

Books Reclaim Forgotten Black History

By Jim Harris

Daniel J. Middleton has passions for publishing and history. He's combined the two into his latest publications, *The Black History Activity Book* and *21st Century Black Changemakers*. The works are categorized in the Adult Coloring segment, but the books offer much more. A happenstance meeting with a publisher in a bookstore led to Daniel's first job in publishing as a proofreader. Handed a copy of one of the publisher's works, Daniel immediately identified multiple typos and was offered a position on the spot. Later, he started his own venture, designing books for micro-press and self-publishing authors.

His first venture into writing was a children's book, *Naomi Redflower: Imagine with Me*. The central character is a young girl, based on his daughter, who experiences nature through a vivid imagination, even shrinking herself down to the size of a ladybug and flying on the back of a hawk.

Later, a 2019 trip to Belize and exposure to the poverty there compelled him to think about the forgotten figures from history in the U.S. Daniel found that available historical materials on black Americans were few compared to the number of stories that needed to be told. He identified individuals that, in his words, were "people who struggled and overcame, but their stories were lost in history." He felt compelled to tell these stories. He says, "I want readers to get a proper introduction to figures they probably never heard of."

The first release, *The Black History Activity Book*, includes profiles of twelve obscure but significant historical figures. While each subject has a biography and a detailed grayscale line art picture for coloring, fun is added to the learning experience with crossword puzzles, word searches, and trivia. In addition to some fantastic individuals, you will also read about events, like MLK and the Newark riots, Juneteenth, and the story of the unique town of Allensworth, California, a city founded and financed



by blacks and named for the highest-ranking black officer in the Union Army, Colonel Allen Allensworth.

The latest release, *21st Century Black Changemakers*, covers individuals that have made a significant imprint in current times. You'll see familiar names like Derek Jeter and Lester Holt, plus find some lesser-known folks who have still made quite a mark in the world. For instance, you'll meet Marian R. Croak, the lead developer of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), the technology behind Skype and Zoom.

Daniel describes the objective of his books as "fun learning experiences with readers coming away with something powerful." The hope is that the books will appeal across the age spectrum with adults sharing with children and vice versa. In addition to the complete books, individual subjects are available for purchase and download.

Daniel also created a YouTube channel that features videos from some of these stories and a website where readers will view stories of an incredible roster of people who did extraordinary things. For example, viewers will enjoy the story Bridget "Biddy" Mason, who was born into slavery

but became the wealthiest woman in Los Angeles.

Daniel is transitioning the design company to his daughter as he focuses on his new ventures. He has another new book scheduled for release this fall, entitled *45 People, Places, and Events in Black History You Should Know*. His books are available through all major sellers.

