

DAR To Dedicate Plaque to Honor Lena Santos Ferguson on June 26

Pamela Edwards Rouse Wright, President General

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During the upcoming 132nd Continental Congress week, we are so pleased to be holding a special ceremony in celebration of a DAR member who was a changemaker in our organization – and you are invited to attend.

Monday, June 26, 2023 at 8:30 a.m., DC Daughter [Lena Santos Ferguson](#) (1928-2004) will be recognized with a tribute plaque memorial in the Memorial Garden at DAR National Headquarters.

All DAR members are welcome to attend the ceremony, which will occur after the annual Daughters Tribute Wreath Laying Ceremony. The National Board of Management and members of Mrs. Ferguson's family are also expected to attend.

Mrs. Ferguson was instrumental in creating changes within DAR to help the organization become more diverse, inclusive and supportive of its members of color. Her struggle to

become a member of DAR lasted from 1980 to 1983 after her initial application was not advanced by a DAR chapter. After she became a DAR member-at-large, an agreement was reached in 1984 that resulted in DAR revising its National Bylaws to bar discrimination by any of its chapters on the basis of race or creed.

Another major goal of the agreement was to reconnect Black families to lost Revolutionary War heritage, and as a result of Mrs. Ferguson's advocacy, DAR started a project to focus more research on Revolutionary War Patriots of color. The research that began in the 1980s expanded into the long-term [Forgotten Patriots](#) project to identify African Americans, Native Americans and individuals of mixed heritage who supported the struggle for independence. This effort led to a series of different publications on the topic including the 874-page resource book, *Forgotten Patriots: African American and American Indian Patriots in the Revolutionary War*.

Additionally, at Mrs. Ferguson's proposal, DAR began scholarships supporting students of color in the Washington, D.C., community studying nursing or physical therapy. For more than two decades, Mrs. Ferguson served as the National Vice Chair overseeing these DAR scholarships, taking great pride in awarding them annually.

In Mrs. Ferguson's honor, DAR renamed the scholarship in 2023 as the DAR-Lena Ferguson Scholarship. The scholarship award was increased to \$5,000 and it is given to two nursing students attending the University of the District of Columbia. Details regarding this scholarship can be found on the DAR Scholarships public webpage at www.dar.org/DARLenaFergusonScholarship.

Mrs. Ferguson grew up in Plainville, CT and moved to Washington, D.C., in 1950. Her mother was the daughter of a white Maine sea captain and a Black woman from Virginia. Her immigrant father was of Black and Portuguese ancestry from Cape Verde. Her Patriot ancestor, Jonah Gay, supported the Revolutionary War effort as a member of the Committee of Correspondence of Friendship, Maine. After initially joining as a member-at-large, Mrs. Ferguson then joined a D.C. chapter that later disbanded, and she continued her dedication through the Margaret Whetten Chapter in Washington, D.C. until she passed away in 2004. Mrs. Ferguson was an active member of DAR for more than 20 years.

If you are attending Congress and arrive early enough to do so, please join us for this special event honoring a person who changed DAR for the better.

