

More than a Black History Museum visit

By Horace Crenshaw, Jr.



“Wow girl, my Dad is all excited about going to this Black History Museum, today,” Sonya uttered as she talks on her cell phone to her friend Jasmine. “Besides, I need to check to see if Harvey left me a message. You know he wants to take me out next Saturday night,” she continued. “I just want to get this tour over. I mean what’s so inspirational about going to a museum especially with my irritating little brother, Junior.” “Sonya will you get off the phone and get in this car, her Dad, John stated emphatically. “I don’t want to be late for our museum tour, and we have to be on time, in line before the tour starts. Matter of fact, the tickets have a disclaimer statement that states arrival at least 15 minutes prior to the start.” “Finally, we made it to the museum, “John was relieved. Then his cell phone rang.

Hey Tom. We just got up here to the exhibit at the museum... Yeah, I got my kids with me. I thought it was important for them to experience this today. Well when we finish here, I will shoot the report over to you so you can finish the presentation for tomorrow's meeting. Alright. Thanks. Bye.

Pam the Tour Guide walks over to John and says Hello Sir...

I am sorry Ma'am. Give me one second... Sonya, Junior — would y'all please come on. The tour is about to start. Dad, we are coming. This is awesome! There are just so many cool things in this museum. Did you see the 3D images downstairs, all those inventions... Aww, man there is so much to do here!

Junior. Look, we are about to go to the next exhibit. Son do not touch anything. Just look with your eyes and not your hands. You were all over the place at the last exhibit and were making me nervous. And where is your sister...Keisha, Come on!

Can you believe her? I was like who does that? And then she had the nerve to post it on Snapchat. Duh? Like everyone in school is going to see how whack she is.

“Sonya!” John shouts. But I have to admit, her boots were on point. I think that is the only reason she got so many likes. I am going to Forever 21 to get me....

Sonya would get off that phone. You act like you cannot live without being on that thing 24 hours a day.

Dad, you are messing up my Facetime... Huh (frustrated). Jasmine, I have to go. My Dad wants me to see the wonderful history museum. That is why I cannot wait to go to college so I can have my freedom.

What did you say?! Her father looked at her with a serious look and if looks could kill.

Nothing, I just um... Sonya quickly responded. That is what I thought. (faces tour guide). OK, ma'am. I am sorry. I just wanted everyone to be here, together, when we started the tour.

No problem, the tour guide stated. Welcome again to the Black History Museum. I hope you have been enjoying your time with us. My name is Pam and I will be your tour guide for this next exhibit we call "Legacies of Greatness"

Legacies of Greatness. Ok, that has a nice ring to it. John was enthralled

Yes, this exhibit celebrates the rich legacy of Black History by highlighting the powerful stories and accomplishments of iconic black figures who have made major contributions to our heritage. Oh wow, that is amazing!

Well. the great thing about this exhibit is that it is an interactive display. So, as you go to each station and press the start button, the exhibits will come to life and share their story of greatness. We can start right here with the first one. (looks at Junior). Young man, would you like to do the honors?

Um... my dad told when I get up here that I better not to touch anything, do not ask for anything...

. . . Um, um, son...It's OK. Go ahead. John emphatically interrupts.

Junior pushes the button, and the Robert Abbott exhibit comes to life.

Have you heard of Essence, Black Enterprise, JET Magazine, well if so, you probably know who I am. I am Robert Abbott and I paved the way for these great magazines as the founder of the Chicago Defender in 1905 which grew to have the highest circulation of any black-owned newspaper in the country. Born in 1870 as a child of former slaves, I fought to obtain my law degree in 1899 but then was told I was too black to practice law in America. Struggling to earn a living as a lawyer, I became convinced that I could defend black people in print better than in a courtroom and that is what I did through the Chicago Defender. The success of this paper allowed me to become one of the nation's most successful post-slaver black millionaires and after 100 years is still in circulation today. I am Robert Abbott

Over 100 years old and still in circulation. That is incredible.

It is amazing. How about we check out this next display? Please, go ahead. Pam motions toward the Sojourner Truth exhibit.

John pushes the button and the Sojourner Truth exhibit springs forward

You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free... You guessed it- I am Sojourner Truth and I became an outspoken advocate for civil and women's rights in the 19th century. I was born into slavery as Isabella Bomfree in New York in 1797. I was bought and sold numerous times as a slave and endured harsh physical labor and unjust punishments. In 1826 I escaped to freedom with my infant daughter Sophia and begin serving in ministry shortly thereafter. In 1843 I felt the strong calling of God to preach truth and then renamed myself Sojourner Truth. In my fight for equality for slaves and women, I begin speaking all over the nation, lobbied against segregation and was eventually honored at the White House and became involved in the Freedmen's Bureau to help freed slaves find jobs and build new lives. The impact of my legacy carries on today. I am Sojourner Truth.

Sonya, you see that? You are benefiting today from the legacy of Sojourner Truth.

Dad I had no idea that... (interrupted). Sonya retorts. Wow Dad, this next one is about baseball! Junior states. Bruh that's rude, Sonya displayed her displeasure with Junior interruption.

Yes, we made history as entrepreneurs and activists, but in sports as well.

Well you know, back in the day your father used to quite the athlete if I may say so myself. I remember my first game like it was yesterday... John is immediately cut off by his daughter.

OK Dad, please spare us the 30-minute lecture of the glory days. We heard these stories a million times ...Junior, go ahead and push the button.

"A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives." I am Jackie Robinson, and this is a quote I lived by to help me to break the color barrier in baseball and become the first black player in the 20th century to take the field in the big leagues. I played as a second baseman for the Kansas Monarchs as a part of the Negro Leagues until the Brooklyn Dodgers manager decided he wanted to integrate baseball. In 1947, I made my major league debut with this team. I endured much opposition, unfair treatment and even death threats, but kept on holding on to my dream and eventually became Rookie of the Year and then MVP just two years later. The Dodgers won six pennants in my 10 seasons. And on every April 15th of each season every team in the Major League Baseball teams celebrate Jackie Robinson day for the contribution I made to black history and the game of baseball. I am Jackie Robinson.

What an incredible legacy! We have done a lot as a people.

We sure have. Just wait to hear the amazing story of this woman!

Sonya, go ahead and take it away. After this prompt, Sonya hits the button.

If you have traveled by using a smartphone, flown in an airplane, used social media, had food delivered to your house then you have experienced the impact of my work. I am Dr. Gladys West and played a pivotal role in creating the technology that is used in the Geographical Positioning System, better known as GPS. I graduated from Virginia State University on a full academic scholarship and then later obtained my masters degree. In 1956 I was hired as a mathematician at the Dahlgren Virginia Naval

Base where I input data collected from orbiting machines into supercomputers and used complex calculations to record satellite locations to measure the size and shape of the earth which led to the accuracy of the GPS system. Today, my work is used by the military, auto industry, NASA, social media and the list goes on and on which led to me being inducted into the Air Force Hall of Fame. I am Dr. Gladys West.

Do you mean to tell me that all these apps on my phone using GPS are connected to black history? Thank you, Dr. West.

Yes honey, these are just a few of the many contributions we made throughout history.

Your dad is right. Sonya, why don't you go ahead and start the next exhibit?

Don't mind if I do. Be my guest, her father implored. Enthusiastically, Sonya hits the button.

I worked as a civil rights attorney, became the first black President of the Harvard Law Review, won a Nobel Peace Prize, served as a community organizer on the south side of Chicago and am a husband and father of two — but you may know me better as Barack Hussein Obama, the first black President of the United States of America. Throughout my life I have been driven by a deep passion to bring about change. In my early days as a community organizer I organized Project Vote which was a drive that registered tens of thousands of black people in Chicago. In 1996 I was elected to the Illinois State Senate and then to the U.S. Senate in 2004 where I fought to reform criminal justice and welfare laws. In 2007, I declared that I would run for the highest office in the land and in 2008 won the election to become the 44th President of the United States of America. I am President Barack Obama.

Dad, do you think I can be president one day?

Son, you can be whatever you put your mind to. Just look at all these great people who did amazing things.

Keisha: Speaking of great people. Dad I have heard of all these people in school, but I do not recognize these individuals? (looks at the tour guide). Who are these people?

Tour Guide: Why don't you hit the button to find out?
(Keisha hits the button)

Person 1: I marched at Selma

Person 2: I helped bring slaves through the underground railroad

Person 3: I led the prayer meetings for our children and civil rights leaders

Person 4: I was arrested during a peaceful protest

Person 1: I organized the bus boycott in my town

Person 2: I taught black children to read when they were not allowed in schools

Person 3: I fought for black educational rights

Person 4: I helped organize civil rights meetings through the local church

Person 1: We held on to the dream

Person 2: We kept the faith

Person 3: We stood strong

Person 4: We never gave up

Person 1: Who are we?

All: We are the unsung heroes of black history.

You see there are countless people whose names we will never know who made tremendous sacrifices, gave their all and even laid down their lives to help us get to where we are today.

Dad I never realized how much those who came before us did to impact my life. I can go to college because of the sacrifices these people made for me.

You are correct, Sonya. Therefore, I wanted to bring you both down here. I wanted you to see that black history is a rich legacy greatness. Never forget where you came from and always be proud of who you are.

Dad I am so glad you brought us with you.

Yeah Dad, this was awesome!

I knew you would enjoy it. Well let's get you guys home so that you can get your homework done.

Wait, Dad before we leave, can we finish seeing the rest of the exhibits on this floor.

Wow. Sure, honey absolutely.

Wait, before we leave, I have to get a selfie to put on the Gram. This is going to get so many likes.

Aww Dad, do we have to?

Somethings are never going to change.

Well ladies and gentlemen, this concludes today's tour. We hope you enjoyed yourself and have been inspired to carry on this great legacy of black history. We look forward to seeing you next time at our Legacies of Greatness at the Black History Museum.