

# MORSELS FOR THE MIND BOOK GROUP

**Date:** April 20, 2020

**Hostess:** Nancy Dausman

**Book Title:** Daughter of a Daughter of a Queen

**Author:** Sarah Bird

**Book Synopsis:** Cathy Williams was born on a tobacco plantation in Missouri. She escapes slavery when she is taken from the plantation by Union General Sheridan to work as an assistant to his cook. At the end of the Civil War she enlists as a man calling herself William Cathey, and becomes a member of the legendary Buffalo Soldiers cavalry unit, made up of all black soldiers. Her struggles to become respected for who she is as a person and what she accomplishes is a main theme of the book.

**Our Review:** All members present by Zoom enjoyed this historical novel. The writing was engaging and showed the humor of difficult situations, while also describing some terrible conditions that Cathy had to endure. Although disguised as a man, she was the first African-American woman to enlist in the U.S. Army and the only woman Buffalo Soldier. Much of the story about her life as a Buffalo Soldier seemed to drag on, as did the march to Fort Arroyo where they were stationed. Some were hoping for more descriptive accounts of the work the soldiers did keeping the area and settlers safe from the “savages”.

**Food Served:** Because we couldn't meet in person due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we met by Zoom and brought our own refreshments to the virtual meeting.

**Highlights of Discussion:** We discussed life as a woman soldier, both in the Buffalo Soldiers unit and as a soldier today. There was confusion about documentation of this historical person, Cathy Williams. The author had provided copies of Cathy's enlistment, discharge, and pension documents in an article of an interview she had given. This provided the author with the impetus to pursue her 20 year obsession with Cathy Williams, and begin writing the historical novel to tell the story. We also talked about Cathy's background and the fact she never referred to herself as a slave, but as a captive, as her grandmother and mother had insisted. This gave Cathy the will and determination to shape her own future.

**Attendance:** Julie Coup, Nancy Dausman, Mary Grant, Ginny Martin, Laura Lewakowski, Anne Hill, Nancy McQuate, Nancy Schellenberg.

**Business/Suggestions:** The next meeting might again be a virtual meeting on Zoom. Some members are hesitant to meet face-to-face while there are still many unknowns about the COVID-19 illness and how it spreads.