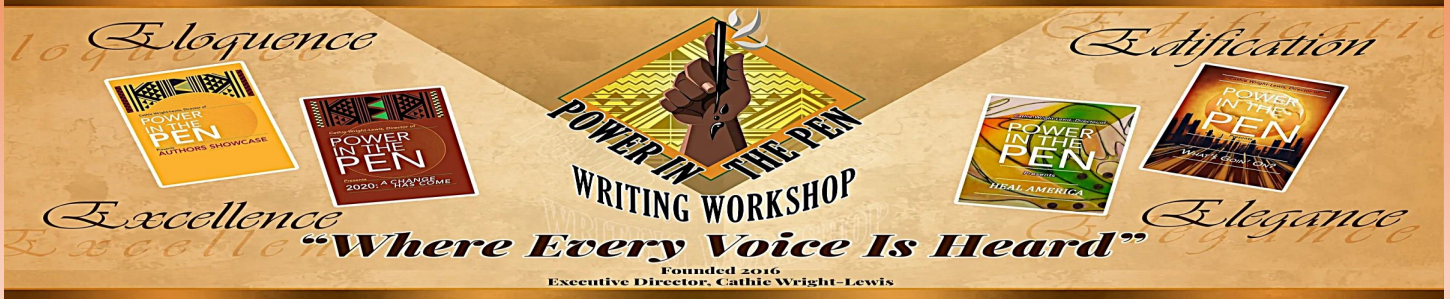


NEWSLETTER

POWER IN THE PEN, INC.



SPECIAL!

News 12 New York—PITP Interview with Executive Director, Cathie Wright-Lewis, Special Ambassador Diane Jefferson Ortiz, and In-house Artist, and PITP member, Ansel Pitcairn.

Welcome New Members:

Rosemary and Kwamina

Upcoming Events

“IN DIVINE TIME”
Annual Authors’ Showcase, June 29, 2024
Brooklyn Heritage House
581 Mother Gaston Blvd
Brooklyn, NY 11212

3rd ANNUAL GALA AND FUNDRAISER
October 12, 2024
Glen Terrace
5313 Ave N
Brooklyn, NY 11234

17TH NATIONAL BLACK WRITERS CONFERENCE



Power in the Pen members attended the 17th annual National Black Writers Conference (NBWC) on Saturday, March 23, 2024. PITP members learned valuable literary lessons from the many workshops professional presenters offered. The conference was held from March 20 to March 23 at Medgar Evers College, City University of New York. This year’s conference was themed “All That We Carry: Where Do We Go From Here?” and drew its name from the title of Tiya Miles’s nonfiction book, *All That She Carried: The Journey of Ashley’s Sack, a Black Family Keepsake*, which illustrates the value of tradition and history... as the nation witnesses the deterioration of democratic values.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY SHOUTOUTS

April

Gail McLeod
Beverly Smith
Charnora Simon-Tavares
Lenora Sasteh Walters

May

Alycia Parker
Tayllor Johnson
Abigail Savitch-Lew
Lenora Fine
Katonya Trent

June

Asaad Bell
Linda Miles
Hyacinth Black
Ladeeta Smith
Sankofa B. Soleil
Betty Boney

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Membership Fees

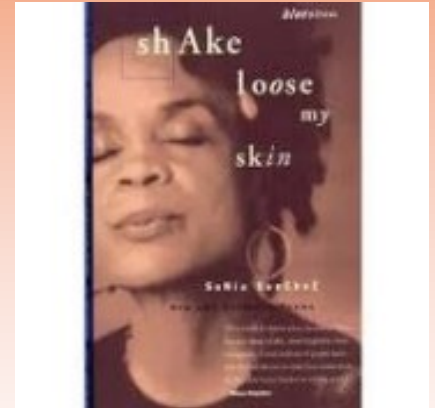
The annual membership fee is \$25 due January 2024. Please pay using PayPal or QR Code below:



“If not for my people, if not for their words, if not for their emotions spilling out as verbs, if not for their actions born from social unrest, our pens may have digressed, concluding with only civil unrest.” Dr. Gail Stanback

ACTIVISM AND POETIC JUSTICE

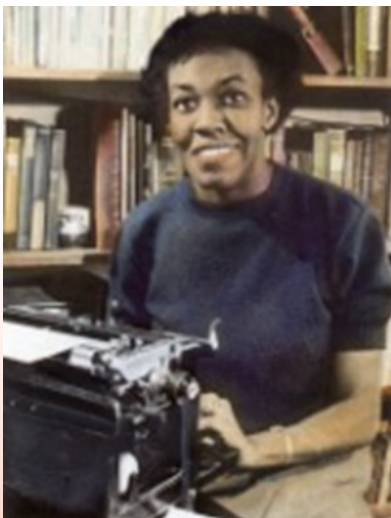
Sonia Sanchez (born September 9, 1934) is an American poet, author, and professor. She was known as a leading figure in the Black Arts Movement. She received the 2018 Wallace Stevens Award in recognition of her outstanding and proven mastery of poetry, and in 2001 she was awarded the Robert Frost Medal for her contribution to the canon of American poetry. She moved to Harlem, New York in 1943 with her father, siblings and stepmother. Sonia developed a stutter after losing her grandmother and became withdrawn. It was through this tragedy she rose to represent the Black symbolism of thought and sound that we espouse and forever labor to protect and share. An excerpt from her work reads “No. Don't never go looking for love girl. Just wait. It'll come. Like the rain falling from the heaven, it'll come. Just don't never give up on love.”



– Sonia Sanchez,

[Shake Loose My Skin: New and Selected Poems](#)

ACADEMICS AND BLACK COMMENTARY



Gwendolyn Elizabeth Brooks (June 7, 1917–December 3, 2000) was an American poet, author and teacher. She was born in Topeka, KS and later moved to Chicago, IL. Her poetry reflects the struggles and triumphs of her community. Gwendolyn Brooks was a prolific poet of the twentieth century. She was known for her love of mankind and her ability to address societal ills while unifying the nation. She was inspired by Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson and Richard Wright. Her work appears in twenty volumes of poems, and remarkably, her first poem was published at the young age of 13, “Eventide” in *American Childhood* magazine. Her poems frequented the *Chicago Defender*, a notable Black-owned newspaper founded by Robert S. Abbot in 1905. Following her success in the *Defender* throughout her teenage years, her fame was achieved when she became the first African American to secure a Pulitzer Prize in 1950. In addition, she was appointed as Consultant in Poetry by the Library of Congress, now known as Poet Laureate. Gwendolyn Brooks was appointed to the position of Poet Laureate of Illinois in 1968 and served in the position for 32 years until her death.



Maya Angelou (April 4, 1928 – May 28, 2014); her name was Marguerite Annie Johnson. The poem “Still I Rise” begins like this: “You may write me down in history/With your bitter, twisted lies/You may trod me in the very dirt/But still, like dust, I’ll rise.” The sentiments of this poetic work that came later in her career echoes her life and the lives of so many others. She worked in many professions, and in her book *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, she discloses truths about her life. She was one of the most beloved memoirists and poets of our history.



Ntozake Shange (October 18, 1948—October 27, 2018) was most known for her play “*For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*” in 1975. The play ushered in a new love and appreciation for the arts, as the use of several mediums of the arts, termed, “choreopoem” provoked thought and emotion about the Black man and the Black woman and what their relationships reflect. Her work was brilliant and described almost every relationship and social narrative in the hood. Shange’s poetry is equally riveting, and the titles of her poems ignite indignation as well as promise. Ntozake Shange produced a plethora of work to examine for years to come. She is a dynamic part of our social and political history. She received a fellowship from the Guggenheim and the Lila Wallace Reader’s Digest Fund, in addition to other awards and accolades from the press and other creative artists.

SOCIAL ACTIVISM IN CREATIVE PROSE



Robert Sengstacke Abbott (December 24, 1870 – February 29, 1940). He had a very interesting background as his parents were freemen in the South. He originated from the Gullah Islands, descendants from Africa who maintained their cultural African heritage. His natural father died when he was a baby and his mother remarried into an integrated marriage in Charleston, S.C. which was illegal at the time. His stepfather was a German and actually purchased his mother to gain her freedom. His mother died after giving birth to her third child, his sister. His stepfather took the children to Germany to raise.

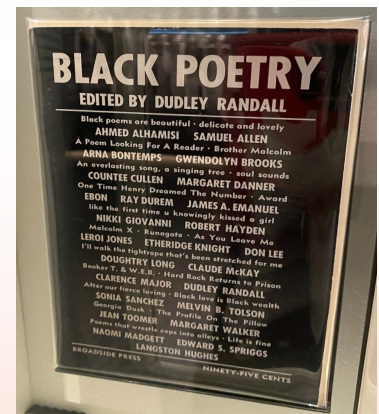
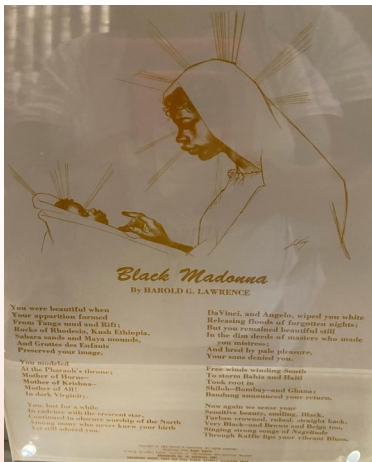
Robert was given the name Sengstacke by his German stepfather. He became a missionary and a teacher determined to improve education for children of color. He was a publisher, founded the *Woodville Times*, based in Woodville, Georgia, a town later annexed by Savannah, Georgia. He founded and owned the *Chicago Defender*, using a 25 cent investment.

Our stars are the community of writers, videographers, filmmakers and content artists committed to social justice and the elevation of education.



BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN ACADEMICS AND BLACK COMMENTARY

Lenora Sasteh Walters is a writer, a poet, and a retired school teacher who dedicated 39 years to teaching the children of New York City. Her ability to write poems that ignite a fiery warmth in your belly, while also connecting you to a sea of Aboriginal culture is a distinct skill that provides the audience a sense of pride and nourishment. Her work is academic genius and is essential for the growth of children everywhere.



Betty Boney is a woman of faith who dedicated her life to Christ at an early age. She exudes love and compassion in her poetic expressions. Her poetry is reminiscent of the Book of Psalms and is prophetic in tone and spiritually healing. Affectionately called *Miss Betty*, she works tirelessly to uplift her community in ministry. This wife, mother of three, grandmother of five, and great grandmother of one was born in Bessemer, Alabama. She migrated to New York City in 1990 and graduated from Morris High School in the Bronx, New York. Miss Betty received an Associates Degree in Occupational Studies at Taylor Business Institute. After 25 years of service, she retired from the Human Resources Administration. Her early days of writing lyrics with her mother led to writing poetry and short stories as a form of relaxation.



Chante Graham, Award Winning Documentary Filmmaker

“RUNNING FOR MY LIFE”

Film Screening and Talkback @Brownsville Heritage House (April 20, 2024)



Chante Graham is the President of CG Productions, LLC. She is an award-winning documentary filmmaker, podcast/television producer, director, and a member of Power in the Pen (PITP). She has a strong financial background in construction management and sustainability. Her talents for the built environment are expressed in her social commentary and film production.

Chante's latest production "Running For My Life" Film Screening and Talkback @The Brownsville Heritage House in April was a success. The documentary opened up valued conversations about her first-time running journey and how it changed every aspect of her life. The insightful panel discussed health promotion, prevention, and equity. Her debut film, "The New Face of Hunger" won an international film festival award and was screened in Paris, France in 2015. She continues to work within her community using film as a means of activism.



Powerinthepenww.org



THE POWER IN THE PEN WRITER'S SQUARE

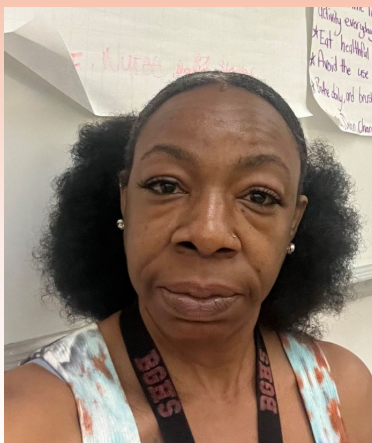
Power in the Pen writers are creators of literary works that engage the thinking brain thereby promoting health in communities of color.



Christina Wigfall is a dynamic lyricist and poet. Her pen to paper rhythm propels a cultural genre that mirrors a prophetic litany most historic to the African American experience.

Crown the Queen

Am I crazy about you,
or am I just crazy?
I have to be
To be the Queen that I am
And be doing what I am doing
To allow You
To be My undoing
Something I declared
Could NEVER happen
Would Never happen
Long Before I Ever laid eyes On you.
—Christina Wigfall



Ladeeta Smith is a New York City public high school teacher. Her writings reflect the passionate, nostalgic memories of a child “Living for the City.” Ladeeta’s love and respect for the familial relationships that she pours into her writing are a testament to Black Love, Black Identity, and the Black Family in the *Power in the Pen 2023: Manifesting A Breakthrough anthology*, she writes the following titled:

If You Tell One Lie...

I remember being self-conscious about my looks from early on. I would sometimes stare in the mirror for what felt like hours, evaluating my big lips, wide nose, and the bags under my eyes. Looking in the mirror, I convinced myself that I was beautiful. I imagined having longer, straighter hair, hazel eyes, a lighter complexion, and a thinner nose. I wanted to look like Thelma from Good Times. I found myself obsessed with looking in the mirror sometimes. As I got older, people thought my obsession with the mirror was vanity, however, it was insecurity.



Asaad Bell is an undergraduate student at Allegheny College in Meadville, Pennsylvania. Assad is currently enrolled in the bachelor’s program and is studying International Political Science and Social Justice. Asaad is a future leader as is evidenced in his commitment to social justice and social change. He reflects authenticity in his writing published in two anthologies. One example is the piece titled “Scars” shown below.

Scars

Everyone has scars/Some big, some small/Some long, some wide/Some have many/While some have few/They all tell a story/Of pain and loss/The trials and error/That we call life/Our suffering/But through that suffering/We find joy/In our experiences/In the people we meet/In the knowledge we’ve gained/Some scars still hurt/To see or to feel,/But that’s okay/Some pain never leaves/That doesn’t mean you’re alone/Accepting scars is a part of life/They are more/Than a sore reminder/They show us a journey/From the cut that used to be/The cut that made the skin/Stronger than before.



POWER IN THE PEN PODCAST



Cathie Wright Lewis, Asaad Bell, Diane Ortiz, Ansel Pitcairn, Andrea Phillip-Merriman and Chante Graham



Ladeeta Smith, Chante Graham, Gail Stanback, Cathie Wright-Lewis, Christina Wigfall, Lenora Fine, Hyacinth Black and Caroline Miller.

BRIC MEDIA

Power

In

The

Pen

PODCAST

Available

on the

PITP website

PowerinthePenww.org



Go Tell It On The Mountain



The National African American Museum of History and Culture (June 1, 2024). The Power in the Pen members and guest enjoyed a wonderful visit to the National African American Museum of History and Culture in Washington, D.C. Together, we learned about poignant times in history and revealed in cultural themes easily identifiable within our own life experiences. The museum highlighted a significant number of remarkable African Americans in History. African American comedians are responsible for making us laugh, however, they offer a unique social context in their delivery. Comedians like Red Fox, Moms Mabley, Richard Pryor, Eddie

Murphy and Martin Lawrence were proudly showcased. The educational and legal community was also highlighted with tributes to Thurgood Marshall, Mary McCleod Bethune, and others. Poets like Langston Hughes and Maya Angelo are national treasures that give us pride. The tributes to African Americans in Sports included Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, Wilma Rudolph, Venus and Serena Williams. The most compelling and gripping exhibits explore the Transatlantic Slave Trade. There is so much more to learn.

The African American Museum of History and Culture The Power in the Pen Pilgrimage



“SAY IT LOUD, I’M BLACK AND I’M PROUD”

BLACK HISTORY AND CULTURE

SPORTS and Entertainment—The PITP members were in awe of the respectful tributes to the Black historians responsible for bringing us very valued memories over the years. The exhibits edify the public by dispelling myths and untruths about Black America and their lack of ability, agility and strength.

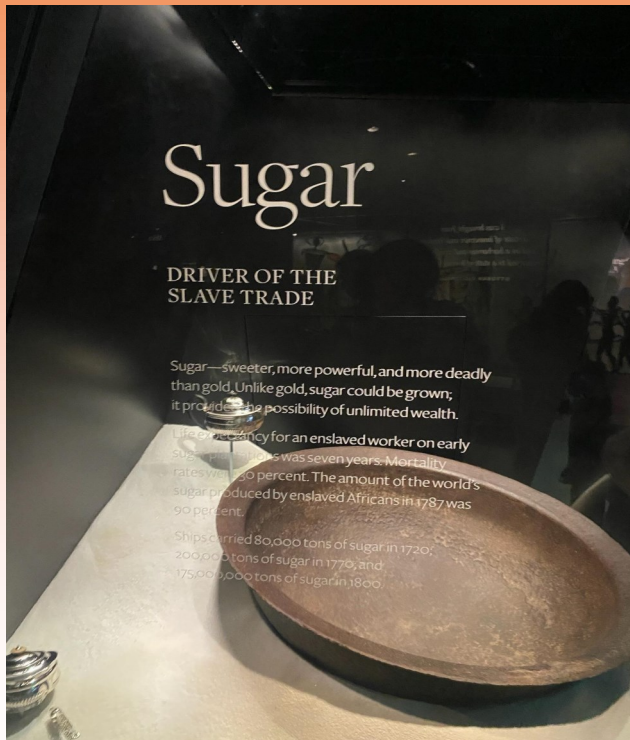
Education — PITP is an advocate for education. Our literary values are encompassed in our work in the community and in our determination to reach and teach underserved communities. We believe that writing is therapeutic and essential. Looking back at our history and all that our ancestors endured fighting injustices in education, we believe that it’s our duty to educate, read, and write.

PRESS

POETRY TO THE PEOPLE BROADSIDE PRESS

Founded in Detroit in 1965 by poet, librarian, and literary scholar Dudley Randall (1914–2000), Broadside Press became a leading

publisher of poetry of the Black Arts Movement. Along with other small independent black presses, Broadside Press provided a vital outlet for black poets, both established and new. Sold in black bookstores, on college campuses, and on street corners, these publications brought revolutionary poetry to the people and transformed the landscape of American literature.



Textiles, metals, spices, guns and sugar all traded

The Transatlantic Slave Trade is not only America's story, but it is also the story of many other malefactors. The rascallions termed slave traders are responsible for the forceful transportation of enslaved African people to the Americas and other culpable nations. Brazil and British American ports were the points of dis-embarkment for enslaved Africans. The slave trade lasted for several centuries from the 16th—19th century. The exhibits at the African American Museum of History and Culture fully envelopes the ancestors' voyage and the emanating dissonance present in the African American community. The ports of America carried the souls of enslaved people of Africa. So, as the soles on their feet touched the New World, there was a new dawn unrecognizable and unfathomable. The ports were dominated by piracy and although slavery not a new idea, the transatlantic slavery trade brought a new kind of cruelty and dehumanization that included physical and mental anguish unthinkable for us to imagine, heinous, and inconceivable. The slave ships carrying the ancestors arrived at ports throughout what we now know as the United States carrying souls bound in metal bracelets unaware of their destination, unaware of their crime.

Voyages Unknown

Voyages Unknown

Lost at Sea

Now exposed in Washington D.C.

Lives uprooted for Slavery's cause.

Desperation and greed can make one
accept dehumanizing roles,

My soul is captured by the visions of the past.

The lost generations of original men and women

Infuriates my spirit and lays grief at my door.

Perhaps even anger for what my people endured.

However, my Black is beautiful and my ancestors
strong.

The spirits remain clothed and draped in the blood.

And in the majesty of our history,
the past meets the present.

And the future is clear,

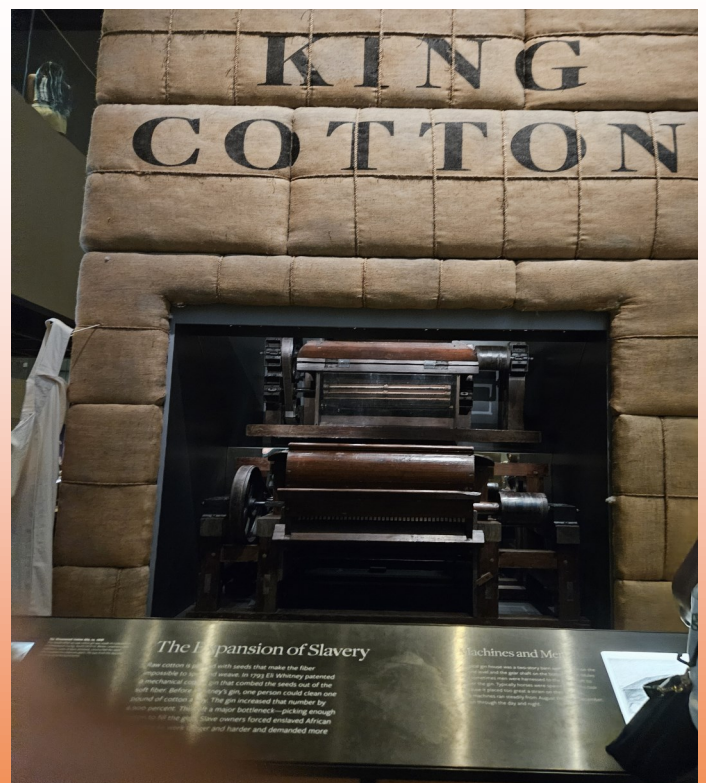
We stand strong in the midst of the souls stolen,

And returned

through archive and documentary for us to learn.

Never to sleep again.

—Dr. Gail Stanback



POWER IN THE PEN, INC.

ACHIEVEMENTS



Donna Allen-Arnold is a resolute member of Power in the Pen, Inc. and serves on the Village of Friends and Family (VFF) and the Communication Media committees. We are so proud to announce that she was sworn in as a Community Board Member on Monday, June 24, 2024, at the Brooklyn Borough Hall. Donna is officially a New York City public official representing the people of Brooklyn in Community Board (District 16) that covers the Ocean Hill and Brownsville communities. Community Board members are an essential resource of the City of New York, and they make important recommendations that affect where New Yorkers live, work and play. Their recommendations on land use, zoning, and other local issues reflect the needs of the people, safety, and the environment in which we live. Donna will be tackling important social issues following the City of Yes initiative created in response to New York City’s zoning efforts. The City of Yes initiative is a plan to modernize and update zoning regulations to support small businesses, create affordable housing, and promote sustainability. We want to wish our sister, Donna Allen-Arnold the best and are confident that she reflects the best this city has to offer.

“I live my life today as if tomorrow has already passed.”

by Donna Allen-Arnold

Lenora (Niecy) Fine is an active member of Power in the Pen, Inc. and serves on the Village of Family and Friends committee. She is responsible for welcoming and checking in new members, in addition to updating membership data. The members of Power in the Pen, Inc. want to extend our congratulations on her graduation from the Fresh Winds School of Biblical Studies, Inc. Lenora (Niecy) studied diligently the book of Acts, and the lessons from *The Practice of Godliness* taught by Instructor Lady Rosalind Nelson. She received recognition as an honor student for her exceptional work in the program and earned awards of excellence at graduation. She exclaims that she feels uplifted by the experience. Lenora’s favorite scriptures are Psalms 119:10-11: *“I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”*



POWER IN THE PEN, INC.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Board Members

Cathie Wright-Lewis -
Founder/Executive Director

Daphne Denis - President

Margo McKenzie - Vice President

Diane Ortiz-Jefferson -Ambassador

Lenora Fine - Interim Acting Treasurer

Gail Stanback - Secretary

The members of Power In The Pen, Inc.

Want to extend our gratitude

To Cathie Wright-Lewis,

Founder & Executive Director, PITP Inc.

We are grateful

For the opportunity to visit

The African American Museum

Of History and Culture

In Washington, D.C.

We also want to give a hardy Thank You to

Brother Keane Smith

Lenora (Niecy) Fine,

And

Diane Ortiz

For making the trip an extraordinary experience.

CITATIONS

Sonia Sanchez | Poetry Foundation

Gwendolyn Brooks | Poetry Foundation

Ntozake Shange | Biography, Plays, Poems, Books, & Facts | Britannica

Maya Angelou | Biography, Books, Poems, & Facts | Britannica

Black Then | Robert Sengstacke Abbott: Founder of the Chicago Defender - Black Then