

= Sue Bailey Thurman =

Sue Bailey Thurman (née , Sue Elvie Bailey ; August 26 , 1903 ? December 25 , 1996) was an American author , lecturer , historian and civil rights activist . She was the first non @-@ white student to earn a bachelor 's degree in music from Oberlin College , Ohio . She briefly taught at the Hampton Institute in Virginia , before becoming involved in international work with the YWCA in 1930 . During a six @-@ month trip through Asia in the mid 1930s , Thurman became the first African @-@ American woman to have an audience with Mahatma Gandhi . The meeting with Gandhi inspired Thurman and her husband , theologian Howard Thurman , to promote non @-@ violent resistance as a means of creating social change , bringing it to the attention of a young preacher , Martin Luther King , Jr . While they did not actively protest during the Civil Rights Movement , they served as spiritual counselors to many on the front lines , and helped establish the first interracial , non @-@ denominational church in the United States .

Thurman played an active role in establishing international student organizations to help prevent foreign students feeling isolated while studying abroad . She organized one of the first international scholarship programs for African @-@ American women . She studied racism and the effects of prejudice on various people throughout the world , making two round @-@ the @-@ world trips in her lifetime . She wrote books and newspaper articles to preserve black heritage , and initiated the publishing efforts of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) by founding the Aframerican Women ? s Journal . In addition to writing the second ever history of black Californians , in 1958 Thurman published a cookbook laced with historical information about black professional women at a time when African Americans had few civil rights . Recognizing that there was little academic interest in black women 's history at the time , Thurman used the marketing ploy of food to report on the lives of black women who were not domestics . She participated in international peace and feminist conferences , and in 1945 attended the San Francisco Conference for the founding of the United Nations as part of an unofficial delegation . Thurman also established museums such as the Museum of Afro @-@ American History in Boston in 1963 .

Thurman and her husband retired in San Francisco in 1965 . She worked with the San Francisco Public Library in 1969 to develop resources for black history of the American West . In 1979 she was honored with a Centennial Award at Spelman College , sharing the recognition with UNESCO director Herschelle Sullivan Challenor . After her husband 's death in 1981 , Thurman took over the management of the Howard Thurman Educational Trust , which funded research for literary , religious and scientific purposes and assisted in scholarships for black students . On her death in 1996 , she left the couple 's vast archives to numerous universities .

= = Early years = =

Sue Elvie Bailey was born on August 26 , 1903 , in Pine Bluff , Arkansas , to Reverend Isaac and Susie (née Ford) Bailey . She attended primary school at Nannie Burroughs ' School for Girls in Washington , D.C. In 1920 , she graduated from the college preparatory school , Spelman Seminary (now Spelman College) in Atlanta , Georgia . She continued her education at Oberlin College in Oberlin , Ohio , graduating in 1926 with bachelor 's degrees in music and liberal arts , making her the first black student to earn a music degree from Oberlin . While there , Bailey developed a friendship with Louise Thompson , who would become a central figure in the Harlem Renaissance movement , and encouraged Langston Hughes , inventor of jazz poetry , to read poetry there . She traveled with a quintet giving concerts in Cleveland , New York , and Philadelphia , as well as London and Paris .

= = Early career = =

After graduating , Thurman took a post as a music teacher at the Hampton Institute in Virginia , but did not enjoy the work . One of the issues at Hampton was that her friend , Louise Thompson , also a teacher there , had written anonymously to W. E. B. Du Bois , co @-@ founder of the National

Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) , complaining about conditions at the college under the predominantly white administration . Although Bailey was suspected of writing the letter after Du Bois published it in the NAACP 's journal The Crisis , she did not betray Thompson but instead invited Langston Hughes to Hampton for a poetry reading and moral support . Nevertheless , she left Hampton in 1930 to become a traveling National Secretary for the Student Division of the YWCA . She lectured throughout Europe and established the first World Fellowship Committee of the YWCA . On June 12 , 1932 , in the dining hall at Lincoln Academy , Kings Mountain , North Carolina , Bailey married Howard W. Thurman (1900 ? 1981) , a minister , who would become a social critic , writer and dean of several prominent US universities . At the time of their marriage , he was serving as Dean of Rankin Chapel and Professor of Systematic Theology at Howard University in Washington , D.C.

= = Asia = =

In 1935 , the couple embarked upon a six @-@ month trip through southern Asia , visiting Burma , Ceylon and India , culminating in a ? Pilgrimage of Friendship ? to the International Student Conference in India . Her husband led the American delegation , lecturing at more than forty universities , while Thurman herself was asked to meet with journalists and students , to discuss race relations and evaluate the parallels between the situation with Indians and the British and the African Americans and white Americans . Initially , Howard had turned down the opportunity and his wife was not included in the offer , but when the trip was finally agreed , both were participants . Thurman was not chosen simply as the wife of Howard Thurman but , in the words of the committee , because she was one of " four persons best able to do this particular job " . This decision was remarkable for the period given that black women were often invisible members of society and generally prohibited from authoritative roles in social welfare programs . Thurman lectured during the trip on negro women and the organizations to which they belonged , as well as internationalism and culture . During their meeting with Rabindranath Tagore in Santiniketan she presented a paper " The History of Negro Music " , though initially she had been reluctant to discuss slave music . She finally agreed only after Tagore and Gandhi explained that to Asian Christians , negro spirituals were deemed to express the profound faith of people even in bondage and seemed more authentic than western hymns . Thurman both sang and taught songs to local choirs . She also commented on art , having acquired knowledge on the subject during an earlier trip to Mexico .

The couple met with Mahatma Gandhi , becoming the first African Americans to have an audience with him . When Thurman asked him to take his message to the United States , he demurred as his work in India and his personal quest there were not finished . One important aspect of the meeting was a discussion of how non @-@ violent resistance could be used as a means of creating social change . The meeting had a profound effect on the couple , changing the direction of their lives . Though they would remain Christians , the meeting with Gandhi led them to consider establishing a church free of prejudice , transcending racial , social , economic and spiritual boundaries . After they returned to the United States , Howard received a letter from A. J. Muste on behalf of Alfred Fisk who was looking for someone to establish a church in San Francisco which crossed the racial and spiritual divides . Muste was hopeful that Rev. Thurman might know of a divinity student interested in the position . Instead , Howard decided to take up the challenge himself , securing a leave of absence in order to found the church . Thurman went with him bringing their two daughters , as she strongly believed in the cause .

= = Mid @-@ career = =

= = = Scholarly work and San Francisco = = =

Thurman established the Juliette Derricotte Scholarship in the late 1930s , which allowed African @-@ American undergraduate women of high academic achievement to study and travel abroad .

The first two recipients of the scholarship were Marian Banfield of Howard University and Anna V. Brown of Oberlin College . Banfield was a goddaughter of Howard Thurman . The following year the recipients of her scholarship were Elizabeth McCree from Boston , who attended Fisk University , and Margaret Bush Wilson of Talladega College .

In 1940 , Thurman founded the Aframerican Women ' s Journal , the first publishing vehicle of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) , which she edited from 1940 until 1944 . In 1941 , an archive committee was formed to design a plan for collecting works about the achievements of African @-@ American women . Though their plans focused primarily on written records and professional accomplishment and would thus reflect middle @-@ class life , the committee initiated work on collecting historical records of black women . In 1944 , Thurman became the committee 's chair and her mother donated \$ 1 @,@ 000 toward creating the National Council of Negro Women 's National Library , Archives , and Museum . On June 30 , 1946 , they held an archive drive , printing notices in newsletters and asking ministers , organizations , librarians and others to help them acquire photographs , books and mementos . They opened the first facility of the library at what is now the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site .

In 1943 , Thurman and her husband moved to San Francisco . She wrote several articles about their Asian trip , analyzing information , discussing their meeting with Gandhi and pressing for scholarship exchanges for negro students at Indian universities . It was from the Thurmans and their talks and writings that Martin Luther King Jr. learned of non @-@ violent resistance as a means of social protest . By 1944 , the church which they had envisioned after their meeting with Gandhi became a reality when they , along with Fisk , opened the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples . It was the first interracial , non @-@ denominational church in the United States . While her husband assumed the pastoral duties , Thurman organized forums and lectures for the members to learn about other peoples such as Native Americans , Africans , Asians and their cultures , covering everything from the Jews to the Navajos .

In 1945 , Thurman attended the San Francisco Conference for the founding of the United Nations as part of an unofficial delegation . The official African @-@ American delegation included W. E. B. Du Bois , founder of the NAACP ; Walter Francis White , Executive Secretary of the NAACP ; and Mary McLeod Bethune founder of the National Council of Negro Women , but Bethune insisted on sending three additional observers from the NCNW , which included Thurman . After the event , Thurman published a report in the Chicago Defender on April 16 , 1945 , in which she questioned the limited role that people of color played in the proceedings and pointed out that the large populations of developing countries would become a force to be reckoned with . Thurman , as a representative for the NCNW , attended the Primer Congreso Interamericano de Mujeres held in Guatemala City , Guatemala , in 1947 . The congress addressed many of the issues she supported such as women 's rights , internationalism , and peace initiatives . In 1949 , she led a delegation of members from the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples to Paris for the Fourth Plenary Session of UNESCO .

After researching black history in California , Thurman wrote eight articles for the San Francisco Sun Reporter as part of a series entitled " Pioneers of Negro Origin in California " . Using the same title , she published the articles in book form in 1952 . It was the second history of black Californians published ? the first being The Negro Trail Blazers of California by Delilah L. Beasley in 1919 ? and filled a gap caused by a lack of academic interest . History in America , at the time , was written about men and almost exclusively about white men . Neither of the women who wrote about the history of blacks in California was a native Californian .

= = = Boston = = =

In 1953 , Howard Thurman became the Dean of the Boston University School of Theology and , after ten years in California , the couple moved to Boston . The move was prompted by the desire to share their ideas of outreach and inclusion in a university setting , though they were aware that the arrival of the first black pastor in a white university would lead to difficulties . From the beginning , Thurman tried to create an inclusive environment , organizing monthly dinners for the Marsh Chapel

Choir members and their friends . Shortly after they arrived , a Japanese student committed suicide leaving a note that she had no friends . Not only was she not known well at the university , finding her family to notify them was difficult . In response , Thurman organized the International Student Hostess Committee to keep international students from feeling isolated . By 1965 , the committee was serving 500 international students at Boston University . The Thurmans were at times criticized by those who felt they should be visibly active in the Civil Rights Movement , but they believed their commitment was to addressing the spiritual needs of those who were visible , rather than participating in marches , protests and demonstrations . Among the papers of MLK were many letters from people such as Homer A. Jack , who co @-@ founded the Congress of Racial Equality ; Lillian Smith , author of the novel Strange Fruit ; Glenn E. Smiley , national field secretary of Fellowship of Reconciliation , as well as King 's own acknowledgement , which credited their spiritual guidance .

Thurman continued her writing work in Boston . In 1958 , she published the The Historical Cookbook of the American Negro , which not only gave recipes but included black history . It retold stories of professional women and history to counter the belief that all black women were maids and domestics at a time when African Americans were excluded from basic civil rights . She recognized that in order to tell their history , a new approach was needed as there was no market for histories of the African Americans . In the preface to her book , she explained she was creating " palatable history " , testifying to her shrewd marketing ability .

During the 1960s , the Thurmans traveled widely , making various trips to study racial barriers that prohibited creation of community . A two @-@ year sabbatical granted from Boston University made their travels possible . In 1962 , they journeyed to Saskatchewan , Canada , to meet with tribal leaders about discrimination and in 1963 , they embarked on a trip that included Nigeria , Israel , Hawaii , and California . In Nigeria , Howard Thurman lectured at the University of Ibadan . The couple 's second round @-@ the @-@ world tour took them to Japan , the Philippines and Egypt .

In 1963 , Thurman founded the Museum of Afro @-@ American History in Boston . Interested in history , she had discovered a settlement where free blacks had lived prior to the Civil War and their 1808 African Meeting House , which housed both Boston 's first black church and the first segregated public school in the United States . The museum was created to save the site and provide a means to purchase other significant properties for preservation of African @-@ American heritage in the area . Thurman also created a map of important African American historical sites in Boston with the help of her daughter , Anne Chiarenza , which she called " Negro Freedom Trails of Boston " . The map highlighted twenty @-@ two points of interest to black history within the city of Boston and was in part created to give black school children a sense that they were part of the history of the city . What is today known as the Black Heritage Trail was adapted from Thurman 's original idea .

While in Boston , in 1962 , Thurman arranged for the sculptor Meta Warrick Fuller to create a commissioned " freedom plaque " for Livingstone College , of Salisbury , North Carolina . Bailey was an invited speaker at Livingstone in 1963 and at that time , in honor of United Nations Day , she donated a collection of dolls representing the member nations to the college . As far back as the 1930s , Thurman had collected ethnic dolls and given them to universities to promote understanding of cultural differences . In 1967 , Livingstone awarded her with an honorary doctorate .

= = San Francisco return = =

Howard Thurman took retirement from Boston University in 1965 and the couple moved back to San Francisco . Thurman continued to pursue historic preservation . She worked with the San Francisco Public Library in 1969 to develop resources for black history of the American West . In the 1970s , the couple took a trip to the Pacific basin . In 1979 she was honored with a Centennial Award at Spelman College , sharing the recognition with UNESCO director Herschelle Sullivan Challenor .

After her husband 's death , in 1981 , Thurman took over the management of the Howard Thurman Educational Trust , which funded research for literary , religious and scientific purposes , endowed

scholarships for black students and assisted charitable projects . Thurman was the mother of Anne Spencer Thurman and stepmother to Olive Thurman , her husband 's daughter with his first wife . Olive was the first wife of actor Victor Wong .

Thurman died on Christmas Day , 1996 , at the San Francisco Zen Buddhist Hospice Center .

= = Legacy = =

After her death in 1996 , she and Howard 's vast archives were donated per their wishes to numerous universities . The largest collection of their documents is housed at Boston University . There are additional collections of their writings and works at Oberlin , Emory University and several other institutions like the National Council of Negro Women 's archives in Washington , D.C and libraries in Arkansas named for her mother , Mrs. Susie Ford Bailey . The collection at Emory University includes the correspondence between the Thurmans and Mrs. Bailey , their personal libraries , and nearly one thousand photographs .