

June 30, 2022

## Spotlight On Your Recent Impact

*from The Woodson Center and our Major Initiatives: the Community Affiliate Network, 1776 Unites, and Voices of Black Mothers United*

### Dear Woodson Center Supporter:

Your generosity makes our work possible – and in a moment of crisis in our nation, that work is needed more than ever. We want to share with you the powerful stories of resilience and renewal that you have helped fuel, all of which demonstrate the continuing power of American values.

Last month *1776 Unites* scholar, Bradley Prize winner, and, like you, a generous supporter of the Woodson Center, sat down with Executive Director Sylvia Bennett-Stone and founder Bob Woodson, to discuss the Center's mission and work. Sylvia shared the heartbreaking story of the murder of her daughter, Krystal, and how she turned anguish into action by connecting mothers who share the same grief and refuse to be silent. Check out Glenn's podcast to hear more about VBMU's growth.



### **Voices of Black Mothers United: National Crime Victims' Rights Week**

*As survivors throughout the nation remembered their lost loved ones, our Moms turned anguish into action*

Across the country, the tide is turning against the influence of massive, ideological “activists” and the catastrophes left in their wake: incompetent district attorneys, rising violent crime, and local businesses under siege.

The Woodson Center is seizing the opportunity to amplify the message of Voices of Black Mothers United and their plan for justice, healing, and better relationships between police and community. Billboards like the one we placed in Racine County, Wisconsin, can now be seen throughout the country. Simple, low-tech messaging like this brings VBMU's message to neighborhoods where slick, expensive media campaigns will never reach.



### Wave of local op-eds brings mothers' stories to light

April 24-30 was National Crime Victims' Rights Week, when the loved ones of Americans lost to homicide and neighborhood violence reflect on their grief, look to one another for healing, and demand justice. The mothers of VBMU are working to end crime in their communities by offering a positive message of solidarity with others who grieve and by working *with*, not against, local police. Your support helped bring their stories to local papers:

"Losing a child is hard to accept," wrote Alabama state lead mom Carolyn Johnson at AL.com. "It feels unreal. It's also impossible to prepare for. I was thrown into grief and loss in a single, staggering moment. It's a moment no mother should have to bear. I needed to know I was doing everything I could to make sure that other mothers didn't suffer what I'd suffered."

"For so many affected by violence, their grief and loss drive them into despair," wrote Wisconsin state lead mom Nakeyda Haymer in The Journal Times. "Communities and families broken by violence feel powerless, vulnerable and alone. I want to show others that pain can catapult them into purpose."

The daughter of Ohio state lead mom Yvonne Pointer was murdered at 14, but with God's help she found hope that "could transform communities and lives far beyond my own," as she wrote at Cleveland.com. "I spent my first five years of advocacy writing letters, trying to get people to save our children. That person still hasn't shown up. Instead, I became the person I needed."

Tennessee mom Marsha Wilson organized a Crime Victims' Week retreat for Memphis mothers, and wrote in the Commercial Appeal: "I turned my pain into my purpose, and it's driven my work. I joined Voices of Black Mothers United because they believe in our families and in our children. We won't heal with time alone, but we can heal if we work together. Join us."

### **True Stories of American Courage that Our Children Need to Know**

*Uplifting 1776 Unites lessons are now available for all grade levels – with new installments in production!*

Our top-rated 1776 Unites history and character-building lessons are shaping how students and educators think about the Black American experience. Our lessons have now been downloaded

over 16,000 times this year by teachers, home-schoolers, researchers, and learners from all walks of life – for a total of over **45,000 downloads** since our first lessons were released in 2020.

The Woodson Center’s authentic, inspiring curriculum has spread throughout the nation mostly through word-of-mouth, church and homeschooling networks, and similar organic pathways, with little advertising. But we’re committed to rapidly extending our reach even further.

### Empowering Lessons in Every Teacher’s Hands: The Texas Home School Coalition Conference

Home schooler, pastor, and 1776 Unites activist **Latasha Fields** represented the Woodson Center and its inspirational, aspirational curriculum at the annual **Texas Home School Coalition Conference**. Ms. Fields is the founder of the Christian Home Educators Support System (CHESS), a home school cooperative centered in Chicago and a Woodson Center CAN affiliate. Our free lessons garnered attention from new parents and teachers from all walks of life, helping to fill a gap that exists in many homeschool curricula. As our curriculum and its user base expands, we’re committed to keeping these lessons free with registration.



### New Lessons: Dramatic Stories to Spur the Imagination

After the Civil War, America’s westward expansion continued – and with it, the struggle to reckon with the legacy of slavery and build a multiracial democracy. Our most recent lessons tell two amazing stories from that era: In May, in conjunction with Law Enforcement Officer Appreciation Month, we released our lesson on the life and legend of famed U.S. Marshal **Bass Reeves**, whose exploits on the frontier earned him the respect of Black, White, and Indian communities – and the fear of desperadoes and outlaws. In honor of the Juneteenth holiday, we released our K-8 lesson on the heroic **54th Massachusetts Regiment**, who fought to save the Union and destroy slavery.

In addition to these history lessons, we have produced (with the help of high school drama teacher Stacy Deemar) four **Drama Lessons** that prompt students to script, stage, imagine, and improvise a variety of creative performances centered on the lives of figures from the 1776 Unites curriculum: **Crispus Attucks**, **Biddy Mason**, **Elijah McCoy**, and **Bessie Coleman**. These lesson plans provide a unique opportunity to bring inspirational Black American history into a theatre class – or in any other context in which teachers and students want to bring history to life!

Upcoming lessons will look at the extraordinary steps towards multiracial democracy in the post-Civil War settlement of Covert, Michigan; the founding of the African Methodist Episcopal Church; and the complex life and legacy of pan-Africanist leader Marcus Garvey.

We’ll also release new lessons in our Contemporary Scholars series, on the life and thought of modern African American economists **Walter Williams**, **Thomas Sowell**, and **Glenn Loury**.

## Community Affiliate Network (CAN): Our Boots on the Ground

*Grassroots leaders across the nation are the first line of defense against poverty, crime, and despair*

The cornerstone of our mission to support community renewal and social entrepreneurship is the **Community Affiliate Network (CAN)**, which continues to expand its reach and draw new members from around the country. Crucially, we have awarded hundreds of thousands of dollars in Mini-Grants to organizations that help neighborhoods thrive. With these modest but transformative funds, CAN affiliates can scale-up their operations in a sustainable way, expanding their reach and readying for next steps. Our CAN affiliates are involved in everything from empowering youth living in urban poverty to helping ex-offenders re-enter society and become productive citizens.

### Woodson Center “co-founder” Hailed as Local Hero



“Brother” Carl Hardrick of Hartford, Connecticut was present at the creation of the Woodson Center in 1981, working with Bob to build the constellation of grassroots leaders that would become CAN. Brother Carl is famous throughout his hometown for his tireless efforts at violence prevention and community engagement. Now a nonpartisan, nonprofit institute has been created in his honor and to build on his work. [The Institute's website](#) describes Brother Carl’s approach, a perfect case study in the Woodson Center’s approach to homegrown community leadership:

“Since much of the violence is often the result of personal disagreement among small groups of young men and women, the intensive, personalized approach of Brother Carl and his team has shown to be an effective way to intervene, work directly with victims and their families, and coordinate with the local [services]. This work depends on a cadre of trustworthy messengers, like Brother Carl, who know the community and are trusted to show up, be present, and coordinate with Law enforcement, hospitals, and community groups.”

### Technical Assistance and Capacity Building

CAN affiliates can now use the Pathwright learning management system (LMS) to access to training programs and technical assistance from the Woodson Center. CAN members have received orientation and instruction in navigating the LMS, and this summer’s series includes courses on Fund Development, Human Resources Management, Financial Planning, and Project Development.

**This is just a fraction of the impact your support of the Woodson Center had made across the nation. Our initiatives expand their reach every day. We are deeply grateful to you for making possible our mission to empower all Americans in becoming agents of their own uplift.**