



# The Barbara Johns' Story

By Dr. Vernon C. Crump III

**Day 27**  
**April 1, 2023**

**Read Esther 3:2**

“And all the king’s servants, that were in the king’s gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence.”

## **Critical Race Fact!**

White vigilantes whipped and lynched Black freedmen who argued with employers, left the plantations where they were contracted to work, or displayed any economic success of their own. White terror groups also focused intense energy on imposing “their own vision of a righteous society,” which usually meant targeting Black men for perceived sexual transgressions against white women. Charges of rape, while common, were “routinely fabricated” and often extrapolated from minor violations of the social code.

Whites also sought retribution of alleged rapes by targeting entire Black communities with violent public, and sexualized attacks, including forcing victims to strip binding them in compromising positions, and whipping their genitals; widespread rape of Black women, sometimes in front of their families; and genital mutilation and castration. Through these acts of violence, white vigilantes used terror “to revive the privileges of white masculinity over the bodies of their former slaves.”

## **Today’s Prayer:**

Lord, thank for our ancestors who were able to do more with less, because you have given us more, help us to do exceedingly and abundantly above all that we can ask or think. In Jesus name, amen.

Barbara Johns was a 16-year-old student when she began a protest at her high school, R.R. Morton, in Farmville, Virginia. In 1951, Barbara influenced and organized the student body to not continue the deplorable conditions of their segregated school while the White students had the best.

I became aware of her heroic actions from Rev. Sam Williams, a Virginia Union alumni, who was chaplain of the Nottaway Correctional Facility there in Farmville. The year was 1998. I had recently graduated from Seminary, when he asked me to do a Revival at the prison. He shared with me that he had been a student at R.R. Morton High School with Barbara Johns. I later discovered that Barbara Johns was the niece of Dr. Vernon Johns, the pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Al. He preceded Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

As the word got out about the protest of Barbara Johns at R.R. Morton High School, Thurgood Marshall and William Spottswood Robinson, III (a Virginia Union and Howard University Law School graduate) decided to include this case in the Brown vs Board of Education in the 1954 Supreme Court to end racial segregation in public schools in America.

Finally, several weeks ago, a statue of Barbara Johns was placed in the Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol. Her statue replaces the stature of Gen. Robert E. Lee. This happened because of Senator Louise Lucas’ efforts as chair of the committee in the state Senate. She was also there for the unveiling in Statuary Hall.

## **Questions to Ponder**

1. How old were you the first time you stood up for your rights?
2. How did that make you feel?
3. What were the results of you standing up?
4. How have you stood up for the rights of others?
5. How have you helped others stand up for their own rights?

