

Women on the Money: Treasury Makes the Right Decision

May 3, 2016

The selection of Harriet Tubman, Union spy, anti-slavery activist and leader of the Underground Railroad risking her life to escort slaves to freedom in Canada, for the face of the \$20 bill was right on the money. The decision was announced by Treasury Secretary Jacob “Jack” Lew in April that Tubman would replace Andrew Jackson (known for his racist views and forced dislocation of Native Americans resulting in many deaths along the notorious Trail of Tears). Unfortunately, Jackson will remain on the back of the \$20 bill, but some have pointed out that the Tubman-Jackson depiction on the same denomination will offer a “teachable moment.” We can support that. The twenty dollar bill is set for a re-design (including measures to foil counterfeiters) and issuance by 2030.

Suffrage Leaders to Appear on the Ten - Also announced is that a re-designed \$10 bill will replace the current picture of the Treasury building on the back with a depiction of the 1913 march in support of women’s right to vote that ended at the building, along with the portraits of the five suffrage leaders: Lucretia Mott, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Alice Paul and Susan B. Anthony.

An unexpected announcement by Treasury for a re-design of the \$5 bill indicates that the back side of the denomination would continue to feature the Lincoln Memorial, but as a background for the historic 1939 performance there by Marion Anderson. Anderson, the African-American classical singer, who was refused permission by the Daughters of the American Revolution to perform before an integrated audience at Constitutional Hall. Sharing space on the new depiction will be former First Lady, diplomat and civil rights activist Eleanor Roosevelt who made it possible for Anderson to perform at the Lincoln Memorial and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. with his equally historic “I have a Dream Speech” at the Memorial in 1963. Both events drew hundreds of thousands to the Lincoln Memorial.

New Designs Revealed in 2020 - The new designs are to be revealed in 2020 – which is also the centennial of the 19th Amendment recognizing women’s right to vote - but will not immediately go into distribution. The new \$10 bill will be the first to be released; reportedly, Secretary Lew directed the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to expedite the redesign of the \$20 and \$5 notes at the same time. It is expected that all three denominations could be available for wide use by 2030.

The National Organization for Women sent a letter to Secretary Lew and U.S. Treasurer Rosie Gumataotao Rios in January, who oversees the Bureau, urging that a prominent woman replace Jackson, while also placing a women’s suffrage vignette on the opposite side of the \$10 bill, keeping Alexander Hamilton on the currency. NOW further encouraged Treasury to eventually depict women on all denominations and to make their selections from the rich national history of women who committed their lives to achieving equality for all women, while recognizing the multiple barriers faced by women in communities of color, women with disabilities and women in the LGBTQIA community. Our letter was accompanied by an [Issue Advisory - Right on the Money: Parity for Women on Our Currency](#), which appears on the NOW website.

NOW’s support for keeping Hamilton on the ten dollar bill related to what we saw as an important continuing recognition of Hamilton as the first secretary of the Treasury and creator of the foundation of the country’s financial system. Reportedly, Broadway writer/composer/singer Lin-Manuel Miranda, creator of the hip hop musical *Hamilton* appealed to Treasury officials to keep Hamilton on the ten dollar bill. Miranda and *Hamilton* have just received 16 nominations for the Tony awards.

More Reading:

The New \$5 Note, The New \$10 Note, The New \$20 Note (with historic photographs), <https://modernmoney.treasury.gov/>

Harriet Tubman Ousts Andrew Jackson in Change for a \$20, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/21/us/women-currency-treasury-harriet-tubman.html?_r=0
Harriet Tubman, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harriet_Tubman
Andrew Jackson, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Jackson
Marion Anderson, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marian_Anderson
Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" Speech,
<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkhaveadream.htm>