



## ABRAHAM LINCOLN BRIGADE ARCHIVES

Summer Institute for Teachers: 2009

La Retaguardia de Tampa:

The Spanish Civil War and its Impact on Florida and U.S. History

Women in Spanish Civil War: Salaria Kea and Evelyn Hutchins

Participant Lesson Plan: Kristina Lawrence

Course: Women Studies

Objective: Students will understand the important role women played in the Spanish Civil War. Although a minority, women risked their lives to help in the fight against Fascism in Western Europe prior to World War II.

Materials:

- **[Biography and Photo of Evelyn Hutchins \(Alba Website\)](#)**

<http://www.alba-valb.org/volunteers/evelyn-rahman-hutchins/?searchterm=hutchins>

- **[Excerpt from interview with Evelyn Hutchins \(Alba Website\)](#)**

<http://www.alba-valb.org/volunteers/evelyn-rahman-hutchins/?searchterm=hutchins>

- **[Biography and Photos of Salaria Kea \(Alba Website\)](#)**

<http://www.alba-valb.org/volunteers/salaria-kea/?searchterm=salaria>

- DVD, "The Good Fight: The Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War" Kino, July 2008. Re-release of 1984 Documentary, directed by Sam Sills, Mary Dore and Noel Buckner. Purchase on ALBA web site.
- DVD, "Into the Fire: Women and the Spanish Civil War," (2002) Director: Julia Newman . Purchase on ALBA website.

Resources: [www.alba-valb.org](http://www.alba-valb.org)

## Day #1

1. Distribute short biographies for both Salaria and Evelyn, giving students a brief understanding of the context of the two women.
2. Read aloud with students the two biographies.
3. Have students record in notebook a T-chart on the two women, such as their job description, time period, reasons for volunteering, struggles faced, and outcome of work in the war.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION- Despite all the obstacles these two women experienced, they both succeeded in volunteering their skills in the Spanish Civil War. It is possible to achieve your goals against society norms.

Discrimination based on race and gender, Society norms for gender in the 1930s, etc.

## Day #2

1. Review and discuss with students both Evelyn and Salaria's role in the war.
2. Show video clips, "The Good Fight, The Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War". Focus on the interviews of the two women.
3. Each share interesting perspectives and experiences, instruct students to add quotes to T-chart for both of the women.
4. Assign students to create a character collage on the Female Spanish American War Volunteer of their choice. Instruct students to use the information from the study on the two women, biographies, video notes and T-Chart.

Make photos of Evelyn and Salaria available to students. Instruct students to choose the war hero that is most interesting to them.

Instruct students to surround the photo with information from the study.

Job description, reasons for volunteering, obstacles faced 2 symbols that represent the female of choice, quote from video. Instruct students to create a slogan that will represent the struggles faced by the female of choice.

Upon completion the students will be able to express their feelings and share one aspect of their character collage with the class.

**Short biography of Salaria Kea**  
**Excerpt taken from [www.alba-valb.org](http://www.alba-valb.org)**  
**Republican Spain**

Salaria's activities centered with the more progressive nurses. Together they attended lectures and discussions on civic affairs, local, national, international. These discussions helped her to understand what was happening in Harlem and its relationship to events in Europe and Africa. German fascism and its attack on Races, Italy's raid on Ethiopia. Now Spain. When Italy invaded Ethiopia she was ready. With groups of Harlem nurses and physicians she assisted in gathering the first two tons of medical supplies and dressings sent from this country to Ethiopia. She was active in the drive Harlem physicians initiated and which resulted in a 75 bed field hospital being sent to Ethiopia.



When Mussolini advanced his Italian troops from Ethiopia into Spain she understood that this was the same fight. She had developed enough to understand it. On March 27, 1937 she sailed from New York with the second American Medical Unit to Republican Spain. A party of twelve nurses and physicians. Salaria was the only Negro in this group. Hundreds of Negro boys had preceded her. They had gone as soldiers, physicians, and ambulance drivers. She was the first Negro woman to go.

It was April third when the party reached Port Bou, Spain. A huge delegation of Spanish men, women and children came down to welcome them. A small boy left the crowd and came over to Salaria. Taking her hand he complained softly,

"Why didn't you come yesterday?"

"Why yesterday?" Salaria asked him.

"Because yesterday the fascists came in their planes and dropped bombs. My mother and my father and my small brothers died. We had no doctors and nurses to care for them after the bombs struck. Stay here. If the fascists return with bombs maybe all of us would be killed if you don't stay here."

Official instructions directed that they set up their hospital at Villa Paz near Madrid. Villa Paz had been the summer home of King Alfonso XIII, deserted since his abdication in 1931. It was a beautiful, low, white palace set in a lovely garden. There was a brilliantly tiled swimming pool screened by tall cypress trees. The palace was now occupied by cows and goats. The peasants still lived in the

cramped, damp hovels. The floors were dirt. For heat they burned dry cow dung on top of a tile stove built in the corner. The peasants were so accustomed to poverty and hardship that even now they did not dare move into the King's abandoned palace. Instead they turned it over to the cattle.

This was Salaria's first concrete example of discrimination where race was not a factor. Here it was peasantry versus nobility. The peasants had previously accepted the belief that nothing could be done about it just as Harlem nurses had earlier accepted racial discrimination in the hospital dining room. Like the Harlem nurses the peasants were now learning that something could be done about it. One resisted, one fought, liberty could be a reality. There was nothing inviolable about the old prejudices. They could be changed and justice established.

The American Medical Unit, with the authorization of the Republican Government of Spain, turned the cows out at once. They cleaned the building and set up the first American base hospital in Spain. The cows went back to live in the mud floored huts of the peasants.

It was in March when her hospital unit suffered a particularly heavy bombardment. The group was eating dinner under the trees and counting the bullets that splattered about the field from the low flying enemy planes. Suddenly the signal was given "Cover! In the trenches!" Lying flat, face buried in the earth floor of the trench she heard a tremendous explosion. Some time later she was uncovered and dug out from under six feet of rock, shell and earth. A bomb had exploded at the end of the trench.

The resulting injury left her unfit for further hospital service. She was furloughed home. She reported at once for service with the Medical Bureau in New York. She has given particular attention to securing medical supplies - so desperately needed - for the people in Spain. Her experience with them gives her first hand knowledge of the great need. It is difficult, she says to see so much goods everywhere and to recall how many times a patient's life was lost from infection just because there was no surgical dressing or the simplest of antiseptics. And so during these months of convalescing Salaria Kee is travelling through the country urging aid to the people of Spain, medical aid, food.

"Negro men have given up their lives there," she says, "as courageously as any heroes of any age. Surely Negro people will just as willingly give of their means to relieve the suffering of a people attacked by the enemy of all racial minorities, - fascism - and its most aggressive exponents - Italy and Germany.