

# Non-profit documents, illuminates stories of black females from around the world

By Empish J. Thomas  
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African-American women like Rosa Parks, Billie Holiday, Ida B. Wells, and Shirley Chisholm are an intricate part of the fabric of this country and play a vital role in its history. We can read their incredible stories in school textbooks, novels in libraries and bookstores, or even on the Internet. But many stories of black women still have not been told, written and documented. The National Black Herstory Task Force, Inc., a non-profit agency established in 1997, wants to go above and beyond the traditional way that history of black women is researched, collected and written. "We knew there was little information on women of color in the schools and campuses," said Mozella Galloway, co-founder. "When you did find information it was always on the same few people and we felt the stories of African and African-American women were being neglected."

The NBHTF not only documents and collects stories nationally but internationally. Initially the focus was limited to women of African descent due to budgetary restraints. But with additional solid funding from individual donors, business sponsors and various fundraisers the NBHTF can also gather stories from other places in the world. "The desire to share our true stories was so great that sisters began reaching out to us from other countries like Nigeria, South Africa, Canada, and the UK," said Galloway.

The NBHTF has been collecting all kinds of stories of black women from the stay-at-home mother, to the corporate manager, to the educator. Stories in the collection include the trials and triumphs of black women; sharing their hopes, struggles and fears. "We get recommendations from a wide range of people," said Galloway. "We wanted to have a good mixture of all kinds of stories."

The response has been very positive and in 1999, Atlanta became the first city to proclaim March, National Black Herstory Month. In addition, the United States President's Commission on the Celebration of Women in America presented a Presidential Commission Certificate of Recognition to the NBHTF for developing ways to best acknowledge and celebrate the roles and accomplishments of women in American History.

Currently, the NBHTF is focusing on a more permanent place to house and store the large volume of documents. The majority of the documents are located at the center for Women at Emory University. Since the beginning the university has been a strong supporter of the NBHTF's efforts. "The vast majority of the initial board of directors worked at Emory," said Galloway, who is an Information Analyst at Emory's School of Medicine. "However, we have members and a very close relationship with Spelman College and many other HBCU's."

The NBHTF is working closely with architectural and engineering students at North Carolina AT&T State University to design a state of the arts research library and cultural center. The partnership has been a win-win situation. The school was searching for a non-profit agency they could help and the NBHTF was looking for people who could do conceptual and architectural designs. "The students and professors have already completed the external phase," said Galloway. "Now we are working on the internal phase and creating a budget."

To further explore the powerful stories of women of African descent the NBHTF hosts an annual conference and awards banquet held in March. This conference provides the opportunity for healthy discussion on ideas and important issues -- such as multiculturalism, human rights, entrepreneurship and motherhood. "We purposely look for presentations, keynote speeches and group dialogues designed to give voice to those in and outside of academia," said Galloway. "We are also a cultural organization and first and foremost, we operate on a grassroots level. We collect and share real life stories that can benefit and educate everyone about our rich, strong and regal heritage."

This year's theme for the 11-annual conference will be "Gathering of Voices on Health Care: Physical, Mental, Spiritual and Holistic." It will be held from March 28-30 at Emory University. "The conference will include presentations on traditional health customs and alternative health care practices," said Galloway. "The sessions will be led by outstanding practitioners, researchers, survivors, community members and students."

For more information on the National Black Herstory Task Force call 404-712-9674 or log on to [www.blackherstory.org](http://www.blackherstory.org).