



Black

History

Month



The History of Black History

- Dr. Carter G. Woodson (son of two former slaves and Ph.D. recipient from Harvard) studied black history and founded the *Association for the Study of Negro Life and History*, in 1915. In 1916 Dr. Woodson founded the *Journal of Negro History*. In 1926 he launched *Negro History Week* to bring national attention to the contributions of black people throughout American history.
- Negro History Week: was chosen by Dr. Woodson because it was the birthday week of men who greatly impacted the black population: *Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln*.
- February 23, 1868: *W.E.B. DuBois* (civil right leader and co –founder of NAACP) was born.
- February 3, 1870: The *15th Amendment* was passed, granting blacks in the U.S. the right to vote.
- February 25, 1870: The first black U.S. senator, *Hiram R. Revels* (1822-1901), took his oath of office.
- February 12, 1909: The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (*NAACP*) was founded by a group of concerned black and white citizens in New York City.
- February 1, 1960: In what would become a civil-rights movement milestone, a group of black Greensboro, NC college students began a *sit-in* at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter.
- January 20, 2009: Barack Obama became the first African American President of the United States.

Civil Rights Timeline: 1954 to 1991

- 1954 – May 17, BROWN vs. BOARD OF EDUCATION: The Supreme Court unanimously agrees that segregation in the public schools is unconstitutional. It is a victory for the NAACP lawyer *Thurgood Marshall* who will later return to the Supreme Court as the nation's first black justice.
- 1955 – Dec. 1, ROSA PARKS: *Rosa Parks* refuses to give up her seat at the front of the bus to a white passenger. In response to her arrest Montgomery's black community launches a bus boycott which lasted until December 21, 1956 when the buses are desegregated.
Jan – Feb, SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE: *Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.*, *Charles K. Steele* and *Fred L. Shuttlesworth* establishes the SCLC. The SCLC plays a major role in organizing the civil rights movement.
- 1957 – Sept., LITTLE ROCK, ARK.: Nine black students are blocked from entering the school by crowds organized by Governor Orval Faubus. The National Guard was sent to intervene on behalf of the students.
Feb. 1, SIT-IN: Four black students from NC Agricultural and Technical College begin a sit-in at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter. Although they are refused service, they are allowed to stay at the counter. This triggers many similar nonviolent protests throughout the South.
- 1960 – April, STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE: founded at Shaw University, the SNCC provided young blacks a more organized place in the civil rights movement. Later the SNCC grew more radical under *Stokely Carmichael* (1966-1967).
- 1961 – May 4, THE CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY: begins sending students to test the implementation of

new laws prohibiting segregation in interstate travel facilities. "FREEDOM RIDERS" encountered troubles two weeks later when a mob in Alabama sets the riders' bus on fire. By the end of the summer of 1961, One Thousand black and white volunteers have participated.

— **1963** – June 12, MEDGAR EVARS: the NAACP's field secretary is murdered outside his home at age 37. Byron De La Beckwith is tried twice in 1964, both trials resulting in hung juries. Thirty years later he is convicted for murdering Evars.

- Aug. 28, MARCH ON WASHINGTON: 250,000 people joined the march at the Lincoln Memorial as Reverend King gave his "I Have a Dream" speech.

- Sept. 15, FOUR YOUNG BLACK GIRLS KILLED: While attending Sunday school at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, a popular civil rights meeting place in Birmingham AL, a bomb explodes. Riots erupt in Birmingham leading to the death of two more black youths.

— **1964** – Summer, COUNCIL OF FEDERATED ORGANIZATIONS: a network of civil rights groups that includes CORE and SNCC, launches a massive effort to register black voters during what becomes known as the FREEDOM SUMMER. It also sends delegates to the Democratic National Convention to protest and attempt to unseat the official all-white Mississippi contingent.

- July 2, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964: President Johnson signs the act, making segregation in public facilities and discrimination in employment illegal.

- Aug. 5, POLICE RELEASE CIVIL RIGHTS WORKERS TO THE KKK: 3 men James Cheney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner had been arrested for speeding. The police released them to the local KKK. President Johnson sent in military personnel to join the search for their missing bodies. The three men had been working to register black voters.

— **1965** – Feb. 21, MALCOLM X: A black nationalist and founder of the Organization of Afro-American Unity, is shot to death in Harlem. It is believed the assailants are members of the Black Muslim faith, which Malcolm had recently abandoned.

— **1965** – March 7, BLOODY SUNDAY: In Selma, Alabama, blacks begin a march to Montgomery in support of voting rights. They are stopped at a bridge by police and fifty marchers were hospitalized after police use tear gas, whips, and clubs against them. The incident is dubbed “Bloody Sunday” by the media.

– Aug. 10, VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1965: Congress passes the act making it easier for Southern blacks to register to vote. Literacy tests and other such requirements that tended to restrict black voting become illegal.

— **1968** – April 4, MLK JR. ASSASSINATION: In Memphis TN, Reverend King at age 39, is shot as he stands on the balcony outside his hotel room. Although escaped convict James Earl Ray later pleads guilty to the crime, questions about the actual circumstances of King’s assassination remain to this day.

– April 11, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1968: President Johnson signs the Act, prohibiting discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of housing.

— **1971** – April 20, SWANN vs. CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG BOARD OF EDUCATION: The Supreme Court upholds busing as a legitimate means for achieving integration of public schools. Although largely unwelcome in local school districts, court-ordered busing plans in cities such as Charlotte, Boston, and Denver continue until the late 1990s.

— **1988** – March 22, CIVIL RIGHTS RESTORATION ACT: The act is overridden by Congress after President Regan vetoed the act. The Act expanded the reach of non-discrimination laws within private institutions receiving federal funds.

— **1991** – Nov. 22, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1991: After 2 years of threatening vetoes President Bush passes the Act strengthening the laws and providing for damages in case of intentional employment discrimination.

Famous Black Americans throughout History

Chinua Achebe – born 1930, Writer. His first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, was reprinted in 40 languages and has sold more than 3 million copies around the world.

Maya Angelou – born 1928, Poet, Actor & Activist. Northern Conductor for SCLC. First black person to write and recite a poem at the presidential inauguration.

Josephine Baker --1906 – 1975, Vaudeville performer and political activist.

Chuck Berry – born 1926, Rock musician and composer for many famous rock bands.

Ralph Bunche – 1904 – 1971, Scholar, Statesman, UN Under-Secretary General, 1950 first black American to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

George Washington Carver – 1861 – 1943, Educator, Agricultural Researcher.

Lucille Clifton - born 1936, Poet. Was awarded a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1969. Has written more than 25 books, considered one of the most prolific writers working today. Is best known for minimalist poetry.

W.E.B. DuBois – 1868-1963, Historian, sociologist, writer and civil rights activist. A founder of the NAACP. The first black to receive a doctorate from Harvard. Was a professor at Atlanta University.

Alex Haley – 1921-1992, Journalist, writer. *Roots* “Autobiography of Malcolm X”.

Billie Holiday – 1915-1959, Musician. Born Elenora Fagan.

Langston Hughes – 1902-1967, Journalist, poet, playwright and novelist.

Zora Neale Hurston – 1891 – 1960, Novelist & Anthropologist. Barnard College’s first black student. Wrote 8 novels and 3 short story compilations. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* a fictional autobiography, is her most famous work.

Jesse Jackson – born 1941, Civil rights activist, Baptist minister and presidential candidate.

Martin Luther King Jr. – 1929-1968, Reverend, civil rights leader (non-violent social change). Awarded the Nobel Prize in 1964.

Thurgood Marshall – 1908-1993, Associate Justice of Supreme Court, Lawyer for Brown vs. Board of Education. Challenged across the country the system that allowed for injustices against blacks in America.

Toni Morrison – born 1931, Writer and Editor. Born Chloe Anthony Wofford.

Jesse Owens – 1913-1980, Track and Field Athlete, longest world record holder. 4 gold medals at the 1936 Olympics in Germany.

Sidney Poitier – born 1924, Movie Actor, first African-American to win Best Actor Oscar, 1963

Paul Robeson – 1898 – 1976, Singer/ Actor, The first black All-American football player. Valedictorian of his class at Rutgers, graduate of Columbia Law School. His acting career was cut short by the anti-Communist movement in the 1950s.

Jackie Robinson – 1919-1972, 1st African American in the Major League Baseball association.

Sojourner Truth – 1797 – 1883, Visionary, abolitionist, feminist and orator. Born Isabella, she walked away from her slave owner in 1820, although illiterate she won a court case to retrieve her son who had been illegally sold to a slave holder in the deep South. During and after the Civil War Sojourner Truth worked to bring relief to the newly freed slaves.

Ida B. Wells - Barnett – 1862-1931, Anti-lynching crusader, journalist, activist for racial justice and women's suffrage.

Malcolm X – 1925-1965, Civil Rights leader. Born Malcolm Little. His hostility against all whites, which was tempered at the end of his life, contrasted with Martin Luther King Jr.'s political strategies. After a falling out with Elijah Mohammad, Malcolm X was assassinated in NYC in 1965.

