

Resource Sheet #3

Key Notes

- Born free in the slave city of Baltimore
- Orphaned at age 3
- Was brought up by an Aunt and Uncle William J. Watkins
- Uncle William was a shoemaker by trade
- Uncle William was an abolitionist
- Uncle William was a teacher at a small school
- Frances attended school until she was 13 years old, in Baltimore
- She went to work as a servant in the household of a Baltimore bookstore
- She authored *Forest Leaves*, a collection of poems and essays
- In 1854, she authored *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects*
- She became a teacher and then a lecturer
- Around 1847, "Blacks were also prominent in the abolition movement as agents and speakers for various societies." She was "among the best-known agents" (Franklin & Moss, 2004, p. 200).
- She married Fenton Harper when she was 35 (Sterling, 1984)
- They had a daughter named Mary
- In 1887 she went to New York with her daughter Mary for the annual Congress of the Association for the Advancement of Women
- She wrote "Our Greatest Want," an essay
- In 1858, while John Brown was in prison awaiting execution for trying to free slaves, Frances Watkins wrote to Brown and his wife (Sterling, 1984).
- She wrote *Aunt Chleo, Moses*, a long narrative poem, and *Iola Leroy*, a novel
- She worked under the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union; founded the National Association of Colored Women
- She died in Philadelphia in 1911