



BELLUM



CREATED BY

Michelle Boback
Adria Budd Johnson
Paula Jean Hixson

bellum ['bɛl əm] : *n.* Latin for war



Women have always been an equal part of the past.

*We just haven't been a part of **H**istory.*

~ Gloria Steinem ~

OVERVIEW

The American Civil War is, quite literally, the most defining event in U.S. history. The outcome of this war would change the lives of every woman, man, and child for generations to come. In many ways, Americans are still wrestling with the aftermath, as seen in the ongoing racial and ideological divide and the rise of nationalism.

While the subject matter has been visited and revisited, what has never been shown is the extraordinary and vast network of women - young, old, black, white, rich, poor, enslaved, free - who risked their lives helping to steer the course of the war.



From spying and gathering intelligence, to tossing their antebellum gowns for a soldier's uniform and rifle, to nursing the sick, wounded, and dying, to being one of Lincoln's trusted advisors, these women gave themselves, body and soul, to the cause. They used everything in their power to fight in the name of their own politics and freedoms.



Antebellum America preferred its women demure, dainty, and quiet. But the division over freedom for enslaved people and potential loss of the Southern way of life caused passions to flare dramatically. In a time when the Union was fighting to end slavery, women everywhere were choosing sides, digging in their heels and fighting every way they could. Their collective spirits and achievements hold an indelible place in history.



THE SERIES

Based on actual events, BELLUM is an eight episode, one-hour historical dramatic series that follows the exploits of the real-life women who, through espionage, political influence, and military action, helped steer the course of the American Civil War.

This ensemble cast of female spies, abolitionists, medics, political advisors, and soldiers go to extraordinary lengths to defend their rights and beliefs, and influence male decision makers. BELLUM explores this period of devastating loss that became a defining era in the rise of modern feminism.



THE PILOT

∞ *Interregnum* ∞

In the wake of the 1860 Presidential election, Union and Confederate women launch themselves into action in preparation for the inevitable war. In the pilot episode:

~ Activist Harriet Tubman rescues her niece and leads a group of escaped enslaved people to Canada via the Underground Railroad.

~ Abolitionist matriarch Bet Van Lew gathers her forces in Richmond, as she navigates Virginia law to get her dear friend and future spy Mary Jane Richards out of prison.

~ Southern belle Rose Greenhow seduces secrets from politicians in D.C., while Elizabeth Keckley, a black business owner, lands her dream contract at the White House.

~ Journalist Anna Ella Carroll exposes an impending coup, and female detective Kate Warne thwarts an assassination attempt on Lincoln en route to the Inauguration.



HISTORICAL & CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

The Media

In striking parallel to today's political climate, media and communication technology played huge roles in keeping citizens informed, swaying public opinion, and rallying support during the Civil War. It was the first war to use telegraph communication and the first to be photographed. The proliferation of journalism and print media skyrocketed during this period, as citizens hungry for information about not only the fate of their fighting loved ones, but that of the future of the nation, devoured newspapers and pamphlets.



NEWS BY TELEGRAPH.
FROM WASHINGTON
AND THE WAR.
Secretary Stanton's Official
Bulletin.



ANTI-SLAVERY MEETINGS!

Anti-Slavery Meetings will be held in this place, to commence on _____ in the _____

To be Addressed by

Agents of the Western ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

Three millions of your fellow beings are in chains—the Church and Government sustains the horrible system of oppression.

Turn Out!

AND LEARN YOUR DUTY TO YOURSELVES, THE SLAVE AND GOD.

EMANCIPATION or DISSOLUTION, and a FREE



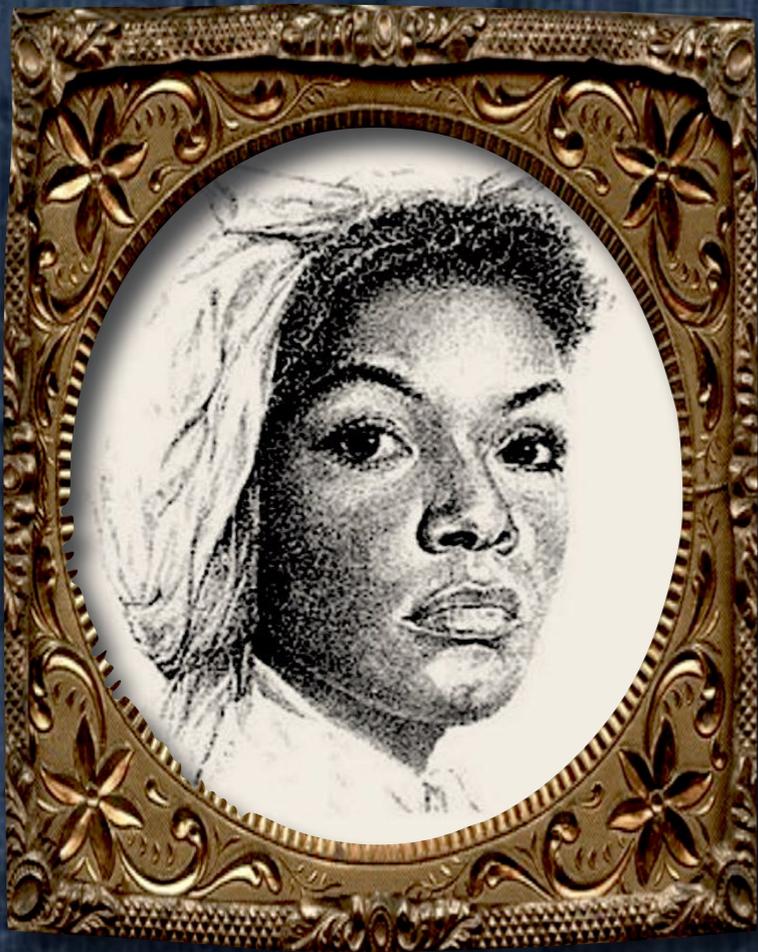
The Movements

Decades of protest, outrage, and conflict over the rights and freedoms of African-Americans and women culminated in this long, bloody era of devastation. Though they did not always see eye to eye, black and white abolitionists joined forces with women's rights advocates to grow and fortify their respective movements. They spoke at each other's conventions and published their own newspapers to raise support for the ideologies of liberty and equality for every person in America. The echoes of these uprisings still ring in the Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movements of the 21st century.

U N I O N

Affiliates





MARY JANE 'MJ' RICHARDS, 19

Brilliant, clever, contrary. Born free into the Van Lew family household, MJ was educated in Philadelphia, however being Black and literate means it's illegal for her to live in Virginia. She is a vital member of the Van Lew spy ring with her photographic memory, ability to engineer and craft gear and tools for spying and smuggling, and penchant for disguise. She becomes one of the Union's most successful operatives when she is installed in the Confederate White House in Richmond, pretending to be a 'dim-witted but hard-working slave', which gives her daily access to Jefferson Davis' office.

ELIZABETH 'BET' VAN LEW, 42

A compassionate, commanding, and resourceful abolitionist in the capitol of the Confederacy. Bet runs an extensive and prolific Union spy ring in Richmond from her family's mansion, utilizing their well-established Underground Railroad network which includes her mother, brother, their household of freed men and women, and a broader network of those loyal to the Van Lews and their cause. As a prominent, wealthy spinster in Richmond society, 'Crazy Bet' feigns mental illness as a cover and distraction from her work to undermine the Southern agenda.



KATE WARNE, 27

The first female spy in the Pinkerton Detective Agency, Kate is appointed head of the women's division. Self-assured with an honest, trustworthy demeanor, Kate is able to draw out information from people in ways that men can't. She goes undercover as a Southern belle and discovers a plot to assassinate Lincoln on his way to his inauguration in 1861. She plans the diversion that thwarts the assassination and she and the Pinkertons become Lincoln's security team at the inauguration and beyond. Kate continues her spy work while also training and overseeing the Pinkerton Women's division, who sourced intelligence that was crucial to the Union's success throughout the war.



ELIZABETH KECKLEY, 42

Fashion designer and dressmaker to Mary Todd Lincoln, Varina Davis and many of Washington D.C.'s elite. Keckley is diligent, hardworking, resilient and trustworthy, whether she's saving up to buy freedom for herself and her son, navigating being a black female entrepreneur, or being the FLOTUS' confidante and friend. She utilizes her contacts and relationships with politicians and wealthy Union supporters to raise money and supplies for the Contraband Relief Association as well as the Ladies' Freedmen and Soldier's Relief Associations — organizations she founds and supports to aid the freed enslaved people pouring into D.C.



ANNA ELLA CARROLL, 45

Confident, savvy, and well-versed in navigating social dynamics for political gain, Anna is fluent in both politics and constitutional law, a military strategist, anti-slavery spokesperson, and political writer. Her publications and lobbying are instrumental in keeping Maryland in the Union, thereby keeping Washington D.C. from being completely surrounded by Southern states. Anna becomes an unofficial member of Lincoln's cabinet and a key military advisor, she devises and authors several successful plans of attack, though she constantly battles for recognition and compensation due to her gender.

HARRIET TUBMAN, 39

Her diminutive size and meager, measured words belies her indomitable will. She uses her vast network of loyal supporters and years of hard-earned experience to successfully liberate hundreds of black people. Despite the challenges of having narcolepsy resulting from a childhood beating by an overseer, Harriet aids the Union in many capacities — scout, spy, nurse, contraband liaison. Well-respected by generals, she travels freely with her own Union military pass, procuring necessary supplies as would any officer. She leads several raids for the Union in the South including the most successful at Combahee River, earning her the title of General Tubman.



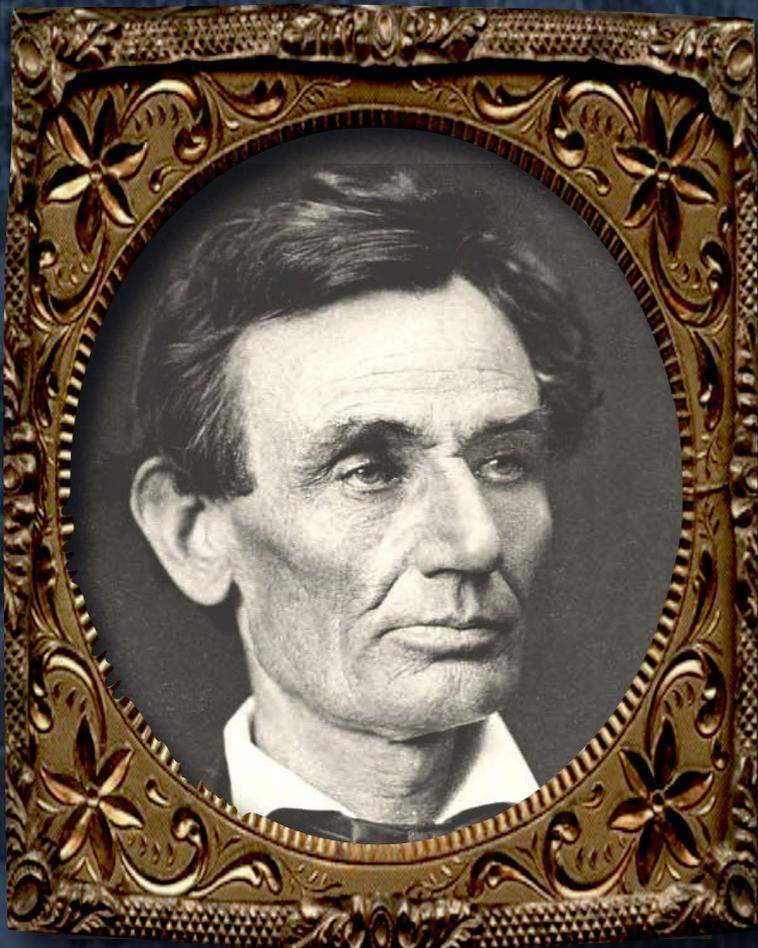
MARY TODD LINCOLN, 42

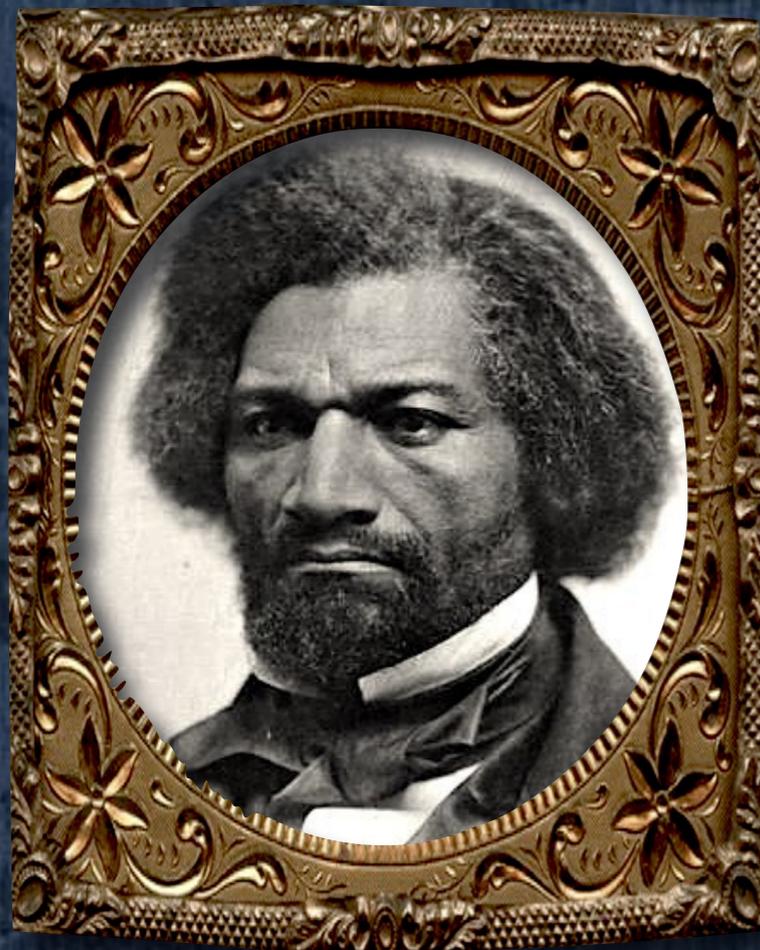
A brittle but feisty woman who struggles with the long term grief of her son Edward's death in 1850. She is ill-prepared for the challenging time ahead for her, her husband, and their children in the White House during the Civil War and her mental health suffers greatly. Her enthusiasm for the dressmaking talents of her new confidante and friend Elizabeth Keckley prove costly to Mary in public opinion and fuels critics' condemnation of her expenditures on lavish gowns and entertaining. When son, Willie, dies in the White House in Feb 1862, Mary goes into a deep, long mourning. She turns to spiritualism to process her grief and holds seances in the White House.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN, 51

16th President of the United States. Self-educated lawyer, avid reader, orator, and storyteller. Abe is pragmatic yet idealistic. He is wise and humble enough to choose safety when he is alerted that Kate Warne and the Pinkerton operatives have discovered an assassination plot to be attempted on his route into D.C. for the inauguration. Lincoln is challenged by the scope, scale, and economics of the war. He comes to rely on Anna Ella Carroll for political and military strategy. He seeks council from Elizabeth Keckley on navigating not only his wife's mercurial moods, but also for a solution to the ever-increasing numbers of escaped enslaved people from the South seeking sanctuary in D.C.





FREDERICK DOUGLASS, 42

Abolitionist leader, orator, human rights activist, author, statesman. Born into slavery, Douglass escaped to freedom via the Underground Railroad. An eloquent and dazzling speaker, he is renowned for his speeches on anti-slavery, suffrage, and woman's rights. As the Civil War builds he is very vocal about rights for blacks to enlist and fight for their own freedom. He becomes a prominent recruiter for the Union and two of his sons enlist and fight in a number of battles.

ALLAN PINKERTON, 41

Detective, spy, and staunch abolitionist. This adventurous, gregarious Glaswegian's home was a stop on the Underground Railroad for years. He, colleague Kate Warne, and his team of operatives discover and thwart a plot to assassinate Lincoln on route to the 1861 inauguration. The Pinkerton Agency becomes Lincoln's security service and the precursor to the US Secret Service. Pinkerton establishes a women's division, headed by Warne, which is very successful in its intelligence missions.



CONFEDERATE

Affiliates





ROSE O'NEAL GREENHOW, 46

Prominent Washington D.C. socialite, widow, mother of four daughters and enthusiastic spy for the Confederacy. A popular hostess, Rose has many friends and gentlemen callers in high places. Rose gathers and delivers crucial information about Union troops to General Beauregard, which leads to a Southern victory at First Bull Run. She is the kingpin of an elaborate, mostly-female Confederate spy network, and very adept at using her considerable charm and sensuality to illicit valuable intelligence, even while under house arrest and later as an inmate at Old Capitol Prison with her youngest daughter, Little Rose.

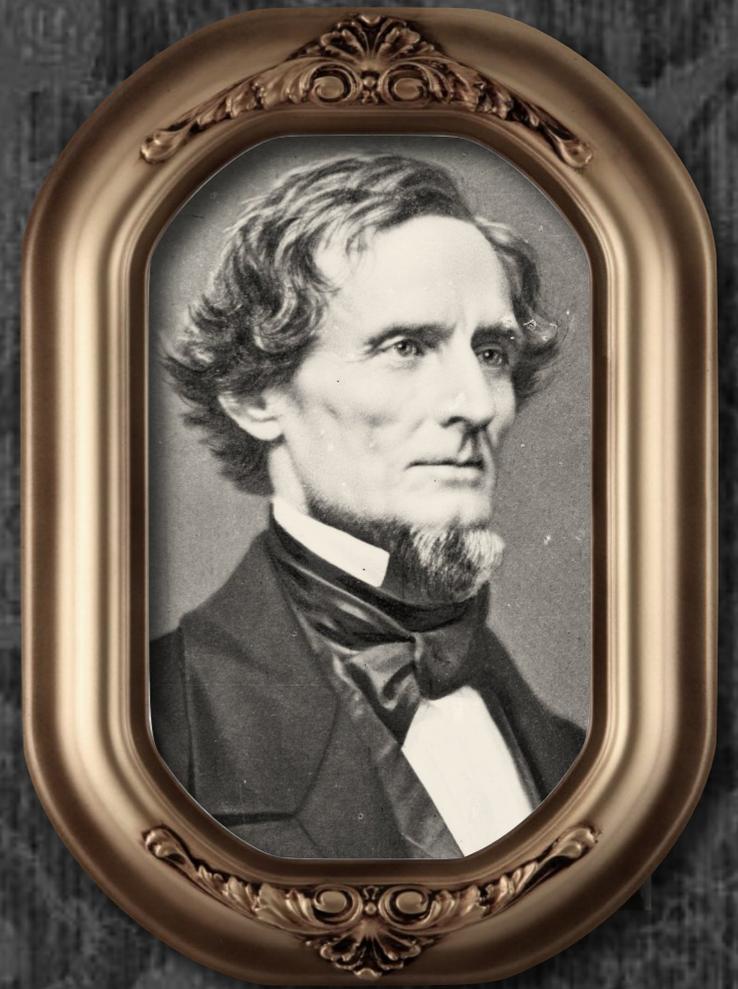
VARINA DAVIS, 34

First Lady of the Confederacy. Known for her lively repartee, acute intellect, and fierce convictions. Born and raised in the South on her family's plantation, she was educated in the North and deeply influenced by the forward thinking. When husband Jefferson resigns from the Senate to become President of the Confederacy, she is outwardly supportive, but has severe misgivings about the impending war. Despite her affinity for D.C., Varina begrudgingly moves back to the South with her two children, and secretly maintains contact with friends in the North throughout the war. With her dark features and outspoken opinions, Varina's ethnic origins and commitment to the cause are questioned by fellow southerners.



JEFFERSON DAVIS, 52

A patriotic, loyal, serious and principled man prone to melancholy. A West Point graduate, veteran of the Mexican-American War and former Secretary of War, Jefferson is heartbroken to resign from Congress when Mississippi secedes. Though willing to serve in whatever way necessary, he is severely conflicted upon being appointed President of the Confederacy. He relies heavily on Varina as a sounding board and for emotional support.



JEB STUART, 27

Brilliant and flamboyant leader of the Confederacy's nearly invincible cavalry in the first half of the war. Wears a plumed hat and cloak. Works closely with Rose Greenhow and her spy network of adoring teenaged girls. He is the embodiment of white male privilege and JEB enjoys every minute of his charmed life.



SEASON 1 ARC

Fort Sumter to First Bull Run

After Lincoln is sworn in, the attack on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, kicks off a call to arms and thrusts our women into high gear in anticipation of the coming war:

Harriet returns from an Underground Railroad run to Canada and uses her skills to help the Union Army.

Bet uses her home to smuggle Union delegates and captured supporters out of Richmond as the city becomes increasingly dangerous. She tries to maintain her Southern facade while secretly aiding Unionists.

Mary Jane marries in order to stay in Virginia. She begins inventing gadgets for the Van Lew spying operation.

Anna uses everything at her disposal to keep Maryland from seceding. She writes the defence of Lincoln's right to suspend the writ of habeas corpus during the Baltimore Riots.

Kate infiltrates Rose's household in disguise to gather evidence that she is a Confederate spy.

Keckley staves off repeated requests to spy from within the White House. Her fair-skinned son enlists in the Union Army.

Rose uses every trick in the book to illicit information from Washington politicians. The information she gets to JEB Stuart helps the Confederates to win the First Battle of Bull Run.

CREATORS



ADRIA BUDD JOHNSON

Adria is an Edmonton-born, Toronto-based writer-producer with over 20 years in television, feature film and animation production and development. She wrote on the first Computer Animated TV series, REBOOT, was on the creative team for two IMAX Ridefilms and produced and digitally distributed her first feature and numerous short films. Projects in development include: Level Films feature film S.O.S., the first Philippines-Canadian Treaty Co-production, starring Amybeth McNulty, with director Brett Sullivan, feature film REMIND ME, from award winning writer Andrew Rai Berzins and director Eric Johnson, and feature documentary on the controversial Indian Bandit Queen-turned-Parliamentarian Phoolan Devi.

MICHELLE BOBACK

Michelle's career in entertainment has spanned on all sides of the camera, from her degree in VFX, to acting for film, video games, and voice, to screenwriting. She has also produced, directed, and edited music videos for Lily Frost and BOBÄCK. Michelle is an award-winning actress with multiple nominations for her screen and voice performances. She is a singer-songwriter who independently produces music for herself (BOBÄCK) and Jennifer Hale, and is gunning for her feature directorial debut. She is based in Los Angeles.



PAULA JEAN HIXSON

A dual citizen of the US and Canada, Paula Jean has been an actor in film, television, voice, theatre, commercials, and video games for nearly 25 years. Most recently, she wrote, produced, and co-starred in the multi-award-winning action-comedy short film ARE YOU MY MOMMY, which deals with the challenges and discrimination women face in the entertainment industry. Among other awards, the film won Best Comedy at the Artemis Women in Action Film Festival, and Paula Jean won Best Actress in the Independent Shorts Awards. With an eye on continuing her pursuits behind the camera, she is currently writing and developing female-driven projects in both narrative and documentary. After spending most of her adult life in Montreal, she is currently based in Los Angeles.



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