



Black History Month Resource Base

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Instructions

Choose the items you'd like to include on your document from the Resource Base. Copy and paste desired items into the blank templates located on DEOMI's Special Observances tab, under Observance Products. You can also paste facts into emails and other social media. Be creative and share your ideas!

Black History Month

People



*Painting of Mary McLeod Bethune by Betsy Graves Reyneau.
Public Domain.*

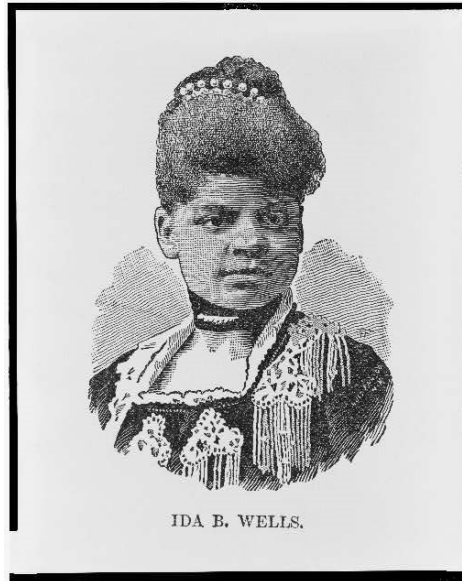
Mary McLeod Bethune Advocated for African Americans in Government

Mary McLeod Bethune was an educator, organizer, public policy and health leader, advisor to President Franklin Roosevelt, and the first Black woman to head a federal agency. She was born on July 10, 1875, in Mayesville, South Carolina. McLeod advocated against Jim Crow laws and racial violence for most of her life. Early in her career, she organized schooling for African Americans and served in many organizations, including the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools and National Association of Colored Women.

In 1936, Bethune became the Director of Negro Affairs in the Roosevelt administration and established a “Negro College and Graduate Fund” that helped over 4,000 students in higher education. She is partially responsible for drafting the presidential executive orders that ended segregation in the military and defense industry. While acting as special assistant to the Secretary of War for the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps, she was responsible for establishing a training academy for women and recruited Black women for army officer training, being named honorary General of the Women’s Army for National Defense. Before her death in May 1955, she helped to draft the United Nations Charter as an associate consultant to the U.S. delegation.

<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/mary-mcleod-bethune>

<https://www.nps.gov/mamc/learn/historyculture/mary-mcleod-bethune.htm>



*Portrait of Ida B. Wells for the NAACP, The Afro-American Press and Its Editors, I. Garland Penn., 1891.
Library of Congress.*

Ida B. Wells Sheds Light on the Horrors of Hate Crimes

Ida B. Wells, a journalist and activist, was instrumental in bringing attention to the horrors of lynching in the southern United States, risking her life in the face of white hegemony and violence. Wells was born into slavery in July of 1862, in Holly Springs, Mississippi. After her parents died of the yellow fever in 1878, she was left to take care of her siblings as a teenager. She became a teacher to support her family.

In 1884, she filed a lawsuit against a train car company in Memphis, Tennessee after getting rejected from a first-class car, despite having a ticket. She won on a local level, but the case was overturned federally. When several of her friends were lynched after shopping at a grocery store, she became a staunch critic of the unjust treatment of Black people, investigating and publishing findings about lynching in pamphlets and local newspapers. Her investigative journalism found that lynching was a way to suppress and control Black populations, especially when white power was threatened. Her journalism led to an angry mob burning down her press and running her out of Tennessee.

Her work continued, though, and she spread the word of injustice to national and international audiences with her exposes, *Southern Horrors*, *The Red Record*, and others. She was founder of both the National Association of Colored Women's Club and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She also supported women's suffrage and was considered very radical for her time.

<https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/ida-b-wells-barnett>

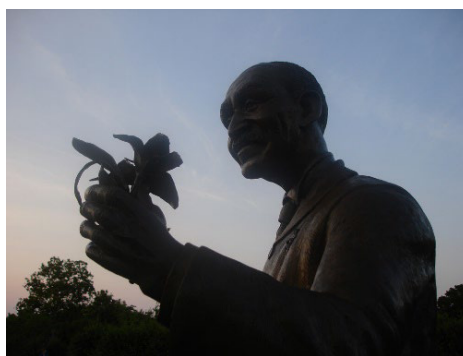
Phillis Wheatley was the first African American to publish a book of poetry

Wheatley was born around 1753 in Gambia, Africa before her capture by slave traders. While enslaved, Wheatley was educated in Christian, Greek, Latin, and British literature. She began writing poetry at age 14. Her first book, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773), was the second book of poems published by a woman in American history. Wheatley was emancipated shortly thereafter and supported abolition.

<https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/phillis-wheatley>



WWII Poster of Carter. Public Domain.



Monument of Carter in St. Louis. Public Domain.

George Washington Carver was an African American Innovator

George Washington Carver was an inventor and agricultural scientist who created hundreds of products using peanuts and sweet potatoes. Born into slavery outside of Diamond, a small town just southeast of Joplin, Missouri. Carver, as an infant, and his family were kidnapped by raiders during the Civil War.

Taking an interest in herbal medicine, cooking, gardening, and education, Carver valued learning and survived using his domestic skills. In 1880, he was accepted into the all-white college, Highland College in Kansas, but was rejected once the administration learned he was black. He was the first African American to earn a Bachelor of Science degree and went on to earn his Master of Agricultural degree at Iowa State University, and later worked at Tuskegee University. He developed new kinds of flour, vinegar, paints, oils, cosmetics, and medicines. He is the first African American to have a national monument built in his honor.

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/george-washington-carver>



*Philip A. Payton Jr., "Father of Harlem."
Public Domain.*

Phillip A. Payton Established Harlem as a Black Cultural Center

Philip A. Payton, a Black real estate entrepreneur, procured property in New York City's Harlem to rent to Black tenants, who faced discrimination elsewhere. Starting out in real estate as a janitor, Payton eventually became the "father of Black Harlem" because of his efforts to secure equal housing for African Americans. Harlem became a cultural hub for African Americans through the 20th century.

During WWI, many African Americans went to urban centers for job opportunities that often supported the war. This fueled "The Great Migration" of Black people from the south to northern cities throughout the 1900s.

<https://archive.org/details/nationalcycloped01richrich/page/258/mode/2up?view=theater>



Sleeve patch of the 761st Tank Battalion. Public Domain.

"Black Panthers" Fought Valiantly in WWII

The 761st Tank Battalion was the first African American tanker unit to see combat in Europe during WWII. The battalion, which was better known as the "Black Panthers," was attached to the 26th Infantry Division in late 1944. After arriving in Normandy, they fought for a record 183 straight days and liberated 30 towns on their way to Germany. The 761st Tank Battalion helped rescue the surrounded American forces at Bastogne, Belgium.

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/761sttankbattalion.htm>



*Jackie Robinson, Brooklyn Dodgers.
Library of Congress.*

Jackie Robinson Became the First Black MLB Baseball Player

In 1947, Jackie Robinson became the first Black man to play baseball for Major League Baseball, effectively bringing an end to the unofficial segregation in national baseball. He was signed by Brooklyn Dodgers President, Branch Rickey, and played for ten years, winning Rookie of the Year and playing in six World Series.

Before baseball, Robinson was drafted into the Army during WWII. In the military, he became one of the few African Americans to be enrolled in Officer Candidate School, eventually being commissioned as a second lieutenant and morale officer. In 1944, he refused to move to the back of a segregated military bus, resulting in charges of insubordination and disrespectful conduct. He was court-martialed and prohibited from seeing combat overseas. He was a major supporter of civil rights throughout his life.

<https://scholarship.law.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1159&context=facpub>

The Myers Family Face Housing Discrimination in Levittown, PA

Daisy Myers was a Black woman who moved with her family to Levittown, Pennsylvania, which was intended to be an all-white suburb outside of Philadelphia. Housing discrimination was common around the country when the Myers arrived in 1957. They were met with intense prejudice, including a petition to kick them out signed by two thousand residents, angry mobs, and cross burnings (a symbol associated with white supremacy).

While the incident helped fuel the fight for civil rights, Levittown remained mostly segregated, primarily through discriminatory redlining practices. The segregation and prejudice in Levittown were shown through a documentary made at the time, which can be viewed here: <https://archive.org/details/47664CrisisInLevittownPA>

<https://guides.libraries.psu.edu/redliningpa/levittown>

Civil Rights: Martin Luther King Penned his Letter from Birmingham Jail

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a key leader in the Civil Rights movement, was arrested after organizing a series of protests, marches, and sit-ins against segregation in April of 1963. In Birmingham, Alabama, he and many other activists were sent to jail after continuing their protest after an injunction. There, he penned his “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” which responded to critics of his methods for making change. In the letter, he advocated for breaking unjust laws, nonviolent protest, and for others to join his crusade.

His famous speech, “I Have a Dream,” was given during the March on Washington in 1963. King’s protests, writings, organizing, and self-sacrifice ultimately led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, the youngest person to ever do so. On April 4, 1968, King was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee while supporting a sanitation workers’ strike.

<https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/martin-luther-king-jr-writes-letter-from-a-birmingham-jail>

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/martin-luther-king-jr>



Jesse Jackson speaking at PUSH headquarters, 1973.

Jesse Jackson was an Influential Civil Rights Leader into the Modern Era

Jesse Jackson founded the People United to Save (PUSH) organization, which sought to provide African American better employment opportunities.

Born in 1941, Jackson is an activist and politician who worked closely with Martin Luther King Jr. during the Civil Rights Movement. In the 1980s and 1990s, he independently negotiated the successful release of prisoners from adversarial nations. Jackson helped free 22 Americans and 27 Cuban political prisoners from Cuba and a captured U.S. fighter pilot from Syria.

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/jesse-jackson>



*Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. meet on March 26, 1964.
Library of Congress.*

Malcolm X Changed the Course of The Civil Rights Movement

Malcolm X was a prominent civil rights activist during the 1950s and 1960s. He was a controversial figure that supported Black nationalism and equity. Born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska, he faced many hardships throughout his young life, including threats from the Ku Klux Klan, the murder of his father (including the denial of his death benefits), various foster homes, and eventually, at age 21, prison for theft. In prison, he became deeply involved with the Lost-Found Nation of Islam, particularly the Black Muslims, a group that advocated for power for African Americans and equal rights “by any means necessary.” His early radical views made him a counterpoint to Martin Luther King Jr. and his rhetoric of nonviolence.

Eventually, he changed his last name to “X” as a rejection of his “slave” name. Malcolm X would eventually become disillusioned with the Nation of Islam and underwent a spiritual transformation after traveling to Mecca. In June of 1964, he created the Organization of Afro-American Unity, a more moderate social justice organization that focused more on fighting racism instead of the white race in general. The next year, Malcolm X was assassinated in New York City by members from the Nation of Islam. His autobiography, published posthumously, became very influential for civil rights activists.

In 2022, Malcolm X became the first Black honoree to be inducted into the Nebraska Hall of Fame.

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/malcolm-x>

<https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/malcolm-makes-nebraska-hall-fame-years-flap-8982422>



*President Obama awards John Lewis Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2011.
The White House, Public Domain.*

Civil Rights: John Lewis was a Fought for Civil Rights his Entire Life

John Lewis was a titan of the Civil Rights Movement, being the youngest speaker and organizer of the March on Washington. In 1960, he and others founded the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which he headed from 1963 to 1966. Lewis led the march from Selma to Montgomery with Martin Luther King, Jr. This march resulted in “Bloody Sunday” on February 18, 1965, in which marchers were attacked by segregationists and state troopers. Lewis was a member of the “Big Six” Civil Rights organizers, which included James Farmer, Martin Luther King, Jr., A. Phillip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, and Whitney Young, Jr. In 1987, Lewis became a Congressman for Georgia’s 5th district, continuing to enact racial justice reform until his death in 2020.

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/civilrights/john-lewis.htm>

<https://www.biography.com/political-figure/john-lewis>

Civil Rights: Medgar Evers Organized and Died for the Civil Rights Movement

Medgar Evers worked closely with the NAACP to organize voting registration, protests, recruitments, and integration, especially in Mississippi. Born in 1925, Evers experienced harsh racism and segregation as a child, before enrolling in the Army during WWII. After his service, he moved to Jackson, Mississippi. He eventually became the NAACP’s field secretary in Mississippi. There, he orchestrated boycotts of white merchants and led efforts to integrate the University of Mississippi. In June 1963, Evers was shot and killed by a white supremacist on his way home from an NAACP meeting. Unfortunately, the primary suspect for the crime was not charged by the all-white jury. In December of 1990, a new grand jury returned and charged Evers’s murderer with life in prison.

<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/medgar-evers>

Kamala Harris is the First Woman of Color to hold the Office of Vice President

In January 2021, Kamala Harris became the first woman and first Black person to hold the office of Vice President of the United States. She is the daughter of two immigrants: one from India and one from Jamaica. Prior to becoming Vice President, Harris was a U.S. senator of California.

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/black-history-milestones>



Biles awarded Presidential Medal of Freedom. Public Domain.

Simone Biles Earned a President Medal of Freedom

In 2022, Simone Biles became the youngest person to receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Born in 1997, Simone Biles is an African American gymnast from Spring, Texas.

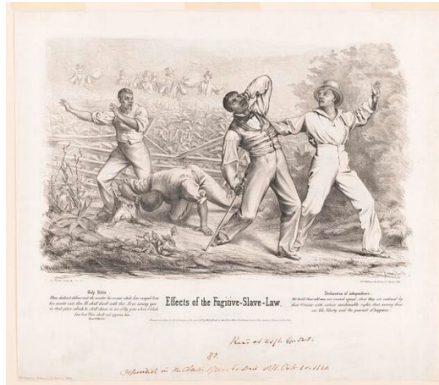
In 2019, she became the most decorated gymnast of all time, winning a total of 25 world-title medals over her life. She's a seven-time Olympic medalist, including four gold, 1 silver, and two bronze. In 2022, she stepped back from gymnastics to focus on her mental health. She's an advocate for athletes' mental health, sexual assault victims, and children in foster care.

<https://www.teamusa.org/usa-gymnastics/athletes/simone-biles>

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/general-news/denzel-washington-simone-biles-presidential-medals-freedom-1235174868/>

Black History Month

Events



*Illustration of violence cause by the Fugitive Slave Act, 1850.
Library of Congress.*

Enslaved People Often Defied their Masters

African Americans resisted their masters in numerous ways, whether it was attempting to escape to northern states, helping others flee, purposefully slowing down their work, or not showing up at all. These methods, especially the former, would risk harsh, brutal punishments. If an enslaved American escaped, they risked the death of themselves or loved ones. Due to the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, escaped African Americans could be hunted down and captured, even in free states.

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/african/resistance-and-abolition/>

Slave Revolted in the Colonial Period of American History

The largest slave rebellion during the colonial period of American history was the 1739 Stono Rebellion outside of Charleston, South Carolina. Of the 20 enslaved people to begin the revolt, many of them had experience as soldiers in the Yamasee War. They raided a store for supplies and weapons and marched south toward promised freedom in Spanish, Florida. As their numbers grew to around 100, they carried banners and chanted, “Liberty!” The uprising failed after about one week when they were stopped and killed by English colonists.

<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/did-african-american-slaves-rebel/>

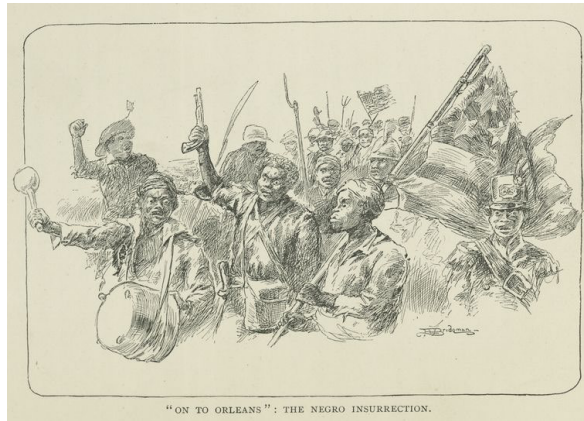


Illustration of rebels in the 1811 German Coast Uprising. Public Domain.

Slave Revolts Continued into 19th Century

The German Coast Uprising in 1811 was the largest revolt by enslaved Americans in United States history. Inspired by the successful Haitian Revolution, Charles Deslondes and about 25 enslaved people attacked the owners of the Andry sugar plantation, gathered weapons and uniforms from a militia warehouse, and marched toward New Orleans. They pillaged plantations and killed the white people who lived there. Their numbers grew to around 124 fighters as enslaved people were freed. The insurrection was stopped after the rebels ran out of ammunition during a battle with the U.S. Military. Every enslaved person involved in the revolt was executed.

<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/did-african-american-slaves-rebel/>

African Americans Took it upon Themselves to Fight in the Civil War

During the Civil War, many newly liberated Black people formed militia units in Louisiana, Kansas, and South Carolina, and then fought skirmishes against the Confederate army. President Abraham Lincoln issued the Second Confiscation and Militia Act of 1862 as a first step to enlist African Americans. These infantry units took it upon themselves to fight for the United States against Confederates. They were later incorporated into the official Armed Forces. The first Black regiment in the Civil War was the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment.

<https://www.history.com/topics/american-civil-war/black-civil-war-soldiers>

<https://www.history.com/topics/american-civil-war/black-civil-war-soldiers#the-second-confiscation-and-militia-act-1862>



Black Wall Street Burns. Public Domain.

Tulsa, Oklahoma was a Thriving Black Community before a Racial Massacre

In 1906, a wealthy African American named O.W. Gurley purchases over 40 acres of land in Tulsa, Oklahoma and resells the land to other African Americans escaping harsh oppression in other parts of the south. Known as the Greenwood district, the area became a financial and cultural center for African Americans. It was often called “Black Wall Street. By 1921, Tulsa was home to over 10,000 Black residents, which included many professionals and creatives, who had access to many modern luxuries.

On May 31, 1921, the *Tulsa Tribune* published an inflammatory report that a Black man, Dick Rowland, sexually assaulted a white woman, Sarah Page. The story accused him of rape without due process, sparking outrage for white and Black communities in Tulsa. The following day, The Tulsa Race Massacre occurred when white mobs burned 35 blocks, causing 300 deaths and 800 injuries in the thriving Black neighborhoods in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Armed mobs showed up to the courthouse and shots were fired between Black and white people.

White mobs destroyed businesses, public buildings, churches and private homes with kerosene bombs, totaling damages at \$1.8 million in 1921 dollars; some estimates total the economic loss between \$150-200 million in 2018 dollars, when factoring in personal and commercial assets. White men threatened firefighters with their guns, which allowed the fires to spread. Police and city officials did not try to stop the violence. The underlying cause of the massacre was the threat of Black Wall Street’s growing power and influence to white cultural dominance in Tulsa. The Greenwood district never fully recovered to its previous status of success, despite rebuilding efforts.

Messer, C. M., Shriver, T. E., & Adams, A. E. (2018, May). The Destruction of Black Wall Street: Tulsa’s 1921 Riot and the Eradication of Accumulated Wealth. American Journal of Economics and Sociology, 77(3–4), 789–819. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajes.12225>

<https://daily.jstor.org/the-devastation-of-black-wall-street/>

Race Riots occurred throughout the 1920s

Racial violence erupted throughout the 1920s in the wake of WWI and the Great Migration of African Americans to other parts of the country. This outright violence, along with Jim Crow segregation laws, effectively crippled real and potential prosperity for Black communities across the country for future generations.

In Elaine, Arkansas, a local church was fired upon by a white mob after Black sharecroppers got together to protest low wages in 1919. That same year, a race riot erupted in Chicago after a young Black man was stoned to death after swimming in a “whites only” section of a lake. January 1923, in Rosewood, Florida, a riot broke out after another report of sexual assault by a Black man against a white woman, resulting in the burning of homes and businesses owned by African Americans. Deadly riots like these also happened in Knoxville, St. Louis, and Washington D.C., among others.

Messer, C. M., Shriver, T. E., & Adams, A. E. (2018, May). *The Destruction of Black Wall Street: Tulsa’s 1921 Riot and the Eradication of Accumulated Wealth*. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 77(3–4), 789–819. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajes.12225>



A. Philip Randolph, 1942. Library of Congress.

A. Phillip Randolph Pushes Anti-Discrimination in Hiring Practices

After the outbreak of WWII, President Franklin Roosevelt released Executive Order 8802, which declared there shall be no discrimination “in the employment of workers in defense industries and in Government, because of race, creed, color, or national origin.”

Black people moved to urban areas to support the war effort. However, they were often met with prejudice and unfair treatment. After A. Philip Randolph, a Black labor unionist and civil rights activist, presented a list of racial grievances to Eleanor Roosevelt to give to her husband, FDR. This order established the Fair Employment Practice Committee, though it remained largely ineffective at preventing employment discrimination.

<https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/executive-order-8802>



*African American Infantry unit in Verdun, France, WWI.
Library of Congress.*

Many African Americans Enlisted in the U.S. Military Despite Challenges

During World War I, about 200,000 African Americans served in the Army, mostly in support roles as segregated units. This same segregation also occurred in the Navy and Marine Corps.

During World War II over 2.5 million African Americans registered for the draft, but they still served in segregated roles in the Army and Army Air Corps. Beginning in late 1945, efforts were made to ensure better treatment of Black soldiers with suggestions for integration and equal rights. This included an Executive Order for equal treatment by President Truman, though it was met with resistance. In April of 1949, Defense Secretary Louis Johnson implemented Truman's order with a "bill of rights" for Black Servicemen, which gradually removed segregation from the military. In 1954, the Army became the last branch to fully integrate.

https://www.army.mil/article/243604/african_american_service_and_racial_integration_in_the_us_military



*Jazz being performed in New York City, Harlem.
Library of Congress.*

Harlem Rose to be an Important Cultural Center for Black People

Harlem became a major cultural hub for African Americans in the United States. During the 1920s and 1930s, the “Harlem Renaissance” saw many Black artists, writers, musicians, and intellectuals work alongside each other.

Figures like Langston Hughes, a poet, Aaron Douglas, a painter, and Alain Locke, a philosopher, all rose to prominence in Harlem and African American history. However, The Great Depression and WWII devastated the area. Higher rents, unemployment, and racism caused the Harlem riots of 1935 and 1943. During the Civil Rights era, political and religious leaders gathered in Harlem to support and empower African Americans to seek equal rights.

<https://www.harlemheritage.com/history-of-harlem/>

Black History Month

Milestones & Facts



*Civil Rights March on Washington featuring Roy Wilkins, A. Philip Randolph, and Whitney M. Young, among others.
U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, Public Domain.*

The Origins of Black History Month Began in 1926

Black History Month originally began as “Negro History Month,” created by Black historian and educator, Carter G. Woodson, in 1926. He chose the second week of February because it coincides with Frederick Douglass’s and Abraham Lincoln’s birthdays.

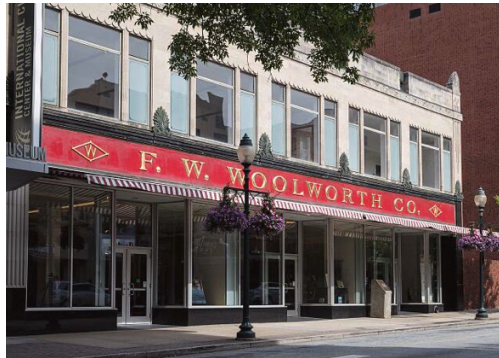
In the 1960s, colleges and universities began celebrating Black history for the entire month because of the ongoing Civil Rights movement and the absence of substantial Black history educational materials. In 1976, President Ford announced the establishment of Black History Month as a national observance.

<https://time.com/4197928/history-black-history-month/>

Hundreds of Thousands Escaped Bondage Before Emancipation

400,000 people had escaped from slavery by 1860. Many escaped through the Underground Railroad, a network of routes and safehouses that enslaved people could follow to freedom.

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/african/resistance-and-abolition/>



The Woolworth Co. where the first “sit-in” took place is now the International Civil Rights Center and Museum, 2017. Library of Congress.

Sit-ins were Crucial to the Civil Rights Movement

In February of 1960, Black students at North Carolina A&T College began the first “sit-in” protest at a Woolworth store. These four students, Ezell Blair Jr., David Richmond, Franklin McCain, and Joseph McNeil were influenced by the nonviolent protests by Mohandas Gandhi and the Freedom Rides. Woolworth’s dining counter was reserved for white people only, so the students sat there until they were served. Police arrived but couldn’t do anything without provocation.

<https://history.msu.edu/files/2010/04/V.P.-Franklin4.pdf>

In 1967, Interracial Marriage became Legal

Loving v. Virginia was a Supreme Court case ruling in 1967, which invalidated laws prohibiting interracial marriage. Laws against interracial marriage had existed in the United States since the Colonial period of American history and were present in all but nine states at some point before 1967.

The case involved a couple, Richard Loving and Mildred Jeter of Virginia, who fell in love and married in Washington D.C., where they could legally marry. A few weeks after they returned to Virginia, they were arrested and charged with felonies for marrying. In the Supreme Court decision, Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote, “Under our Constitution, the freedom to marry, or not marry, a person of another race resides with the individual, and cannot be infringed by the state.” This made it possible for men and women of different races to marry one another across the country.

<https://www.history.com/topics/civil-rights-movement/loving-v-virginia>



African Americans in WWII. Public Domain.



Black man facing segregation at home. Public Domain.

The “Double V Campaign” sought victory in WWII and at home against racist oppression

During World War II, Black colleges and universities contributed greatly to the war effort. About 80% changed their curricula to defense-related programs, particularly in manufacturing and engineering.

In the military itself, African Americans still faced prejudice. Black Americans weren't allowed to participate in civil defense training programs and jobs. The Jim Crow philosophy impacted service branches. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, a race riot broke out between Black GIs, civilians, and police in Alexandria, Louisiana. Because of this and racism at large, many African Americans felt disaffected by the war. Many thought it was hypocritical to fight for democracy in Europe while suffering as second-class citizens at home in the U.S. This galvanized many African Americans to push for greater civil rights.

<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/double-v-victory>



First graduating class of African American pilots in the U.S. Army Air Corp., Tuskegee, Alabama. March, 1942. Library of Congress.



A Black Lives Matter event in Washington, D.C. 2020. Library of Congress.

The Black Lives Matter Movement Began to Combat Modern Injustice

The Black Lives Matter movement first began in 2013, after the death of a Black teenager, Trayvon Martin, in Sanford, Florida, and the acquittal of the man who shot him. The movement spread further in 2014, after the deaths of Eric Garner, who died in a police chokehold by NY police and after being accused of selling loose cigarettes, and Michael Brown, an unarmed Black man shot by police in Ferguson, Missouri.

The Black Lives Matter organization was founded by three Black women, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi. The organization is made up of 40 chapters across the nation; it's more decentralized than the Civil Rights Movement that came before it. The movement seeks equal opportunity for African Americans, the elimination of police brutality, and the end of systemic racism in the United States.

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/killings-by-police-declined-after-black-lives-matter-protests/>

African American Demographics are Growing and Diverse

As of 2019, there are 46.8 million people in the United States who self-identify as Black, a 29% increase in population from 2000. Black Americans make up a diverse group of different demographics (Hispanic, non-Hispanic, multiracial). In total, they make up about 14% of the total U.S. population.

In 2019, Black households' median incomes were around \$44,000. About 46% of all Black households made more than \$50,000 a year. About a quarter of Black adults in the U.S. have a bachelor's degree or higher. About 33% of Black residents have completed some college and 44% have a high school diploma or didn't finish high school.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/fact-sheet/facts-about-the-us-black-population/>

Black People are Imprisoned in Disproportionate Numbers

As of 2019, Black people make up 38% of jail and prison populations, while only making up about 14% of the total population of the United States.

https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2022/05/19/updated_charts/

Hate Crimes are Not Just a Thing of the Past

In 2020, a 25-year-old Black man, Ahmaud Arbery, was shot dead by a white father and son while jogging through a suburb in Brunswick, Georgia, stimulating calls for racial justice. The men followed Arbery, suspecting him of robbery, and murdered him. The men were not initially charged until the video of the crime was publicly released, renewing calls for the men to be prosecuted. The next year, the men were sentenced to prison on murder and hate crime charges.

<https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/ahmaud-arbery-murdered-while-jogging-georgia>

Many Black Writers Have Achieved National Prominence with Pulitzers

In the early 2020s, many Black writers won Pulitzer Prizes in writing.

- In 2020, Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* won in Fiction.
- Lynn Nottage's *Sweat* won in Drama.
- Tyehimba Jess's *Olio* won in Poetry.
- Hilton AI's work in the *New Yorker* won in Criticism.
- Marcia Chatelain, Les Payne, Tamara Payne, James Ijames, and Winfred Rembert are some of the writers and artists who won the coveted prize in 2021 and 2022.
- The first Black person to win a Pulitzer Prize was Gwendolyn Brooks in 1950 for her book, *Annie Allen*.

<https://www.essence.com/news/black-writers-pulitzer-prize-winners/>

<https://www.pulitzer.org/prize-winners-by-year/2021>

<https://www.pulitzer.org/prize-winners-by-year/2022>

Legislation Officially Makes Lynching a Federal Crime

In 2022, Congress passed the Emmett Till Anti-Lynching Act after over 200 attempts to make a similar federal law. This legislation imposes a criminal offense on anybody who has conspired to commit a hate crime that results in death or injury.

The law is named after Emmett Till, a 14-year-old, who was brutally lynched in 1955, near Money, Mississippi. His murderers got away with their crimes. The injustice of his death fueled the growing demand of expanded civil rights in the 1950s into the present day.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/55>

<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/emmett-till>



*Maya Angelou reciting "On the Pulse of Morning" at President Clinton's inauguration.
William J. Clinton Presidential Library, Public Domain.*

Maya Angelou's Legacy Celebrated with Specialty Quarter

In 2022, the United States Mint announced production of quarters featuring civil rights activist and poet Maya Angelou. Her representation marks the first time that a Black woman will be featured on the quarter.

Angelou is best known for her memoir, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, written in 1969, about her childhood experiences of racism, abuse, motherhood, and persistence. Before her death in 2014, she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2010.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/newly-minted-maya-angelou-quarters-enter-circulation-and-make-history-180979398/>

Black History Month

Quotes



*Martin Luther King, Jr., giving his "I Have a Dream" speech.
National Archive.*

"Despite the attitude of some employers in refusing to hire Negroes to perform needed, skilled services, and despite the denial of the same opportunities and courtesies to our youth in the armed forces of our country, we must not fail America and as Americans, we must not let America fail us."

– **Mary McLeod** advocating for equal opportunity, 1941

<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/mary-mcleod-bethune>

"Over the last few years, I have consistently preached that nonviolence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek. So, I have tried to make it clear that it is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends. But now I must affirm that it is just as wrong, or even more, to use moral means to preserve immoral ends."

– **Martin Luther King, Jr.** in his "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

<https://www.csuchico.edu/iege/assets/documents/susi-letter-from-birmingham-jail.pdf>

“You may write me down in history / With your bitter, twisted lies, / You may trod me in the very dirt / But still, like dust, I’ll rise.”

– **Maya Angelou** in her 1978 poem, “*Still I Rise*”

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/newly-minted-maya-angelou-quarters-enter-circulation-and-make-history-180979398/>

“Get in good trouble, necessary trouble, and help redeem the soul of America.”

– **John Lewis** in Selma, Alabama, 2020

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/how-we-rise/2020/07/23/five-things-john-lewis-taught-us-about-getting-in-good-trouble/>

“I felt that one had better die fighting against injustice than to die like a dog or rat in a trap. I had already determined to sell my life as dearly as possible if attacked. I felt if I could take one lyncher with me, this would even up the score a little bit.”

– **Ida B. Wells** in her autobiography, started in 1928, finished posthumously

Wells, I. B., Duster, A. M., Duster, M., & Ewing, E. L. (2020, May 13). Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells, Second Edition. University of Chicago Press.

“I’m for truth, no matter who tells it. I’m for justice, no matter who it is for or against. I’m a human being, first and foremost, and as such I’m for whoever and whatever benefits humanity as a whole.”

– **Malcolm X** in his autobiography, published in 1965 after his death

X, M., Haley, A., Handler, M. S., Sloan, S., & Shabazz, B. (2015, November 29). The Autobiography of Malcolm X. Ishi Press.

“History shows that it does not matter who is in power or what revolutionary forces take over the government, those who have not learned to do for themselves and have to depend solely on others never obtain any more rights or privileges in the end than they had in the beginning.”

– **Carter G. Woodson** in *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, originally published in 1933.

Woodson, C. G., & Darnell, T. (1999, December 31). The Mis-Education of the Negro. 12th Media Services.

Updated October 2022