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Informative Speech

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Claude A. Barnett

Who are some of the most influential African Americans in history and how many can you name? Many people automatically think about Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman, Maya Angelou, etc. We as Americans don't take it upon ourselves to learn about history, or the struggles our ancestors have gone through. We just take what we're taught and run with it. Can anyone say they know who Claude A. Barnett was? Barnett was an American journalist, publisher, entrepreneur, philanthropist, civic activist, pan-Africanist, and founder of the Associated Negro Press. Barnett was one of the most influential African Americans of the twentieth century. (Horne, 2017)

Claude A. Barnett was born on September 16, 1889 in Sanford, Florida. (Tracy, 2011) Barnett did not come from a family of influencers. His mother Celena Anderson Barnett worked as a housekeeper; and his father William Barnett was a hotel worker. When he was young he moved to Chicago with his family. There he finished high school, and then went on to Alabama where he studied at the Tuskegee Institute. After graduating he returned to Chicago, and took on a number of jobs working commercial. This sparked his interest in entrepreneurship, which eventually led him to starting his own agency. Claude also had the pleasure of marrying Etta Moten in June 1934, who was also a successful African American. She created a way for Black

women on stage and screen. She featured in many successful films and accomplished many great things throughout her life. Together they were an influential pair. Barnett was always passionate about making a change for his people, because he knew the struggles that were being faced. His dream was to provide a national news service that gave black newspapers information that is not available through white wire services. (McMurry, 2021)

Although times have changed from how things were before to how they are now, African Americans still face many challenges. It is important that we stick together and remind each other of those who paved the way for our new generation. The Associated Negro Press was one of the most impactful businesses placed. This idea was generated in 1919. The ANP began in a tiny office on Chicago's south side with a small staff, who provided notable information to black newspapers for publication. ANP's popularity began to expand a number of new black newspapers not only in Chicago but also in Norfolk, Virginia, Houston, and Oklahoma City. (Tracy, 2011) Relating this to our day and age I'm glad Barnett could have a great impact on the media today. In my opinion, it is hard to have African Americans acknowledge in the news unless it's something negative. We aren't acknowledged as often as we should be, for our successful businesses and achievements. Instead we're being given attention for reasons like crime, and racial injustice. Claude Barnett had a positive effect on news because he added an advertising technique that offered ANP service to newspapers in exchange for advertising space paid for by Black owned businesses, especially successful cosmetic businesses, as well as his own. (Tracy, 2011) Barnett was one of the writers and editors of the ANP. The ANP even documented the civil rights movement. He eventually expanded his coverage (to Liberia, Philippines, Carribean, etc.) , which influenced his interest in Africa which soon turned into a

frequent trip in the later years of his life. Although it is overlooked he was a Pan-Africanism promoter. He worked relentlessly to make an impact, and his efforts never went unnoticed.

Claude A. Barnett passed at the age of 78 due to a cerebral hemorrhage on August 2, 1967. Barnett was an overachiever, who dedicated his life to making a change for his people. He has accomplished many great things throughout his life which created positive change for African Americans. He is referred to as the “Father of the Black Press”. He played a huge role in Chicago's Black Renaissance. He gave news coverage, job opportunities, and social contacts for African Americans, mainly in Chicago. In addition he assisted in building a public Black media and positively affecting the Black business press after World War II. For Barnett's legacy to go on, it's on us scholars to bring it to the attention of our peers and remind them about the influential figures in history.

References

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