



**American Corner
Craiova Newsletter**

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**A PUBLICATION THAT PROMOTES
AMERICAN CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION**

Number 3, March 2009

AMELIA EARHART

The roots of the National Women's History Month go back to March 8, 1857, when women from New York City factories staged a protest over working conditions.

International Women's Day was first observed in 1909, but it wasn't until 1981 that Congress established National Women's History Week during the second

American Corner Craiova organized a movie screening - *Amelia Earhart: The Story of the first woman aviator to fly solo and non-stop across the Atlantic (1928)* followed by a meeting with Melissa Culkin, *Peace Corps* volunteer.

It was the story of a brave woman, ready to accept any challenge for her passion. She was an uncommon heroine, a legendary aviator, and the focus of one of the greatest mysteries of all time.



A daredevil of unimaginable proportions, Amelia Earhart was destined to make her mark on history.



After the screening, participating students discussed with Melissa on the topic. They were happy to practice their English and to learn more

about this famous and inspiring American woman.

**The story of the first woman aviator to fly solo
and non-stop across the Atlantic (1928)**

2009 NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

week of March. In 1987, Congress expanded the week to a month. Every year since, Congress has passed a resolution for Women's History Month, and the President has issued a proclamation.

The people of the United States observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies and activities that honor the history, accomplishments, and contributions of American women to building our world.



MARCH 2009

CELEBRATIONS

Women's History Month

March 8th

***International Women's
Day***

March 14th

***Albert Einstein's
Birthday (1879)***

March 16th

***Freedom of Information
Day***

March 21th

***The International Day
for the Elimination of
Racial Discrimination***

March 21th

The Poetry Day

This year's theme, *Women Taking the Lead to Save Our Planet*, encourages the recognition of the important work of women in the on-going *green movement*. To acknowledge women in communities and states throughout the country, we are including all the women nominated as 2009 Honorees. Please consider recognizing women in your own community as you plan for National Women's History Month events.

The 2009 Honorees include scientists, engineers, business leaders, writers, filmmakers, conservationists, teachers, community organizers, religious or workplace leaders or others whose lives show exceptional vision and leadership to save our planet.

These brief biographies of the 2009 Honorees were submitted by the person who nominated the woman. Web referrals are also included to provide more information about each woman.

Source : <http://www.nwhp.org/>

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
March 3, 2009

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH, 2009

With passion and courage, women have taught us that when we band together to advocate for our highest ideals, we can advance our common well-being and strengthen the fabric of our Nation. Each year during Women's History Month, we remember and celebrate women from all walks of life who have shaped this great Nation. This year, in accordance with the theme, ***Women Taking the Lead to Save our Planet***, we

pay particular tribute to the efforts of women in preserving and protecting the environment for present and future generations.

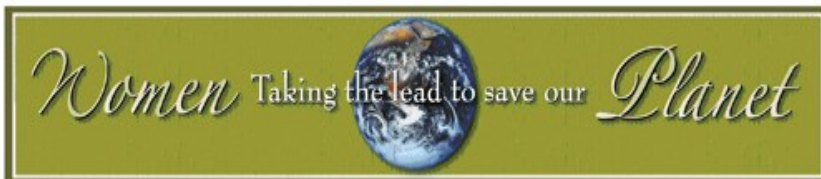
Ellen Swallow Richards is known to have been the first woman in the United States to be accepted at a scientific school. She graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1873 and went on to become a prominent chemist. In 1887, she conducted a survey of water quality in Massachusetts. This study, the first of its kind in America, led to the Nation's first state water-quality standards. Women have also taken the lead throughout our history in preserving our natural environment.

In 1900, **Maria Sanford** led the Minnesota Federation of Women's Groups in their efforts to protect forestland near the Mississippi River, which eventually became the Chippewa National Forest, the first Congressionally mandated national forest.

Marjory Stoneman Douglas dedicated her life to protecting and restoring the Florida Everglades. Her book, ***The Everglades: Rivers of Grass***, published in 1947, led to the preservation of the Everglades as a National Park. She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1993.

In 1992, she launched a successful campaign to organize Native Americans to oppose the storage of nuclear waste on their reservations, which she said contradicted Native American principles of stewardship of the earth. She also proposed that America invest in alternative energy sources such as hydroelectricity, solar power, and wind power.

These women helped protect our environment and our people while challenging the status quo and breaking social barriers. Their achievements inspired generations of American women and men not only to save our planet, but also to overcome obstacles and pursue their interests and talents. They join a long and proud history of American women leaders, and this month we honor the contributions of all women to our Nation.



Rachel Carson brought even greater attention to the environment by exposing the dangers of certain pesticides to the environment and to human health. Her landmark 1962 book, ***Silent Spring***, was fiercely criticized for its unconventional perspective. As early as 1963, however, **President Kennedy** acknowledged its importance and appointed a panel to investigate the book's findings. ***Silent Spring*** has emerged as a seminal work in environmental studies. Carson was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom posthumously in 1980.

Grace Thorpe, another leading environmental advocate, also connected environmental protection with human well-being by emphasizing the vulnerability of certain populations to environmental haz-

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 2009 as Women's History Month. I call upon all our citizens to observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities that honor the history, accomplishments, and contributions of American women.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this third day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-third.

BARACK OBAMA

Freedom of Information Day

Freedom of Information (FOI) Day is an annual event on or near March 16, the birthday of James Madison, who is widely regarded as the Father of the Constitution and as the foremost advocate for openness in government.



James Madison, *Father of the Constitution* and fourth president of the United States, was born on **March 16**, 1751.* A graduate of the College of New Jersey at Princeton, where he studied the liberal arts, Madison wed his love of learning to a deep sense of civic responsibility to charter and to lead the young United States of America.

“What spectacle can be more edifying or more seasonable, than that of Liberty & Learning, each leaning on the other for their mutual & surest support?”

James Madison, letter to W.T. Barry, August 4, 1822

To be or not to be

... informed

by Theodor Vlădășel

The problem of liberty has always been a fundamental one for mankind, and its accomplishment is even more important now than it was in the past, with democracy struggling to make sure individuals' rights are respected. But whether all people benefit from the same amount of informational access and independence and whether they enjoy being constrained is a much-debatable question, with more than one side.

The quintessential standpoint reveals information as the paramount necessity of people, as the most vital pillar of knowledge; hence, any material that involves and contains records brings an important source of awareness and the access to, basically speaking, any kind of data is not only indispensable, but also the supreme method of acquiring a sense of reality and a proper understanding of life. A perfect reasoning regarding the impetuous requisite for information has been summarized by peace-militant Kofi Annan: “Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family.”

Locally and generally, information proves to be the ultimate scheme of accomplishing the process of knowledge transfer; for instance, if I were to obtain a special, unique, original piece of information, I would, sensibly, add it to the sum of knowledge already “on display”. I would write a book, an article, an e-mail, anything really, and send it, make it widely known; successively, those who benefit will maintain the procedure, and, over an extensive period of time, everybody will be aware of what I have discovered. This is not only a theory, it is a reality,

and all the technological developments will lead to a furtherance and acceleration of the process, with people as *virtual selves*, as Marshall McLuhan once said: “In this electronic age we see ourselves being translated more and more into the form of information, moving toward the technological extension of consciousness.”

Internationally, information is what makes global communication possible and feasible; for what would happen if nations did not know anything of each other? The interdependence would be ruined and a worldwide political crash would be imminent. Besides this, history teaches us that information is crucial in ruling over a nation and an army; were companies not to know of their positions, a subsequent clash between fellows might occur, as undesirable as it may sound. Economically, the market transparency has to be fulfilled and, thus, the right to information is ideal. All of these thoughts could be implied by Dwight Eisenhower's statement: “There is no justification for obstructing freedom of information, particularly as nations have a right to know what their people are being used for.”

All in all, liberty – of speech, of thought, of education, of religion, but most importantly, of information – is what all people crave to obtain, but no one will ever be satisfied with the amount he receives. Whether political, territorial or managerial, there will always be obstacles in man's pursuit of happiness and unequivocal freedom, but the latter will, eventually, come unharmed: “Information is the oxygen of the modern age. It seeps through the walls topped by barbed wire, it wafts across the electrified borders.” (Ronald Reagan).

**Coordinating teacher
Cristiana Coșoveanu**

AMERICAN CORNER CRAIOVA - 3 YEARS OF EXISTENCE -

This is a place where ideas are conveyed freely and arguments are brought to sustain them. It is a place where questions are answered and new opinions are shaped, where responses bring together laughter and queries.

The *American Corner Craiova* was created with the purpose of gathering both teenagers and other people interested in American culture and life. In the frame of this project, adolescents meet with volunteers from the States and tackle with different topics, such as nature, American life, American movies, hobbies, leisure and many others. The location of these meetings is the Audio-Video Department of *Alexandru si Aristia Aman* Library or *Tradem House*. The date, hour and other guidelines of all the events and activities are announced by e-mail or can be found on our blog.

Before taking part in any activity, the people involved have to look for information about the specified topic. By doing this, one creates a personal view about the subject; consequently, opinions and theories can be built. During the meetings, other complementary or opposite ideas, counter arguments as well, can be uttered, leading to constructive debates. Once more, through communication, people have the chance to know each other as well as their own personality and one leaves this place not only with a mind full of new information, but also spiritually enriched.

Each year, we meet in order to celebrate some famous literary profiles of American literature: Mark Twain and Edgar Allan Poe are only a couple of examples. Due to the large interest of youngsters, as well as adults, in literature and cinema, *American Corner* has decided to organize a *Film and Conversation Club* where our host, Mr. Kerry Glamsch from Craiova University, is the moderator of many interesting debates.

Literature and film is not the only topic, it is just part or many cultural, political, sportive or social activities connected to the American civilization and way of life: the USA elections made up one of the most passionate and disputed topic.

We had very challenging discussion with representatives of American Embassy in Bucharest or with American personalities throughout videoconferences, exchanging interesting ideas about the most precious ideals of American people: democracy, equality or fair play. Fulbright awarded youngsters come each year to share their exciting experience as American students of famous USA Universities: they meet our high-school-adolescents and give them advice or provide important information about the American educational system.

But *American Corner* is not only a place of hard work. It is equally a place where we celebrate or benefit from international events: *Earth Day* or *Peace Day* are probably the most important. Exhibitions are organized as well as essay contests; the best and most talented of the participants are awarded diplomas and valuable prizes consisting on books or documentary material about the United States. Each year we commemorate the Independence Day, Presidents Day or celebrate other national holidays – some of them part of our own cultural or religious background: *Thanksgiving*, *Christmas* or *Easter* are a few of them.

Taking into consideration the huge interest of our coordinator who always keeps us informed, and in consequence of the partnership with numerous educational, social and cultural structures, we can say that *American Corner Craiova* is a project which brings together different types of people with dissimilar views and enables them to discuss about everything. It is a lively place of freedom of thought and expression.

Teacher Cristina Coşoveanu

DIGITAL VIDEOCONFERENCE FOR AMERICAN STUDIES

STUDENTS

On Thursday, March 19, 2009, at 2 pm, Alexandru and Aristia Aman County Library through the American Corner and Audio-Video Department hosted a videoconference on

The Feminine Identity in Contemporary American Literature

The audience, composed of American Studies students of the University of Craiova and students from the *Frații Buzesti* National College and the *Carol I* National College, attended the lecture offered by the invited speaker, Professor Roberta Rubenstein, on American women writers.

Dr. Rubenstein is a professor of literature at American University, where she teaches courses on modernism, literature by women and feminist theory. The 30 students were accompanied by faculty members Mihaela Roibu and Georgiana Dila.

A book exhibit was organized, of over 20 titles by American female authors; American Literature booklets and American Corner brochures were distributed to the participants.

The audience welcomed this initiative and appreciated the very informative lecture and discussions on the topic, which is new to Craiova students. Participants showed interest in the topic of the videoconference and wanted to know more about the American Corner collections.

They expressed their interest in such events and their wish to return.

FEMININE IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LITERATURE

The last conference I participated in was truly enlightening as it stirred my curiosity with regard to a less known field in literature: the literature of immigrant women in the USA.

Professor Roberta Rubenstein gladly shared some of her vast experience with us. Her speech seized my attention and left me longing for more. I thus started doing personal research immediately thereafter and found a startling new universe that had beforehand slipped through my fingers. It was, one might say, in James Joyce's terminology, an epiphany and now I'm following my growing interest in Asian-American and Latin-American female writers.

I've started by taking timid steps and renting a video called *Mulan*, a Walt Disney animation based on Maxine Hong

for the Widow on a three-part person. The protagonist feels she belongs to the African, Caribbean and American cultural background equally.

All three writers present clashes within the individual, split personality, and tormenting identity crises. Thinking about these themes I came to realize that they represent an everyday, social phenomenon in the US. It's all about



Kingston's novel *The Woman Warrior*.

Professor Roberta Rubenstein recommended this animation movie as a sort of first contact strategy of making people fall in love with the exquisite mixture of Chinese tradition and early forms of feminism.

Professor Roberta Rubenstein also mentioned Julia Alvarez, of Dominican descent, whose most anthologized novel is *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accent* and Paule Marshall. Paule Marshall a second generation immigrant from Barbados focuses in her novel *Pray Song*

the "melting pot", the "salad bowl", being different and trying to blend in, while still retaining a personal identity.

All in all it was an excellent experience, and as I myself am teaching at The University of Craiova I'll do my best to introduce such contemporary American writers to my students. I'm sure they'll find them as interesting as I do.

Mihaela Roibu

University of Craiova



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The American Corners Program seeks to promote understanding and cooperation between the United States of America and Romania, by providing accurate and diverse information about the United States on a variety of topics that will expand communication and exchange between our two countries.

The American Corner Craiova is interested in interacting with the public by using its resources in conducting cultural programs, including speakers and student advising, as well as art exhibits and professional development training.

This newsletter seeks to inform *American Corner's* users and also to be a tribune of expression for those who teach and learn English as a second language.

World Theatre Day

Theatre certainly reflects a philosophy of life, an extraordinary gift to express our thoughts and personality.

People have always associated the theatre with life itself as it is trapped into an enchanted and dark world infused with ghosts, fears, love, dreams and wishes.

The World Theatre Day Message for 2009 is written by Augusto Boal and he says: "One of the main functions of our art is to make people sensitive to the "spectacles" of daily life in which the actors are their own spectators; performances in which the stage and the stalls coincide. We are all artists. By doing theatre, we learn to see what is obvious, but what is obvious we usually can't see because we are only used to looking at it". He also considers that the economic *stage* is "just a bad theatre, a dark plot in which a few people won a lot and many people lost all (...) And we, the victims of their decisions, have remained spectators in the last row of the balcony".

Augusto's Boal thoughts shouldn't pale into insignificance as it's high time we raised people's awareness; it's high time for momentous changes because it is up to us to build the world with our own hands and act on the stage of our own life. Theatre should reflect a beauty which springs from the profound feelings of love between us and the world.

Logoviceanu Cosmina - Iulia - Carol I National College

Teacher: Delia Drăgănescu