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Call for National Holiday Designation for Harriet Tubman

By Debra M. Johnson

March 10th, a National Holiday for Harriet Tubman

"Her name deserves to be handed down to posterity, side by side with the names of Jeanne D'Arc, Grace Darling, and Florence Nightingale, for not one of these women, noble and brave as they were, has shown more courage and power of endurance in facing danger and death to relieve human suffering, than this black woman, Harriet Tubman" (Sarah H. Bradford, *Harriet Tubman: The Moses Her People*. Lockwood and Son, New York, NY, 1886: p. 4).



The month of March provides a time for celebration of the many contributions to our society by courageous women. Aminta "Minty" Ross, better known as Harriet Tubman, lived a life of extraordinary courage and perseverance. Since 1990, many cities across the United States and Canada have declared March 10 as a day to commemorate Harriet Tubman. I believe she should have a National Holiday designated in her name, because she was a humanitarian, practiced the traditions of her ancestors, and was a hero in American History.

Araminta Ross (1820-1913) was born enslaved in Dorchester County, Maryland. In 1844, she married a free African American named John Tubman. Taking her mother's name, she became Harriet Tubman. In 1849, certain that she was about to be sold, she fled with her two brothers, leaving her reluctant husband behind. In 1851, Harriet took members of her family, including her 70-year-old parents, to St. Catharines, in what is today Ontario, Canada, on perilous journeys out of bondage. Until 1857, when she moved to Auburn, New York, that Canadian town was her base of operations. Armed with a pistol, she made approximately 19 other trips into the South and led many people out of slavery; historians' estimates range from 70 to more than 300 individuals whom were freed with Tubman's help. Angry slaveholders in the South offered \$40,000 for her capture. She was never caught, however, and served in the Union Army as a nurse, scout, and spy. Tubman was also a suffragist and founded the National Association of Colored Women. She died in Auburn, New York, and has been referred to as a "Moses of her people."

As a member of the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations, I participated with others in forming the Black Women's Leadership Caucus, with a main goal of encouraging government officials to commemorate March 10 as Harriet Tubman Day. Please contact me at debramj@gmail.com to join in this effort.