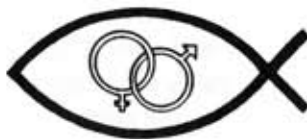


- ⁸ Leslie Morgan, "Why Are Girls Obsessed With Their Weight?", *Seventeen*, November 1989, p. 118.
- ⁹ Cheryl Rosenthal, "Women As Waif," *Challenging Media Images of Women*, Volume 5, Number 4, Fall 1993.
- ¹⁰ Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, New York: William Morrow, 1991.
- ¹¹ Leslie Morgan, "Why Are Girls Obsessed With Their Weight?", *Seventeen*, November 1989, p. 118.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 118.
- ¹³ "Diet Shams?", *Shape*, March 1994, p. 25B.
- ¹⁴ Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, New York: William Morrow, 1991.
- ¹⁵ Leslie Morgan, "Why Are Girls Obsessed With Their Weight?", *Seventeen*, November 1989, p. 118.
- ¹⁶ Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, New York: William Morrow, 1991.



CBE BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

Theme: "Empowered by the Word"

Date: July 6 - 9, 1995

Place: Gordon College campus,
outside Boston, MA

Plan Now to Attend!



"A WILD GOOSE CHASE" or, ELLA SHEPPARD & THE JUBILEE SINGERS

Jo Ellen Heil

"The slave songs represented things to be forgotten... We finally grew willing to sing them privately. We practiced softly... But the demand of the public changed this. Soon the land rang with our slave songs."

Ella Sheppard, 1871

Seven women. Four men. They called themselves The Jubilee Singers. One of America's most astonishing successes, their music once rang out across the land. They changed the fabric of our culture by introducing spirituals to the American public for the first time. Yet their stories have been hushed.

Founded in 1866 for African-Americans, Nashville's Fisk University seemed doomed for closure by 1871. Student Ella Sheppard recalled, "There was no money even for food. A special prayer was offered for the next meal."

Led by their music instructor, students like Sheppard, Maggie Porter and America Robinson decided to risk it all. On October 6, 1871, the small choir set out to "sing the money out of the hearts and pockets" of Northern audiences. Scoffers called it "a wild goose chase." Eight months later the Singers paid off Fisk's debts.

The choir then took Europe by storm. Performing before royalty and general audiences alike, they paved the way for many African-Americans who followed, artists like Sissieretta Jones and Marian Anderson. Their confidence grew. Sheppard had once slipped into her music teacher's home after dark, "so that no one would see the black pupil." In Berlin she wrote, "After the concert many came up to congratulate us."

After raising over \$150,000 The Jubilee Singers disbanded in 1878. They had brought the cause of African-American education to millions. Sheppard returned home, becoming a teacher and community leader. Robinson remained abroad to study languages and music. Seeking new challenges in an era that offered painfully few options to African-American women, they continued to touch the world.

Let us applaud them.

Jo Ellen Heil is a free-lance writer who has taught history at Oxnard College. She received an M.A. in history, and specializes in teaching women's history.