

The Inspirational Life of Samuel Battle: Shattering the Color Line in New York City

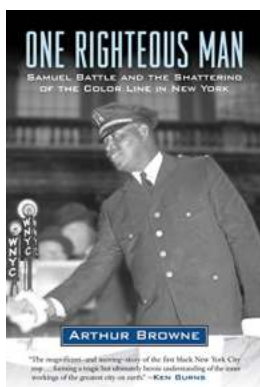


When discussing the history of racial equality and the fight against discrimination in the United States, prominent figures like Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X often come to mind. However, there are many unsung heroes who contributed to breaking the color line and promoting racial integration in their own

way. One such hero is Samuel Battle, the first African-American police officer in New York City.

The Early Years

Samuel Jesse Battle was born on January 16, 1883, in New Bern, North Carolina. Growing up in a racially segregated society, Battle faced numerous challenges and prejudices. However, his strong character and determination guided him towards a different path. With the support of his family, he pursued an education and eventually moved to New York City in search of better opportunities.



One Righteous Man: Samuel Battle and the Shattering of the Color Line in New York

by Arthur Browne (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 3932 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled

Print length : 336 pages



A Trailblazing Career

Battle began his career as a porter on a railroad and later worked as a ship's waiter. Despite these humble beginnings, he always aspired to have a more significant impact on his community. In 1911, Battle took the Civil Service exam to become a New York City police officer, and after passing with flying colors, he was officially appointed as the first African-American officer in the NYPD on June 28, 1911.

Battle's appointment in the police force created a seismic shift in the racial dynamics of New York City. Before his breakthrough, African-Americans were primarily employed in menial positions and faced discrimination and inequality. Battle's presence in the force challenged these norms, inspiring other African-Americans to pursue careers in law enforcement and other previously inaccessible fields.

Challenges and Triumphs

As the first Black police officer, Battle faced immense obstacles and racism within the department. He was initially assigned to the all-Black precinct known as the 28th Precinct, where he worked diligently and gained respect from his colleagues and community. Battle's dedication and professionalism paved the way for his eventual transfer to a predominantly White precinct, where he continued to excel.

During the racially charged period of the Harlem Renaissance, Battle's presence in the police force helped ease tensions between the African-American community and law enforcement. He bridged the gap between the police and the community by actively participating in community outreach programs and engaging with residents on a personal level. His efforts were instrumental in building trust and understanding.

An Enduring Legacy

Battle's accomplishments and impact extended beyond his time as a police officer. In 1941, he became the first African-American sergeant in the NYPD and later, in 1951, he achieved the rank of lieutenant, once again breaking barriers for future generations.

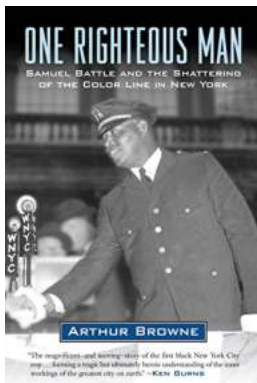
Samuel Battle's legacy as a trailblazer and role model for racial equality continued long after his retirement. He inspired countless young African-

Americans to believe in their abilities and pushed for greater representation within law enforcement. His courage, determination, and perseverance shattered the color line not only in the NYPD but also in society at large.

In

Samuel Battle's remarkable journey is a testament to the power of one individual's determination and commitment to justice. His unwavering spirit paved the way for future generations of African-Americans in law enforcement. Battle's legacy reminds us that no matter how challenging the circumstances, it is possible to break down barriers and shatter the color line. The story of Samuel Battle is one that should be celebrated and remembered, as his actions continue to inspire us to fight for equality and justice in all aspects of life.

New York City Parks



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Winner of the Christopher Award and the New York City Book Award

Winner of the 2016 Wheatley Book Award in Nonfiction

A history of African Americans in New York City from the 1910s to 1960, told through the life of Samuel Battle, the New York Police Department's first black officer.

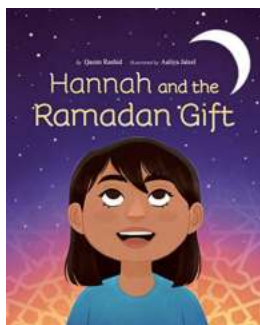
When Samuel Battle broke the color line as New York City's first African American cop in the second decade of the twentieth century, he had to fear his racist colleagues as much as criminals. He had to be three times better than his white peers, and many times more resilient. His life was threatened. He was displayed like a circus animal. Yet, fearlessly claiming his rights, he prevailed in a four-decade odyssey that is both the story of one man's courageous dedication to racial progress and a harbinger of the divisions between police and the people they serve that plague twenty-first-century America.

By dint of brains, brawn, and an outsized personality, Battle rode the forward wave of African American history in New York. He circulated among renowned turn-of-the-century entertainers and writers. He weathered threatening hostility as a founding citizen of black Harlem. He served as "godfather" to the regiment of black soldiers that won glory in World War I as the "Hellfighters of Harlem." He befriended sports stars like Joe Louis, Jesse Owens, and Sugar Ray Robinson, and he bonded with legendary tap dancer Bill "Bojangles" Robinson. Along the way, he mentored an equally smart, equally tough young man in a still more brutal fight to integrate the New York Fire Department.

At the close of his career, Battle looked back proudly on the against-all-odd journey taken by a man who came of age as the son of former slaves in the South. He had navigated the corruption of Tammany Hall, the treachery of gangsters like Lucky Luciano and Dutch Schultz, the anything-goes era of

Prohibition, the devastation of the Depression, and the race riots that erupted in Harlem in the 1930s and 1940s. By then he was a trusted aide to Mayor Fiorello La Guardia and a friend to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt.

Realizing that his story was the story of race in New York across the first half of the century, Battle commissioned a biography to be written by none other than Langston Hughes, the preeminent voice of the Harlem Renaissance. But their eighty-thousand-word collaboration failed to find a publisher, and has remained unpublished since. Using Hughes's manuscript, which is quoted liberally throughout this book, as well as his own archival research and interviews with survivors, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Arthur Browne has created an important and compelling social history of New York, revealed a fascinating episode in the life of Langston Hughes, and delivered the riveting life and times of a remarkable and unjustly forgotten man, setting Samuel Battle where he belongs in the pantheon of American civil rights pioneers.



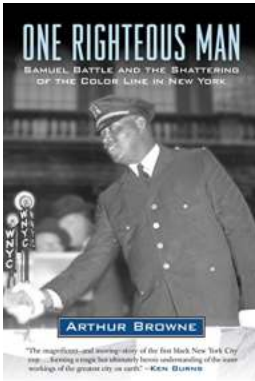
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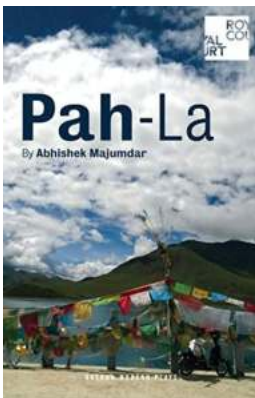
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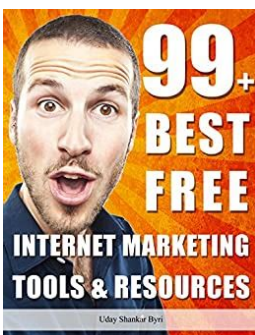
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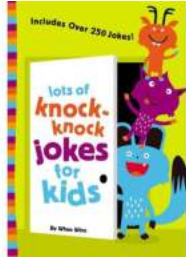
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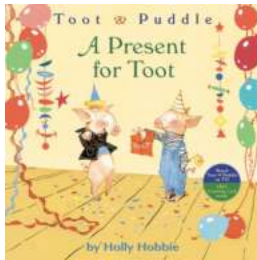
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