

WOW

WARRIOR QUEENS AND DIVINE SPIRITS

Dahlia/al-Kahinat, an Amazigh queen

A woman who faced her enemies while empires crumbled, one of the most famous yet elusive women in history, Dahlia (seventh century CE) was an Amazigh queen. She is better known as Kahina or al-Kahinat, 'the witch'.

The Africa of Dahlia's youth was a melting pot, in which peoples of different races and religions thrived, including Romans, Amazighen, Vandal and Visigoth settlers, and tribes of black Numidians. There were Christians of various denominations and also numerous Jews and pagans, living mostly in peace.

When she was young, a chieftain who demanded her as his bride terrorised her tribe. Dahlia went into hiding for some time. Finally she agreed to the marriage. On the wedding night, she slew her new husband by smashing his skull with a nail.

During the siege of Carthage, Dahlia completed her lifetime's achievement. She united all the major Amazigh tribes under a common purpose, driving out the invaders. Dahlia attacked the main Muslim army, completely defeating it. She even reclaimed the ruins of Carthage. At that point, she was the unquestioned heroine and leader of all of Africa's population.

Dahlia soon found herself the only enemy of Islam on the African continent. Muslims sent considerable forces and finally defeated her. Some say that she died a soldier's death – sword in her hand. Others maintain that she poisoned herself when defeat was near. Dahlia's head was mummified and sent to the Caliph, who ordered that it be nailed to the entrance of his favourite mosque.

Amanirenas, Queen of the Meroitic Kingdom of Kush

Amanirenas reigned from about 40 BCE to 10 BCE. She is one of the most famous queens, because of her role in leading Kushite armies against the Romans in a war of five years. After an initial victory when the Kushites attacked Roman Egypt, they were driven out

of Egypt and the Romans established a new frontier at Maharraqa. Amanirenas was described as brave, and blind in one eye. Meroitic inscriptions give Amanirenas the title of 'qore' as well as 'kandake', suggesting that she was a ruling queen.

When the chief magistrate of Egypt was absent on a campaign in Arabia, the Kushites launched an attack on Egypt. Amanirenas and Akinidad defeated Roman forces at Syene and Philae, and drove the Jews from Elephantine Island. They returned to Kush with prisoners and loot, including several statues of Emperor Augustus.

The Kushites were driven out of Syrene later in the year by Publius Petronius. According to a detailed report, the Roman troops advanced far into Kush. Although they withdrew again to the north they left behind a garrison in Primis, which now became the border of the Roman Empire. The Kushites made a renewed attempt to seize Primis, but Petronius forestalled this attempt. Following this event, negotiations began. The Meroites sent mediators and a peace treaty was concluded. It was strikingly favourable to the Meroites: they were exempted from paying tribute to the Emperor.

This arrangement continued until the end of the third century, with relations between Meroe and Roman Egypt remaining generally peaceful during this time.

Queen Zenobia of Palmyra

Zenobia (c. 240 CE) challenged the authority of Rome during the period known as The Crisis of the Third Century. While she was careful not to engage Rome directly in military conflict, it is clear she increasingly disregarded Roman authority. Zenobia conducted trade agreements and added territories to her empire without even considering Rome's interests.

Zenobia was placed in charge of the family flocks and shepherds when she was a young girl and thereby grew used to ruling over men. She became adept at riding horses and learned the endurance and stamina she was later known for. It is recorded she would march on foot with her troops long distances, could hunt as well as any man, and could out-drink anyone.

Zenobia is perhaps the only female whose superior genius broke through the servile indolence imposed on her sex by the climate and manners of Asia. Zenobia was esteemed the most lovely as well as the most heroic of her sex. Special mention is always made of her chastity. She believed that sex should only be engaged in for procreation and, after her marriage, refused to sleep with her husband except for that purpose.

Later, defending Palmyra from Aurelian, 'She retired within the walls of her capital, made every preparation for a vigorous resistance, and declared, with the intrepidity of a heroine, that the last moment of her reign and of her life should be the same'. Monarchs such as Catherine the Great of Russia compared herself to Zenobia and her court to that of Palmyra.

Queen Gudit of Aksumite

Gudit (perhaps tenth century CE) was a rebel leader to whom the downfall of the ancient Aksumite Empire (modern-day Ethiopia/Eritrea) is traditionally ascribed.

It is still a matter of conjectures whether she should be identified with the queen of the Bani al-Hamuya and represented a resurgence of one of the non-Christian indigenous populations of southern Ethiopia, or whether she had much closer links with the Aksumite dynasty and was perhaps herself leader of a Judaized element. It is possible that the whole cycle of legends of a Jewish queen who brought about the downfall of Aksum evolved from indistinct memories of persecution by a woman ruler, who in fact killed the reigning Emperor and for many years persecuted Christians.

A woman, apparently queen of the Bani al-Hamuya, was laying waste to the country and harrying the Emperor and his followers from place to place in an effort to wipe out Christianity completely.

The episode of a warlike queen receives further confirmation, although the geographical location remains vague and specific identification with the queen of the Bani al-Hamuya is not possible, in a note on Ethiopia by the contemporary Arab scholar Ibn Hawqal who wrote:

'As for Abyssinia, it has been ruled by a woman for many years. It is she who killed the Emperor of Abyssinia, known as the hadani and she still holds sway over her own country and the neighbouring regions of the hadani's country in the interior of Abyssinia'.

The basic theme of the legend of a rebel queen as a destructive fury bringing ruin and devastation upon Aksumite civilization is common to Ethiopian tradition.

Beatriz Kimpa Vita of Kongo

Beatriz Kimpa Vita (1684-1706), was a Kongo Empire prophet and leader of her own Christian movement, Antonianism. This movement taught that Jesus and other early Christian figures were from the Kongo Empire. Her teaching grew out of the traditions of the

Roman Catholic Church in Kongo, and caused her to upbraid the Catholic priests for not believing as she did.

At the time of her birth, Congo was torn by civil war. Beatriz had visions even as a child, and her high spirits and otherworldly outlook caused her two youthful marriages to fail and led her deeper into a spiritual life. Kimpa Vita was trained to communicate with the supernatural world.

During an illness in 1704 she claimed to have received visions of St. Anthony of Padua. She began to preach, claiming that she was the real voice of God. From that point onward, she believed she had a special connection to God, among other things, she died each Friday and spent the weekend in Heaven talking with God, to return to earth on Mondays.

While she was in São Salvador, she built a special residence for herself in a ruined cathedral, and also called the formerly ruined and abandoned capital to be reoccupied by thousands of followers.

Kimpa Vita was captured near her hometown and burned at the temporary capital of Evululu as a heretic in 1706. The Anthonian prophetic movement outlasted her death. Her followers continued to believe that she was still alive.

Queen Nanny of Jamaica

Queen Nanny (1686-1755) was a Maroon leader in Jamaica during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Maroons were enslaved people in the Americas who escaped and formed independent settlements.

Nanny and her four brothers (all of whom became Maroon leaders) were sold into slavery and later escaped from their plantations into the mountains and jungles of Jamaica. Nanny and one brother, Quao, founded a village in the Blue Mountains that became known as Nanny Town. Nanny has been described as a practitioner of Obeah, a term used in the Caribbean to describe folk magic and religion based on West African influences.

Nanny Town, placed as it was in the mountains away from European settlements and difficult to assault, thrived. Nanny limited her attacks on plantations and European settlements and preferred instead to farm and trade peacefully with her neighbours. She did however make numerous successful raids to free enslaved people held on plantations and it has been widely accepted that her efforts contributed to the escape of almost a thousand.

Nanny's life and accomplishments have been recognised by the Jamaican government and she has been the only woman honoured as a National Hero. A modern portrait of Nanny, based on her description, appears on the Jamaican \$500 note, the largest banknote in circulation in Jamaica.

Nanny is known as one of the earliest leaders of resistance against slavery in the Americas.

Marie Laveau, the Voodoo Queen of New Orleans

Marie Laveau (1801-1881) is the most renowned voodoo figure in the history of North America. For several decades she held New Orleans spellbound, as her occult powers became legendary. The crypt where she was buried is believed to be the most haunted cemetery in America.

Laveau worked as a hairdresser at her house. Most of her clients were wealthy elite women. This gave her access to the gossip of the whites in the city, as well as their servants who, by that time, believed her to be a powerful voodoo priestess. Laveau reportedly developed a network of informants. No event in any household in New Orleans was a secret from her.

By all outward appearances she seemed to know, magically, information about her clients and their lives. In a very short time she was thought to have 'special powers' as a mystic. With the enslaved servants, free persons of colour and white communities now believing in her powers, Laveau became very popular. She told fortunes, gave advice on love, and prepared potions called gris-gris for anyone needing to effect a cure, charm, or hex.

Under Marie Laveau's guidance voodoo thrived as a business, served as a form of political influence and provided a source of spectacle and entertainment. Laveau injected herself into every aspect of New Orleans life. She staged ceremonies in which participants became possessed by loas (voodoo spirits) and danced naked around bonfires. In 1874, when she officiated over the St. John's Eve rites on the shores of Lake Pontchartrain, the crowd numbered nearly 12,000.

Anastacia of Brazil, enslaved saint

Anastacia (lived eighteenth century) was a blue-eyed Black beauty, now revered as a saint, for her strength in enduring hardship. Legend has it that she was the child of an enslaved Black female brought from the west coast of Africa to Brazil. Her mother had been raped by

her white owner. Anastacia was conceived from this trauma and became the first Black child to be born with blue eyes in Brazil.

Anastacia was so beautiful that all the white women around were jealous of her. This encouraged her owner to make her wear the slave mask, as a punishment for repeatedly refusing his advances. Anastacia suffered the same fate as her mother and was raped. He condemned her to wear the iron mask for the rest of her life, only removing it once a day for her to eat. She lived for some years before the toxicity of the metal from the mask became poisonous.

From the late nineteenth century, Black Brazilians have been venerating the image of an enslaved woman with piercing blue eyes and wearing an oppressive facemask. In 1968 she took on the status of a saint. Her legend has been considered an amalgam of the many enslaved females who inspired healing, beauty and hope. She is worshipped by nurses, who see in her an exemplar of selfless healing. Prisoners also became devotees, seeing in her an inspiration to patience in captivity. Her image began to proliferate in Black beauty salons, as a model of the beautiful Black woman.

Queen Nzinga Mbandi of Angola

Queen Nzinga Mbande was a ruthless and powerful seventeenth-century African ruler of the Ndongo and Matamba Kingdoms (modern-day Angola). Nzinga fearlessly and cleverly fought for the freedom and stature of her kingdoms against the Portuguese, who were colonising the area at the time.

Unlike many other rulers at the time, Nzinga was able to adapt to these fluctuations in power around her. By her own determination and refusal to give in to the Portuguese without a fight, she transformed her kingdom into a formidable commercial state on equal footing with the Portuguese colonies.

To build up her kingdom's martial power, Nzinga offered sanctuary to runaway enslaved people and African soldiers. She stirred up rebellion among the people still left in Ndongo, ruled by the Portuguese. Nzinga also reached out to the Dutch and invited them to join troops with her.

Even their combined forces were not enough to drive the Portuguese out, however, and after retreating to Matamba again, Nzinga started to focus on developing Matamba as a trading power and the gateway to the Central African interior.

By the time of Nzinga's death in 1661 at the age of 81, Matamba was on equal footing with the Portuguese

colony. The Portuguese came to respect Queen Nzinga for her shrewdness and intransigence.

Queen Mother Moore, civil rights leader

'Our purpose in life is to leave a legacy for our children and our children's children. For this reason, we must correct history that at present denies our humanity and self-respect.'

A legendary freedom fighter, Queen Mother Moore (1898-1997) was an African-American civil rights leader and a black nationalist who founded the African American Cultural Foundation, Inc., which led the fight against usage of the term 'Negro'.

Moore was in the forefront of the struggle for over sixty years. She worked with Marcus Garvey, the Jamaican-born black nationalist leader, and his Back-to-Africa movement. Moore's last public appearance was at the Million Man March in October 1995, where she was one of only five invited female speakers to address the historic demonstration.

Moore often talked about how the police in and around New Orleans used to routinely round up Black men for vagrancy if they were just standing on a corner talking. She also told how the police would raid Fish Fries and arrest all the Black men only to return later and rape the Black women.

Moore actively promoted reparations until her death in 1996. In 1994, she addressed a conference in Detroit of the the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America, where she declared: 'Reparations. Reparations. Keep on. Keep on. We've got to win.'

When she was 75 years old and taking stock of her life so far, Moore sum it up like this. 'Yes, I have done my best to measure up, to qualify as a woman in the Black movement. I have done my best.'

Muhumusa of Uganda, guerilla fighter

In the early twentieth century one of the most feared Nyabinghi leaders was Muhumusa (died 1945), a dreadlock guerrilla fighter, a person described by the illegitimate colonial governments established by the Europeans as 'an extraordinary character'.

The European enslavers encountered the Ugandan section of the Nyabinghi resistance when they sought the expansion of their human trading activities into northern Uganda in the late nineteenth century. This movement was led exclusively by women and they fiercely resisted the incursion of the Europeans. The tit

for tat engage between Nyabinghi movement and the European lasted for well more than fifty years.

Her followers believed she was possessed by the spirit of the legendary Kushitic Queen, Nyabinghi. Calling for a revival of right living through reliance on the principles of the forest code, Muhumusa not only inspired a vast popular following of dreadlocked-lion worshipping, hemp-smoking auxillary fighters, but also organised military action against the German colonialists.

The Nyabinghi movement was subsequently condemned by the British as 'witchcraft'. and Muhumusa was captured in 1913. The Ugandan movement was relentlessly hounded by the government of the Europeans.

Again, such brave resistance could not be so easily forgotten. It has lived on in many ways amongst the children of Africa at home and in the diaspora, having much influence on the Rastafari tradition, in which so-called Nyabinghi codes of livity, and chants are very popular.

St. Josephine Bhakita, the only patron saint of Sudan

St. Josephine Bakhita (1869-1947) was a Sudanese-born woman who was enslaved before becoming a nun in Italy, living and working there for 45 years. In 2000, she was canonised by Pope John Paul II.

At the age of seven she was kidnapped by Arab human traders. Over the course of the next eight years she was sold and resold five times in the markets of El Obeid and Khartoum.

The fright and the terrible experience she went through made her forget her own name. Bakhita, which means 'fortunate', was the name given to her by her kidnappers. She suffered much brutality during her captivity. Her fourth enslaver used a razor and salt to create scar patterns into her skin. She had more than 114 patterns on her breasts, belly and arms. She was also forcibly converted to Islam.

In the Sudanese capital, St. Josephine was bought by an Italian consul. Two years later, when he had to return to Italy, Bakhita asked to go with him. It was there that Bakhita came to know about Christianity. In 1902, she was assigned to the Canossian convent at Schio, where she spent the rest of her life. Her special charisma and reputation for sanctity were noticed by her order; the first publication of her story (Storia Meravigliosa) in 1931, made her famous throughout Italy.

Bakhita died in 1947. For three days her body lay on display while thousands of people arrived to pay their respects. She is venerated as a modern African saint, and as a statement against the brutal history of slavery.

COLONIALISM AND CONTEMPORARY REVOLUTIONARIES

The Aba Women's War

The Aba Women's Riot, also known as the Women's War, was an insurrection in Nigeria during the British occupation to redress social, political, and economic grievances. The protest, led by the rural women of Owerri and Calabar provinces, encompassed women from six ethnic groups. The episode is regarded as the first major challenge to British authority in West Africa during the colonial period, and took months to suppress.

The women's revolt sparked after a dispute between a woman named Nwanyereuwa and Mark Emereuwa, a representative of the warrant chief, because of his request to declare her possession to be taxed. After an argument between the two, Nwanyeruwa went to the town square to discuss the incident with other women. Believing that women would begin to be taxed the Oloko women invited other women from other areas, gathering nearly 10,000, to protest against the warrant chief.

Ikonna, Mwannedia and Nwugo were the leaders of the protest, known for their skills in speaking, their intelligence and their passion and their ability to deescalate tense situations. Also, Nwanyereuwa played a major role in keeping the protests non-violent, advising woman to sing and dance during protests.

During the two month 25,000 women were involved in the protest. About fifty-five women were killed and more were wounded by the colonial troops. As a result of the protests, the position of women in society was greatly improved. In some areas, women were able to replace the Warrant Chiefs or appointed to serve on Native Courts. Women's movements grew stronger in Nigeria, many later events were inspired by these protests.

Taytu Betul, the Warrior Queen

Taytu was an important contributor to the modernisation of her country, Ethiopia, who led troops in battle and devised strategies crucial in defeating the Italian army in 1896. Born around 1850, she belonged to prominent family, descending from Emperor Susneyos (r.1607-1632).

Thanks to her mother, who was a lay administrator in the Debre Mewi monastery, she received an education and could read and write Amharic and Ge'ez, an exceptional case in Ethiopia at that time. Taytu married four times, before finally marrying Menelik II, heir to the throne of the Shoa kingdom in central Ethiopia, proclaimed king in 1865 and emperor 1899.

Taitu was a valuable advisor to her husband. One of her first ventures was to build the new capital at Addis Ababa, connected to the rest of the country via modern infrastructures. However, she did not only advise him on administrative matters. In the famous battle of Adwa in 1896 she was in charge of organising the defence perimeter, and gathered 10-20,000 women to provide water and take care of the injured. Soon she gained the title of 'warrior queen'. When Menelik died in 1913, Taitu retired from court. She died in 1918; in Ethiopia, she is honoured and remembered as a warrior, a moderniser, and a nationalist, a symbol of what can be achieved by the daring and brave.

Cut Nyak Dhien, National Hero of Indonesia

Cut Nyak Dhien (1848-1908) was a leader of the Acehese guerrilla forces during the Aceh War. Following the death of her husband Teuku Umar, she led guerrilla actions against the Dutch for 25 years. She was posthumously awarded the title of National Hero of Indonesia in 1964 by the Indonesian government. Cut Nyak Dhien was born into an Islamic aristocratic family in Aceh Besar in 1848.

During the First Aceh Expedition in 1873, 3,000 Dutch soldiers were confronted by 10,000 Aceh forces, aided by Italy and the United Kingdom, which succeeded to push back the Dutch.

In 1873, during the Second Aceh Expedition the Dutch captured VI mukim and the Sultan's Palace. In 1875, Cut Nyak Dhien along with her child and other women were evacuated to a safer location while her husband Ibrahim Lamnga fought to reclaim VI mukim, dying in action. Upon hearing this, Cut Nyak Dhien swore revenge against the Dutch.

In 1880, she married an Acehese hero Teuku Umar, who allowed her to continue to fight. Umar and Dhien kept resisting the Dutch in extremely difficult conditions, until he was killed in a surprise attack. After he died, Dhien continued to resist with her small army until its destruction in 1901. Caught by surprise by the Dutch, Dhien was captured, although her daughter Cut Gambang escaped and continued the resistance. Dhien was then exiled to Sumedang, West Java.

Queen Mother Nana Yaa Asantewaa of the Ejisu Clan of the Asante

Yaa Asantewaa (1863-1923) was named Queen Mother of the Ejisuhene by her brother Nana Akwasi Afrane Okpese, exiled together with King Prempeh I by the British colonial rulers. She was the Gatekeeper of the 'Golden Stool' (Sika 'dwa), a dynastic symbol of the Ashanti empire involved in the crowning ceremony.

In 1900, the British colonial governor Frederick Hodgson ordered the Ashantehene local rulers to surrender the Golden Stool to the British. When the rulers told Yaa Asantewaa about the received order she encouraged them to fight for their country, and said that if they were not willing to, she would have fought the battle together with other women.

At the beginning of 1900, the Ashantehen rebels sieged the fort of Kumasi, where the British were seeking refuge. During the siege, Queen Yaa Asantewaa together with her advisers were captured, and exiled to the Seychelles, where also the King was. She died in exile in 1921. The confrontation of a woman, serving as political and military head of an empire, was foreign to British colonial troops in nineteenth-century Africa. Yaa Asantewaa's call upon the women of the Asante Empire is based on the political obligations of Akan women and their respective roles in legislative and judicial processes. The hierarchy of male stools among the Akan people were complemented by female counterparts.

Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, the Lioness of Lisabi

Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti (1900-1978), known as the Lioness of Lisabi, was a Nigerian teacher, political campaigner, and women's rights activist, womanist, winner of the Lenin Peace Prize and the first woman to drive a car in Nigeria.

Ransome-Kuti founded in 1932 the Abeokuta Women's Union, one of the most impressive women's organisations of the twentieth century. Initially a civic and charitable group of mostly Western-educated Christian women, then from 1946 open to all women in Abeokuta. Ransome-Kuti was the first president of the organisation, which under her leadership became a national organisation.

The goals of the organisation were greater educational opportunities for women and girls, the enforcement of sanitary regulations, and the provision of healthcare and other social services for women. Ransome-Kuti pursued these initiatives with the intention of raising living standards for women and ultimately eliminating

the causes of poverty, as well as advocating for women's votes. She was a member of the ruling National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons party (NCNC). She was one of the delegates who negotiated Nigeria's independence with the British government, and travelled widely around the world.

In 1977, some soldiers stormed the family property in Lagos, during the assault, soldiers dragged Funmilayo by her hair and threw her out a second-story window. She lapsed into a coma and died as a result of her injuries.

Carmen Pereira, President of Guinea-Bissau

Carmen Pereira (1937-2016) was a politician in Guinea-Bissau. She served three days as Acting President in 1984, becoming the first woman in this role in Africa and the only one in Guinea-Bissau's history.

Carmen Pereira was the daughter of African lawyers. She married at a young age, and both she and her husband became involved in the Guinea-Bissau War of Independence against Portugal. In 1962, Pereira joined the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), a revolutionary movement that sought independence for Portugal's two colonies in West Africa. The PAIGC was exceptional in pushing for greater gender equality in a society with strongly defined sex roles. Pereira became a high-ranking political leader and delegate to the Pan-African Women's Organisation in Algeria. Compelled to leave the country, she lived in Senegal before traveling to the Soviet Union to study medicine.

On her return, she was active both in health and political matters. She was Deputy President of the People's National Assembly from 1973-84. From 1981 to 1983 Pereira was Minister of Health and Social Affairs of Guinea-Bissau. As President of the National Assembly, she was Acting President of Guinea-Bissau from 14 to 16 May 1984 as a new constitution was introduced. She was Minister of State for Social Affairs in 1990 and 1991. This last made her Deputy Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau until she was dismissed in 1992.

N'Nonmiton, the Dahomey Amazon

The Dahomey Amazons or N'Nonmiton, which means 'our mothers' in Fon, were an all-female military regiment of the Kingdom of Dahomey in the present-day Republic of Benin which lasted until the end of the nineteenth century. Some women became soldiers voluntarily, while others were involuntarily enrolled if their husbands or fathers complained to the king about

their behaviour. Membership among the N'Nonmiton was supposed to hone any aggressive character traits for the purpose of war. During their membership, women were not allowed to have children or be part of married life (though they were legally married to the king). The regiment had a semi-sacred status, which was intertwined with the Fon belief in Vodun. They trained with intense physical exercise, learnt survival skills and indifference to pain and death, storming acacia-thorn defenses in military exercises and executing prisoners.

Serving in the N'Nonmiton offered women the opportunity to 'rise to positions of command and influence' in an environment structured for individual empowerment. They represented about a third of the entire Dahomey army, and were judged to be superior to male soldiers in effectiveness and bravery. During the first French-Dahomean War, according to records, many of the French soldiers hesitated to shoot the N'Nonmiton, leading then to many French casualties. The N'Nonmiton were disbanded when the kingdom became a French protectorate.

Lilian Ngoyi, leader of anti-apartheid protest

Born into a poor family in Pretoria, Lilian Ngoyi (1911-1980) became one of the leading lights of anti-apartheid protest. In her career, Ngoyi became the Secretary General of the ANC Women's League, the National Chairman of FEDSAW and the first female to be elected to office in the main body of the African National Congress.

She combined her identities as an African, woman, mother and worker to mobilise South African women in the fight against apartheid. She dedicated her life to struggling against these oppressive measures for a better future. She recognised the potential influence that international support could have on these struggles and in 1955, she embarked on an audacious journey to participate in the World Congress of Mothers held in Lausanne by the Women's International Democratic Federation. In her speech at the congress, she detailed the hardships faced by South African women to a global audience and appealed for support in bringing freedom and democracy to the nation. Her travels were remarkable considering the strict control in South Africa on African movement and mobility.

As a result of her actions, Ngoyi was issued with her first banning order in 1962, valid for ten years and renewed in 1975 for another five years. She was not allowed to leave Orlando or meet more than one person at a time. Despite this, she remained outspoken both on African and women's rights until her death in 1980.

Assata Shakur, political activist, author and fugitive

Assata Olugbala Shakur (1947) was born JoAnne Deborah Bryon in New York City.

Shakur studied at the City College of New York, where her exposure to Black Nationalist organisations profoundly impacted her activism. She also began interacting with other activist groups and subsequently participated in student rights, anti-Vietnam war, and black liberation movements. In 1971, she adopted a new name: Assata ('she who struggles') Olugbala ('love for the people') Shakur ('the thankful').

During a trip to Oakland in 1970, Shakur became acquainted with the Black Panther Party (BPP). Upon her return to New York City, she joined the Harlem branch. However, in 1971 she left the group and joined the Black Liberation Army (BLA), which the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) branded an anarchist group. In 1972, the Bureau issued a warrant for her arrest in connection with crimes allegedly committed by the BLA.

In 1973, Shakur was pulled over by the police, shot twice and then charged with murder of a police officer. She was eventually convicted of Trooper Foerster's murder despite the partial paralysis of her arm after the gunshot wound she sustained during the confrontation making her incapable of firing a weapon. After six years in prison, she escaped in 1979 and sought refuge in Cuba, where she continues to live in exile.

Ruby Bridges, the six year-old heroine

Ruby Bridges (1954) was the first African-American child to attend an all-white public elementary school in the American South. Her bravery paved the way for continued Civil Rights action.

Ruby was born in 1954 in Mississippi. When she was 4 years old, her parents moved to New Orleans. When she was in kindergarten, she was chosen to take a test determining whether or not she could attend a white school, and she passed it. Ruby was the only African-American student at her school, where she was allowed to attend only from November.

On Ruby's first day at William Frantz, federal marshals drove Ruby and her mother to her new school, where they were met by protestors and media. During Ruby's first few weeks at Frantz School she was confronted with blatant racism. Many white families withdrew their children from the school. The racial abuse wasn't limited to Ruby; her family suffered as well, as her

father lost his job at the filling station. Slowly, many in the community, both black and white, began to show support. However, Ruby began to show signs of stress and had to see a child psychologist.

Gradually, many families began to send their children back to the school and the protests and civil disturbances seemed to subside as the year went on. By the beginning of second grade the protestors were gone and the classes were officially integrated.

Bridges graduated from an integrated high school in New Orleans, and still resides in the city. In 1993, her youngest brother, Malcolm Bridges, was murdered in a drug-related killing. In 1999, she formed the Ruby Bridges Foundation, headquartered in New Orleans. The foundation promotes the values of tolerance, respect, and appreciation of all differences. Through education and inspiration, the foundation seeks to end racism and prejudice.

Bree Newsome, flag activist

On June 27, 2015, Brittany 'Bree' Newsome (1984/85), an activist and community organiser, climbed up a flagpole on the South Carolina state house grounds determined to take down the confederate flag flying there. This act of civil disobedience by Newsome and spotter James Ian Tyson sparked an outpouring of support on social media sites.

Newsome and Tyson were arrested and charged with 'defacing a monument,' an offense that is punishable by a maximum of three years in jail and \$5,000 fine. About 4,000 people donated to an Indiegogo campaign 'Bail for Bree Newsome' which raised more than \$112,000. Newsome and Tyson were later freed on bond. Newsome said that the racially motivated massacre in a Charleston church on June 17, which left nine people dead, was the turning point. Newsome strategised with other activists about how to execute the plan. 'We made this decision because for us, this is not simply about a flag, but rather it is about abolishing the spirit of hatred and oppression in all its forms,' Newsome added.

Newsome was born in Mariland, and currently lives in Charlotte, North Carolina. Her father, Clarence G. Newsome, served as a dean at Howard University before becoming president of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, a Cincinnati museum focused on slavery. In addition to being an activist, Newsome is a musician and filmmaker. In 2010, she made a 20-minute movie, *Wake*, which won best short film at the BET Urban World Film Festival. In 2012, she released 'Shake It Like an Etch-A-Sketch,' a widely viewed satirical rap video about Mitt Romney.

Amina Tyler, feminist activist

On 11 March 2013, Amina Tyler (1994) was the first Tunisian woman to post a photograph of herself nude from the waist up on Facebook, with the phrase 'My body is mine and not the source of anybody's honour' in Arabic. The photo was seen as scandalous and evoked strong controversies within Tunisian society. On a popular talk show she explained that it was not for sexual reasons that she appeared topless but to call out their demands for the women's liberation in a patriarchal society. A fatwa was issued, for her to be punished with 100 lashes and to be stoned to death. In May 2013, again she protested against the annual congress of the Salafi party by painting 'FEMEN' on a cemetery wall. She was then arrested and brought to jail in Sousse.

Tyler's father, the doctor Mounir Sbouï, told the French newspaper *Libération* in an interview that he was proud of his daughter who 'defended her ideas' and who also brought him to reconcile with his own values making him understand that one needs to be active. International protests followed for her release from detention. FEMEN staged a protest in front of the Grand Mosque of Paris burning a Tawhid flag.

However, upon her release in August 2013, Tyler declared that she was leaving the group in protest, because of the disrespectful action by FEMEN towards Muslims. Then she moved to Paris, where she completed high school and co-authored an autobiography, *My Body Belongs to Me*.

SLAVERY AND COLONIALISM

Carlota Lukumi, revolt leader of Cuba

Carlota (died 1844), also known as 'La Negra Carlota' was a Cuban enslaved woman of Yoruba origin. She was one of the three leaders of a revolt of enslaved Africans in Cuba in 1843 and fought to put an end to the brutality of the system.

Carlota led the uprising of the sugar mill *Triumvirato* in the province of Matanzas in 1843. During this period, there were many confrontations between the enslaved and the regime. Using drums to secretly communicate, Carlota and her fellow warriors freed many, broke the chains of their brothers and sisters, and went on a well-organised armed uprising against at least five other plantation operations in the area.

In 1844 Carlota was captured during a battle in the San Rafael mill. The repressive forces tied her to horses sent to run in opposite direction in order to destroy her

body completely so that she would be unrecognisable forever.

Her name was later given to Cuba's 1980's operation 'Black Carlota' in Southern Africa, which culminated in the battle of 'Cuito Cuanavale' and the defeat of the South African army in pitch battle. This also led to the negotiations that removed Apartheid.

Today, her statue – a monument to Carlota's rebellion – can be found between the remains of the Triumvirato sugar mill in Cuba.

Lakshmibai, Rani of Jhansi

Lakshmibai (1828-1858), the Rani of Jhansi, was one of the leading warriors in India's First War of Independence, which was fought in 1857 in northern India, and she became for Indian nationalists a symbol of resistance to the British Raj.

Her struggles in life started at the age of four, when her mother passed away. Thereafter she was raised by her father along with other soon-to-be revolutionaries and she grew to be an independent, courageous girl. Her studies included shooting, horsemanship, and fencing.

When she was just twenty-four years old, her husband, the Maharaja of Jhansi died and she took over his responsibilities. When the British company annexed the territories of Jhansi with treachery, she revolted against them with the help of other Indian rebellion leaders. She surprised the British by showing extraordinary fighting spirit and courage in battles. She inspired many generations of freedom fighters in India, thus becoming immortal in history. She became a national heroine and is seen as the epitome of female bravery in India.

Patriotic songs have been written about the Rani; including lines on how she fought as well as a man. She is a symbol of woman manhood as one line says in her respect 'Khoob ladi mardani wo to jhansi wali rani thi' (Bravely and relentlessly she fought like men).

Bartolina Sisa, leader of the Bolivian rebellion

Born as an indigenous Aymaran, Sisa grew up in modern-day Bolivia. Together with her husband she organised and led an army of up to 40,000 indigenous rebels against Spanish colonialism in Bolivia. This army seized La Paz from the Spanish and camped out in El Alto for a total of six months. Bartolina Sisa commanded this seize alongside her husband until he was captured, then she commanded the army independently in his absence until her imprisonment by Spanish forces.

Much like her predecessors Bartolina Sisa was shown no mercy during her conviction and was sentenced to a humiliating and brutal execution. She stands for the bravery of certain women in battling Spanish colonialism in Latin America. Her infamy lives on and she, along with her husband, are figureheads for various guerrilla armies and social justice groups in Bolivia today. 5 September, the date of her execution has been declared the International Day of Indigenous Women in honour of her bravery and commitment to liberalising Bolivia from the oppressive Spanish colonial presence.

Sanité Bélair, Haitian freedom fighter and revolutionary

Sanité Bélair (1781-1802) was one of the few female soldiers who fought during the Haitian Revolution. Sanité is formally recognised by the Haitian Government as a National Heroine. In 2004, she was featured on a commemorative banknote, the only woman depicted in the series and the second woman ever to be depicted on a Haitian banknote.

Bélair was born a free person of colour, a group who were considered between those who were free whites and enslaved Black people, so she was still under the thumb of the ruling class. Bélair became a sergeant and later a lieutenant during the conflict with French troops of the Saint-Domingue expedition. Her exact reason for joining the rebel army is never explicitly stated, but it is understood that she wanted to help Haiti claim its independence. She married Brigade commander Charles Bélair. Together, she and her husband are responsible for the uprising of almost the entire enslaved population of L'Artibonite, against their enslavers.

Sanité was sentenced to death by decapitation, and Charles by firing squad. She refused to die by decapitation and demanded to be executed just like her husband, whom she just witnessed being executed by firing squad. He had calmly asked her to die bravely.

Reportedly, she walked to her death with bravery and defiance, refusing to wear a blindfold. She shouted to the Atlantians 'Viv Libète anba esklavaj!' ('Liberty, no to slavery!'), who of course were forced to watch the scene, in an attempt to dispel the revolution idea. Their deaths, however did not deter the revolutionaries, who continued fighting.

Solitude la Maronne, freedom fighter of Haiti

Though little is known of her early life, Solitude (c. 1771-1802) is celebrated as a heroine for her role in the struggle for lasting freedom in 1802. A revolution of enslaved plantation labourers in today's Haiti forced France to legally abolish slavery in its colonies less than

three years later. By 1802, however, Napoléon's forces sought to resurrect the sugar-based economies by re-enslaving freed people who had been living as French citizens for eight years. Africans and their descendants fiercely resisted French forces. Solitude had joined a maroon settlement, and during an attack she became the leader of a small group that escaped to the hills of Guadeloupe. Battles erupted as Africans and their descendants fought to preserve their freedom.

Solitude, now pregnant, mobilised her followers to join the forces against the French military. They struggled until they were surrounded and outnumbered by the French troops. Approximately 500 troops allowed the French soldiers to advance into their territory before igniting stores of gunpowder. The strategic suicide plan resulted in the death of hundreds of French soldiers. Solitude survived and was captured and detained.

The French military brought Solitude and the other survivors before a military tribunal, which sentenced them all to death. Solitude was temporarily pardoned until she gave birth to her child, who became the legal property of her owner. One day after delivering her baby, Solitude was executed, thirty years old.

Today, Solitude's name adorns squares, avenues, a library, and a museum room in Guadeloupe. Solitude's bravery and courage is remembered in songs, poems, and the musical *Solitude la Marronne*.

Marie-Joseph Angélique, enslaved martyr of Canada

Marie-Joseph Angélique was an enslaved woman owned in the early 1730s. Being in her sexual prime, she was expected to breed with enslaved males as well as provide sexual services to her master. Angélique, however, had other plans, such as freedom and having a normal relationship with her lover.

Angélique learned that she was about to be sold and, in a fit of fear and anger, retaliated by setting fire to her owner's home. The fire spread and the final damage was forty-six buildings. No lives were lost.

After trying to escape, Angélique was captured and brought to trial, a systematic process that took two months. First, the chief investigator extracted her 'confessions' which in essence was a narrative of her life. Later, this time under torture, she admitted her guilt.

On the day of her execution, she was driven through the streets on a scavenger's cart, with a rope tied around her neck and signs bearing the word 'arsonist' on her chest and back. On arrival at the parish church, she was made to kneel and beg for forgiveness from the King, God, and her fellow citizens. Then her hand was cut off. Placed back in the wagon, she was taken to the gallows where she was publicly hanged and burned.

Canada has been paraded in history as a paragon of virtue on the issue of slavery, especially lauded as a safe haven for runaway enslaved people. Portrayed as the antithesis of the American South, Canada's version of the 'peculiar institution' has been described as benevolent slavery. Benevolent or otherwise, it was still slavery with the attendant consequence of one man or one race dominating another.

Janey Begum Tetary, enslaved rebel of Suriname

Janey Tetary (c. 1856-1884) was an Indian female indentured servant, who signed contracts in India to labour overseas. She was promised a good job by the government, with a good payment. She and her 10 year-old son arrived in Suriname in 1880. During the trip measles had broken out on board the ship. Tetary made herself useful, and soon was known as a friendly and sociable person.

She was indentured to Plantation *Zorg en Hoop*. Over here Tetary got her nickname 'Begum', meaning noble woman, because of her commitment to the interests of the contractors. They resisted the hard work and the harsh treatment. This led to brief strikes. She also defended women who were treated badly by their men.

If the work was not completed, no reward was paid. The workgroup of Janey attacked a white officer that same day. Along with some male combatants they injured the officer with sticks. This was the reason for the great rebellion.

To suppress the uprising the colonial government sent a detachment of soldiers to arrest the contract workers who were involved in the assault. The contract workers revolted against this and formed a strong union. They spread themselves in different groups and armed themselves with sticks and cutlasses. The female contractors, led by Janey, fought side by side with the men. She challenged the soldiers; the soldiers didn't succeed in breaking the barrier at their first attempt.

A sniper mission was given orders to eliminate the leader of the female insurgents. He killed Begum Janey. The line of women fell apart and the conflict was resolved.

Micaela Bastidas Puyucagua, Peruvian martyr

Micaela Bastidas Puyucagua (1744-1781) was a courageous pioneering indigenous leader against Spanish rule in South America, and a martyr for Peruvian independence. She led a rebellion against the Spanish with her spouse, Tupac Amaru II.

Due to Micaela's African as well as her indigenous roots, she was known by many as Zamba, a name given during the colonial period to people that are the product of a mixed race of African American and native American.

Micaela received childhood education in letters and art, which was unusual in this age for the time period for women. Her husband was her ideology teacher, and she quickly became aware of the situation of the people in the country and took part in the cause. She strongly supported him, defending and divulging hypotheses that would resurge the conscience of the rights of farmers to free the land and its existence in the oppressive hands of the Spaniards.

After that she was captured in a failed uprising. She had joined her spouse in leading the rebellion, leading indigenous men and women in a battle for independence as well as organising supplies and recruiting forces.

Finally, she was executed very painfully by the Spanish at 36 years of age. Her son was also executed by the Spanish. Her bravery and determination to defend her goals for justice and freedom, until her tragic and unexpected death, have become legendary and symbolic of the fight against colonial oppression and exploitation.

Gertrudis Bocanegra, warrior of Mexico

María Gertrudis Teodora Bocanegra Mendoza (1765 - 1817), who fought in the Mexican War of Independence, is known in Mexico as 'La Heroína de Pátzcuaro'.

Bocanegra was born in Pátzcuaro, to Pedro Javier Bocanegra and Feliciano Mendoza. She married Lieutenant Pedro Advíncula Lazo de la Vega, a soldier in the Spanish provincial forces of Michoacán; they had five daughters and two sons. Unusually for a woman of her time, Bocanegra had read the principal authors of the Enlightenment. When Mexico's War of Independence began, she was quick to take sides. Her husband and eldest son joined the forces of Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla when the insurgents passed through Morelia in October 1810. Both died at the Battle of the Puente de Calderón. She then served as a messenger for the insurgents in the region of Pátzcuaro and Tacámbaro, aiding communications between the principal locations of the rebellion.

During the war, she was sent to Pátzcuaro to aid the rebels in the capture of the city. However, she was betrayed and taken prisoner by the royal army in 1817. She was subjected to torture to press her to reveal the names of other rebels, but she refused to give information to the Spaniards. Finally, she was tried and found guilty of treason.

Sentenced to death, she was executed on 11 October 1817 at the Plazuela de San Agustín in Pátzcuaro.

Juana Azurduy de Padilla, military leader of Bolivia

Juana Azurduy Llanos (1780/81-1862) was a South American guerrilla military leader. At 12 she joined a convent to become a nun. She was expelled age 17 because she rebelled too often. She married a man who shared her love of the indigenous populations in Bolivia.

Upon their return they raised an army and joined in the fighting in the area. She fought a guerrilla-style war against the Spanish from 1809 to 1825. Juana, who was expecting a child, was injured and her husband killed while trying to save her. She found herself in a desperate situation: single, pregnant and with armies effectively controlling the territory. After giving birth, she joined the guerrillas. She led an attempt to recover her husband's body. When the Spanish eventually counter-attacked, she fled to northern Argentina where she continued to fight. She was appointed to the position of commander. So determined to the cause, she actually fought while she was pregnant, at one point giving birth then returning to fight soon after. At the highpoint of her control, she commanded an army 6,000 men strong.

At the time of her death, she was forgotten and in poverty, and remembered as a hero only a century later. She was awarded the rank of general of the Argentine Army in 2009. A 52-foot-tall statue of Azurduy was created in Buenos Aires and unveiled in 2015. Juana Azurduy is also the subject of a children's cartoon designed to promote knowledge of Argentine history.

Tarenorerer, Aboriginal leader

Tarenorerer (c.1800-1831) was a woman of the Tommeginne people. In her teens she was abducted by Aborigines of the Port Sorell region and sold to White sealers on the Bass Strait Islands. She became proficient in speaking English and took particular notice of the use and operation of firearms.

In 1828 Tarenorerer returned to her country in the north of Tasmania, where she gathered a group of men and women from many bands to initiate warfare against the invaders. Training her warriors in the use of firearms, she ordered them to strike the white men when they were at their most vulnerable, between the time that their guns were discharged and before they were able to reload.

Challenged by Aboriginal rivals in battle, she escaped to Port Sorell. Known as 'Mary Anne', she was given to John Williams and lived with him and other men and

Aboriginal women on Forsyth Island. In December 1830 she plotted to kill one of the sealers but was foiled by agents and taken to Swan Island, where her identity was revealed after she was given away by her dog.

Tarenorerer was isolated because it was feared she would incite revolt: 'nearly all the mischief perpetrated upon the different settlements' had been traced to Tarenorerer's warriors. It was believed that she was responsible for killing other Aborigines. Moved with the others to Gun Carriage Island, Tarenorerer became ill and died of influenza. She had fought on behalf of her people with bravery and tenacity in a war for which there are no memorials.

Lozen, Apache warrior

Lozen (c. 1840-1890) was a warrior and prophetess of the Chihenne Chiricahua Apache who fought in the Apache wars of the nineteenth century.

Lozen was born into the Chihenne during the late 1840s in a region of Arizona and northern Mexico known at that time as Apacheria. From an early age she rejected traditional women's duties, preferring to ride horses and receive warrior training from her brother.

By the 1870s the Chihenne had been moved to the harsh conditions of the San Carlos Reservation in Arizona. By this time Lozen's brother had become a chief and described Lozen as his right hand. They led their followers in a breakout from the reservation and began a rampage of attacks against Americans who had appropriated their homeland around Black Mountain.

Lozen became known as a 'shield for her people' who protected Apache bands from attack. She rode on horseback armed with a rifle and a knife. She was also believed to have mystical powers that allowed her to foresee the enemy's movements and no band under her leadership was ever caught by the Americans.

In 1880, following a solo mission to escort a new mother through enemy territory, Lozen received word that her brother had been killed in an ambush along with hundreds of others. She returned to assist in leading the remainder of her people and also fought alongside Geronimo in the final campaign of the Apache wars.

Lozen was never captured, and was a member of the final group of free Apaches who surrendered in 1866. Like many other Apaches she was imprisoned and ultimately died of tuberculosis. Her legacy as the Apaches' famous warrior woman is respected even today.

COLOPHON

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