



An E-Newsletter from the Holmes Cultural Diversity Center and the Office of Diversity and Equity Programs

National African American History Month **February 1 – February 28**

THE DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Aretha Jones-Cook and Carson C. Cook, Jr.

Every February, in the United States, we observe National African American History Month--also known as "Black History Month"—in order to celebrate and honor the many achievements and contributions made by African Americans to our nation's economic, cultural, spiritual, and political development.

We owe the celebration of Black History Month, and more importantly, the study of black history to Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson. Born to parents who were former slaves, he spent his childhood working in the Kentucky coal mines and enrolled in high school at age twenty. He graduated within two years and later went on to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University.

In 1915, Dr. Woodson founded The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. Through that Association, he began pressing for the establishment of Negro History Week as a way to bring national attention to the accomplishments of African Americans. He hoped to neutralize the apparent distortions in Black history and to provide a more objective and scholarly balance to American and World history.

Dr. Woodson's dream became a reality in 1926. He chose the second week of February for the observance because of its proximity to the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, two individuals whom Dr. Woodson felt had dramatically affected the lives of African Americans. In the early 1970's, the event was called Black History Week; and in 1976, the Association succeeded in expanding the observance, which then became Black History Month.

For generations, African Americans have strengthened our Nation by urging reforms, overcoming obstacles, and breaking down barriers. We see the greatness of America in those who have risen above injustice and enriched our society; greatness reflected in the resolve of Jackie Robinson, the intellect of W.E.B. DuBois, and the talent of Louis Armstrong. We also gain a deeper appreciation for the African American experience in the writings of James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, and Zora Neal Hurston, as well as in the music of Mahalia Jackson, Billie Holiday, Duke Ellington, and countless others.



[Dr. Carter G. Woodson](#)

African Americans reflect a proud legacy of courage and dedication that has helped to guide our Nation's success and prosperity. Visionary leaders like Frederick Douglass, Thurgood Marshall, and Martin Luther King, Jr., possessed clarity of purpose and were instrumental in exposing and addressing the issues that threatened our founding principles. The battle for freedom, equality, and opportunity was fought on the front lines by strong figures such as Harriet Tubman and Fannie Lou Hamer, as well as many other everyday heroes who helped to lead this Nation to a more hopeful and just society.

As we recall these remarkable individuals, we also recognize that, despite our progress, racial prejudice still exists in America. As a Nation and as individuals, we must be vigilant in responding to discrimination wherever we find it. By promoting diversity, understanding, and opportunity, we will continue our efforts to build a society where every person, of every race, can realize the promise of America.

African American history is American history!

**Internet Links to
African American
Pan Hellenic
Organizations
(The Divine Nine)**

Sororities

[Alpha Kappa Alpha](#)
[Delta Sigma Theta](#)
[Zeta Phi Beta](#)
[Sigma Gamma Rho](#)

Fraternities

[Alpha Phi Alpha](#)
[Kappa Alpha Psi](#)
[Omega Psi Phi](#)
[Phi Beta Sigma](#)
[Iota Phi Theta](#)



Coach Carter made national news in 1999 when he benched his entire undefeated basketball team for poor academic performance. The controversy surrounding this event caught Hollywood's attention and resulted in the production of a movie based on his life, starting Samuel L. Jackson.

MSU BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Keynote Speaker

Coach Ken Carter

Thursday, February 9, 2006

7:00 p.m.

MSU Colvard Union Ballroom

Free and Open to the Public

For more information contact:

Aretha Jones-Cook at (662) 325-2033

!WOW! Facts

- In July 2004, 39.2 million people in the United States or 13.4 percent of the total population claimed their racial identity as black or black in combination with one or more other races. The majority of Blacks (55 percent) live in the south.
- The 10 states with the largest African American populations in 2004 were New York (3.5 million), California (2.5 million), Texas (2.5 million), Florida (2.5 million), Georgia (2.4 million), Illinois (1.8 million), North Carolina (1.7 million), and Maryland, Louisiana and Michigan (1.4 million each). These were also the top 10 in 1990.
- In 2004, 32 percent of all Blacks were under age 18, compared with 23 percent of non-Hispanic Whites. Only 8 percent of Blacks were age 65 and older, compared with 14 percent of non-Hispanic Whites.
- In 2004, 27 percent of all African-American married-couple families had incomes of \$75,000 or more.
- 60% of all Blacks citizens age 18 and older voted in the 2004 presidential election which amounted to 14 million votes. The percentage of those voting was up 3 percentage points from the previous election. Blacks had the highest voter turnout rate of any minority group in 2004.
- 48 percent of all Black households own their home.
- More than 1.2 million businesses across the country are owned by African-Americans. During 2002 these businesses generated more than 92.7 billion dollars in revenues. Nearly 4-in-10 African-American-owned firms are owned by women, and that's a higher percentage of female owners than any other minority race or ethnic group. [Read more](#)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

**Local Historic foundation to
sponsor Black History
Tours Feb. 4 & 5**

Columbus, MS Historic Foundation, in partnership with several area organizations, will focus on Columbus' African American heritage with the February 4 Black History Month Tour. Tours will be conducted at 9 a.m., 11 a.m., and 1 p.m. They will begin at the Tennessee Williams Welcome Center at 300 Main Street in Columbus. Each tour is free and transportation is provided, but reservations are required.

Tour sponsors include WCBI, the Columbus-Lowndes Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science, Missionary Union Baptist Church, Columbus Air Force Base, and Mississippi University for Women.

**500 Notable African
American Biographies**
[>click here<](#)

The 2006 Black History Theme

Celebrating Community: A Tribute to Black Fraternal, Social and Civic Institutions

What happens when a people are without institutions to articulate their concerns, preserve their heritage, or make manifest their desires? They are vanquished, made into an oppressed caste, or assimilated into the majority culture--losing their distinctiveness, diminishing their voice, and dissipating their ranks. Fortunately, African Americans have not met this fate. The Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) has chosen to devote the 2006 National Black History Theme to exploring the impact that Black fraternal, social, and civic organizations have had on the evolution of African American life and history.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of the first continuous, collegiate black Greek letter fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha. Established in an age when racial segregation and disenfranchisement plagued African Americans, the rise of each of the black fraternities and sororities that make up the "Divine Nine" bore witness to the fact that despite hardships African Americans refused to assent to a status of inferiority. Serving more than just their immediate members, the "Divine Nine" joined with the [National Association of Colored Women's Clubs](#), the [Prince Hall Masons](#), and Eastern Stars, the [Urban League](#), and other civic organizations to provide service to the entire black community. As the twentieth century progressed, black social organizations like the Links and [Jack and Jill](#) rose to reflect the middle class aspirations of many African Americans. More recently civic groups such as the [Rainbow/PUSH Coalition](#) and [100 Black Men](#) have emerged to address the community's social, economic, and political challenges.

Most Americans recognize the centrality of African American religious institutions in the formation of community. In contrast, too little attention has been paid to the full spectrum of black organizations. While the Black Church has served as a rock in a weary land, African American fraternal, social, and civic organizations have also aided the community in its efforts to draw sweet honey from the rock of the their American experience.

Source: [Association for the Study of African American Life and History](#)

Quiz: African-American Firsts

1. Who was the first African-American Rhodes scholar?
2. Who was the first African-American senator AFTER Reconstruction?
3. Who was the first African American to reach the North Pole?
4. Who was the first African-American Nobel Peace Prizewinner?
5. Who was the first African-American Miss America?
6. Who was the first African-American heavy weight champion?
7. Who was the first African-American millionaire?
8. Who was the first African-American mayor of a major U.S. city?
9. Who was the first African American to win an Oscar?
10. Who was the first African-American tennis champion?

THE DISENGAGEMENT OF HURRICANE KATRINA

Dr. John H. McClendon

Associate Professor
African American & American Cultural studies
Bates College, Lewiston, Maine

February 23, 2006
Colvard Union Ballroom
7:00 p.m.

Dr. McClendon is the editor of the American Philosophical Association's Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience. He earned his doctorate in Philosophy from the University of Kansas and formerly taught at SUNY-Binghamton, University of Illinois at Champaign/Urbana, Eastern Illinois University, and the University of Missouri at Columbia.

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

*For more information contact the Holmes Cultural
Diversity Center at 325-2033*

Answers to Quiz: 1. Alain Locke; 2. Edward Brooke; 3. Matthew A. Henson; 4. Ralph Bunche; 5. Vanessa Williams; 6. Jack Johnson; 7. Madame C .J. Walker; 8. Carl Stokes; 9. Hattie McDaniel; 10. Althea Gibson

More !WOW! Facts

81%

Among Blacks age 25 and older, the proportion that had at least a high school diploma in 2004. This proportion rose by 8 percentage points from 1994 to 2004.

2.3 million

Number of black college students in fall 2004, roughly double the number 15 years earlier.

18%

Among blacks age 25 and older, the proportion that had a bachelor's degree or higher in 2004 – up 5 percentage points from 1994.

1.1 million

Among blacks age 25 and older, the number who had an advanced degree in 2004 (e.g., master's, Ph.D., M.D., or J.D.). Ten years earlier -- 1994-- only 624,000 Blacks had this level of education.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Former Slave Presides Over U.S. Senate

On February 14, 1879, a Republican senator from Mississippi presided over the Senate. The senator who temporarily assumed these duties had a personal background that no other senator, before or since, could claim: he had been born into slavery.

[Blanche K. Bruce](#) was born thirty-eight years earlier near Farmville, Virginia. The youngest of eleven children, he worked in fields and factories from Virginia to Mississippi. Highly intelligent and fiercely ambitious, Bruce gained his earliest formal education from the tutor hired to teach his master's son.

At the start of the Civil War, Bruce escaped slavery by fleeing to Kansas. He attended Oberlin College for two years and then moved to Mississippi, where he purchased an abandoned cotton plantation and amassed a real estate fortune. In 1874, while Mississippi remained under postwar military control, the state legislature elected Bruce to the U.S. Senate. Several years earlier, that legislature had sent the Senate its first African American member when it elected [Hiram Revels](#) to fill out the remaining months of an unexpired term.

Withdrawal of the military government in Mississippi ended Republican control of that state's political institutions and any chance that Bruce might serve more than a single term. That term, however, proved to be an active one as he advocated civil rights for blacks, Native Americans, Chinese immigrants, and even former Confederates.

The Great Black Migration

The Great Black Migration was the migration of thousands of African-Americans from the South to the North. African Americans were looking to escape the problems of racism in the South and felt they could seek out better jobs and an overall better life in the North. It is estimated that more than one million African-Americans participated in this mass movement.

The Great Migration created the first large, urban black communities in the North. The North saw its black population rise about 20 percent between 1910 and 1930. Cities such as Chicago, Detroit, New York, and Cleveland saw some of the biggest increases.

World War I and boll weevils were major factors in pulling blacks to the North. The war created a huge demand for labor in the North when it caused millions of men to leave their jobs to serve in the armed forces and forced immigration to slow down. In the South, a boll weevil infestation of the cotton crop that ruined harvests and threatened thousands of African Americans with starvation also caused people to head North.

Railroad companies were so desperate for help that they paid African Americans' travel expenses to the North. While northern labor agents traveled to the South to encourage blacks to leave and go find jobs in the North.

With black labor leaving the South in large numbers, southern planters tried to prevent the outflow, but were ultimately unsuccessful. The more progressive southern employers tried to promise better pay and improved treatment. Others tried to intimidate blacks, even going so far as to board northbound trains and to attack black men and women to try to force them into returning to the South.

Despite the jobs and housing available in the North, the challenges of living in an urban environment were daunting for many of the new migrants.

The stream of migrants continued apace, however, until the Great Depression and World War II caused northern demand for workers to slacken. [Read more....](#)

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AFRICAN-AMERICAN LIVES, A FOUR-HOUR DOCUMENTARY SERIES TRACING BLACK HISTORY THROUGH GENEALOGY AND DNA SCIENCE, TO PREMIERE FEBRUARY 2006 ON PBS

Renowned Scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr. To Serve As Series Host

Co-Produced By Thirteen/WNET New York And Kunhardt Productions

A compelling combination of storytelling and science, *AFRICAN-AMERICAN LIVES* is an unprecedented four-hour series on PBS that takes Alex Haley's *Roots* saga to a whole new level. The series will profile some of the most accomplished African-Americans of our time, using genealogy and DNA to trace their roots down through American history and back to Africa. Hosted by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., W.E.B. Du Bois professor of the Humanities and chair of African and African-American Studies at Harvard University, *AFRICAN-AMERICAN LIVES* will premiere in February 2006 on PBS. The series is a co-production of Thirteen/WNET New York and Kunhardt Productions Inc. [Read more...](#)

[click here
to view](#)

National Museum of African American History and Culture



Civil Rights in Mississippi

McCain Library & Archives,
The University of Southern Mississippi

Digital Archive

The [Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive](#) is an Internet-accessible, fully searchable database of digitized versions of rare and unique library and archival resources on race relations in Mississippi maintained by the McCain Library & Archives at University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg.

Early African American Pioneers and Explorers

JAMES BECKWORTH roamed the West in the 1840's as a trapper, scout and hunter. He discovered a pass through the Sierra Nevada Mountains, opening a new route for California gold seekers. This route was later used by the Western Pacific Railroad.

YORK, a slave owned by Clark, was one of the members of the Lewis and Clark expedition leaving St. Louis in the 1804 and traveling up the Missouri river to reach the Pacific Coast.

ESTAVANICO, a Black slave, became the first non-Indian to explore New Mexico and Arizona more than 80 years before the Pilgrims arrived on the Mayflower in 1620. Born in Morocco in 1500, he traveled as a slave to the New World with a Spanish expedition.

MATTHEW HENSON was a co-discoverer of the North Pole with Robert Peary and four Eskimos. Henson planted the American flag in 1909 on the spot said by Peary to be the exact location of the Pole. While Peary and his assistants were given acclaim, Henson a Black was ignored by the public and the government. He was honored by President Eisenhower at the White House in 1954.

JEAN BAPTISTE DU SABLE, a Black pioneer and trader, founded the city of Chicago around 1772. He helped open large areas of American wilderness to settlers and trappers. A plaque marks the site of his house in Chicago which was the City's first permanent dwelling.

NAT LOVE was freed from slavery after the Civil War. Nat "Deadwood" Love became a cowboy in the frontier region of the west and in 1907 published his autobiography "Life and Adventures of Nat Love", one of the few records of the lives of Black cowboys.



The Art Institute of Chicago's collection of African American art provides a rich introduction to over 100 years of noted achievements in painting, sculpture, and printmaking. Ranging chronologically from the Civil War era to the Harlem Renaissance and from the civil-rights struggles following World War II to the contemporary period, these works constitute a dynamic visual legacy. [click here to view....](#)

Who were the Buffalo Soldiers?



African Americans have fought in U.S. military conflicts since colonial days. However, the Buffalo Soldiers, comprised of former slaves, freemen and Black Civil War soldiers, were the first to serve during peacetime.

Shortly after the Civil War, Congress authorized the formation of the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 38th, 39th, 40th, and 41st Infantry Regiments: Six all Black peacetime units. Later the four infantry regiments were merged into the 24th and 25th Infantries.

Once the Westward movement had begun, these African Americans were charged with and responsible for escorting settlers, cattle herds, and railroad crews. The 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments also conducted campaigns against American Indian tribes on a western frontier that extended from Montana in the Northwest to Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona in the Southwest. Throughout the era of the Indian Wars, approximately twenty percent of the U.S. Cavalry troopers were Black, and they fought over 177 engagements. Their combat prowess, bravery, and tenaciousness on the battlefield, inspired the Indians to call them “Buffalo Soldiers.”

Buffalo Soldiers participated in many other military campaigns: The Spanish American War, The Philippine Insurrection, The Mexican Expedition, World War I, World War II, and the Korean Police Action. Despite second-class treatment these soldiers made up first-rate regiments of the highest caliber and had the lowest desertion rate in the Army.

Much has changed since the days of the Buffalo Soldiers, including the integration of all military servicemen and women. However, the story of the Buffalo Soldiers remains one of unsurpassed courage and patriotism, and will be forever a significant part of the history of America.

African Americans have fought with distinction in all of this country's military engagements. However, some of their most notable contributions and sacrifices came during the Civil War. During that conflict, more than 180,000 African Americans wore the Union Army blue. Another 30,000 served in the Navy, and 200,000 served as workers on labor, engineering, hospital and other military support projects. More than 33,000 of these gallant soldiers gave their lives for the sake of freedom and their country.

At least 18 Medals of Honor were presented to Buffalo Soldiers during the Western Campaigns. Similarly, 23 African Americans received the nation's highest military award during the Civil War.

For further reading refer to *The Buffalo Soldiers* by William H. Leckie. The book, a narrative of the Negro Cavalry in the West, remains one of the best sources on the subject.

Contributions to *Diversity Matters*, preferably via e-mail, are welcome at any time.