted the Methodist doctrine as it was. However, with the passage of time, the emancipation of Blacks from slavery created the desire by Blacks to have and control their own church. This desire led formerly enslaved persons who had been members of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, to start their own independent religious organization.

The Organizers: Forty-one men who has exemplified leadership qualities gathered together in Jackson, Tennessee on December 16, 1870. With the advice and assistance of the white brethren of the M.E. Church South, the Black religious leaders organized the colored branch of Methodism. On Tuesday, December 20, they adopted the Methodist South's Book of Discipline and on Wednesday, December 21, they elected two of their own preachers - William H. Miles of Kentucky and Richard H. Vanderhorst of Georgia - as their bishops. Gathering in Jackson with only a dream, the religious leaders departed with their own church a reality. In the words of Bishop Randall Albert Carter, "this tender plant of God" had taken root and "was here to live or die." (Biblical basis: Psalm 80.)

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