

A READING: PRIDE, DETERMINATION AND HOPE, FROM THE NANNIE HELEN BURROUGHS LIBRARY OF CONGRESS FILES

“NANNIE HELEN BURROUGHS LIFE WAS STEEPED IN PRIDE, DETERMINATION AND HOPE. MANY CONSIDERED HER A FEMINIST BECAUSE OF HER FIGHT FOR THE DIGNITY OF WOMEN. SHE TOLD THE WORLD THAT WE MUST HAVE A GLORIFIED WOMAN THAT CAN LOOK ANY MAN IN THE FACE—WHITE, RED, YELLOW, BROWN OR BLACK—AND TELL OF THE MOBILITY OF THE CHARACTER WITHIN WOMAN.” SHE SPECIFICALLY REMINDED OUR BLACK WOMEN THAT THERE IS AS MUCH CHARACTER IN EBONY AS THERE IS IN MARBLE.

NANNIE HAD A STRONG CHRISTIAN FAITH AND BELIEF IN THE ABILITY TO OVERCOME OBSTACLES. SHE TELLS THIS STORY ABOUT HER GRANDMOTHER, MARIA POINDEXTER: “MY GRANDMOTHER WAS WHAT SHE PROUDLY CALLED, AN F.F.V. SLAVE (FIRST FAMILY OF VIRGINIA). THEY TELL ME SHE WAS A REMARKABLE WOMAN, A SEAMSTRESS AND PHILOSOPHER, AND WOULD TELL THIS INTERESTING STORY OF HER ATTITUDE TOWARDS SLAVERY. SHE WOULD SAY: YES. HONEY, I WAS IN SLAVERY. BUT, I WASN’T NO SLAVE. I WAS JUST IN IT. THAT’S ALL. THEY NEVER MADE ME HOLD MY HEAD DOWN AND THERE WAS A WHOLE PARCEL OF NEGROES JUST LIKE ME. THAT PROUD VIRGINIAN WOULD SAY, HOLD YOUR SPIRIT UP INSIDE CHILD, HOLD YOUR SPIRIT UP, AND THAT HELPS YOU HOLD YOUR HEAD UP. DON’T LET YOUR SPIRIT DOWN AND THAT HELPS YOU HOLD YOUR HEAD UP. DON’T LET YOUR SPIRIT DOWN. HONEY, THEY MAY HAVE SLAVED MY BODY, BUT THEY DIDN’T SLAVE MY MIND.”