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BARBERSHOP TALK
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by **Robert L. Woodard**
The Wynnefield Barber

At Woodard's Barbershop, I get a chance to pick the brains of many seniors who have lived very extraordinary lives. I call it "*Barbershop Talk. Working on the Head and in the Head.*" Barbering is like traveling through time by conversation.

One afternoon, my friend, Mr. Cody Anderson, was in my chair. He was the General Manager of WDAS Radio Station and the owner of WHAT and WURD Radio Stations. He was also the Founder of UNITY Day here in Philadelphia. While cutting Cody's hair, we were discussing the history of music in Philadelphia and its worldwide popularity. During our conversation, Mr. Roscoe Draper, a living legend, walked in the door. Mr. Draper is a Tuskegee Airman, one of the Heroes in American History. As soon as he entered, the conversation shifted. As I introduced Mr. Draper to Mr. Anderson, I realized that these two famous men were already familiar with one another. This steered the discussion in the direction of American History.

The question was posed, 'Why is Black History often neglected in our American History narrative?' I replied, "I believe it's because it isn't taught in educational institutions and is rarely mentioned in the media." Mr. Draper agreed. 'Did you know that in March 1941, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt flew with a Black pilot, against the advisement of her staff, to prove that Black men could fly a plane?' Draper asked. The Pilot's name was Charles Alfred Anderson. After that historic flight, the Army named him *Chief Instructor and Commander* of the Tuskegee Airmen. Mr. Draper then asked, 'Did you know that when Pearl Harbor was attacked on December 7, 1941, one of the First Responders was a Messman Third Class stationed on the

USS West Virginia by the name of Doris "Dorie" Miller?' He helped save the life of the wounded Captain by moving him out of harm's way on the Bridge. He then manned an anti-aircraft gun, despite not receiving formal training to use it.

The conversation shifted again when a white college student sitting in the shop joined in and asked, 'Wasn't it a Black guard who discovered an open door at *Watergate*? What was his name?' Cody replied, 'It was Frank Wills.' An Asian Student chimed in, 'What about this year in an Oregon school, where the Black security guard, Keanon Lowe, tackled a student wearing a trench coat armed with a shotgun? He prevented a possible massacre!' It got me thinking, again, as I continued our chat. "I would be remiss if I didn't mention Black billionaire Robert F. Smith. He paid the debts of Morehouse College's 2019 Graduating Class."

The past, present and future converged in *Barbershop Talk*. There are many Blacks in American History that are rarely discussed. However, in *Barbershop Talk*, my diverse patrons learned as well as shared that day. This type of education is rare in today's technical society because some people text instead of talk to each other. It needs to extend to all of our learning institutions. All American History is necessary to help share every ethnicity in the American story. This knowledge will help dispel some of the negative stereotypes placed on certain groups of people. By saluting with a well-balanced hand, we can bring fairness to all heroes.

Take the "RACE Test" today for a better way at www.BarbershopTalkHFD.org. **PRH**

Woodard's Barbershop, 5031 Diamond Street, is a member of the Philadelphia Row-Home (PRH) Business Network.

WRITERSBLOCK