

Henrietta Vinton Davis

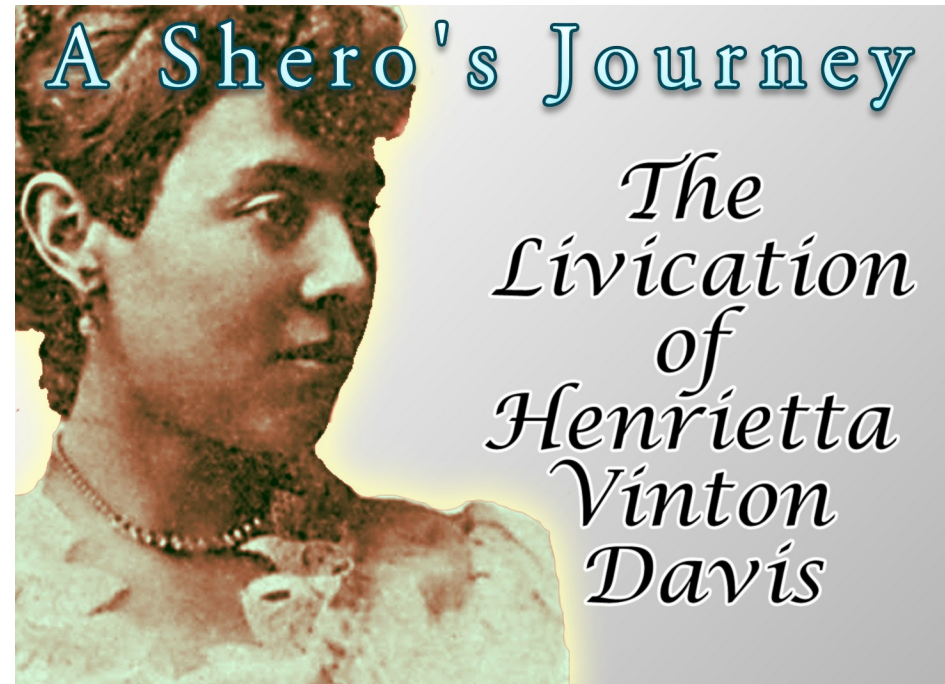
Henrietta Vinton Davis was born in Baltimore, Maryland on August 25, 1860 to Mansfield Vinton and Mary Ann (Johnson) Davis. Her father, a pianist, died while she was very young. Her mother remarried George Alexander Hackett. Hackett was one of the founders of the Chesapeake Marine Railway and Drydock Company, an African American owned ship building company that operated from 1855 to 1873. When her stepfather died in 1870, Davis and her mother moved to Washington, DC, where she completed her education and became a schoolteacher at 15 years of age in Maryland and later Louisiana. Her mother's illness brought her back to Washington, DC, where she worked as a copyist in the Recorder of Deeds Office. Davis was the first African American employed at the Office, three years before Frederick Douglass was appointed as Recorder.

On April 25, 1883, Frederick Douglass introduced Davis in her debut at Marini's Hall, a venue formerly located at the current site of the FBI Building. For nearly 40 years she performed professionally as an elocutionist, Shakespearean actor, and dramatic reader. In 1919, Davis performed Paul Laurence Dunbar's *Lil Brown Baby* before a meeting of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League. The group, founded by the Honorable Marcus Garvey, became the vehicle for Davis' next career as an activist. In that role she served as an International Organizer for the UNIA, in addition to Vice President and Director of the Black Star Line. Davis died on November 25, 1941 at age 81 and is buried in an unmarked grave at National Harmony Memorial Park in Largo, Maryland.

For more information, visit the Henrietta Vinton Davis Memorial Foundation website:



ladydavis.org



*A Women's History
Month Tribute*

Sun, March 14, 2010

*Martin Luther King, Jr.
Memorial Library
901 G Street, NW*

The DC Public Library and the Henrietta Vinton Davis Memorial Foundation are proud to present a Women's History Month program celebrating the life of Henrietta Vinton Davis. Miss Davis was an African American Shakespearean actress, elocutionist, dramatic reader and activist during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The program, a *Livication** Ceremony, honors the achievements of Davis, and highlights the public awareness efforts of the Foundation.

*Liv-i-ca-tion n.

1. the act of livicating or being livicated.
2. A note or inscription prefixed to a work of literary, artistic or musical composition bestowing gratitude upon someone in token of affection or esteem.
3. A rite or ceremony of livicating.

Livicate v.

1. To set apart for divine or spiritual purposes and uses.
2. To focus one's thought or actions on life and living.
3. Complete and wholehearted devotion to life, career, ideal, etc.
4. A Rastafarian vocabulary term meaning "to bring to life."

Program

Master of Ceremonies

Clayton LeBouef

Libation

Welcome Address

*Derek Gray, Archivist, Martin Luther King, Jr.
Memorial Library, Washingtoniana Division*

*Performance of "Shine on Eternal Light" written by
Arnold Josiah Ford.*

*Video Presentation of Shero: The Livication of
Henrietta Vinton Davis*

*Professor William Seraile, Ph.D. Author of article
"Henrietta Vinton Davis and the Garvey Movement"
originally published in the journal "Afro-Americans in
New York Life and History", vol. 7, no. 2, July 1983.*

*Reading of a Scene from the dramatic play "The Life
and Breath of Henrietta Vinton Davis"*

*Reading of the poem, "Lil' Brown Baby" written by
Paul Lawrence Dunbar*