

# VIRGINIANS WHO FOUGHT AGAINST SLAVERY

## **GABRIEL** (ca. 1770s-1800)

ENSLAVED, LITERATE BLACKSMITH WHO IN 1800 ORCHESTRATED ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ATTEMPTED REVOLTS IN THE HISTORY OF NORTH AMERICAN SLAVERY. THE PLOT, INSPIRED BY INTERNATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS, WAS BETRAYED AND SUPPRESSED BEFORE IT COULD BE SET IN MOTION. THE EXECUTION OF GABRIEL AND MANY OF HIS FOLLOWERS STARKLY LAID BARE THE CONTRADICTIONS OF AMERICAN FREEDOM AND AMERICAN SLAVERY.

## **NAT TURNER** (1800-1831)

LEADER OF THE MOST FAMOUS SLAVE REVOLT IN AMERICAN HISTORY, HE SHATTERED THE MYTH OF THE CONTENTED SLAVE. THE BLOODY SOUTHAMPTON REVOLT OF 1831 AND THE WIDESPREAD REPRESSION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST AFRICAN AMERICANS THAT FOLLOWED REVEALED DARK TRUTHS ABOUT SLAVERY AND HAUNTED AMERICA UNTIL THE CIVIL WAR.

## **DRED SCOTT** (ca. 1799-1858)

ENSLAVED MAN FROM SOUTHAMPTON COUNTY WHOSE LAWSUIT FOR HIS FREEDOM LED TO THE 1857 SUPREME COURT DECISION DRED SCOTT V. SANDFORD, DECLARING THAT PERSONS OF AFRICAN DESCENT HAD NO RIGHTS UNDER THE U.S. CONSTITUTION, HELPING TO TRIGGER THE CIVIL WAR AND EMANCIPATION.

## **WILLIAM HARVEY CARNEY** (1840-1908)

ESCAPED SLAVE FROM NORFOLK WHO FOUGHT WITH THE 54TH MASSACHUSETTS INFANTRY REGIMENT OF THE UNITED STATES COLORED TROOPS. FOR HIS HEROISM AT FORT WAGNER IN 1863, HE WAS THE FIRST PERSON OF AFRICAN DESCENT TO EARN THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR. CARNEY AND HIS FELLOW SOLDIERS FOUGHT FOR THE EMANCIPATION OF MANY OF THEIR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

**MARY JANE RICHARDS BOWSER** (fl. 1846-1867)

BORN INTO SLAVERY, SHE GAINED AN EDUCATION AND WENT AS A MISSIONARY TO LIBERIA. SHE RETURNED TO RICHMOND AND SERVED AS A KEY MEMBER OF A PRO-UNION SPY RING DURING THE CIVIL WAR, GATHERING INTELLIGENCE HELPFUL TO THE UNITED STATES FROM THE HOUSEHOLD OF JEFFERSON DAVIS, PRESIDENT OF THE CONFEDERACY. AFTER EMANCIPATION, SHE DEDICATED HERSELF TO EDUCATING THE FORMERLY ENSLAVED, LECTURING AND TEACHING IN FREEDMEN'S SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA, FLORIDA, AND GEORGIA.

# VIRGINIANS WHO FOUGHT FOR EQUALITY

## REVEREND WYATT TEE WALKER (1929-2018)

AN ARCHITECT OF THE STRATEGIES OF PEACEFUL PROTEST THAT ENDED SEGREGATION. HE WAS A PETERSBURG MINISTER, A CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST, CHIEF OF STAFF TO DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., AND A CO-FOUNDER OF THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE.

## JOHN MERCER LANGSTON (1829-1897)

BORN TO A FREE WOMAN OF COLOR AND A WHITE PLANTER IN LOUISA COUNTY, HE GAINED AN EDUCATION AND BECAME AN ACTIVE ABOLITIONIST IN OHIO BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR.

RETURNING TO VIRGINIA DURING RECONSTRUCTION, HE WAS VIRGINIA'S FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN MEMBER OF CONGRESS IN 1888, THE FIRST DEAN OF THE LAW SCHOOL AT HOWARD UNIVERSITY, AND THE FIRST PRESIDENT OF WHAT IS NOW VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY.

## LUCY SIMMS (1855-1934)

BORN A SLAVE, SHE BEGAN TEACHING AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS AT AGE 17. A GRADUATE OF HAMPTON INSTITUTE (NOW HAMPTON UNIVERSITY) SHE TAUGHT THREE GENERATIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN THE HARRISONBURG AREA OVER A 56-YEAR CAREER.

DURING SEGREGATION SHE ORGANIZED THE ROCKINGHAM COUNTY ASSOCIATION FOR TEACHERS AND ADVOCATED FOR UNIVERSAL EDUCATION.

## JOHN MITCHELL, JR. (1863-1929)

BORN INTO SLAVERY AND EDUCATED IN THE FREEDMEN'S SCHOOLS DURING RECONSTRUCTION, HE BECAME THE EDITOR OF THE *RICHMOND PLANET* NEWSPAPER.

HE EXPOSED AND CAMPAIGNED AGAINST LYNCHINGS, SEGREGATION, AND THE RISE OF THE KU KLUX KLAN.

A FEARLESS ACTIVIST AND COMMUNITY BUILDER, HE WAS A LEADER OF THE 1904 RICHMOND STREETCAR BOYCOTT, FOUNDED A BANK, AND IN 1921 WAS THE

FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN TO RUN FOR GOVERNOR  
OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA.

**ROSA DIXON BOWSER (1855-1931)**

EDUCATOR, WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVIST, AND SOCIAL REFORMER WHO FOUNDED THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN TEACHERS ASSOCIATION OF VIRGINIA AND CO-FOUNDED THE VIRGINIA STATE FEDERATION OF COLORED WOMEN'S CLUBS AND THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORED WOMEN'S CLUBS. SHE PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN AFRICAN AMERICAN REFORM ORGANIZATIONS, GROUPS SUPPORTING UNIVERSAL WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE, AND ASSOCIATIONS PUBLICLY OPPOSED TO LYNCHINGS AND RACIAL SEGREGATION.

THROUGHOUT THE PERIOD OF SLAVERY IN VIRGINIA, ENSLAVED PEOPLE SOUGHT FREEDOM THROUGH ACTS OF RESISTANCE, SELF-LIBERATION, AND REBELLION. AT THE START OF THE CIVIL WAR, ENSLAVED PEOPLE SOUGHT TO AID UNITED STATES TROOPS AT FORT MONROE. ON JANUARY 1, 1863, THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION FREED ENSLAVED PEOPLE ONLY IN AREAS "IN REBELLION" AGAINST THE UNITED STATES. IN 1865, THE THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES ABOLISHED SLAVERY ACROSS THE NATION. IN 1868, THE FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT ESTABLISHED THE FORMERLY ENSLAVED AS CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES AND PROMISED EQUAL PROTECTION UNDER THE LAW FOR ALL. THE STRUGGLE TO MAKE THAT PROMISE A REALITY CONTINUES.

THE VIRGINIA DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. MEMORIAL COMMISSION DEDICATES THIS MONUMENT TO AFRICAN AMERICAN VIRGINIANS WHO MADE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIGHT FOR THE EMANCIPATION AND FREEDOM OF FORMERLY ENSLAVED PERSONS AND FOR CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA THROUGH THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.