



NATIONAL ARCHIVES
FOUNDATION

2021 Cokie Roberts Women's History Fellow

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Proposal Abstract:

My research at the National Archives focused on the Civil War espionage and postbellum activism of the nineteenth-century African American woman who is most often misremembered – when she is remembered at all – as "Mary Bowser." While Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Jacobs, and other nineteenth-century black women activists have received substantial attention from biographers and historians, most of what circulates in print and online regarding "Mary Bowser" is flagrantly inaccurate. As I research and write the first scholarly study of the life of this historically significant but elusive figure, I have been working in archives around the country to document her contributions accurately, using her wartime and postbellum activities to illuminate larger topics and themes in American history, particular women's history and black history.

I undertook my research at the National Archives in Washington DC and in College Park MD. The opportunity to consult thousands of documents across many different Record Groups held in these two locations was invaluable.