

A ST. LOUIS ODYSSEY

Classicists Honor African-American Scholars; Citizens March for AIDS

**Part of the traveling exhibition, "12 Black Classicists."**

EDITOR'S NOTE: While in St. Louis recently for the meeting of the Classical Association, TRIBUNE correspondent/photographer Mary T. Miller was able to cover not only a significant honor for black scholars, but a march for AIDS awareness in the shadow of the Gateway Arch.

By Mary T. Miller

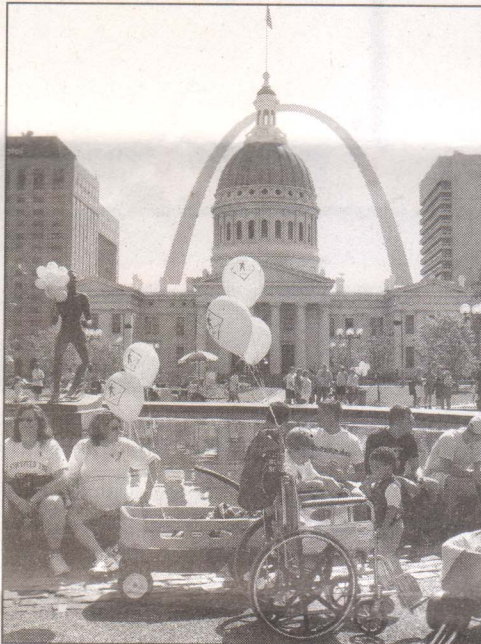
Reflected in the light of the Gateway Arch and in the shadow of the historic Old Capitol where the Dred Scott Trial took place, Classicists from Virginia's colleges, universities, high schools and grade schools gathered with Classicists from all over the midwest and south to celebrate the Centennial Meeting of the Classical Association of the Middle West and South (CAMWS) in St. Louis, Missouri, April 15-18.

The University of Virginia's Jenny Strauss Clay, Professor of Classics, presided over the occasion. John F. Miller, Professor and Chair of Classics at UVA and University of Virginia Professor Emeritus Arthur Stocker are past presidents of the organization which first met in 1904 in St. Louis. CAMWS is an organization of over 2,000 members that brings together K-12, college and uni-

versity teachers to advance the teaching and study of Latin and Greek.

While the conference was going on, citizens of St. Louis

PHOTOS BY MARY T. MILLER

**Alongside the AIDS march.**

participated in a walk to raise awareness and funds for AIDS, beginning at the foot of the historic Old Courthouse where, on April 6, 1846, the slave Dred Scott and his wife Harriet sued for their freedom. In 2004,

African Americans are five times more likely to contract AIDS and die from it than the rest of the population.

In the historic Dred Scott case the Scotts had been taken by their owner to free jurisdictions and then returned to Missouri, a slave state. During an eleven-year period, the Scotts endured two civil trials, a State Supreme Court case, and a federal trial to find out if they would remain enslaved or gain their freedom. In *Dred Scott v. Sanford* (1857), the United States Supreme Court ruled that Americans of African ancestry were not eligible to be citizens and had no legal rights under the constitution. Chief Justice Roger B. Taney's opinion also declared that Congress could not prevent the spread of slavery into the Western territories. This decision fueled sectional conflict, which led to the Civil War.

The classicists celebrated the diversity of their 100 years of association with a historic exhibition featuring African-American classical scholars who made groundbreaking achievements in education at the end of the Civil War. The traveling version of the exhibition created by classical scholar Michele Valerie Ronnick of Wayne State University in Detroit, is titled "12 Black Classicists," and focuses on the lives of twelve African-American men and women who taught Greek and Latin at the college or uni-

versity level and whose academic accomplishments helped pave the way for future generations of African-Americans entering American universities.

"With them," says Ronnick, "begins the serious study and teaching of philology (the study of language) by African Americans."

Featured African-American academics in the exhibit include Macon native William Sanders Scarborough, the first black member of the Modern Language Association and author of a Greek textbook (1881), Lewis Baxter Moore, who earned the first Ph.D. awarded by the University of Pennsylvania to an African-American for his work on the Greek tragedian Sophocles, Wiley Lane, the first black professor of Greek at Howard University and John Wesley Gilbert from Augusta GA who was the first black to attend the American School in Athens, Greece. The installation was funded by the James Loeb Classical Library Foundation at Harvard University.