

# AFRICAN-AMERICAN HOLIDAYS, FESTIVALS, AND CELEBRATIONS

The History, Customs, and Symbols

Associated with Both Traditional and Contemporary Religious  
and Secular Events Observed by Americans of African Descent



**KATHLYN GAY**

Foreword by Jean Currie Church

Chief Librarian, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University

Introduction by Jessie Carney Smith, Consulting Editor

University Librarian and William and Camille Cosby Professor in Humanities, Fisk University



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**By Kathlyn Gay**

Foreword by Jean Currie Church  
Introduction by Jessie Carney Smith

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## Foreword

Special holidays provide an opportunity for all ethnic groups, especially those that have endured painful past histories, to reach out and remind their constituents (and others) of all the members who survived and thrived in spite of the adversities, of all the members who achieved and accomplished by persevering, and of all the members who laid the foundations upon which each of us builds. Special holidays allow us to celebrate the important people and the important events that define who we are and make our history shine. Special holidays foster pride in our ethnicity and serve as a strong bond among generations.

Our ethnic festivals provide opportunities for people to come together in one location for a joint celebration of their culture and heritage. In a fun-loving and relaxed atmosphere, festivals offer a time and place for ethnic groups (and others) to review and remember their history with exhibits and displays; to sample the group's food and fare at culinary booths and stands; to examine the group's arts and crafts at shows and demonstrations; to experience the group's music, dance, and drama in performance; and to be immersed in the culture of the group *in the company of many of its members* at a deliberate, enjoyable pace. Ethnic festivals offer one of the most important means of obtaining firsthand knowledge about other cultures in an uncomplicated, inexpensive manner. They often serve as a child's initiation into the foods and cultures of other peoples or his path for exploring the customs and traditions of his ancestors.

Celebrations of all types present us with avenues for making vital connections with each other, both as individuals and as groups. They remind us of our commonalities, inspire us to new heights, and renew our sagging spirits. They are the reason for this book.

When I was contacted about participating in a survey to determine the need for a comprehensive book about the holidays, festivals, and celebratory events of African Americans, I was as excited about the prospect of the publication as I was about helping to shape the final product. In my role as Chief Librarian (and continuing role as reference librarian) at the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University, I am acutely aware of the need for quality reference materials that will provide our users—professors, teachers, librarians, authors, parents, and students—with reliable information

about important events in the lives of the African-American ancestors whom we continue to honor and celebrate. *African-American Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations* will long be a primary source of information and inspiration, as well as a companion, when we venture into the lives, history, and culture of people of African descent.

Jean Currie Church  
Chief Librarian, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center  
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# Preface

**M**any events occur each year to honor the heritage of African Americans as well as that of people of the African diaspora who have immigrated to the United States. Anniversaries, commemorations, concerts, feasts, festivals, historic reenactments, holiday celebrations, parades, religious events—all have played roles in African Americans' struggle to reclaim their past, maintain their traditions, and celebrate their cultures. Through these observances, participants and onlookers alike may increase their knowledge and appreciation of the history and traditions of Americans of African descent, from Africa to the Caribbean to the United States, from slavery times to the present day.

## Scope

*African-American Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations: The History, Customs, and Symbols Associated with Both Traditional and Contemporary Religious and Secular Events Observed by Americans of African Descent* includes a broad range of events. These events include national holidays and observances, such as **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday** and **African-American History Month**; local festivals, such as the **Kunta Kinte Festival** and the **Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Arts and Humanities**; celebrations marking important moments in history, such as **Buffalo Soldiers commemorations** and **Emancipation Day**; and special observances that may be both communal and domestic, such as **Kwanzaa** and **Umoja Karamu**.

Some of the festivals selected have historic significance—for example, colonial election days, coronation festivals, and corn shucking—although they are no longer observed. Others were selected to represent religious observances practiced by Christians as well as adherents to Santería and other African-based faiths. Still others focus on African-American artistic expression—music, dance, literature, film, and theater. In addition, some festivals and special days honor various African Americans, for example, **Harriet Tubman Day**, **George Washington Carver Day**, **Rosa Parks Day**, and one of the most recent, **Jackie Robinson Day**.

## Audience

*African-American Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations* is intended for a general audience, including students, educators, librarians, and other interested individuals and groups. In addition, the book is intended for those who plan vacations around celebratory events that focus on African-American heritage. Contact information and web sites included in this book direct travelers to communities where celebrations occur as well as to African-American historic sites, museums, and cultural centers. Through these pages, readers can explore many wonderful events and activities that honor African-American contributions to the nation and celebrate freedom from oppression and triumph over adversity.

## Organization

The 109 entries in this book are arranged alphabetically by the name of the event. Each entry begins with the following elements: 1) the name of the celebration; 2) the date on which the holiday or festival is observed; and 3) the location of the observance.

The main body of each entry contains an introductory paragraph that outlines what or who the event commemorates and whether it is a holiday, festival, or other kind of observance. The remainder of the entry is organized according to the following headings:

- **Historical Background:** This section provides an overview of the event or person commemorated.
- **Creation of the Holiday, Festival, or Observance:** This section gives information about the process by which the event was created.
- **Observance:** This section offers descriptions of the event's observance, customs, and symbols.

Each entry concludes with listings of helpful web sites and contact information and suggestions for further reading.

## Cross References

Within each entry, terms in boldface type and see-also references guide the reader to holidays and festivals featured in other entries in the book.

## Hyphenation

Hyphenation of the term "African American" varies in the text of this volume, depending on usage. The term has not been hyphenated when used in its noun form, to refer

to people, as in “African Americans.” The term has been hyphenated when used in its adjectival form, as in “African-American holidays.” However, there are exceptions to this style. The names of festivals and organizations have been rendered according to the preference evidenced by festival and organization web sites and literature. Thus, some events are hyphenated (such as African-American Heritage Festival); others are not (African American Day Parade).

## **Other Features**

### ***Appendix 1: Chronology***

This appendix lists significant events in the history of the African-American holidays, festivals, and celebrations covered in this volume. It includes dates of the first observance of events as well as significant dates relating to the people and historical events that are memorialized during the holiday or festival. In so doing, the appendix provides an at-a-glance guide to the history of African-American holidays, festivals, and celebrations. Although historical events are included, the chronology is not intended to serve as a comprehensive list of events in African-American history.

### ***Appendix 2: Calendar of Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations***

This appendix lists each currently observed event in calendar order. Within each month, events that annually occur on the same fixed date are listed first. These are followed by events that occur throughout the month or events that take place during the month on varying dates each year.

### ***Appendix 3: Geographical List of Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations***

This appendix lists each currently observed event by the state(s) in which it takes place. Under each state, events that are official state holidays or observances are listed first, followed by events observed in cities within the state.

### ***Bibliography***

The Bibliography contains a complete list of books and articles consulted in the preparation of this volume.

### ***Organizations — Contact Information and Web Sites***

This section includes the organizations represented in the book, listed in alphabetical order, along with their web sites and contact information.

## ***Index***

The Index includes people, places, customs, symbols, foods, musical and literary works, and other subjects mentioned in the entries.



## ***A Note on the Sankofa Symbol***

The sankofa symbol—shown above and used throughout this volume—is an illustration of a bird with its head facing backward. It comes from the pictorial writing system of the Akan people of Ghana. The term sankofa means “one must return to the past in order to move forward.” The sankofa symbol is also associated with an Akan proverb that translates as “go back and fetch it” or “return to the source and fetch [learn].”

## **Acknowledgments**

We would like to thank the institutions and event organizers who helpfully responded to our requests for information, photographs, and illustrations. We also wish to express our appreciation for the countless organizers and volunteers whose creativity and hard work have made these important events possible.

In addition, we want to acknowledge the assistance of our Advisory Board members. This volume was developed in consultation with a distinguished panel comprised of educators, librarians, archivists, and other experts in the field. Their comments and suggestions were invaluable throughout the production process. Following is a list of advisors who contributed to *African-American Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations*:

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We want to thank the advisors for extending their insights and expertise to this book.  
Any errors, of course, are ours alone.

## **Comments and Suggestions**

We welcome your comments on *African-American Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations*, including suggestions for topics that you would like to see covered in future editions. Please address correspondence to:

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# Introduction

The celebration of African-American life through holidays and festivals, whether religious or secular, is important. For ancestors who grew up in the African-American community, celebrations had a very special meaning that may be best understood and appreciated by those who were a part of it. In his seminal work *O Freedom! Afro-American Emancipation Celebrations* (University of Tennessee Press, 1987), folklorist and educator William H. Wiggins Jr. lamented the fact that scholarly works of the past “contain no hint” of the exciting events that the African-American community embraced historically with enthusiasm. Such celebrations included “dramatic proclamation readings, historical pageants, colorful parades, all-night barbecues, exciting ball-games,” and numerous other ways of recognizing African Americans’ freedom.

While Wiggins’s exploration of such celebrations began as early as 1972, scholars remained slow to capture the breadth and depth of these cultural expressions, much less deem them important. A study of these activities provides a vital new perspective on African-American and American history. In a brief article, “Festivals in the United States, African American” in *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience* (edited by Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates Jr., 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, 2005), Aaron Myers groups early celebrations under three major headings: “coronation festivals, emancipation festivals, and commemoration festivals.” His claim that these activities took place primarily in the antebellum North is questionable and disregards occurrences in the South during the same period. While celebrations held in the slave-dominated South were less documented, we must not overlook the joys that slaves mixed with the pain of their condition. Depending on the compassion of the slave master, slaves celebrated weddings and such holidays as Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year’s Day, and Easter (sometimes Easter Monday as well). Some slaves also celebrated the Fourth of July as an occasion for a big barbecue and a time to mix with fellow slaves from other plantations. Conversely, some slaves saw some disparity between the meaning of that day to white Americans who celebrated freedom from British rule and black Americans who were still enslaved. This disparity was voiced by Frederick Douglass, abolitionist, former slave, and orator, in his famous speech, “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?”

Some masters held Saturday night parties for their slaves and at times provided meager refreshments for them to enjoy. Provisions included alcohol, a hog, or chickens for a barbecue. Some slaveowners also organized corn-shucking festivals at harvest time. The community would gather, divide into teams, and compete in a corn-husking contest. In the truest sense, these celebrations may not have been African-American sponsored; nevertheless, in the words of William Wiggins, "Contemporary Emancipation celebrations, whose structural and cultural origins can be traced to earlier slave holidays, have exerted continuing influence on Afro-American culture during the 20th century. . . . The simple, leisure-time celebrations of the slaves were the cultural forerunners of these freedom celebrations."

*African-American Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations* is an essential new work well characterized by its subtitle, "The History, Customs, and Symbols Associated with Both Traditional and Contemporary Religious and Secular Events Observed by Americans of African Descent." This book was developed through the collaboration of a team of dedicated professionals from libraries, archives, museums, and research centers across the country. *African-American Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations* emerges as an authoritative work that identifies many African-American celebrations nationwide. Furthermore, the results demonstrate that, since Wiggins's research was done, such celebrations tend to fall within four categories: emancipation celebrations, coronations, commemorative celebrations, and contemporary celebrations. This volume has broadened Wiggins's earlier research and expanded Aaron Myers's grouping by adding a fourth category.

Numerous emancipation celebrations, including Emancipation Day, Juneteenth, and West Indies Emancipation Day, are identified in *African-American Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations*. These are festivals or celebrations that recognize the date that slavery was abolished nationally as well as the final recognition of abolition in a particular state. Emancipation celebrations also honor individual rebels and/or fugitives who were important liberation figures, as seen, for example, in Jerry Rescue Day. That celebration originated in Syracuse, New York, in honor of a slave named Jerry who escaped, was captured, and then set free by abolitionists. Another celebration, the Junkanoo festival (variously known as Jonkonnu, John Canoe, and so on), is believed to have originally feted a west African leader named Junkanoo. One celebration that has increased in popularity is Juneteenth, or June 19, 1865, which marks the date that slaves in Texas finally learned they were free. Although an official state holiday in Texas, Juneteenth is increasingly celebrated in a number of other states. Traditionally, these celebrations have aimed at promoting racial pride and preserving cultural traditions, and have included such activities as parades, dancing, barbecues, music, prayer, oratory, and sports.

Coronations are identified in this book under the heading "Negro Election Days and Coronation Festivals." Included are traditional celebrations held to honor black elect-

ed leaders. The elected celebrant was often an African-born black of royal lineage. Most celebrations of this type appeared in 18th-century New England, where slaves elected their own governors or kings. Another coronation festival identified here is the Pinkster celebration, most commonly held between 1790 and 1810. Initially, the Dutch celebrated Pinkster as a spring festival around the Christian holy day of Pentecost, and they included their slaves in the holiday. Later it was recognized as an African-American holiday—a time to reunite with family and friends, sell crafts, and enjoy speeches, storytelling, and singing.

*African-American Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations* also tells of commemorative celebrations in the black community. It features discussions concerning festivals, celebrations, and religions of the black heritage in various cultures, such as African (African Street Festival), Bahamian (Miami/Bahamas Goombay Festival), Caribbean (DC Caribbean Carnival), Cuban (Honoring Santería Orishas), and West Indian (J'Ouvert Celebration and West Indian-American Day Carnival). Some of the celebrations recognize the importance of the African-American church which addressed the spiritual needs of its members. For example, church homecomings were generally built around anniversaries, Founder's Day, or other events such as quarterly church conferences in the African Union Methodist Protestant Church. Others commemorate secular achievements, including the Charlie Parker Jazz Festival in New York City; the National Black Theatre Festival held biennially in Winston-Salem, North Carolina; and African-American History Month (previously called Black History Month) celebrated each February. The purpose of the latter celebration is to honor past and present African-American luminaries and to promote racial pride. African-American History Month is one of the most highly recognized celebrations. It garners wide acclaim among all American ethnic groups. Also well known are the traditions of Carnival. However, when African Americans infuse their own cultural creativity, traditions, beliefs, and practices, they create a unique celebration. For example, a featured presentation of the Mardi Gras celebration in New Orleans is the parade of Black Indians and Zulus, whose participants mock white parade kings.

Commemorative celebrations serve to honor not only the memory of the group, but also the memory of the individual. A part of the role of the community as cultural preserver is to remember such giants as anthropologist, folklorist, and writer Zora Neale Hurston, as reflected in the Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Arts and Humanities in Eatonville, Florida. Again taking note of the individual, in the sports arena is Jackie Robinson Day, which celebrates his first Major League baseball game. In the arena of social equality and justice are the celebrations related to Martin Luther King Jr.—the only African-American national holiday—as well as Rosa Parks and Malcolm X.

Contemporary celebrations include the sports classics that occur in the African-American community, such as the Atlanta Football Classic and the Bayou Bowl. The seven-day holiday celebration, Kwanzaa, offers an addition and/or an alternative to traditional Christmas celebrations. Inspirational events, such as the National Black Family Reunion Celebration, the Million Man March, and the Millions More March, celebrate the unified effort to reconnect the black family with respect to its strength, traditions, and values. Each honors African-American culture from different perspectives.

This new work is a welcome addition to resources on African-American culture. It provides in a single reference information that is otherwise scattered. It expands such works as Mitch Kachun's *Festivals of Freedom: Memory and Meaning in African American Emancipation Celebrations, 1808-1919* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2003). It enlarges and updates James A. Anyike's *African American Holidays: A Historical Research and Resource Guide to Cultural Celebrations* (Chicago: Popular Truth, 1991). Additionally, it extends Barbara Eklof's *For Every Season: The Complete Guide to African American Celebrations, Traditional to Contemporary* (HarperCollins, 1997).

*African-American Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations* will serve well the needs of librarians, researchers, cultural historians, and the general reader. It fills a void among current works by presenting an important aspect of African-American culture. For individuals who want to identify current and traditional cultural celebrations and to understand the connection between historical and contemporary celebrations, this reference provides easy accessibility. It may help to clarify misconceptions about traditional celebrations. For those who are unfamiliar with African-American traditions, this volume will introduce another aspect of history—the celebrations and festivities that have spurred African Americans to capture their enduring spirit. Moreover, it will reveal ways in which the race simultaneously endured years of hardship and found outlets for joyous expression. Thus, *African-American Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations* is a vitally needed and timely work which adds to the body of knowledge about African Americans.

Jessie Carney Smith  
University Librarian and William and  
Camille Cosby Professor in the Humanities  
Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee

# African-American Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*A dance group from New York performs at the Odunde Festival  
in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*







# AFRAM Festival

*Date Observed: Second weekend in August*

*Location: Seaford, Delaware*

The annual AFRAM Festival in Seaford, Delaware, takes place on the second weekend in August. “AFRAM” stands for African American. Developing cultural awareness and displaying African-American heritage and pride are two of the underlying reasons for the festival.

## Historical Background

African-American festivals have been taking place on a widespread scale in the United States since the 1980s. Many of these festivals have been initiated to connect the past with the present in black communities and to foster understanding of the African diaspora and the contributions people of African descent have made worldwide. Festivals also provide opportunities for local black communities to display their talents and highlight their accomplishments.

## Creation of the Festival

The AFRAM Festival originated as “a big vision for a small county,” according to its founder Councilwoman Pat Jones, the first African American to serve on the city council. It was designed to promote a positive outlook in the African-American community, and it has turned into one of the largest cultural events in Sussex County, Delaware.

The first AFRAM festivals were held in the 1990s, but after 1999 there was a hiatus for four years. In 2003 Jones chaired a committee that resumed the event.

## Observance

The festival has grown since its inception. By 2005 participants had increased to more than 4,000 from fewer than 1,000 in 2003. The number of floats in the parade also increased, and there was a greater diversity of people—a goal the committee had hoped



## **Sankofa**

The term *sankofa* has been applied not only to performance companies (like the Dover group and the Williams College Step Team) but also to newsletters about Africana and to titles of films and books. According to Eric Kofi Acree of the Cornell University Library, *sankofa* stems from words in the pictorial writing system of the Akan people in Ghana, meaning “one must return to the past in order to move forward.” The sankofa symbol is also associated with a proverb meaning “go back and fetch it” or “return to the source and fetch (learn).” A flying bird turning its head completely around to face backward is often used to symbolize sankofa. The reason for using the symbol and/or term is to focus on rediscovery of traditions that may be lost or forgotten and to give them meaning and significance in present-day life.

to accomplish. Activities include a car show, cultural displays, a pageant with entrants competing for Little Miss and Mr. AFRAM titles, musical entertainment, games and, of course, food.

A traditional west African ritual to honor elders is also part of the festival. The Sankofa Drummers and Dancers of Dover, Delaware, is a performance company that focuses on African dance and percussion instruments. The musicians and dancers participate in a procession in which a huge umbrella—a sign of respect—is held over honored guests while drums beat. Other performances at the festival have included a Christian rapper, a rhythm and blues group, and a creative movement troupe.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

AFRAM Festival  
P.O. Box 687  
Seaford, DE 19973  
302-628-1908

City of Seaford  
414 High St.  
P.O. Box 1100  
Seaford, DE 19973  
302-629-9173; fax: 302-629-9307  
<http://www.seafordde.com>

## **Further Reading**

Kofi Acree, Eric. “Message from the Africana Librarian.” *Sankofa Africana Library Newsletter* (Cornell University Library), February 2003. <http://www.library.cornell.edu/africana/newsletter/feb2003.htm>.



# African American Day Parade

*Date Observed: Third Sunday in September*

*Location: Harlem, New York*

The African American Day Parade held in Harlem in New York City in September is considered one of the largest black parades in the U.S. Held since 1969, the parade's primary purpose is to display African-American achievement and pride.

## Historical Background

New York has had a significant African-American populace since the 18th century. It was a concentrated center for abolitionist activities, harboring numerous Underground Railroad stops and groups, such as the New York Manumission Society, that worked to abolish slavery, free slaves, and educate young African Americans. As a state, New York passed laws granting freedoms and rights to blacks much more progressively than many others in the U.S. In a 1799 act, children of slaves born after July 1799 were granted freedom. And the state of New York abolished slavery in the state in 1827, 38 years before the nation did so in 1865.

In the early 20th century blacks began to flock to New York in large numbers to escape the extreme poverty and racism of the South and to explore the burgeoning chances for economic opportunity. Harlem is considered the center of New York City's black culture. But Harlem actually began as Nieuw Haarlem, named by the Dutch, who initially established a farming community on the site (*see also* **Pinkster**). By the turn of the 20th century, however, black New Yorkers had begun moving uptown into Harlem's apartment buildings and townhouses.

Harlem came to international prominence during the 1920s through a cultural movement known as the Harlem Renaissance. This golden era propelled local writers, such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Ralph Ellison, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston, and artists, such as Aaron Douglas, Lois Mailou Jones, and Jacob Lawrence, into the limelight. The Renaissance cast a spotlight onto Harlem itself, which was, at the time, quite

prosperous. However, in the 1930s the Great Depression hit hard, and its impact was felt strongly for years afterward. By the turn of the 21st century, an economic renaissance appeared to be taking place, with a renewed effort to celebrate the culture and history of Harlem's past and present (*see also* **Harlem Week**).

### **Adam Clayton Powell Jr.**

**T**he main thoroughfare of the African American Day Parade route is named for another notable New York personage: Adam Clayton Powell Jr. (1908-1972). Powell was a civil rights leader, minister, publisher, and politician. He came to prominence during his years as a U.S. congressman, first elected in 1944 and serving until 1970. He was the first black congressman from New York City's Harlem district.

During his years in the U.S. House of Representatives, Powell worked to end racial segregation in schools, the military, and even the U.S. Capitol Building, where House rules prohibited blacks from using dining rooms, barbershops, and other facilities. He also succeeded in making changes in the House press gallery, bringing in black journalists for the first time. Powell was so consistent and adamant about overturning racial segregation that he became known as "Mr. Civil Rights." He also was known for a tactic that congressional members called the Powell Amendment, which was attached to spending bills and, when successful, forbade federal funds to any government agencies that discriminated.

Additional accomplishments included a House chairmanship of the Education and Labor Committee. Under Powell, the committee helped pass such legislation as the Minimum Wage Bill of 1961, the Vocational Education Act, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and anti-poverty bills. Powell was a powerful congressman, but he was also a controversial figure. He was accused of tax fraud, taking kickbacks from former employees, and misuse of public funds, along with other charges. His numerous court cases eventually affected his political clout and the House expelled him for his excesses. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled against the action, however, and Powell was reinstated. Nevertheless, his political career was over. When he ran for office in 1970, he was defeated by Charles Rangel. Powell died two years later of cancer. Although Powell is not revered nationwide like some other civil rights leaders, he is honored in Harlem with an office building and boulevard bearing his name.

## Creation of the Festival

In 1969 a group of community members, led by Abe Snyder, organized the first African American Day Parade. Their goal was to celebrate the achievements of the black community, as well as to provide a positive venue in which to bring people together in a joyful demonstration of unity and culture.

## Observance

The African American Day Parade is held on the third Sunday of September each year. It kicks off mid-afternoon in Harlem at 111th Street and proceeds to 142nd Street, traversing along Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Boulevard. Participating in the event are various local officials, celebrities, and other community leaders, who march along the entire distance of the parade route waving and sometimes interacting with those gathered to watch the festivities. Interspersed among these notables are parade favorites, such as marching bands and dance groups. Members of organizations from a dozen states traveled to New York to take part in the 2006 event, which marked the parade's 37th year.



To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*A woman carries the Ethiopian flag in the 1997 African American Day Parade.*

## Contacts and Web Sites

African American Day Parade Office  
1969 Madison Ave.  
New York, NY 10035-1549  
212-348-3080

Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce  
200A W. 136th St.  
New York, NY 10030-7200  
212-862-7200; fax: 212-862-8745  
<http://www.harlemdiscover.com>

### **Further Reading**

Hamilton, Charles V. *Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.: The Political Biography of an American Dilemma*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield/Cooper Square Press, 2002.

Hill, Laban Carrick. *Harlem Stomp!: A Cultural History of the Harlem Renaissance*. New York: Little, Brown/Megan Tingley, 2004. (young adult)



# African-American Heritage Festival

*Date Observed: First week in May*

*Location: Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio*

**T**he Multicultural Center at Ohio State University in Columbus holds an annual African-American Heritage Festival over the first week in May. The purpose is to share a celebration of African-American culture and history with the university. In 2006, the festival celebrated its 28th year.

## Historical Background

Ohio State University opened in 1873 with 24 students, none of whom were black. Fewer than 20 years later, however, the first African-American students were enrolled. The university established its Black Studies Department in 1972. During the 1970s black enrollment had increased to the point at which African-American student services be-

### Stepping

**F**or decades African-American fraternities and sororities have developed and performed stepping performances that are rooted in African and African-American cultures. The tradition has been passed on for generations, and step shows are part of many African-American festivals and celebrations in the United States. Step shows also have become popular worldwide.

Stepping involves synchronized movements, such as high steps, hand clapping, arm crossing, and shoulder tapping. This complex performance also is mixed with singing and chanting.

came necessary. The umbrella Multicultural Center, which now organizes the festival, was created during the mid-1990s. By 2005 African Americans comprised about seven percent of the university's student body.

## **Creation of the Festival**

The African-American Heritage Festival has its origins in an informal block party held by students in the 1970s. Each year the event was repeated and grew in size. By the 1980s, students began efforts to instead create an event that would focus on cultural awareness. In 2001 they named the celebration the African-American Heritage Festival. Organizers also began to use a different Swahili term each year as part of the festival's theme. In 2005, for example, the theme was "Kisima: Healing the Mind, Body and Soul." *Kisima* means "well." In 2006, the term *Ufanisi* (meaning "prosperity") was used: "Ufanisi: Striving for Higher Heights."

## **Observance**

The African-American Heritage Festival begins with a parade of student groups and marching bands. During the week, events include forums that address the year's theme—for example, in 2005, a panel discussed diabetes, a disease that affects many African Americans, and a health fair provided free screenings. A step show, basketball tournament, food market, music, art, poetry, and dancing are part of this annual festival as well. In addition, volunteers read stories and poems to young schoolchildren throughout the week to encourage them to read.

## **Contact and Web Site**

African American Student Services  
The Ohio State Multicultural Center  
The Ohio Union  
1739 N. High St.  
Columbus, OH 43210  
614-688-8449  
<http://www.osuheritagefestival.com/>

## **Further Reading**

Fine, Elizabeth C. *Soulstepping: African American Step Shows*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2003.





# African-American History Month

*Date Observed: February*

*Location: Communities Nationwide*

**A**frican-American History Month is celebrated each February to honor prominent African Americans of the past as well as present-day leaders and others who have made significant contributions to the nation and world. It began in 1926 as Negro History Week. Since 1976 the president of the United States has issued a proclamation calling on Americans to observe African-American History Month with appropriate programs and events. Each February communities, schools, libraries, and other institutions across the United States pay tribute to African-American achievements in numerous ways.

## Historical Background

Until the early part of the 1900s, few if any U.S. history books contained information about African-American accomplishments. References to blacks nearly always depicted the low status forced on them by the dominant white society. Because of the vision of Carter Goodwin Woodson (1875-1950) and others, African Americans' contributions and roles in history were largely accepted as integral to American history by the end of the century.

Woodson was the son of former slaves and one of nine children in the family. When the Woodsons moved to West Virginia, Carter found work in the coal mines and also enrolled in high school at age 20, graduating within two years. He later earned a degree from the University of Chicago and a doctorate from Harvard, becoming the second African American to earn a Ph.D. in history. For 10 years he taught high school history in Washington, D.C., and began his study of African-American history, believing that educating people about black history would promote racial pride and harmony.

**To view this text, please refer to the print version of this book.**

In 1915, Woodson and a few colleagues in Chicago organized the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, now called the Association for the Study of African-American Life and History (ASALH). Under the auspices of the association but with his own funds, Woodson founded the *Journal of Negro History*, publishing the first

issue in January 1916. To further his mission of publishing black perspectives on history (as opposed to those by white scholars), he established the Associated Negro Publishers in the 1920s.

### Creation of the Observance

In 1926 Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History launched Negro History Week. Woodson and the other leaders chose the second week in February for the celebration because the birth dates of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln are observed around that time (*see also* **Frederick Douglass Day**). Negro History Week eventually became Black History Week. In 1976 Gerald Ford was the first president to call for Americans to observe February as Black History Month. Since then each president of the United States has done the same, though in recent years the observance is better known as African-American History Month.

### African-American Achievements

From colonial times through the civil rights era—and, sometimes, to the present day—African Americans often have been prevented from entering occupations and professions dominated by whites. Once someone broke the color barrier that person became known as an “African-American First.” Today there are so many “firsts” that their lives and achievements fill hundreds of books, and their success stories are part of African-American History presentations. Out of thousands of people, a variety in diverse fields may be featured during the month.

As a public service, the U.S. Census Bureau sponsors features for a radio program called “Profile America.” All year long “Profile America” offers vignettes of important observances, commemorations, or people. On each day in February 2006, “Profile America” recognized African Americans and their achievements in daily one-minute radio spots, airing free on stations across the United States.

On the first day of African-American History Month 2006, “Profile America” featured filmmaker William Greaves. His films have included documentaries about Ralph Bunche, the first African American to win the Nobel Peace Prize; Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, and Malcolm X (*see also* **Malcolm X’s Birthday**). Over the following days, radio spots described 27 other African Americans and their accomplishments. Some are well known and others are not widely recognized. Days two through eight highlighted the following people:

- Robert Pelham, who worked for the U.S. Census Bureau from 1900 to 1930, patented two devices that mechanically totaled statistical tables.

- Evelyn Ashford, one of the world's fastest sprinters, won five Olympic medals—four gold and one silver—during the 1980s and 1990s.
- Maurice Ashley became the first African American to achieve the distinction of international grand master in chess in 1999.
- Dorothy West, associated with the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, was a magazine publisher and author of short stories and books such as *The Living Is Easy* and *The Wedding: A Novel*.
- Sarah Goode, a former slave who was freed after the Civil War, opened a furniture store in Chicago, invented a fold-up cabinet bed, and in 1885 became the first African-American woman to hold a patent for an invention.
- Fannie Lou Hammer organized voter registration drives in the 1960s and, at the 1964 Democratic National Convention, led an effort to unseat the all-white delegation from Mississippi.
- Captain Frederick Branch became the first African American to be commissioned as an officer in the Marine Corps in 1945.

Among others featured were pianist and vocalist Bobby Short; Army officer, physician, and judge Martin Robinson Delany; U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice; publisher John Johnson; National Football League coach Tony Dungy; award-winning playwright Lorraine Hansberry; traditional jazz saxophonist Sidney Bechet; inventor Miriam Benjamin, who received a patent in 1888 for a hotel "signal chair" that lit up when a guest wanted service; cell scientist Ernest Just; poet Arna Bontemps; Dr. George Grant, a dentist who created the first golf tee, which he patented in 1899; Vietnam veteran Sherian Cadoria, an African-American woman who retired as a brigadier general; and former slave Lewis Temple, who developed a whaling harpoon in 1848.

Others profiled were Harriet Tubman, who led slaves from the South to freedom in the North (*see also Harriet Tubman Day*); famed photojournalist, film director, and poet Gordon Parks; civil rights worker C. DeLores Tucker, Pennsylvania's first African-American secretary of state; inventor George Edward Alcorn Jr., whose expertise is nuclear and molecular physics at the Goddard Space Flight Center; George Washington Bush, a pioneer who went West by wagon train in 1844; and Edward Davis of Detroit, a 1996 inductee in the Automotive Hall of Fame as the first African-American new car dealer.

## Historic Sites

During African-American History Month, many individuals and tour groups visit National Park Service historic sites that commemorate African Americans, although people visit these places throughout the year as well. One of the sites is in Boston, Massa-

Leaders in African-American History



*Abolitionist  
Sojourner Truth*



*Educator Mary  
McLeod Bethune*



*Educator Booker T.  
Washington*



*Labor leader  
A. Philip Randolph*



*U.S. Supreme Court  
Justice Thurgood Marshall*



*Activist Mary  
Church Terrell*



*Activist Roy Wilkins*



*U.S. Representative  
Barbara Jordan*



*Writer and educator  
W. E. B. Du Bois*



*Diplomat Ralph Bunche*

### **African-American National Park Sites**

The U.S. National Park Service provides links to the following African-American National Park Sites at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/aahistory/parks/parks.htm>:

Booker T. Washington National Monument (Virginia)	Fort Donelson National Cemetery (Tennessee)
Boston African American National Historic Site (Massachusetts)	Fort Scott National Historic Site, "First to Serve: African-American Soldiers" (Kansas)
Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site (Kansas)	Fort Smith National Historic Site, "From Slavery to Parker's Court" (Arkansas)
Cane River National Historic Area (Louisiana)	George Washington Birthplace National Monument, "Slavery at Pope's Creek Plantation" (Virginia)
Cane River Creole National Historic Park (Louisiana)	George Washington Carver National Monument (Missouri)
Central High School National Historic Site (Arkansas)	Guadalupe Mountains National Park, "Buffalo Soldiers" (Texas)
Colonial National Historic Park, "African Americans at Jamestown" (Virginia)	Gulf Islands National Seashore, "Louisiana Native Guards on Ship Island 1863-1870" (Mississippi)
Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historic Park, Dunbar House (Ohio)	Hampton National Historic Site (Maryland)
Frederick Douglass National Historic Site (Washington, D.C.)	Harpers Ferry National Historic Site, "Frederick Douglass at Harpers Ferry" (West Virginia)
Fort Donelson National Battlefield, "African Americans at Fort Donelson" (Tennessee)	

chusetts, where there is a Black Heritage Trail that links 15 historic buildings, such as the African-American Meeting House and an African-American church dating back to pre-Civil War times.

In Topeka, Kansas, the Monroe Elementary School, once a segregated school, now is a historic site maintained by the U.S. National Park Service. The site commemorates *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision that struck down "separate but equal" educational facilities, declaring them unconstitutional.

**African-American National Park Sites *continued***

Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, "African Americans at Hopewell Furnace" (Pennsylvania)	Nicodemus National Historic Site (Kansas)
Independence National Historical Park, "The Robert Morris Mansion" (Pennsylvania)	Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial, "African American Seamen" (Ohio)
Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve (Louisiana)	Petersburg National Battlefield, "African Americans at Petersburg" (Virginia)
Jefferson National Expansion Memorial (Missouri)	Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial (California)
Lincoln Memorial (Washington, D.C.)	Richmond National Battlefield Park (Virginia)
Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site (Virginia)	San Francisco Maritime Park, "African American History" (California)
Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site (Georgia)	Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail (Alabama)
Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site (Washington, D.C.)	Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve, "Kingsley Plantation" (Florida)
Manassas National Battlefield Park, "The Robinson House" (Virginia)	Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site (Alabama)
Natchez National Historic Park (Mississippi)	Virgin Islands National Park (Virgin Islands)
New Orleans Jazz National Historic Site (Louisiana)	

The Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site in Tuskegee, Alabama, welcomes visitors to the home of George Washington Carver, founder of the Tuskegee Institute, and the Carver Museum. Also located on the site are original buildings designed by Robert R. Taylor, the first African American to graduate from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Tuskegee students constructed the buildings (*see also* **George Washington Carver Day**).

In Richmond, Virginia, the Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site was once the home of a prominent African-American woman. Walker was the first woman in the United

States to establish a bank and serve as its president. Guided tours of the house are provided at the site, and a video illustrates her life as a civic leader and businesswoman.

The National Register of Historic Places lists numerous sites that have significant ties to African-American history and are recognized during the month. In Indianapolis, Indiana, for example, there are several historic places, among them the Madame C. J. Walker Building, a National Historic Landmark. It is a museum that documents the life of successful businesswoman Madame Walker, who developed, manufactured, and sold formulas for hair care and other beauty products for black women. She was also the first African-American millionaire.

Baltimore, Maryland, touts its numerous African-American historical sites of interest to visitors during Black History Month as well as at other times of the year. The National Great Blacks In Wax Museum houses lifelike African-American wax figures that represent various periods in black history. The museum also has a replica of a slave ship. At the Eubie Blake National Jazz Institute and Cultural Center there are memorabilia and artifacts honoring the life of Blake. Other historic sites in Baltimore include buildings where Frederick Douglass lived and worked; headquarters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; and St. Francis Academy, a black educational institution established in 1828 and still operating.

Many other cities across the United States also call attention to markers, monuments, museums, schools, and other buildings associated with African-American heritage. These structures provide tie-ins with notable African Americans featured in educational programs offered during the month.

## **Observance**

As with other national holidays and observances, the U.S. president issues a proclamation calling on Americans to mark the occasion with appropriate programs and activities designed to honor African Americans' contributions to the nation.

Throughout February, books, magazine articles, newspaper features, Internet sites, television documentaries, videos, and other materials feature scholars, explorers, civil rights leaders, authors, poets, journalists, musicians, artists, sports and film stars, and many others of African descent. Print and electronic materials frequently explain how African-American History Month should be celebrated. But there is no single "correct" way. Observances may involve the celebration of a potpourri of individuals and events, or they may be designed around a specific theme or field of interest.



To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*For African-American History Month 2005, James Earl Jones read Faith Ringgold's  
If a Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Parks to children at a school in Harlem, New York.*

As this month-long observance takes place each year, people from diverse backgrounds pay tribute to African-American heritage and achievements in many fields. For example, in Los Angeles, California, the **Pan African Film & Arts Festival** is billed as the largest African-American History Month event in the nation.

At religious institutions a common practice is to reflect on the lives of such historical figures as Richard Allen, the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (*see also **Founder's Day/Richard Allen's Birthday***); Peter Spencer, founder of the African Union Methodist Protestant Church (*see also **African Methodist August Quarterly***); and prominent abolitionists and civil rights pioneers, such as Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King Jr., and Rosa Parks (*see also **Frederick Douglass Day; Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday; and Rosa Parks Day***).

Libraries mark African-American History Month with tables and showcases displaying titles about African Americans or by African-American authors. Some libraries also participate in the annual African-American Read-In, sponsored by the Black Caucus of the

National Council of English Teachers (NCET). The yearly event, which is also designed to encourage literacy, takes place in elementary and secondary schools, on university campuses, in bookstores and churches. Local celebrities, community leaders, and students read from works by their favorite African-American writers or African-American authors read from their works.

Along with reading, writing is usually emphasized in schools during the observance. Many states have school essay contests with specific themes for Black History Month. Rewards for such essay contests range from savings bonds to college scholarships. In Florida, for example, the state sponsors an annual essay contest that is just one of numerous events during the month to commemorate Florida's African-American heritage. The theme for 2006 was "What Impact has an African-American Athlete from Florida Had on My Life?"

African-American athletes are often the subjects of tributes during Black History Month. Some popular figures are Jackie Robinson, the first black man to break the color barrier in the modern era of major league baseball (*see also Jackie Robinson Day*); Jack Johnson (1878-1946), the first black heavyweight boxing champion; boxers Joe Louis (1914-1981) and Muhammad Ali (1942-); Jessie Owens (1913-1980), famous track star and winner of Olympic gold medals; James "Jim" Brown (1934-), a football legend inducted into the Professional Football Hall of Fame; basketball great Michael Jordan (1961-); tennis stars Arthur Ashe (1943-1993), Serena Williams (1981-) and Venus Williams (1980-); track star and Olympic medal winner Jacqueline "Jackie" Joyner-Kersey (1962-); and many more.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

"African American History Month 2006"

National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/NR/feature/afam/>

"The African-American Mosaic: A Library of Congress Resource Guide for the Study of Black History & Culture"

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african/intro.html>

Association for the Study of African-American Life and History

C. B. Powell Bldg.

525 Bryant St., Ste. C142

Washington, DC 20059

202-865-0053; fax: 202-265-7920

<http://www.asalh.org/>

“Black History Month Resources,” a U.S. Department of Education site that contains links to web pages related to African-American history

<http://www.ed.gov/free/bhm.html>

“Celebrating African American History & Culture: Our Shared History”

National Park Service

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/aahistory/bhm-sites.htm>

Eubie Blake National Jazz Institute and Cultural Center

847 N. Howard St.

Baltimore, MD 21201

410-225-3130; fax: 410-225-3139

<http://www.eubieblake.org>

The HistoryMakers, an organization that collects videos, oral histories, and other materials on African-American heritage

1900 S. Michigan Ave.

Chicago, IL 60616

312-674-1900; fax: 312-674-1915

<http://thehistorymakers.com/>

Madame C. J. Walker Building

617 Indiana Ave.

Indianapolis, IN 46202

317-236-2099; fax: 317-236-2097

[http://www.walkertheatre.com/walker\\_building.htm](http://www.walkertheatre.com/walker_building.htm)

National Civil Rights Museum

450 Mulberry St.

Memphis, TN 38103

901-521-9699; fax: 901-521-9740

<http://www.civilrightsmuseum.org/>

National Great Blacks in Wax Museum

1601-03 E. North Ave.

Baltimore, MD 21213

410-563-3404; fax: 410-563-7806

<http://www.ngbiwm.com> or <http://www.greatblacksinwax.org>

## **Further Reading**

- Cantor, George. *Historic Landmarks of Black America*. Detroit: Gale Research, 1991.
- Curtis, Nancy C. *Black Heritage Sites: The North*. New York: The New Press, 1996.
- . *Black Heritage Sites: The South*. New York: The New Press, 1996.
- Muwakkil, Salim. "Black History Month Matters." *In These Times*, January 2006. <http://www.inthesetimes.com/site/main/article/2476/>.
- Savage, Beth. *African American Historic Places*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 1994.
- Smith, Jessie Carney. *Black Firsts: 4,000 Ground-Breaking and Pioneering Historical Events*. 2nd ed., revised and expanded. Canton, MI: Visible Ink Press, 2003.
- Webster, Raymond B. *African American Firsts in Science & Technology*. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 1999.
- West, Cornel. *Race Matters*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.
- Woodson, Carter. *The Mis-Education of the Negro*. 1933. Reprint. New York: AMS Press, 1977.



# African American Women in Cinema Film Festival

*Date Observed: Three days in late October*

*Location: New York, New York*

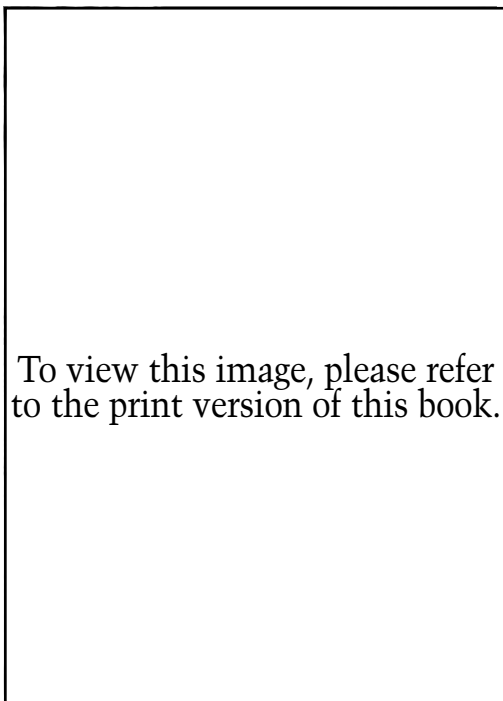
**T**he African American Women in Cinema, Inc. holds a film festival each October in New York City. The annual event aims to expand, explore and create career opportunities for minority women filmmakers within the entertainment industry.

## Historical Background

Although blacks have been involved in filmmaking ever since motion pictures were first produced, white males have dominated the industry. Not surprisingly, then, African-American women have struggled not only to be recognized as filmmakers, but also to attain the funds needed to produce motion pictures. Usually, they have produced independent films or videos for specific audiences, and, for the most part, have not been known by the general movie-going public or, for that matter, by major studios.

Black women directed and produced movies from about 1920 to 1930, when white men took over the industry, forcing nearly all women into the background. One of the early filmmakers was the famed author Zora Neale Hurston, according to *Sisters in the Cinema*, a documentary written, directed, produced, and narrated by Yvonne Welbon (see also **Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Arts and Humanities**). Welbon's film was the result of a search for other black women filmmakers. Premiering in 2004, the documentary traces the history of black women in filmmaking and has been widely and favorably reviewed.

In January 1992, Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* opened in Chicago. It was the first feature-length film by an African-American woman to receive a wide theatrical release. The film is the story of three generations of African Americans who meet on a Sea Island in 1902 (see also **Georgia Sea Island Festival, Native Islander Gullah Celebration, and Penn Center Heritage Days**).



To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*Julie Dash's groundbreaking film, Daughters of the Dust (1992), was released as a DVD in 2000.*

## **Creation of the Festival**

The African American Women in Cinema Festival began in 1998 in an effort to develop opportunities for African-American women in filmmaking. The non-profit African American Women in Cinema (AAWIC), which incorporated in 2000, focuses on supporting minority female filmmakers, particularly by providing resources that might not otherwise be readily accessible to them.

## **Observance**

Stretching over three days in late October, the festival is a combination of film screenings, workshops, seminars, social events, and award ceremonies.

The films screened at the festival aspire to achieve AAWIC's mission: to improve cultural understanding and overall social welfare through the promotion of diversity in dramatic and documentary media content.

All other activities support the organization's belief that the tools of enlightenment, empowerment, entertainment, education, and enterprise can be used by women, for the betterment of women, to break barriers in the black filmmaking arena.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

African American Women in Cinema Organization, Inc.  
545 Eighth Ave., Ste. 401  
New York, NY 10018  
212-769-7949; fax: 212-871-2074  
<http://www.aawic.org>

Daughters of the Diaspora offers "A Filmography of Black Women Independent Film and Video Makers," based on John Williams's "Re-Creating Their Media Image: Two Generations of Black Women Filmmakers." *Black Scholar*, Spring 1995.  
<http://geechee.tv/DaughtersDiaspora.html>

Sisters in Cinema, a resource guide provided by Yvonne Welbon's Our Film Works, Inc.  
<http://www.sistersincinema.com>; <http://www.sistersincinema.com/info/festivals.html>

### Further Reading

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Ellerson, Beti. *Sisters of the Screen: Women of Africa on Film, Video and Television*. Lawrenceville, NJ: Africa World Press, 2000.

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Moss, Marilyn. "Sisters in Cinema." *Hollywood Reporter*, February 6, 2004.

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# **African/Caribbean International Festival of Life**

***Date Observed: Five days including July 4***

***Location: Chicago, Illinois***

**T**he African/Caribbean International Festival of Life (IFOL) is a multicultural, family event held each year over the Fourth of July weekend in Chicago, Illinois. Since 1992 the festival has presented African and Caribbean music and foods to a diverse audience.

## **Historical Background**

Chicago is home to people from a great variety of ethnic groups, including European, Hispanic, Caribbean, and African Americans, as well as people of Asian and Native American descent.

To celebrate his city's richness, Ephraim M. Martin established Martin's Inter-Culture, Ltd., a company that has produced festivals in Chicago since the 1980s. In addition to the African/Caribbean Festival of Life, Martin also produces the annual Chicago Music Awards and the Reggae and World Music Awards.

## **Creation of the Festival**

Martin's Inter-Culture presented the first African/Caribbean International Festival of Life in 1992, attracting an estimated 6,000 people. By 2004 the crowd totaled 30,000. Martin's objective has been to attract a diversity of Chicagoans to experience African, Caribbean, and African-American music, foods, arts, and more.

## **Observance**

The festival is held at Washington Park where two stages provide live entertainment daily. One is typically devoted to music. Genres include reggae, calypso, salsa, blues,



rhythm and blues, highlife (west African music that is described as a fusion of indigenous dance rhythms and melodies and western influences), soukous (modern Zairean dance music), hip hop and rap. The second stage is more often geared to gospel and educational undertakings.

There are numerous children's activities available during the festival, in keeping with its family orientation. An international marketplace is open daily and has something for every taste and temptation. Between 200 and 300 vendors offer food, arts and crafts, jewelry, and clothing. At the food booths participants can sample Caribbean, African, Asian, Mexican, Indian, Middle Eastern, and American dishes. Local business merchants and companies also have booths to showcase their area services. Each year the event is themed but, typically, it follows along the lines of IFOL founder Martin's belief that "Out of the Many, We are One People."

### Contact and Web Site

International Festival of Life  
c/o Martin's Inter-Culture, Ltd.  
1325 S. Wabash Ave., Ste. 307  
Chicago, IL 60605  
312-427-0266; fax: 312-427-0268  
<http://www.festivaloflife.com>



# **African Film Festival**

***Date Observed: April through May***

***Location: New York, New York***

**T**he African Film Festival is an annual two-month, non-competitive cinematic celebration held in New York City. The festival runs from the beginning of April until the end of May and showcases both feature- and short-length films produced by African directors in the diaspora.

## **Historical Background**

Since the 1950s Africans have been creating films that depict the diverse cultures on the continent. The films have covered such topics as colonialism, corruption in independent nations, and traditional ways of life. Over the years, the films have served as vehicles of cultural exchange.

**To view this text, please refer to the print version of this book.**

In the late 1980s a committee of African and American artists and scholars banded together to find a way to use African cinema to promote and increase knowledge and understanding of African arts, literature, and culture. The goals were to develop a non-African audience for African films and to expand the opportunities for the distribution of African films in the United States. Ultimately, the committee formed a non-profit organization, the African Film Festival, Inc. (AFF), to sponsor a festival.

### **Creation of the Festival**

The African Film Festival was established in 1993. The festival has grown both in terms of attendance and respect among critics. AFF also has expanded the festival's impact by adding a traveling film series, a young adults education program, summer outdoor screenings, and community outreach.

### **Observance**

During the festival the New York and visiting populace have an impressive array of African films available for viewing. AFF's commitment to bridging the divide between post-colonial Africa and the American public through the medium of film is reflected by the diverse selection. Panel discussions and post-screening events have also been added over the years to broaden both educational and film distribution opportunities.

In recent years, wider embrace of the festival has been demonstrated by recurring commitment of the festival's hosts: the Film Society of Lincoln Center and the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

### **Contacts and Web Sites**

"African Cinema/Theatrical Movies about Africa," a resource of the Media Resources Center, University of California at Berkeley, that provides synopses of movies by African filmmakers

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/Africanfilm.html>

African Film Festival, Inc.

154 W. 18th St., Ste. 2A

New York, NY 10011

212-352-1720; fax: 212-807-9752

<http://www.africanfilmny.org>

### **Further Reading**

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Gugler, Joseph. *African Film: Re-Imagining a Continent*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.

Pfaff, Françoise. *Focus on African Films*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.

Ukadike, Nwachukwu Frank. *Black African Cinema*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.



# African Methodist August Quarterly

*Date Observed: Last weekend in August*

*Location: Wilmington, Delaware*

The African Methodist August Quarterly is a meeting of the African Union Methodist Protestant (AUMP) Church held each year at the end of August in Wilmington, Delaware. This religious festival, also known as the Big Quarterly, commemorates the founding of the church in 1813. It has served as an opportunity to conduct yearly church business as well a reunion celebration.

## Historical Background

The African Union Methodist Church (AUMC) was the first independent black church to be established in the United States. Although the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Philadelphia began earlier—in 1793—it did not separate from the predominantly white Methodist Episcopal denomination until 1816.

In 1813 Peter Spencer founded the church, originally called the Union Church of Africans, in Wilmington, Delaware. Spencer was born a slave in Kent County, Maryland, in 1782 and was freed when his owner died. During the 1790s, he moved to Wilmington. There he eventually became known as “Father Spencer” because of his strong faith, teaching abilities, and knowledge of the law. He not only taught people to read and write but he also offered legal advice. Spencer believed that the combination of education and religion would empower and liberate African Americans.

Soon after he arrived in Delaware, Spencer became active in the white-dominated Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church, called the Mother of Methodism in the state. Although accepted into the church, black congregants were not considered equal to whites and were segregated—required to sit in the church balcony rather than on the main floor. During worship, black congregants would praise the Lord out loud when they felt the presence of the Holy Spirit, and white church members disapproved, insisting that the African Americans should worship quietly. Spencer believed that was an unfair request, and he and another layman, William Anderson, left the church.

**To view this text, please refer to the print version of this book.**

Nearly 40 people followed Spencer and Anderson out of the church and formed the Zion Methodist Episcopal Church, which was still part of the Asbury denomination. But neither Spencer nor Anderson was ordained, so in 1812 the Asbury church appointed a white minister to lead the new church. Spencer and his followers were not allowed to control their church finances or other business affairs. By 1813 they were so dissatisfied that they withdrew entirely from the Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church and founded the Union Church of Africans. This was the first African-American-controlled church in America.

With the help of Delaware's Quaker community, Spencer built a church on land near an Underground Railroad station. This new and independent church was recorded under the title of the Union Church of Africans in 1813. The legal document clearly stated that the church, also called the African Union Church, was for "African Brethren and their descendants," which secured African-American control of church administration and worship.

The church name was changed to the African Union Methodist Protestant Church in 1867. Under Spencer's leadership, 31 churches were established in several more states. By 2005 there were about 40 AUMP congregations in Delaware, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and the District of Columbia.

## Creation of the Observance

After the church was established, Spencer created the August Quarterly in 1814. The church held four meetings during the year, and the August Quarterly became the annual conference. Also known as the Big Quarterly, the meeting, or conference, was held in Wilmington on the last Sunday of every August. At that time of year, the harvest was usually completed and slave and free African-American workers were given time off to attend. The Quarterly was the first major church festival for African Americans and has long symbolized African-American religious freedom.

## Observance

Since 1814, the Big Quarterly has been held annually (except for the Civil War years) on the last weekend in August. During the early years of the event, pastors were assigned to the churches they would serve during the upcoming year. Other church business, such as reports from trustees, also took place at the Quarterly.

African-American congregants came to the Quarterly from several surrounding states, reuniting with relatives and friends and celebrating their religious independence (*see also Church Homecomings*). Slaves and free black laborers were given the day off to attend. Sermons were the major features of the Big Quarterly festivals and involved call-and-response elements—a back-and-forth conversation between the preacher and the congregants. Along with preaching, the festival included singing, dancing, testimonies, and faith healing.

The August festival also provided an opportunity for runaway slaves to escape via the Underground Railroad. Spencer along with Quaker Thomas Garrett, Wilmington's station master, helped escapees.

Over the years, the Big Quarterly brought together African Americans across denominational lines. Baptist and Methodist attendees took part, affirming their unity as Christians. The Quarterly also was an opportunity for participants to express themselves through singing and dancing and to share traditional foods at a feast.

Attendance at the Quarterly dropped after the original AUMP church was torn down in 1969 to provide space for a city center plaza that became the Peter Spencer Plaza. The

### **The Ring Dance Ceremony**

**R**eligious or holy dances at the Quarterly were known as ring dances, which had their roots in Africa and at the August festival were usually performed by men. In his book *"Invisible" Strands in African Methodism*, historian Lewis Baldwin includes a description of the dance which was published in the *Delaware State Journal*:

In the basement of the church a hundred or more men formed a circle and swayed to and fro, sometimes fast and sometimes slow, according to the metre of the hymn sung. Those who formed the inner line of the human ring were the most violent in their movements and most of the time perspired so freely that they could not have been more wet if a hose had been turned upon them. Frantically, they urged one another to more violent feats of ghymnastic devotion, clapping their hands, jumpbin and shouting, and occasionally groaning. When they grew weary they dropped upon their knees and prayers were offered. The women were modest and did not help form the rings. Instead they sang and watched the proceedings with interest.

church found another location in Wilmington, and by the 1980s the Quarterly had been rejuvenated somewhat. It is considered the oldest African-American church festival in the nation.

U.S. Senator Joseph R. Biden Jr. of Delaware frequently has recognized the festival on the floor of the Senate, noting that "the history and spirit represented by the Big Quarterly are important to our identity and character as a community and as a nation. It is an event that both reminds us of what has been overcome, and challenges us to complete the journey."

### **Contacts and Web Sites**

August Quarterly  
Mother AUMP Church  
812 N. Franklin St.  
Wilmington, DE 19806  
302-658-3838



"Delaware History Explorer Online Encyclopedia - Peter Spencer"

Historical Society of Delaware

505 Market St.

Wilmington, DE 19801

302-655-7161; fax: 302-655-7844

[http://www.hsd.org/DHE/DHE\\_who\\_Spencer.htm](http://www.hsd.org/DHE/DHE_who_Spencer.htm)

## Further Reading

Baldwin, Lewis V. *"Invisible" Strands in African Methodism: A History of the African Union Methodist Protestant and Union American Methodist Episcopal Churches, 1805-1980*. Metuchen, NJ, and London: The American Theological Library Association and The Scarecrow Press, 1983.

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Russell, Daniel James. *History of the African Union Methodist Protestant Church. 1920. Documenting the American South*. University Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/russell/russell.html>.



# African Street Festival

***Date Observed: Third weekend in September***

***Location: Nashville, Tennessee***

**T**he African Street Festival is held each year in Nashville, Tennessee, on the main campus of Tennessee State University and extends into the nearby community. Sponsored by the African American Cultural Alliance, the festival promotes increased awareness of the culture and history of people of African descent.

## **Historical Background**

In the early 1980s, a small group of African Americans founded the African American Cultural Alliance in Nashville, Tennessee. The original mission of the Alliance was to recognize and promote positive aspects of African cultures, raise awareness of the heritage of people of African descent, and create opportunities to demonstrate African cultures. By doing so, the Alliance hoped to instill a collective sense of pride in African Americans.

Yvette Brunson and Helen Shute-Pettaway were two of the founding members of the Alliance. Believing that African heritage and history had been largely ignored by American mainstream society, Brunson and Shute-Pettaway wanted the Alliance to create a festival celebrating Africa and its diverse cultures and stories. The two hoped that giving African Americans reasons to be proud of their heritage would generate positive self-esteem and motivate them to learn more.

## **Creation of the Festival**

In 1983 the Alliance created the African Street Festival as a public showcase for positive images of African nations, peoples of African descent, and African ways of life. The festival's primary goals include increased education about and understanding of the unique creative aspects of African cultures as well as continued support of the African/African-American community.

### Observance

The African Street Festival has grown to become one of Nashville's largest cultural events. It includes a wide variety of activities of interest to people of all ages. There are lectures on topics related to African and African-American history, special programs for children, storytelling, and authentic African cuisine. Music and dance performances are featured along with poetry readings and theatrical presentations. Some of the important, but often overlooked, historical contributions of African Americans are highlighted, such as the stories of African-American soldiers who fought in the Civil War. A marketplace offers African art and other items for sale. Approximately 100,000 people attend the festival each year.

### Contact and Web Site

African American Cultural Alliance  
P.O. Box 22173  
Nashville, TN 37202  
615-251-0007  
<http://www.africanamericanculturalalliance.com/>

### Further Reading

Edwards, Holly. "African Festival 'Feels Like Family'." *The Tennessean*, September 19, 2004.

Torres, Ailene. "African Street Festival Aims to Bring Together People and Share Cultures." *The Tennessean*, September 18, 2005.



# **African World Festival in Detroit, Michigan**

***Date Observed: Third weekend in August***

***Location: Detroit, Michigan***

**T**he African World Festival celebrates the richness, diversity and worldwide influence of African cultures through music, art, and food. The festival is produced by the Charles H. Wright Museum of African-American History and is held in downtown Detroit on the third weekend of August each year.

## **Historical Background**

The city of Detroit has a rich African-American history spanning as far back as the 1800s. Although it is unknown exactly when the first African Americans came to Detroit, the U.S. census of 1820 reported that African Americans made up 4.7 percent of the city's population. By 1837, Detroit had become an important stop along the Underground Railroad, with city residents helping multitudes of slaves escape across the Detroit River to Canada. Black Bottom, Detroit's first African-American community, was established in the mid-1800s on the banks of the Detroit River. Black Bottom soon became an African-American cultural center with the founding of social and political organizations, educational and recreational societies, churches and schools. During the Civil War years many southerners moved north, and by 1870 the city's African-American population had increased dramatically.

To meet the military demands of World War I, the industrial manufacturing factories in Detroit recruited southern African Americans by advertising high-paying jobs for able-bodied workers. This triggered a massive migration of African Americans to Detroit that continued through the 1930s. A second influx of African Americans occurred during World War II as southerners again moved north looking for work. Detroit's African-American population doubled during the 1950s and 1960s, and the city again became an important cultural center. The Motown Record Corporation launched the careers of

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*A dancer instructs a festivalgoer at the 1999 African World Festival.*

many popular African-American superstars such as Aretha Franklin, Diana Ross and the Supremes, and the Jackson Five. During these years Detroit also became a focal point of the civil rights movement, making national news when violence erupted throughout the city in the 1967 riots. After this period of extreme racial tension, African Americans in Detroit focused on political activism and worked to elect African Americans to public office. By 1975, African Americans made up the majority of Detroit's population, and by 1990 Detroit was among the 10 U.S. cities with the largest percentage of African Americans. The 2000 U.S. census reported Detroit's population as 83% African American.

### **Creation of the Festival**

The Charles H. Wright Museum of African-American History (formerly known as the Afro-American Museum of Detroit) has produced the African World Festival since 1983. The African World Festival is modeled after the Festival of African Culture, an interna-

tional event that was last held in Nigeria in 1977. More than a celebration of African-American culture, the African World Festival honors all of the cultures that have evolved in the African diaspora — the descendants of African people who are now scattered all over the world. The festival promotes the ideals of the Pan-African movement that began in the 1920s. Championed by Jamaican civil rights pioneer Marcus Garvey, the Pan-African movement encourages the descendants of African nations to learn about the customs and cultures of their homeland (*see also* **Marcus Garvey's Birthday**). The African World Festival provides opportunities for people to see the connections between African people all over the world.

## **Observance**

The African World Festival has grown to be Detroit's largest ethnic festival and one of the largest festivals of its kind in the U.S. More than one million visitors attend this free outdoor event each year.

The festival celebrates the music, art, and food of Africans and those of African descent, featuring arts and crafts, film screenings, poetry readings, lectures, and storytelling in African traditions. Local musicians as well as performers from around the world provide live entertainment focusing on African and African-influenced music from various eras, including blues, jazz, gospel, reggae, soul, and folk. African-American fraternities and sororities perform elaborately choreographed step shows, and African touring groups showcase traditional dances of Africa. Like the busy open-air markets found throughout Africa, the marketplace area gives visitors a chance to explore the wares of hundreds of vendors, many of whom travel to Detroit from Africa to participate in the three-day festival each year.

## **Contact and Web Site**

Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History  
315 E. Warren  
Detroit, MI 48201  
313-494-5800  
<http://www.maah-detroit.org/>

## **Further Reading**

Bates-Rudd, Rhonda. "Rhythms of the African World: Detroit Brings Out the Best of Art, Music, Clothing and Food to Celebrate Cultures." *The Detroit News*, August 18, 1999.

## African World Festival in Detroit, Michigan

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Heron, W. Kim. "A World of Africa in Detroit." *Detroit Free Press*, August 26, 1983.

Rich, Wilbur C. "Detroit, Michigan." In *The African-American Experience: Selections from the Five-Volume Macmillan Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History*, edited by Jack Salzman. New York: Macmillan, 1998.

Spratling, Cassandra. "African World Festival." *Detroit Free Press*, August 15, 2001.

Sutter, Mary. "Black Fest Picks 'One' (American Black Film Festival 'On the One')." *Daily Variety*, July 18, 2005.



# **African World Festival in Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

*Date Observed: First weekend in August*

*Location: Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

**T**he African World Festival in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is celebrated during the first weekend in August. It highlights African-American culture and its many contributions to the world, both past and present. Participants learn about life and rituals in Africa and the variety of African-American experience.

## **Historical Background**

One aspect of the African World Festival is west African history, particularly that of the great Benin Empire in what is modern-day Nigeria. The logo for the festival depicts a mask that Oba (King) Esigie, who ruled the Benin Empire from about 1504 to 1550, created to honor his mother whom he designated first Iy'Oba, or Queen Mother. During Esigie's reign, Benin artists produced numerous works in copper and brass and refined casting techniques that had been passed on since the 13th century. King Esigie and other powerful and wealthy leaders became patrons of artists, helping to establish the tradition of casting bronze heads and ivory masks and possibly the first brass plaques. Such works of art that have survived are preserved in museums worldwide and have influenced later art.

## **Creation of the Festival**

The African World Festival began in 1982 when four members of Milwaukee's African-American community—a population of about 200,000—met to initiate an event that would focus on the heritage and culture of Africa and members of the diaspora. Since the inception of the African World Festival, its leadership has grown to a board of directors with 17 members as well as a 20-member advisory board. Each year some 500 volunteers contribute their time and efforts to make sure the festival is a success.



### Observance

The African World Festival draws as many as 80,000 attendees each year. The opening ceremonies for the festival include a traditional African libation: pouring a liquid on the ground to honor and give thanks to ancestors and to remember the struggles and trials of African Americans. The designated festival Queen Mother, King, and Elders Council are recognized during the ceremony, and African drummers and dancers perform. Participants also may learn about African ways of life by visiting a replica of a village and listening to African storytellers present traditional tales.

Other venues during the weekend celebrate African-American music —gospel, blues, hip hop, and rhythm and blues. There are sports events and youth activities. A marketplace offers such goods as fried plantains, peanut stew, barbecued ribs, fried chicken, catfish, seafood gumbo, Mississippi mud pie, peach cobbler, and funnel cakes. African jewelry, artwork, and clothing are also for sale at the marketplace.

### Contacts and Web Sites

African World Festival  
Henry Maier Festival Park  
2821 N. 4th St.  
Milwaukee, WI 53212  
414-372-4567; fax: 414-372-6054  
<http://www.africanworldfestival.com>

Greater Milwaukee Convention and Visitors Bureau  
648 N. Plankinton Ave., Ste. 425  
Milwaukee, WI 53203-2917  
800-231-0903 or 414-273-3950; fax: 414-273-5596  
<http://www.milwaukee.org/>

### Further Reading

Giblin, James. "Introduction: Diffusion and Other Problems in the History of African States." Art & Life in Africa Project of the School of Art and Art History, University of Iowa. Revised March 7, 1999. [http://www.uiowa.edu/~africart/toc/history/giblin state.html](http://www.uiowa.edu/~africart/toc/history/giblin%20state.html).

Thurnbauer, Marcia. "Try Out African World Festival." *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Online*, August 8, 2005. <http://www.jsonline.com/news/editorials/aug05/346953.asp>.



# American Black Film Festival

*Date Observed: Five days in July*  
*Location: Miami/South Beach, Florida*

**T**he American Black Film Festival (ABFF), formerly known as the Acapulco Black Film Festival, is an annual five-day retreat and international film market held in Miami/South Beach, Florida. It aims to provide the most prestigious platform for Pan-African films garnered from around the world, competitively screening features, shorts, and documentaries from both known and rising industry talents.

## Historical Background

In 1997, three men co-founded the Acapulco Black Film Festival. Jeff Friday (president and CEO of Film Life, Inc.), Bryon Lewis (chairman and CEO of UniWorld Group, Inc.), and Warrington Hudlin (president of the Black Filmmakers Foundation) united for a common purpose: to create a forum that would provide a springboard for black cinematic achievement while simultaneously broadening public perception of their accomplishments.

## Creation of the Festival

The festival was held in Acapulco for its first five years. In 2002, Film Life, Inc. acquired sole rights to the festival, which was then renamed the American Black Film Festival. Since then, the festival has been held in the South Beach/Miami area of Florida.

## Observance

Since its inception, ABFF has shown more than 350 films, including full features, shorts, and documentaries. Attendance in 2005 topped 2,500.

Both industry professionals and consumers are welcomed at the various events that include not only the film screenings but also workshops, seminars, lectures, classes, interactive discussions, and more. In an effort to fulfill its mission, the festival designs a week-long program to expose attendees to all facets of the industry. In doing so, the goal

is to break down barriers to opportunity (for example, offer access for sharing talent resources and artistic guidance) and to debunk myths of minority marginalization and stereotyping.

The festival concludes with a gala awards ceremony at which independent film awards and cash prizes are announced. In 2005, for instance, the film *On the One*, directed by Charles Randolph-Wright, won best feature award and a cash prize of \$20,000. At earlier festivals such celebrities as Spike Lee, Rosario Dawson, Russell Simmons, and Gabrielle Union have been honored.

### Contacts and Web Sites

American Black Film Festival  
c/o Film Life  
P.O. Box 688  
New York, NY 10012  
<http://www.abff.com>

Black Hollywood Education & Research Center  
1875 Century Park E., Ste. 6th Fl.  
Los Angeles, CA 95067  
310-284-3170; hotline: 323-957-4747; fax: 310-284-3169  
<http://www.bherc.org>

### Further Reading

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- Mottesheard, Ryan. "Urban Heats Up with ABFF; Miami-based Festival Increases Awareness for Segment." *Daily Variety*, July 11, 2005.
- "Russell Simmons and Gabrielle Union Saluted at American Black Film Festival." *Jet*, August 4, 2003.



To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*Director Spike Lee at the 2004 American Black Film Festival, where he was honored with the Time Warner Innovator Award.*





# Battle of Olustee Reenactment

*Date Observed: Mid-February*

*Location: Olustee Battlefield Historic State Park, Florida*

The Civil War Battle of Olustee was fought on February 20, 1864, and since 1977 an annual reenactment has taken place in mid-February. The commemoration in north central Florida features reenactors of the Massachusetts 54th Regiment, one of the most famous African-American regiments. Popularized in the 1989 movie *Glory*, the 54th took part in Florida's largest Civil War battle.

## Historical Background

At the beginning of the Civil War, many free blacks in the North attempted to serve in the Union forces, but they were not accepted. In fact, a 1792 law prohibited people of color from serving in the military. Some northern officials believed that if African Americans took up arms, they would try to kill slave owners. Others insisted, based on widespread prejudice, that black soldiers were cowardly and did not have the intellect for military service. During the first year of the war, African Americans were only permitted to do manual labor for the army, such as build trenches, unload supplies from wagons, and bury the battle dead.

Nevertheless, African-American men formed companies and regiments so they would be ready if called. By 1862, Union forces had lost a series of battles, and white recruits were hard to find. As a result, the U.S. Congress was forced to take action, repealing the 1792 law and passing the Confiscation Act on July 17, 1862, which freed all slaves who were able to cross into Union lines. Congress also passed the Militia Act, which allowed African Americans to serve in the armed forces, and the War Department created the United States Colored Troops.

In January 1863 Massachusetts Governor John Andrew signed up a voluntary regiment composed primarily of free African Americans, including two sons of the great black abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass (*see also* **Frederick Douglass Day**). Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, a young white man in his twenties and a strong abolitionist, trained the regiment, which became the 54th.

In June 1863 the 54th, as it was commonly known, was sent to South Carolina to battle Confederates at Fort Wagner. After that battle, there was no doubt about the bravery of the regiment. Colonel Shaw led 600 soldiers in an assault on the fort. More than 100 soldiers of the 54th were killed, and the remaining troops were compelled to withdraw. Several members of the regiment, some of them former slaves, were awarded the Medal of Honor, the highest military award in the U.S.

The 54th eventually captured Fort Wagner and went on to fight with other Union soldiers in Florida. The Union had launched an operation to occupy Jacksonville in order to disrupt transportation links and deprive the Confederacy of food and other supplies. They also hoped to move west to eventually capture the state capital at Tallahassee.

The Confederate strategy was to stage an offense west of Jacksonville at Olustee, Florida, where there was a lake (Ocean Pond) on one side and a treacherous swamp on the other. Five thousand Confederate soldiers, who defended their post against 5,500 Union soldiers and 16 cannons, forced the Union army to retreat. The Olustee battle resulted in 1,861 Union and 946 Confederate casualties.

## **Creation of the Observance**

Since its inception in 1977, the commemoration of the battle at Olustee Battlefield Historic State Park has become the largest annual Civil War reenactment in the southeastern United States. In the beginning, a festival focusing on the battle took place in nearby Lake City, and two years later the reenactment began. Since then, more than 2,000 people participate in the reenactment each year, with some 20,000 to 50,000 spectators in attendance. In 2003 Olustee Battlefield received the prestigious Congressional Black Caucus Veterans' Braintrust Award. General Colin Powell established the award in 1990 to recognize outstanding national and community commitment to black veterans.

## **Observance**

When the observance gets under way, reenactors portraying southern troops create a charge formation, and, opposite them across the field, Union reenactors set up a line of defense. A cannon roars and the Union troops start to fall. The battle continues with officers shouting to their men. As the Union soldiers begin their retreat, they dodge "dead" and "dying" men, depicting the bloody battle and chaos on the Olustee Battlefield in 1864.

During the commemoration weekend, other activities include a parade at Lake City, arts and crafts sales, food booths, Civil War-period music and fashion shows, and artillery



*Portraits of Massachusetts volunteers who served in the 54th regiment at the Battle of Olustee.  
Top: 1st Sergeant Jeremiah Rolls (left) and Corporal Abram C. Simms (right)  
Center: Corporal George Lipscomb (left) and Sergeant Thomas Bowman (right)  
Bottom: Private Isom Ampey (left) and Sergeant Major John H. Wilson (right)*

demonstrations. Visitors can tour authentic Civil War campsites and Sutler's Row, where merchants sell period items. Volunteers also provide living-history presentations for school groups.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

Battle of Olustee Home Page, sponsored by the Florida Park Service, the Olustee Battlefield Citizen Support Organization, and the University of Florida  
<http://extlab7.entnem.ufl.edu/olustee/>

Olustee Battlefield Citizens Support Organization  
P.O. Box 382  
Glen St. Mary, FL 32040  
<http://extlab7.entnem.ufl.edu/olustee/cso.htm>

Olustee Battlefield Historic State Park  
P.O. Box 40  
Olustee, FL 32072  
386-758-0400; fax: 386-397-4262  
<http://www.floridastateparks.org/olustee/default.cfm>

Company B, 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment  
P.O. Box 15773  
Washington, DC 20003-0773  
<http://www.54thmass.org>

Company I, 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry  
P.O. Box 12454  
Charleston, SC 29422-2454  
<http://www.awod.com/gallery/probono/cwchas/54ma.html>

## **Further Reading**

Adams, Virginia M., ed. *On the Altar of Freedom: A Black Soldier's Civil War Letters from the Front*. New York: Warner Books, 1991.

Blatt, Martin Henry, Thomas J. Brown, and Donald Yacovone, eds. *Hope and Glory: Essays on the Legacy of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000.

Burchard, Peter. *One Gallant Rush: Robert Gould Shaw and His Brave Black Regiment*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990.



- Cox, Clinton. *Undying Glory: The Story of the Massachusetts 54th Regiment*. New York: Scholastic, 1993. (young adult)
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- Kashatus, William C. "54th Massachusetts Regiment: A Gallant Rush for Glory." *American History*, October 2000.
- Wilson, Joseph T. *The Black Phalanx: A History of the Negro Soldiers of the United States in the Wars of 1775-1812, 1861-'65*. 1890. Reprint. Manchester, NH: Ayer, 1992.



## Bessie Smith Strut

***Date Observed: Third Monday in June***

***Location: Chattanooga, Tennessee***

**T**he Bessie Smith Strut is an evening event held as part of the annual Riverbend Festival in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The Strut was named in homage to one of the most important women in the history of American music.

### Historical Background

Bessie Smith was born into impoverished circumstances on April 15, 1894, and began her musical journey by singing on the street corners of Chattanooga, a gritty, industrial railroad hub of the southeastern United States. Her professional career began on the stage as a dancer, not a singer, in the famed Atlanta "81" Theatre around 1913. Ten years later, she had secured a contract with Columbia Records.

Smith's soulful blues and jazz performances earned her the title of "Empress of the Blues." She had a larger-than-life persona, on and off stage, belting out moving lyrics. Notably, at one time, she was the highest paid African-American singer in the United States, earning over \$2,000 per week. "Downhearted Blues," her first record, was a runaway hit in 1923, selling more than 750,000 records in its first month of release. In the winters, she performed in theaters; the remainder of the year, she did tent shows, traveling in her personal railroad car.

Like other performers of her era, Smith's career was affected by the Great Depression, which crippled the recording industry. However, she never stopped performing or attempting new ventures. In 1929 Smith appeared in *Pansy*, a Broadway show, in which critics acclaimed her as the production's only redeeming asset. That same year, she also made her only cinematic appearance in *St. Louis Blues*, singing the title song as well. Her final recordings, in 1933, show a transition from her accomplished blues stylings into swing-era tempos and tunes. Few doubt that she would have continued to evolve with the changing times.

On September 26, 1937, Bessie Smith suffered fatal injuries in an automobile accident. For years, rumors flourished about the cause of her death, with some purporting that Smith was refused admittance to area whites-only hospitals, with the resultant delay causing or contributing to her demise. These tales seem to have been adequately put to rest over the years. Regardless, the loss of Smith was tragic enough without further embellishment.

Bessie Smith performed with the greats while she was alive: Louis Armstrong, James P. Johnson, Joe Smith, Charlie Green, and Fletcher Henderson, to name a handful. Her legacy lives on in the artistry of those she has inspired, from Ella Fitzgerald, Dinah Washington, Billie Holiday, and Mahalia Jackson to the likes of Janis Joplin, and many more whom she has yet to inspire.



*Jazz great Bessie Smith in 1936.*

## Creation of the Observance

The Bessie Smith Strut has been part of the Riverbend Festival since its beginning. The festival, initially named “Five Nights in Chattanooga,” started in 1981 with the dual goals of drawing diverse community elements together via the common language of music and bringing economic development to Chattanooga’s downtown and riverfront.

Chattanooga has also remembered Smith with the 264-seat Bessie Smith Performing Arts Hall and a museum to preserve and share the contributions to history of local African Americans.

## Observances

The Bessie Smith Strut might best be described as a gigantic block party. Held on Martin Luther King Boulevard, the more than 100,000 attendees can find barbecue and blues on every corner. The Strut is the sole Riverbend Festival event for which no admission fee is charged. Multiple musical acts are booked and perform throughout the night.

The Riverbend Festival is now a nine-night observance, drawing a capacity 650,000 crowd, marshaled by over 1,000 volunteers. It is considered one of the top 20 South-eastern U.S. festivals, offering something for everyone: a variety of music, arts and crafts exhibits, fireworks, aerial skydiving artists, a 5K extreme challenge run, and a children's village.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

Chattanooga African-American Museum  
4200 E. Martin Luther King Dr.  
Chattanooga, TN 37403  
423-266-8658; fax: 423-267-1076  
<http://www.caamhistory.com>

Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce  
811 Broad St.  
Chattanooga, TN 37402  
423-756-2121; fax: 423-267-7242  
<http://www.chattanooga-chamber.com>

Chattanooga Area Convention & Visitors Bureau  
2 Broad St.  
Chattanooga, TN 37402  
423-756-8687 or 800-322-3344  
<http://www.chattanoogafun.com>

Riverbend Festival  
Friends of the Festival  
180 Hamm Rd.  
Chattanooga, TN 37404  
423-756-2211; fax: 423-756-2719  
<http://www.riverbendfestival.com>

## **Further Reading**

- Albee, Edward. *The American Dream, The Death of Bessie Smith and Fam & Yam*. New York: Dramatists Play Service Inc., 1962.
- Albertson, Chris. *Bessie*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003.
- Albertson, Chris, and Gunther Schuller. *Bessie Smith: Empress of the Blues*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1975.

- Davis, Angela Y. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude 'Ma' Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*. New York: Random House, 1998.
- Kofskey, Frank. *Black Music, White Business: Illuminating History and Political Economy of Jazz*. New York: Pathfinder Press, 1997.
- Lomax, Alan. *The Land Where the Blues Began*. New York: The New Press, 2002.
- Moore, Carman. *Somebody's Angel Child: The Story of Bessie Smith*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1969.



# Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo

***Date Observed: November through February***

***Location: Varies***

**T**he Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo is the nation's only touring black rodeo, on the road from November through February. Named after the renowned cowboy, it celebrates the contributions that African-American cowboys and cowgirls made to America's western frontier and showcases the talents of their modern-day counterparts.

## **Historical Background**

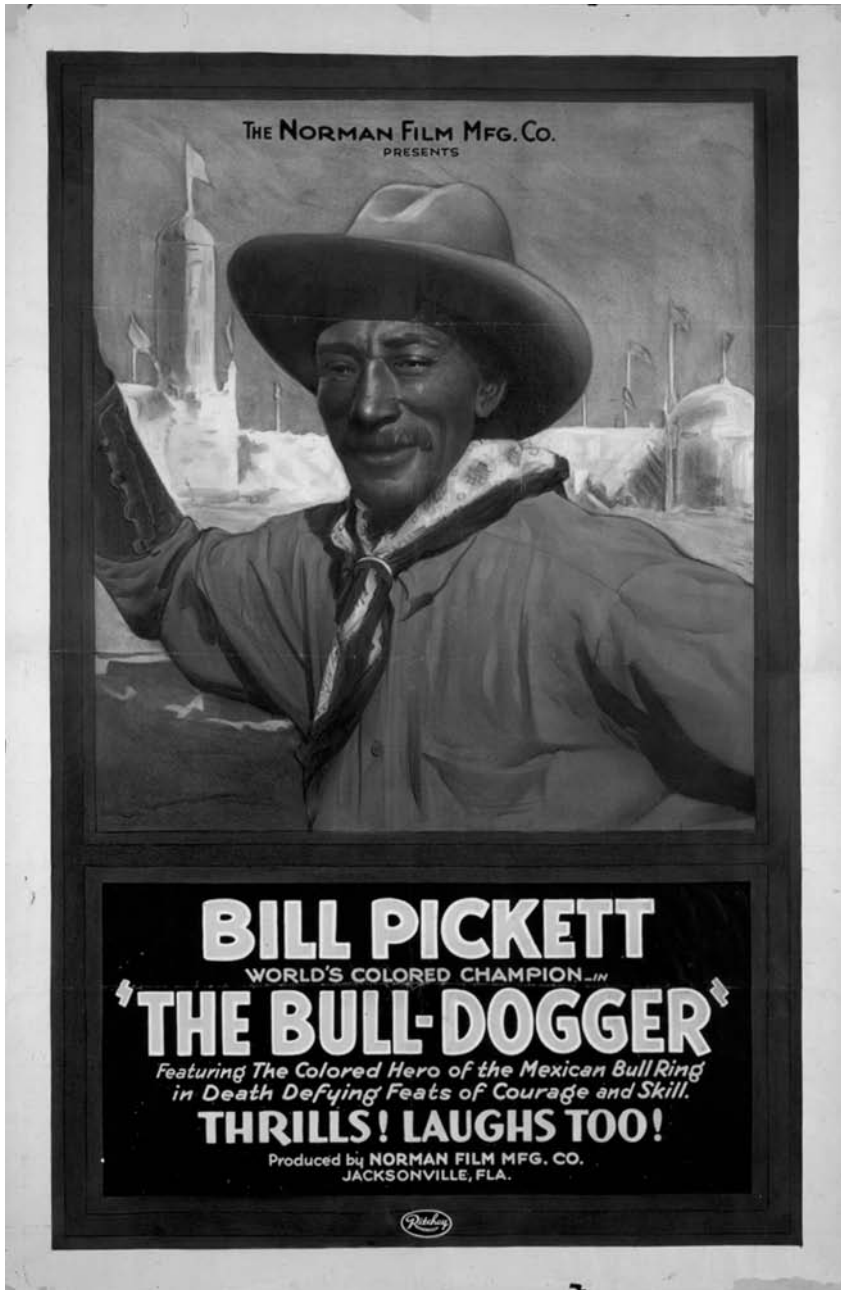
William "Bill" Pickett was born on December 5, 1870, into a family of African American, Cherokee, and white lineage. He spent his formative years in Texas and worked with four of his brothers in the family business, Pickett Brothers Bronco Busters and Rough Riders Association.

The exact date and place of Pickett's claim to fame is unknown, but it earned him a life-long nickname—Bull Dogger—and created a rodeo event called Bulldoggin' that remains popular today. According to an October 11, 1931, article in the *Tulsa* (Oklahoma) *World* newspaper:

The steer lunged into the arena . . . [Pickett's] horse plunged full speed after it . . . the rider leaped from the saddle. He turned a complete somersault along the length of the steer's back, flying out and down over the curved horns to fasten his teeth in the side of the steer's mouth.

With sheer strength he dragged the running behemoth's head to the tanbark, thrust its horn in the ground, and forward momentum threw the steer hocks over horns in a somersault of its own.

Pickett's fame led the Miller Brothers to hire him. He and his family relocated to Oklahoma and the 101 Ranch where he joined their traveling Wild West Show, billed as



*In 1923 the Norman Film Company produced a movie about Bill Pickett.  
This poster was created to advertise the film.*

the “Dusky Demon.” When not on the road, Pickett worked as a farm hand, handling such chores as cotton picking, fence mending, corral building, and horse gentling.

On December 9, 1971, nearly 40 years after his death resulting from “an altercation with a bronco,” William “Bulldog” Pickett earned the distinction of being the first black man to be inducted into the Rodeo Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City. In 1987 a bronze statue of Pickett—posed in his infamous bulldogging sneer—was unveiled at the Fort Worth Cowtown Coliseum. The U.S. Postal Service issued a commemorative stamp in his honor in 1994, although the first issue had to be recalled as it mistakenly portrayed one of his brothers.

Having traveled from Texas to Madison Square Garden to England and performed with the likes of Tom Mix and Will Rogers as his assistants, Bill Pickett has earned his place in history for his notable achievements—and for that bulldogging.

### **Creation of the Rodeo**

Lu Vason, a special events producer in Denver, Colorado, developed the idea for the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo in the late 1970s, after he attended Cheyenne Frontier Days in Wyoming and noted the lack of black cowboys at this pre-eminent rodeo event. Vason learned of Bill Pickett during a visit to Denver’s Black American West Museum. In 1984

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**To view this text, please refer to the print version of this book.**

the first Rodeo drew crowds numbering into the thousands. In recent years, annual attendance has easily topped the hundred thousand mark.

## **Observance**

The Rodeo is a traveling event conducted annually from November through February. Nine rodeos can be seen throughout the United States. They have been held at arenas and fairgrounds in cities such as Atlanta, Georgia; Bakersfield, California; Denver, Colorado; Los Angeles, California; Memphis, Tennessee; Oakland and Sacramento, California; St. Louis, Missouri; and Washington, D.C.

The Rodeo is entertaining and exciting, but it also has an educational aspect. Each performance is dedicated to the black cowboys and cowgirls who played an integral part in shaping the West, as well as those of today who help to keep the spirit of the West alive (*see also* **Black Cowboy Parade**).

Participants are attired in full western regalia and compete in the following events: bare back, tie down roping, ladies' steer undecorating, junior barrel racing, bull riding and—of course—bulldogging. Booming-voiced announcers call events, and crowds are also thrilled by the antics of rodeo clowns.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo  
Administrative Office  
4943 Billings St.  
P.O. Box 39163  
Denver, CO 80239  
303-373-1246; fax: 303-373-2747  
<http://www.billpickettrodeo.com>

Black American West Museum and Heritage Center  
3091 California St.  
Denver, CO 80205  
303-292-2566  
<http://www.blackamericanwest.org>

Fort Worth Cowtown Coliseum  
121 E. Exchange Ave.  
Ft. Worth, TX 76106

888-COWTOWN (269-8696) or 817-625-1025; fax: 817-625-1148  
<http://www.cowtowncoliseum.com>

National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum  
1700 N.E. 63rd St.  
Oklahoma City, OK 73111  
405-478-2250  
<http://www.nationalcowboymuseum.org>

National Cowboys of Color Museum and Hall of Fame  
3400 Mount Vernon Ave.  
Ft. Worth, TX 76103  
817-922-9999

### Further Reading

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- Landau, Elaine. *Bill Pickett: Wild West Cowboy*. Berkeley Heights, NJ: Enslow Publishers, 2004. (young adult)
- Pinkney, Andrea Davis. *Bill Pickett—Rodeo Ridin' Cowboy*. New York: Harcourt Children's Books, 1999. (young adult)



# Black August Benefit Concert

*Date Observed: August*  
*Location: New York, New York*

**T**he Black August Benefit Concert has been held since 1998 in New York City. A project of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM), the concert celebrates “hip hop and freedom fighters”—African Americans jailed because of their activism on behalf of people of color—and remembers the death of George L. Jackson and others considered political prisoners by the group.

## Historical Background

George L. Jackson was incarcerated from 1960 until his death in 1971. He had been convicted of armed robbery. During the first years of his imprisonment, Jackson earned a reputation for being violent. At some point, however, he was drawn to reading Communist works, such as those by Mao Zedong, Fidel Castro, Karl Marx, and others. He drew prison authorities’ concern when he began to organize fellow prisoners to demand better conditions as well as encourage the revolutionary aims of the Black Panther Party, which he had joined.

In 1970 Jackson became nationally known as one of the Soledad Brothers after he and two fellow inmates were charged with killing a guard at the prison. Activists staged protests, arguing that he was accused because of his political activities. Educator and political activist Angela Davis led the movement to support the Soledad Brothers. Some scholars have agreed that the evidence in the case against them was unclear. But, on August 21, 1971, shortly before Jackson’s trial, prison guards killed him during an apparent escape attempt.

## Creation of the Observance

In August 1998, the MXGM sponsored its first Black August Benefit Concert to call attention to black political prisoners and to aid in their release, as well as to highlight the social and political issues which affect inner-city youth.

The MXGM formed in 1992 when a group of young people in Brooklyn, New York, organized campus activities designed to create public awareness of black political prisoners and police brutality in New York's inner-city communities. A non-profit volunteer organization, MXGM also has created community programs to address needs of the homeless and indigent, such as legal services, youth development and leadership, and soup kitchens.

The group chose to hold the concerts in August because of the many significant historical events that have taken place during the month. In addition to containing the anniversary of Jackson's death, August was also the month that slaves in Haiti revolted, slavery was abolished in the West Indies, Nat Turner rebelled, Marcus Garvey was born, and Martin Luther King Jr. led the famous March on Washington (*see also Haitian Flag Day; Marcus Garvey's Birthday; Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday; and West Indies Emancipation Day*).

### Observance

The Black August Benefit Concert is not just about performances. Audiences are reminded by some hip-hop performers or MXGM directors that the purpose of the concerts is to help finance campaigns to free political prisoners. Concertgoers learn about protesters who have been jailed and others who were killed while involved in political activities opposing the oppression of people of color. There also has been an emphasis on HIV/AIDS awareness.

While most Black August Concerts have been held in New York City, where the MXGM is based, the organization has also produced concerts in Cuba during the annual Cuban Rap Festival, and in South Africa and South America.

### Contact and Web Site

Malcolm X Grassroots Movement  
718-254-8800  
<http://www.blackaugust.com>

### Further Reading

Gissen, Jesse. "Mos Def, Black Moon, & More Hit Black August Concert for HIV/AIDS Awareness." SOHH.com, July 11, 2005. <http://www.sohh.com/articles/article.php/7299>.

"Jackson, George Lester." In *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience, A Concise Reference*, edited by Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates Jr. Philadelphia: Running Press, 2003.

Kelley, Robin D. G. "Into the Fire: 1970 to the Present." In *To Make Our World Anew: A History of African Americans*, edited by Robin D. G. Kelley and Earl Lewis. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Lee, Chisun. "Taking the Rap." *The Village Voice*, September 6-12, 2000. <http://www.villagevoice.com/news/0036,lee,17912,1.html>.



# Black Cowboy Parade

*Date Observed: First Saturday in October*

*Location: Oakland, California*

**T**he Black Cowboy Parade in Oakland, California, celebrates the legacy of African-American cowboys — and cowgirls. It is the only event of its kind in the United States and seeks to recognize and heighten awareness of African-American contributions to the development of the western states.

## Historical Background

It is not widely known that between one-quarter and one-third of the pioneer settlers of the western U.S. plains were of African-American heritage. After the Civil War, there were 8,000-9,000 African-American cattle trail drivers. Between drives, they made significant contributions to the cattle industry working on ranches throughout the western territories.

Blacks in the west were considerable not just in number but also in talent; many were top cooks, ranch hands, riders, and ropers. In fact, historians have noted that blacks held every job that whites held with the exception of trail boss. Many trail drives consisted solely of blacks, save the trail boss.

The demand for talent decreased the amount of discrimination and segregation commonly experienced by blacks elsewhere in the country. In those days, in cattle country, blacks often ate, worked, played, fought, and slept side-by-side with whites. Abilities and courage could — and usually would — merit admiration and respect. The possibility of earning a decent, if not always equal, wage existed. While black cowboys were not seen as white cowboys' equals per se, some were viewed as superiors, in terms of job skills and abilities, and were recognized as such. And they were often treated on a fraternal level, regardless of ability rankings, based upon commonalities of life experiences and other factors. For a short time in American history, fairly large numbers of whites and blacks co-existed in relative peace, on more or less equal terms, than had ever been possible before in the United States, or would ever be possible again for quite some time.

### **“Deadwood Dick”**

One of the most famous black cowboys was Nate “Nat” Love, who was born a slave in Tennessee in June 1854. After he gained his freedom at the end of the Civil War, Love set out for the Southwest and found work on a ranch in Texas, where many black cowboys were employed as horsebreakers or as performers in rodeos.

After three years in Texas, Love went to southern Arizona and worked for 18 years as a cowboy on a huge ranch. He herded cattle between Texas and Montana and reportedly encountered extremely harsh weather as well as unfriendly Indian tribes. During one trip to deliver cattle in Deadwood City in the Dakota Territory, he took part in a roping contest set up by miners and others in the area. In his autobiography, Love claimed that in nine minutes he roped, tied, and saddled a wild mustang—three minutes faster than the next closest competitor. As the winner, Nat Love was given prize money as well as the moniker “Deadwood Dick,” the name of a character in a popular novel of the 1870s. In telling stories about his exploits, Love continued to call himself “Deadwood Dick,” enhancing his reputation as a fearless cowboy who was able to outperform anyone on the range. He died in 1921.

Cowboys of the West, as is known today, were not the stuff of movies and folklore. The passage of time has turned fact into fiction and vice versa. White men were portrayed as the romanticized cowboys on the range. Indians were depicted as red-skinned savages. Mexicans were shown as marauding bandits. Blacks were seen in subservient positions. Such stereotyped representations reflected widespread prejudices of the time.

Actually, African Americans have a long heritage of “cowboy-ing.” For example, Gambia and other African countries had large cattle lands, and many black men were skilled herders—work that required similar abilities as those of cowboys.

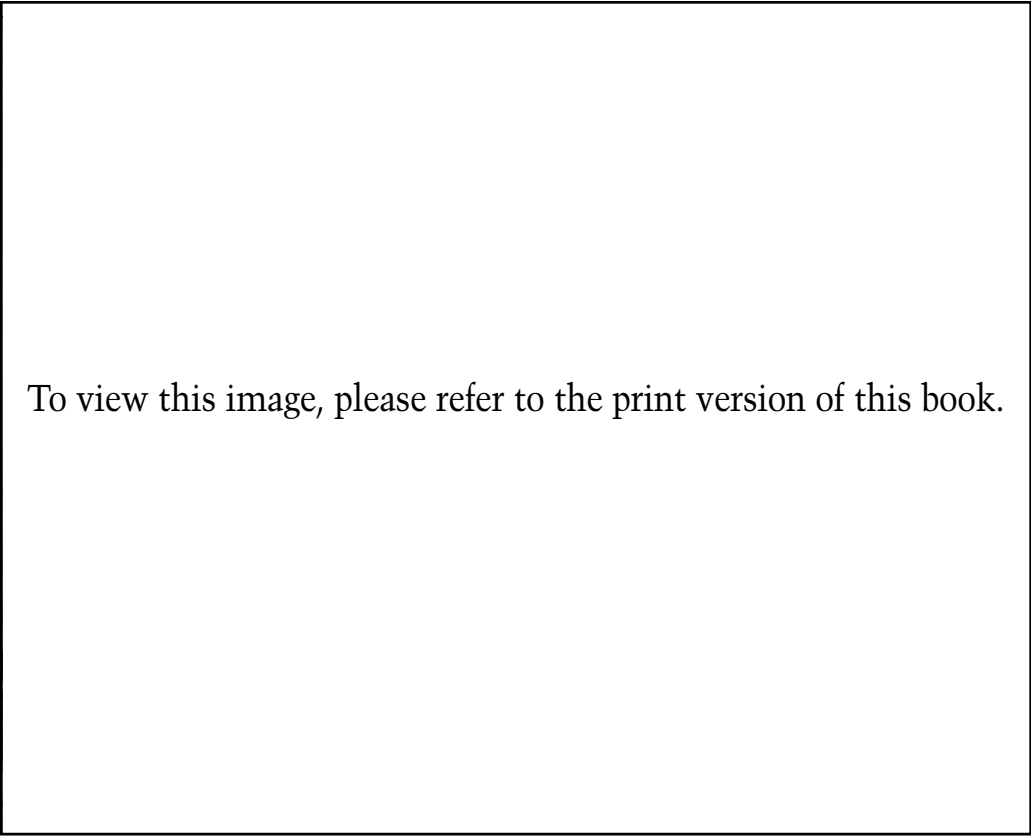
In the United States, southern slave owners with large cattle plantations were interested in acquiring slaves from African cattle lands. In the South, these slaves worked herds in the tall grasses, pine barrens, and marshes. Some rode horses, but most used dogs and bullwhips to manage the cattle. At first, they were concentrated in Alabama, the Carolinas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas.



As more and more cattle farmers moved westward with their herds and slaves, an increasing number of slaves escaped into the northern states. Some ex-slaves swapped skills with *vaqueros* (Spanish for 'cowboys'), who were often American Indians trained by the Spanish. Black cowboys taught *vaqueros* how to control cattle, and, in turn, learned horseback riding and roping.

### Creation of the Observance

The first Black Cowboy Parade was held in 1975. A Brooklyn-born Jew, George Rothman, along with other Oakland businessmen raised the funds for this initial event. Soon thereafter, Rothman, along with recognized local activist Booker T. Emery, founded the Black Cowboy Association. The parade has continued annually since.



To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*A cowboy and his horse posed for this photo sometime between 1890 and 1920.*

## **Observance**

At 11 A.M. on the first Saturday of every October, thousands of people line the downtown streets of West Oakland to view the start of the Black Cowboy Parade. Horse-borne participants wear authentic western attire: cowboy hats, vests, chaps, boots, and spurs. Also joining in are youth groups, dance troupes, color guards, and drill teams. Parade entrants compete for trophies based upon various yearly categories. Along with the parade itself, there are information booths, food vendors, and entertainment events. Activities last until the early evening hours.

The Black Cowboy Association and the Oakland Convention and Visitors Bureau actively promote the parade as a family-friendly, all-inclusive event.

In 2001 the Oakland Heritage Alliance conveyed its Partners in Preservation Award to the Black Cowboy Parade. This honor recognized the part the parade has played in making significant contributions to the preservation of Oakland's African-American heritage.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

Black American West Museum and Heritage Center  
3091 California St.  
Denver, CO 80205  
303-292-2566  
<http://www.blackamericanwest.org>

National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum  
1700 N.E. 63rd St.  
Oklahoma City, OK 73111  
405-478-2250  
<http://www.nationalcowboymuseum.org>

Oakland Black Cowboy Association  
<http://www.blackcowboyassociation.org>

Oakland Convention and Visitors Bureau  
463 11th St.  
Oakland, CA 94607  
510-655-7309 (parade information)  
510-839-9000; fax: 510-839-5924  
<http://www.oaklandcvb.com>

Real Cowboy Association  
#4 Eva Circle  
Longview, TX 75602  
903-753-3165; fax: 903-753-0265  
<http://www.realcowboyassociation.com>

## **Further Reading**

- Katz, William Loren. *The Black West*. New York: Broadway Books, 2005.
- Love, Nat. *The Life and Adventures of Nat Love, Better Known in the Cattle Country as "Deadwood Dick," By Himself*. 1907. Reprint. New York: Arno Press, 1968.
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# **Black History Month**

**See African-American History Month**



# Black Music Month

*Date Observed: June*

*Location: Communities nationwide*

**B**lack Music Month is observed each June to celebrate African-American influences on American music. Since its creation in the late 1970s, radio, television, electronic media, music publishing and recording industries, schools, libraries, and other institutions have marked the month with gospel, jazz, rhythm and blues, soul, rap, hip hop, reggae, and many other musical genres that have their roots in African and African-American cultures.

## Historical Background

Enslaved Africans brought their music and dance traditions with them to the Americas and West Indies during the 1600s and 1700s. They incorporated these traditions into such early festivals as **Pinkster** celebrations and **Negro Election Days and Coronation Festivals** in New England.

Slaves also created work songs in call-and-response form that had roots in tribal chants and were related to religious beliefs. Early on, however, they generally were not allowed to follow their religious rituals, chant in their own languages, or use drums. Many plantation owners feared these practices would help slaves plan and carry out rebellions. Thus, the work songs became a way to share stories of their lives and preserve their history.

When white colonists decided that black slaves should become Christians, slaves learned Protestant hymns, which they adapted and which evolved into spirituals and, eventually, gospel music. During the American Revolutionary War period, black drummers, fifers, and trumpet players were part of military units, and black performers played the fiddle and other instruments at society dances.

In 1865 the 13th Amendment to the Constitution abolished slavery, but many whites continued to obstruct African Americans' new rights (*see* **National Freedom Day**). The

trials and tribulations of the late 1800s led many blacks to develop the musical genre known as the blues, which expressed their frustration, sadness, and despair.

From the early 1900s on, the blues influenced ragtime and jazz, and, later, rhythm and blues, rock and roll, hip hop, rap, and other genres. In short, black music is the origin of much of today's popular music.

### **Creation of the Observance**

In 1978 producer and composer Kenny Gamble and broadcast executive Ed Wright created Black Music Month. Previously, Gamble had founded the Black Music Association, which established Black Music Month to support and advance black music worldwide. On June 7, 1979, as a result of their efforts, President Jimmy Carter declared the first Black Music Month, and the month has been proclaimed in succeeding years by later presidents.

In the late 1980s, Philadelphia disc jockey Dyana Williams (Gamble's ex-wife) and music executive Sheila Eldridge founded the International Association of African American Music Foundation, which became a powerful advocate for the national observance of Black Music Month. In 2000, they succeeded in persuading Pennsylvania Representative Chaka Fattah to introduce a resolution to the House of Representatives to officially recognize Black Music Month.

### **Observance**

A great variety of events mark Black Music Month across the United States. In Washington, D.C. the president of the United States usually hosts a reception and concert at the White House, as well as issues a proclamation calling for Americans to observe the month by recognizing the contributions of black musical artists.

In Harlem, New York, there are conferences and performances in honor of Black Music Month. Awards ceremonies salute jazz, rhythm and blues, and hip hop.

The Jefferson Street United Merchants Partnership in Nashville, Tennessee, has produced the Jefferson Street Jazz and Blues Festival to mark the month since 2000. During the mid-20th century Jefferson Street's music clubs, and other businesses, flourished, hosting artists such as Ray Charles, Fats Domino, Memphis Slim, and Jimi Hendrix.

At Downtown Disney Pleasure Island at the Disney World Resort in Buena Vista, Florida, a Black Music Month Concert is held. The Charles H. Wright Museum of African

American History in Detroit, Michigan, celebrates Black Music Month with musical performances, workshops, and films.

Media observances include radio and TV programs devoted to all types of black music and African-American musicians, singers, lyricists, and composers. Film and sound departments of libraries nationwide promote videocassettes and DVDs to celebrate Black Music Month, and museums of African-American history present programs that honor black music from the past and the present.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History  
315 E. Warren  
Detroit, MI 48201  
313-494-5800  
[http://www.maah-detroit.org/black\\_music.htm](http://www.maah-detroit.org/black_music.htm)

Downtown Disney Pleasure Island  
1590 Buena Vista Dr.  
P.O. Box 10000  
Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830  
407-828-3025

Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce  
200A W. 136th St.  
New York, NY 10030-7200  
212-862-7200; fax: 212-862-8745  
<http://www.harlemdiscover.com>

International Association of African American Music  
P.O. Box 382  
Gladwyne, PA 19035  
610-664-8292; fax: 610-664-5940  
<http://www.iaaam.com/home.html>

Jefferson Street United Merchants Partnership, Inc.  
1215 9th Ave. N., Ste. 201  
Nashville, TN 37208  
615-726-5867; fax: 615-726-2078  
<http://www.jumptojefferson.com>

### Further Reading

Floyd, Samuel A., Jr. *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

"Music." In *Encyclopedia of Black America*, edited by W. Augustus Low and Virgil A. Clift. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1981.

Ramsey, Guthrie P., Jr. *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Southern, Eileen. *The Music of Black Americans: A History*. 3rd ed. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1997.



# Black Poetry Day

***Date Observed: October 17***

***Locations: U.S. Schools and Libraries***

**B**lack Poetry Day is celebrated on or around October 17, the birthday of Jupiter Hammon, considered to be the first African American to publish his own verse. The day recognizes not only Hammon but also the contributions of other black poets who are commemorated in elementary and secondary schools, colleges, and libraries across the United States.

## **Historical Background**

Before west Africans were brought to the Americas as slaves, they had long traditions in literature and storytelling. The slavery system suppressed education, yet a small number of slaves managed to learn to read and write in English and became pioneers in African-American literature. Among them was Jupiter Hammon, who was born a slave on October 17, 1711, on Long Island, New York.

A slave his entire life, Hammon first served Henry Lloyd, a merchant, and then the next two generations of Lloyds. He was allowed to attend school, and his education as well as his Christian beliefs and the religious revivals of the 1700s influenced his development as a poet. His first published poem was titled "An Evening Thought. Salvation by Christ with Penitential Cries: Composed by Jupiter Hammon, a Negro belonging to Mr. Lloyd of Queen's Village on Long Island, the 25th of December 1760."

Following Hammon's publication, Phillis Wheatley, another early African-American poet, published a slim volume of poetry. In 1778 Hammon wrote *An Address to Miss Phillis Wheatley, Ethiopian Poetess, in Boston, who came from Africa at eight years of age, and soon became acquainted with the Gospel of Jesus Christ*. He also wrote tracts about African-American religion and protest pieces against slavery, although he did not demand freedom for himself but instead wanted enslaved youth to be free. Hammon is believed to have died around 1806.



## African-American Poets Laureate of the United States

**D**uring the 20th century, three African-American poets were appointed to the honorary office of Poet Laureate by the Librarian of Congress:

Robert Hayden (1913-1978) served from 1976 to 1978

Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-2000) served from 1985 to 1986

Rita Dove (1952-) served from 1993 to 1995

When Hayden and Brooks served, the position was still known as the Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress. In 1985 Congress passed an act changing the title to Poet Laureate; the act took effect in 1986. Poets Laureate receive monetary compensation in return for performing such duties as an annual public lecture and reading of their poetry.

## Creation of the Observance

Stanley A. Ransom, a folk musician and former director of the Huntington Public Library in New York, edited a book of the complete writings of Jupiter Hammon, which was published in 1970. From that time on, Ransom promoted a national observance of Black Poetry Day on October 17 because of his concern that African-American literary accomplishments would not be recognized. Although there is not yet an official national day proclaimed as Black Poetry Day, elementary and secondary schools, colleges, and libraries across the United States focus on African-American poetry on October 17 or a day around that time, depending on when the institutions are open.

## Observance

To observe Black Poetry Day, instructors and librarians usually focus on books and web sites that highlight the works of African-American poets both past and present, such as Paul Laurence Dunbar, W. E. B. Du Bois (who wrote free verse as well as scholarly works), James Weldon Johnson, Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, Sonia Sanchez, Nikki Giovanni, Maya Angelou, and many others. Students and patrons are encouraged to express themselves through poetry.

Many universities have diversity programs and speakers bureaus that bring in well-known black poets to read and discuss their poetry. On some campuses, students compete in contests, reading their original works or those by African-American poets.

## Contact and Web Site

Dunbar-Jupiter Hammon Public Library, the largest African-American book collection  
in southwest Florida  
3095 Blount St.  
Fort Myers, FL 33916  
239-334-3602; fax: 239-334-7940  
<http://www.lee-county.com/library/library/branches/db.htm>

## Further Reading

- "Black Poetry Day." In *Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations of the World Dictionary*, edited by Helene Henderson. 3rd ed. Detroit: Omnigraphics, 2005.
- Rampersad, Arnold, ed. *The Oxford Anthology of African-American Poetry*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Ransom, Stanley A. *America's First Negro Poet*. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1970.
- Reuben, Paul P. "Chapter 2: Early American Literature—1700-1800: Jupiter Hammon." *PAL: Perspectives in American Literature—A Research and Reference Guide—An Ongoing Project*. January 4, 2003. <http://www.csustan.edu/english/reuben/pal/chap2/hammon.html>.
- Smith, Jessie Carney. *Black Firsts: 4,000 Ground-Breaking and Pioneering Historical Events*. 2nd ed., revised and expanded. Canton, MI: Visible Ink Press, 2003.



# Black Pride Festival

*Date Observed: Last weekend in May*

*Location: Washington, D.C.*

**T**he Black Pride Festival in Washington, D.C., is held in May over Memorial Day weekend each year. The District festival starts off a summer of Black Pride events that take place annually in cities across the United States.

## Historical Background

Men and women in same-sex relationships and bisexual and transgendered people, whatever their ethnicity, have long suffered discrimination, harassment, and brutal assaults that sometimes have ended in death. But blacks who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered (BLGBT) historically have been ostracized from African-American communities as well. Thus, BLGBT celebrations, which originated in Washington, D.C., have become a way to demonstrate pride as well as to educate and raise funds for programs that address health concerns such as HIV/AIDS.

## Creation of the Festival

Black Pride began in 1975 as a party on Memorial Day weekend at a popular disco, the Clubhouse in Washington, D.C. Although everyone was welcome at the Clubhouse, patrons were primarily black gay men and lesbians. The annual party was originally called the Childrens Hour and was attended by hundreds of African-American gay men and lesbians.

In 1990 the Clubhouse closed because of financial problems and also because many of the staff had died of AIDS. Another group formed to concentrate on raising funds for the growing number of HIV-positive black men. In 1991 the group sponsored a Sunday Black Pride festival that brought in about \$3,000 for organizations helping AIDS patients. After that event, the festival grew and became an annual Memorial Day Weekend celebration organized by the DC Black Lesbian and Gay Pride Day, Inc.

## **Observance**

During the 1990s, the Black Pride celebration was held outdoors at Banneker Field. Each year rain disrupted the festivities, so in 2000, the festival moved indoors to the Washington Convention Center. About 15,000 people attended, and, according to organizers, it was the largest such event in the world.

Subsequent festivals have featured African-American recording artists, authors, and other notables. During the four-day event, there are workshops on health issues, Black Pride films, arts and crafts, and food vendors.

The Washington, D.C., festival has encouraged the development of Black Pride events in numerous other U.S. cities. The Philadelphia Black Gay Pride happens on the last weekend in April; the Windy City Pride is held in Chicago, Illinois, around July 4; the Central Florida Black Pride in Tampa takes place during the first weekend in August; and in Atlanta, Georgia, In the Life Atlanta organizes an annual Labor Day Gay Pride celebration. Other Prides take place from Baltimore, Maryland, to Miami, Florida, and from Detroit, Michigan, to Dallas, Texas.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

Central Florida Black Pride  
3350 W. Hillsborough Ave.  
Tampa, FL 33614-5876

DC Black Pride  
Black Lesbian and Gay Pride Day, Inc.  
P.O. Box 77071  
Washington, DC 20013  
202-737-5767 or 866-94BLGPD  
<http://www.dcblackpride.org>

In The Life Atlanta, Inc.  
P.O. Box 7206  
Atlanta, GA 30357  
404-872-6410; fax: 404-506-9730  
<http://www.inthelifeatl.com/>

Philadelphia Black Gay Pride, Inc.  
c/o COLOURS, Inc.  
1201 Chestnut St., 15th Fl.

Philadelphia, PA 19107  
215-496-0330; fax: 215-496-0354  
<http://www.phillyblackpride.org>

Windy City Pride  
c/o TaskForce Prevention and Community Services  
1130 S. Wabash, Ste. 404  
Chicago, IL 60605  
312-986-0661

### **Further Reading**

Norton, Eleanor Holmes. "Honoring the 13th Annual DC Black Pride Celebration and Earl D. Fowlkes." *Congressional Record*, May 14, 2003.

Smith, Rhonda. "Back in the Day: Former Clubhouse Patrons Reminisce about Popular Black Club." *Washington Blade*, May 27, 2005. <http://www.aegis.com/News/WB/2005/WB050527.html>.



## Bridge Crossing Jubilee

***Date Observed: Four days including the first weekend in March***

***Location: Selma, Alabama***

**T**he Bridge Crossing Jubilee commemorates “Bloody Sunday” — the brutal halt of the Selma to Montgomery voting rights march on March 7, 1965 — and the successful march two weeks later. Held near the anniversary of the historic event, the Jubilee is an annual celebration of the struggles to improve African Americans’ voting rights.

### **Historical Background**

The 15th Amendment to the Constitution, ratified in 1870, declared that “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous servitude.” African Americans were thus legally entitled to vote. But particularly in the South, after the Civil War, blacks faced huge obstacles when they tried to register to vote or to cast a ballot. White registration boards used every imaginable legal trick to prevent blacks from voting. Registrars would tell blacks that they had arrived on the wrong day or that they would have to take a literacy test. A person might be deemed ineligible because he could not recite the entire U.S. Constitution or just because the board arbitrarily decided the black person was not qualified. Other more brutal measures kept African Americans from voting, such as threats on their lives, loss of jobs, physical attacks, and the inability to pay poll taxes — which were finally outlawed in 1964 with ratification of the 24th Amendment.

Without federal enforcement, the 24th Amendment guaranteeing black voting rights had little effect in the South. In Alabama, very few African Americans were registered to vote because of white intimidation and repression. In one county, 78 percent of the population was black and in another 81 percent was black, but not one African American in either county was registered to vote. The actual voter registration form used in Alabama before 1965 is reproduced on the following three pages. White officials often required blacks to complete this daunting form.

## Alabama Voter Registration Form Used Before 1965

### APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby apply to the Board of Registrars of \_\_\_\_\_ County, State of Alabama, to register as an elector under the Constitution and laws of the State of Alabama, and do herewith submit answers to the interrogatories propounded to me by said board.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Applicants Full Name)

### QUESTIONNAIRE

1. State your name, the date and place of your birth, and your present address  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Are you single or married? \_\_\_\_\_ (a) If married, give name, resident and place of birth of your husband or wife, as the case may be: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Give the names of the places, respectively, where you have lived during the last five years; and the name or names by which you have been known during the last five years:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. If you are self-employed, state the nature of your business: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- A. If you have been employed, by another during the last five years, State the nature of your employment and the name or names of such employer or employers and his or their addresses: \_\_\_\_\_
5. If you claim that you are a bona fide resident of the State of Alabama, give the date on which you claim to have become such bona fide resident: \_\_\_\_\_ (a) When did you become a bona fide resident of \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_ (b) When did you become a bona fide resident of \_\_\_\_\_ Ward or Precinct \_\_\_\_\_
6. If you intend to change your place of residence prior to the next general election, state the facts: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Have you previously applied for and been denied registration as a voter? \_\_\_\_ (a) If so, give the facts: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Has your name been previously stricken from the list of persons registered? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Are you now or have you ever been a dope addict or a habitual drunkard? \_\_\_\_\_  
(A) If you are or have been a dope addict or habitual drunkard, explain as fully as you can:  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Have you ever been legally declared insane? \_\_\_\_\_ (a) If so, give details:  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Give a brief statement of the extent of your education and business experience:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Have you ever been charged with or convicted of a felony or crime or offense involving moral turpitude? \_\_\_\_\_ (a) If so, give the facts: \_\_\_\_\_
13. Have you ever served in the Armed Forces of the United States Government? \_\_\_\_\_  
(a) If so, state when and for approximately how long: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. Have you ever been expelled or dishonorably discharged from any school or college or from any branch of the Armed Forces of the United States, or of any other Country? \_\_\_\_\_  
If so, state facts: \_\_\_\_\_
15. Will you support and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Alabama? \_\_\_\_\_
16. Are you now or have you ever been affiliated with any group or organization which advocates the overthrow of the United States Government or the government of any State of the United States by unlawful means? \_\_\_\_\_ (a) If so, state the facts:  
\_\_\_\_\_
17. Will you bear arms for your county when called upon it to do so? \_\_\_\_\_  
If the answer is no, give reasons: \_\_\_\_\_
18. Do you believe in free elections and rule by the majority? \_\_\_\_\_
19. Will you give aid and comfort to the enemies of the United States Government or the Government of the State of Alabama? \_\_\_\_\_
20. Name some of the duties and obligations of citizenship: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (A) Do you regard those duties and obligations as having priority over the duties and obligations you owe to any other secular organization when they are in conflict? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
21. Give the names and post office addresses of two persons who have present knowledge of your bona fide residence at the place as stated by you: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Insert Part III (5)

(The following questions shall be answered by the applicant without assistance.)

1. What is the chief executive of Alabama called? Governor
2. Are post offices operated by the state or federal government? Federal Government
3. What is the name of the president of the United States? Lyndon B. Johnson
4. To what national lawmaking body does each state send senators and representatives?  
Congress

Instructions "A"

The applicant will complete the remainder of this questionnaire before a Board member and at his instructions. The Board member shall have the applicant read any one or more of the following excerpts from the U. S. Constitution using a duplicate form of this Insert Part III. The Board member shall keep in his possession the application with its inserted Part III and shall mark thereon the words missed in reading by the applicant.

EXCERPTS FROM THE CONSTITUTION

1. "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the person or things to be seized."
2. "Representatives shall be apportioned among the several states according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each state, excluding Indians not taxed."
3. "Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying war against them, or in adhering to their enemies, giving them aid and comfort."
4. "The senators and representatives before mentioned, and the members of the several legislatures, and all executive and judicial officers, both of the United States and of the several states, shall be bound by oath or affirmation, to support this constitution."

INSTRUCTIONS "B"

The Board member shall then have the applicant write several words, or more if necessary to make a judicial determination of his ability to write. The writing shall be placed below so that it becomes a part of the application. If the writing is illegible, the Board member shall write in parentheses beneath the writing the words the applicant was asked to write.

HAVE APPLICANT WRITE HERE, DICTATING WORDS FROM THE CONSTITUTION

Signature of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_

Source: Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.



*Marching from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in March 1965.*

During the 1960s, such organizations as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) staged marches to compel the federal government to protect African-American voting rights. Activists also conducted voter registration drives and made numerous attempts to help African Americans vote. Part of that effort in early 1965 took place in Selma, Alabama, with a campaign led by Martin Luther King Jr. King and hundreds of others were arrested (*see also* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**). During one demonstration, state troopers fatally shot Jimmie Lee Jackson, a black man who was trying to protect his mother from being beaten by police.

## **The Marches**

Protesters planned to march from Selma to Montgomery, the state capital, on Sunday, March 7. Since King was out of town, civil rights leaders John Lewis (who was later

elected a U.S. representative) and Hosea Williams organized the 50-mile march of 500 participants. At the Edmund Pettus Bridge over the Alabama River, police met the marchers with clubs, cattle prods, chains, and tear gas. At least 50 marchers were beaten and hospitalized, among them John Lewis, whose skull was fractured.

Television images and newspaper photographs of the attack, which became known as Bloody Sunday, incensed much of the American public, who called on the federal government to stop the police brutality. More activists quickly headed for Selma.

Another march was planned even though a federal judge issued an order to stop it. King, who had come back to Selma, first agreed to lead the marchers across the bridge, but then asked them to turn around and return to Selma because he had never defied a judge's order. Nevertheless, another murder was committed that evening. A white northern minister who was with the demonstrators was killed by a group of Selma whites, which created a wave of protests across the United States—a reaction quite different from the listless public response to Jackson's death.

On March 15, in a televised address, President Lyndon B. Johnson asked Congress to pass a voting rights bill. Afterward he persuaded the federal judge to lift the ban on the Selma marchers. Johnson also gave notice to Alabama Governor George Wallace that federal troops would be on hand for the march from Selma to Montgomery, which began on March 21. By March 25, an estimated 3,200 marchers had arrived in Montgomery. Five months later—in August—the U.S. Congress passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which banned literacy tests and provided for federal examiners to register voters and oversee elections in counties where voter eligibility was determined by testing.

### **Creation of the Observance**

Since 1996 the National Voting Rights Museum and Institute in Selma has organized the Bridge Crossing Jubilee, which draws more than 50,000 visitors each year. The event serves as an annual reminder of the sacrifices made to improve voting rights, as well as an occasion to gather and honor the original marchers.

### **Observance**

The Jubilee begins with a welcome reception and a mass meeting featuring a keynote speaker. On the following days, events include a remembrance ceremony for martyrs of the voting rights movement, a program urging people to vote, a Miss Jubilee Pageant, a



*In March 1965, about 15,000 people in Harlem, New York, participated in a march supporting the Alabama marchers.*

Jubilee Festival with music and storytelling, a black-tie awards dinner, and a bridge-crossing reenactment at the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

National leaders who have attended past Jubilees have included Rosa Parks, Congressman John Lewis, Reverend Jesse Jackson, Coretta Scott King, and former President Bill Clinton (*see also Rosa Parks Day*).

### **Contact and Web Site**

National Voting Rights Museum & Institute  
1012 Water Ave.  
P.O. Box 1366  
Selma, AL 36702  
334-418-0800  
<http://www.nvrmi.org/>

## Further Reading

Christian, Charles M., ed. *Black Saga: The African American Experience—A Chronology*. Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1999.

Horton, James Oliver, and Lois E. Horton, eds. *A History of the African American People: The History, Traditions & Culture of African Americans*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997.

Powledge, Fred. *Free At Last! The Civil Rights Movement and the People Who Made It*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991.

Williams, Juan, with the Eyes on the Prize Production Team. *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965. A Companion Volume to the PBS Television Series*. Introduction by Julian Bond. New York: Viking Penguin, 1987.



# Bud Billiken Parade and Picnic

***Date Observed: Second Saturday in August***

***Location: Chicago, Illinois***

The annual Bud Billiken Parade and Picnic is held on the second Saturday in August. The event, held since 1929, is named after a fictional character featured in the pages of the *Chicago Defender* newspaper. The annual celebration is a salute to the community's youth and a gigantic back-to-school rally.

## **Historical Background**

On May 5, 1905, Robert S. Abbott established the *Chicago Defender*, which became one of the most important African-American newspapers in the nation. The paper spoke out against racist practices, advocated for civil rights, and encouraged black migration to the city. The paper also listed contacts for churches and other groups that would assist newcomers with housing, employment, and acclimation to the city (from 1910 to 1930, Chicago's African-American population grew from 44,000 to 235,000).

In 1923 Abbott added a special page for children. The *Chicago Defender* was the first newspaper in the U.S. to include such a feature. It was called the Bud Billiken page, which also served as the forum for the Bud Billiken Club, complete with membership cards and buttons.

Bud Billiken is not a real person; Abbott and his managing editor Lucious Harper made up the name. According to some accounts, "Bud" was Harper's nickname, and "Billiken" came from the name of a Buddha-like good-luck figurine popular during the early 1900s. The Bud Billiken character was intended to be a protector of children.

## **Creation of the Observance**

By 1929 the Bud Billiken character and club were so popular that Abbott decided to organize an event for children. The idea was to show appreciation for the young people

who delivered the paper and also to delight and inspire young African-American children by creating a venue where they would have a chance to be in the spotlight. The first parade was held on August 11, 1929. Abbott kicked off the parade riding in his Rolls Royce, and children in costumes followed. In 1946 the Chicago Defender Charities took over organizing the event and has managed it ever since.

### Observance

The Bud Billiken Parade and Picnic is a much-anticipated annual event in Chicago. As such, even though official festivities do not begin until the parade starts at 10 A.M., people begin staking out prime spots along Martin Luther King, Jr., Drive in the early hours each second Saturday in August. An estimated 65,000 people took part in the 2005 parade, with spectators estimated at well over a million and television viewers reaching in excess of 25,000,000 (the parade receives both local and national cable coverage).

The Bud Billiken Parade is chock-full of typical parade fare, but on a fairly grand scale; it is promoted as the largest of its kind in the country. Close to 200 floats and vehicles take part, as do countless marching bands and various other types of entertainers. Each year, a King and Queen are announced and they preside over the festivities. National figures also take part. Past parades have hosted Oprah Winfrey, Spike Lee, Bozo the Clown, Jesse Jackson, Muhammad Ali, Duke Ellington, Michael Jordan, and U.S. Senator Barack Obama.

After the excitement of the parade has ended and the second half of the day begins, people get down to the serious business of eating at the Bud Billiken Picnic. Other events include drill team and drum corps competitions, entertainment by local performers, and lots of activities planned to keep young people occupied and happy on their special day.



*The purpose of the Bud Billiken Parade and Picnic is to celebrate children, including those who sell and deliver the paper—such as this boy, photographed in Chicago in 1942.*

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau  
2301 S. Lake Shore Dr.  
Chicago, IL 60616  
312-567-8500; fax: 312-567-8533  
<http://www.choosechicago.com>

*Chicago Defender*  
200 S. Michigan Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60604  
312-225-2400; fax: 312-225-9231  
<http://www.chicagodefender.com/>

Chicago Defender Charities, Inc.  
700 E. Oakwood Blvd., 5th Fl.  
Chicago, IL 60616  
773-536-3710; fax: 773-536-3718  
<http://www.budbillikenparade.com>

Encyclopedia of Chicago, an online cooperative effort of the Chicago Historical Society, the Newberry Library and Northwestern University  
<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org>

## **Further Reading**

- Adero, Malaika. *Up South: Stories, Studies, and Letters of This Century's African American Migrations*. New York: The New Press, 1994.
- Arnesen, Eric J. *Black Protest and the Great Migration: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford Book/St. Martin's, 2002.
- Ottley, Roi. *The Lonely Warrior: The Life and Times of Robert S. Abbott*. Chicago: H. Regnery, 1955.
- Reed, Christopher Robert. *Black Chicago's First Century, Volume 1, 1833-1900*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005.
- Simmons, Charles A. *The African American Press: A History of News Coverage During National Crises, with Special Reference to Four Black Newspapers, 1827-1965*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2006.





# Buffalo Soldiers Commemorations

*Date Observed: July 28*

*Locations: Communities nationwide*

In 1992 the U.S. Congress designated July 28 as Buffalo Soldiers Day to commemorate the date in 1866 when Congress created six regular Army regiments composed of African-American enlisted soldiers. These segregated units, who adopted the name Buffalo Soldiers, were sent to fight Native Americans in the military campaigns of the Southwest. Even though July 28 became a national day to remember these soldiers, various U.S. states and communities have honored the soldiers on other days.

## Historical Background

African Americans have served in all of America's wars, including the Civil War, when they were assigned to the U.S. Colored Troops. After the end of the war, in 1866, the U.S. Army formed the first regular African-American regiments. These were the 9th and 10th Cavalry, and the 38th, 39th, 40th, and 41st Infantry. In 1869 the four infantry regiments combined to form the 24th and 25th Infantry. These regiments fought alongside the cavalry and became known collectively as Buffalo Soldiers.

No one is certain how the name originated. Some historians say tribal warriors nicknamed the regiments Buffalo Soldiers because they fought as fiercely as the buffalo, and African Americans considered the name an honorary title. But, during the 1990s, some Native Americans voiced their disagreement. Members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) declared that Plains Indians used the term Buffalo Soldier disparagingly to indicate the soldiers with dark skin who helped kill their people. In 1994 AIM protested when the U.S. Postal Service issued a stamp honoring Buffalo Soldiers, and they demonstrated at museums and other exhibits on Buffalo Soldier history.

The original Buffalo Soldiers were stationed mainly in Kansas, Texas, and New Mexico, where they had to face the prejudice of many white settlers and army officials. They were given old horses, inadequate rations and ammunition, and faulty equipment. Nevertheless, they fought against Native Americans in what has been called "The



*In 1890 these Buffalo Soldiers of the 25th Infantry were photographed at Fort Keogh, Montana.*

Plains War” or “The Indian Campaigns” on a western frontier that extended from Montana and the Dakotas to Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. Buffalo Soldiers also participated in armed conflicts against Mexican revolutionaries, outlaws, and cattle rustlers. They protected stagecoaches and crews building railroads and helped string telegraph lines, build outposts on the frontier, and map areas of the Southwest.

For their bravery and heroism, 18 Buffalo Soldiers received the Congressional Medal of Honor, the nation’s highest honor, over a 20-year period. On July 9, 1870, First Sergeant Emanuel Stance became the first African American in the post-Civil War period to receive this award for his valor in the Battle of Kickapoo Springs, Texas.

Buffalo Soldiers took part in combat during the Spanish-American War in Cuba in 1898. When the United States entered World War I in 1917, no cavalry units served, but the Buffalo Soldier tradition of heroic service continued with the 92nd Infantry, another African-American regiment. In 1941, the 9th and 10th Cavalry became the 4th Cavalry Brigade, led by General Benjamin O. Davis, the first African-American general in the regular army. Horse cavalry units disbanded in 1944, and members transferred to other units of the armed forces; some served in World War II.

### Creation of the Observance

In early 1992, the U.S. Congress designated July 28 as Buffalo Soldiers Day. On July 25, 1992, General Colin Powell, a black four-star army general, dedicated a statue of a mounted Buffalo Soldier at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, on a site where Buffalo Soldiers camped during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. At the dedication Powell said he considered himself “the descendent of those Buffalo Soldiers ... and all the black men and women who have served the nation in uniform.” In the audience were African-American veterans of the segregated army and reenactors in the uniforms of Buffalo Soldiers.

The congressional designation and the commemoration in Kansas were widely publicized, prompting numerous events in the following years. Some states set aside their own days to honor Buffalo Soldiers. In 1998 the Maryland General Assembly signed a citation marking February 20 of each year as Buffalo Soldiers Day. Other states and localities conduct ceremonies on Memorial Day.

### Observances

The events that honor Buffalo Soldiers vary by location, but nearly all include a recitation of the combined mythology and history of the African-American 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry. Honorary observances include special museum displays, documentaries, and performances by reenactment societies.

One group of horseback riders in Michigan formed a horseback riding club in 1992 in honor of the Buffalo Soldiers. They named their group the Washtenaw County Buffalo Soldiers, 10th Cavalry, and they participate in local parades, rodeos, and educational presentations.

Another group is the National Association of Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Clubs, which is headquartered in Chicago and has chapters across the United States. Comprised of African-American men and women, the club members participate in numerous rides on “iron horses” to promote the history of the African-American regiments. On one ride in 2004, the association staged a ride to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to honor the history of the troopers of the 9th and 10th Cavalry.

### Contacts and Web Sites

Buffalo Soldier Educational and Historical Committee  
P.O. Box 3372  
Fort Leavenworth, KS 33027

Buffalo Soldier Monument  
Fort Leavenworth, KS 33027  
<http://garrison.leavenworth.army.mil/sites/about/buffalo.asp>

Buffalo Soldiers National Museum  
1834 Southmore  
Houston, TX 77004  
713-942-8920; fax: 713-942-8912  
<http://www.buffalosoldiermuseum.com/>

"The Buffalo Soldiers on the Western Frontier," online exhibit at the International Museum of the Horse  
Kentucky Horse Park  
4089 Iron Works Parkway  
Lexington, KY 40511  
859-233-4303 or 800-678-8813; fax: 859-254-0253  
<http://www.imh.org/imh/buf/buftoc.html>

Captain Buffalo, web site of author Frank Schubert, offers presentations on the Buffalo Soldiers  
<http://www.captainbuffalo.com/>

National Association of Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Clubs  
<http://www.buffalosoldiersnational.com/>

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# Charlie Parker Jazz Festival

*Date Observed: A weekend in late August*

*Location: New York, New York*

The annual Charlie Parker Jazz Festival celebrates the legendary music master and impresario for whom it is named. Two New York City public parks are opened up on two consecutive days at the end of August so that citizens and visitors can appreciate the genius that is credited with changing the face of modern jazz.

## Historical Background

Charlie Parker's brief life, from 1920 to 1955, had a gigantic impact on the American music scene and the jazz world in particular. As an African American born to modest circumstances in the Midwest, he achieved his successes in what might be viewed as somewhat unconventional ways. Parker left an impressive legacy, despite more than a few stumbling blocks and hurdles.

His early childhood and teenage years were spent in Kansas City, Missouri, where there are varied stories of a largely absent father whose background was in the black vaudeville circuit. Parker's mother was of African-American and Choctaw descent (the source of much theorizing with regard to *Cherokee* and *Ko-Ko*, two of Parker's significant works). Her work hours are said to have allowed young Parker's free reign of the "Paris of the Plains," as Kansas City was then called. His introduction to vice came early; his dual addictions to heroin and alcohol were established by the time he was 15. That was also the year he married his first wife. Three others followed, and when he passed away, Parker had fathered at least three children.

The little formal music education that Parker received was obtained via the Kansas City public schools. His first instrument was a baritone horn, of which he quickly tired. Parker then moved on to what would become his passion, the alto sax. He played in a high school group for a brief time before dropping out in 1935 to pursue music full time. Before long, and with the involvement of two hawked instruments, Parker made his way

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*Charlie Parker playing his saxophone around 1940.*

to New York City. He stayed there a year, working a stint as a dishwasher in order to be near musicians he admired. It was during this time that Parker began to formulate his sound, although it would be years before he would actualize it musically. In the meantime, he honed his basic music abilities and worked towards his creative goals, playing first with the Jay McShann Band and then Earl Hines's group, teaming up with the likes of Dizzy Gillespie and other young modernists. These "hep cats" spent off hours in jam sessions in such renowned Harlem hotspots of the day as Minton's Playhouse and Monroe's Uptown House.

By the mid-1940s, Parker's career was ready to take off. He was grounded in the fundamentals and knew the sound he was after. He and Gillespie set out and did a string of Hollywood engagements. Parker then went to Los Angeles on his own where a reported effort to kick his drug habit landed him in Camarillo State Hospital for six months. Afterward, he worked in Los Angeles for three months, then returned to New York to form a quintet with whom he recorded some of his most famous works.

For Parker, though, this productive period had its ups and downs; ultimately, his lifestyle choices took their toll. In mid-1951, New York's Narcotics Squad curtailed his ability to earn a living locally by having his cabaret license revoked. Constantly forced to be on the road—or broke and begging—Parker's mental and physical health increasingly suffered. Although he did get his license back within two years or so, Parker tried to commit suicide twice in 1954; he voluntarily committed himself to Bellevue Hospital.

Parker made his final public appearance on March 5, 1955. His death was announced on March 12, 1955.

No one argues Parker's technical mastery of the saxophone or his influence. While some question his character, and others still are challenged by the complexity of his compositions, the very longevity of Parker's work has given credence to his stature and the stamina of his place in the halls of music.

Much recognition of the jazz legend occurred posthumously during the last decade of the 20th century. In 1994 efforts to have Parker's one-time New York home on Avenue B placed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places came to fruition. At the end of the decade, the building also was granted New York City landmark status. Easier to achieve was the renaming of Avenue B as "Charlie Parker Place" in 1993. In Kansas City, Missouri, the Charlie Parker Memorial Statue was dedicated in 1999.

### Creation of the Festival

The first Charlie Parker Jazz Festival was held in 1993. The original organizers ran the event until its 10th year, at which time the City Park Foundation took over and has managed it since. The month of August was selected to honor Parker's birthday.

### Observance

The festival is held over the course of two days, Saturday and Sunday, at two different venues, both in areas where Parker lived and worked: Marcus Garvey Park in Harlem and Tompkins Square Plaza in the East Village, near Parker's home on what was then Avenue B. The events start at midday, allowing attendees the chance to spend an afternoon, or two, inspired by Parker's intricate compositions and twists on old standards.

Each year the festival brings together some of the most talented jazz musicians from all corners of the globe. The aim is to exemplify the individuality and innovation that Parker himself intensely idealized. Admission on both dates is free of charge. The event is one to which jazz aficionados eagerly look forward, considering Parker's works to be as provocative today as they were more than a half century ago.

### Contacts and Web Sites

City Park Foundation  
830 Fifth Ave.  
New York, NY 10021

### "Yardbird"

Several accounts purport to explain how Charlie Parker got the nickname "Yardbird," often shortened to "Bird." One popular story, recounted on the official Charlie Parker web site, has it that while Parker was traveling to a gig with Jay McShann, the car hit a chicken—also known as a yardbird—and Parker insisted on stopping the car and retrieving it to cook for dinner.

212-360-2756

<http://www.cityparkfoundation.org>

Official Site of Charlie Yardbird Parker

CMG Worldwide

10500 Crosspoint Blvd.

Indianapolis, IN 46256

317-570-5000; fax: 317-570-5500

<http://www.cmgwww.com/music/parker/home.html>

### **Further Reading**

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# Chicago Gospel Music Festival

*Date Observed: First weekend in June*

*Location: Chicago, Illinois*

**T**he Chicago Gospel Music Festival, sponsored by the Mayor's Office of Special Events since 1984, is held each year on the first weekend in June. The festival celebrates the history of gospel music in Chicago.

## Historical Background

Gospel music has a long history in Chicago's African-American community, but elements of the genre come from slave songs, spirituals, folk songs, hymns, and blues. Its roots go back even further to Africa and rhythms and chants that captured people brought to the Americas.

During the 1700s many enslaved people on plantations became Christianized and went to church services, staying afterward to sing and dance in "praise houses." Slaves also sang to bolster their spirits during back-breaking work in the fields, while logging, and on prisoner chain-gang construction sites. Some songs were related to runaway slaves and the Underground Railroad, such as the spirituals "Wade in the Water" (referring to walking in streams to avoid detection by dogs) and "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" (escaping by wagon).

Protestant hymns also played a role in the development of gospel music, particularly when Richard Allen, founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, published collections of hymns that he considered suitable for African-American churches (*see also Founder's Day/Richard Allen's Birthday*). But the hymns were undemonstrative, and a lighter, less restrained style of singing began to take hold in the 1800s. By the end of the century, Pentecostal churches were influencing gospel music with clapping, foot stomping, and shouting, as was common in praise houses. In addition, African-American composers were contributing to gospel music by arranging spirituals in new ways and publishing their work.

Not until the 1920s did gospel music become an accepted term for this genre of music. In 1921 the **National Baptist Convention, USA** met in Chicago and officially acknowledged the sacred spirit of gospel music. At the time, Thomas A. Dorsey, a honky-tonk piano player and composer who accompanied blues singers, such as Ma Rainey, attended the convention and liked the music he heard. But he wanted to change the rhythms “to get the feeling and the moans and the blues into the songs,” according to the *Chicago Tribune*. Dorsey said he “modified some of the stuff from way back in the jazz era, bashed it up and smoothed it in. It had that beat, that rhythm. And people were wild about it.”

However, when Dorsey attempted to introduce the music to black church congregations on Chicago's South Side, elders did not welcome his style. Although discouraged, Dorsey began to compose his own songs, which totaled more than 1,000 during his lifetime; about half were published. In 1926 he coined the term “gospel music,” publishing his first two gospel songs “Someday, Somewhere” and “If You See My Savior.”

Dorsey eventually found a home for his compositions in the Pilgrim Baptist Church, considered the birthplace of gospel music. As choir director at Pilgrim Baptist, Dorsey trained gospel singers, including the great Mahalia Jackson and many others who gained fame. (Tragically, on January 6, 2006, the historic church was severely damaged in a fire that destroyed priceless artifacts, including some of Dorsey's original compositions.)

Sallie Martin (1896-1988) was instrumental in spreading gospel music through the Midwest and the South. As a young hospital worker with an interest in the genre, Martin joined Dorsey's choir in 1932 and gradually earned a reputation as a charismatic artist. Also in 1932, she co-founded, with Dorsey, the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses. In 1940 Martin started a gospel publishing company in Chicago with songwriter Kenneth Morris. Martin and Morris, Inc., grew to be the most prominent publisher of gospel music in the nation. Until the 1950s, she and her Sallie Martin Singers toured and performed in Europe as well as in the United States. For these contributions Martin is known as the Mother of Gospel Music.

## **Creation of the Festival**

The first Chicago Gospel Music Festival was held in 1984 in Grant Park on the shores of Lake Michigan. It has been organized by the Chicago Mayor's Office of Special Events (MOSE) since its inception.

## **Observance**

During the June weekend of the annual Chicago Gospel Music Festival, performers include local, national, and international gospel artists. There is also a gospel art fair.

### Thomas A. Dorsey (1899-1993)

Known as the “Father of Gospel Music,” Thomas Andrew Dorsey was born in 1899 in Villa Rica, Georgia. His father was a minister, and Thomas heard spirituals and Baptist hymns at church and at home. As a child his life was also filled with secular music—the blues were then emerging. Although the Dorsey family had a limited income, they managed to buy an organ, which Thomas learned to play at about six years old. He also received some musical education from an uncle.

When the Dorsey family moved to Atlanta in 1908, Thomas frequented a vaudeville theater, where he watched pianists at work. He himself became a paid performer, playing blues in clubs and for parties and dances while he was still a teenager.

In 1916 Dorsey went to Chicago looking for better-paying jobs. For the next few years, he traveled between Atlanta and Chicago trying to improve his income. By the mid-1920s, he was touring the country. He also began publishing some of his songs.

Married in 1925, Dorsey’s wife died seven years later while giving birth to their only child. Their infant son died the next day. Dorsey became deeply depressed and after some months began to recover by composing the now-famous song “Take My Hand, Precious Lord.” From then on, he was devoted to gospel music, which he promoted in Chicago and across the nation. He also continued to compose and publish his work, including “There’ll Be Peace in the Valley,” “Ev’ry Day Will Be Sunday By and By,” and “I’ll Be Climbing Up the Rough Side of the Mountain.”

Each year the MOSE selects festival performers based on applications. Applicants submit biographical sketches, tapes, CDs, photographs, and other materials for consideration. Appearing at the festival have been such gospel music favorites as Bryon Cage, the Williams Brothers, and Solomon Burke, called the “King of Rock and Soul.” A Grammy winner, Burke is known for creating soul music by applying gospel techniques to rhythm and blues. Other past performers include the Mississippi Mass Choir, the Canton Spirituals, Mary Mary, Yolanda Adams, Daryl Coley, Men of Standard, John P. Kee & New Life Community Choir, Fred Hammond & Radical For Christ, Bobby Jones

& New Life, Sounds of Blackness, Richard Smallwood & Vision, Take 6, Dottie Peoples & The Peoples Chorale, Dorothy Norwood, Shirley Caesar, Albertina Walker, The Winans, Smokie Norful, Smokey Robinson, D. J. Rogers, Israel & New Breed, and Tye Tribbett & GA.

In 2005 the 21st annual gospel event was staged at the new lakefront Millennium Park with performances on its main stage at the Jay Pritzker Pavilion and its North and South Promenades. The festival draws tens of thousands of gospel lovers.

## **Contact and Web Site**

Mayor's Office of Special Events

121 N. LaSalle St., Rm. 703

Chicago, IL 60602

312-744-3315; fax: 312-744-8523

<http://egov.cityofchicago.org/city/webportal/portalEntityHomeAction.do?entityName=Special+Events&entityNameEnumValue=38>

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# Church Homecomings

*Date Observed: Varies*  
*Location: Churches nationwide*

**A**nual homecomings have a long tradition among African-American church congregations and families. Depending on the congregation, homecomings may have one or more of several purposes: commemorating a church's anniversary, honoring its deceased, celebrating its members and encouraging those who have moved away to return for a reunion. Homecomings tend to be scheduled from Memorial Day on through the autumn, when the weather is pleasant for outdoor events. Although many of these gatherings have taken place every year for decades, some have discontinued because a church no longer exists or because church members and families are too widely scattered.

## Historical Background

From the time the first black churches were built, homecomings have been common annual events. Some occur when large denominational churches mark such anniversaries as **Founder's Day/Richard Allen's Birthday**, celebrating the founding of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) in the late 1700s, and the **African Methodist August Quarterly**, marking the beginning of the African Union Methodist Protestant Church.

Although not as well known, many African-American churches have held homecomings and "decoration days" for many years. Some homecomings mark a church anniversary. One example is the Tynes Chapel AME Zion Church in Dry Fork, Virginia, built in 1901 with donated lumber and labor of the small black community. As Dry Fork residents moved away, the church's anniversary drew them back for a homecoming held each summer. They came from Pennsylvania, Ohio, New Jersey, and other states for reunions and for sermons, singfests, and picnics.

Some homecomings have been held on the weekend of Memorial Day, which originated in 1868 as Decoration Day to honor American Civil War veterans and to decorate the

graves of those who died in that war. Other homecomings have occurred during the spring and summer months when flowers were plentiful for decorating the graves. Summer also was a good time to have “dinner-on-the-ground,” a picnic after a church service.

## **Creation of the Observance**

No specific date marks the beginning of church homecomings; individual churches set their own schedules for such events. In St. John, Kansas, for example, an African-American church held homecomings on Memorial Day, when black families gathered and shared a potluck meal, then took part in a group sing. In Boone County, Kentucky, the First Baptist Church in Burlington held homecomings on the church’s anniversary in April; the church was organized in 1881. Sometimes **Juneteenth**, which celebrates June 19, 1865, when slaves in Texas were notified of their freedom, is selected as church homecoming time. July and August, though, are the months when most church homecomings occur.

## **Observances**

A church homecoming generally includes preaching, singing, and dinner-on-the-ground. The church pastor usually begins the homecoming with prayer, followed by the congregation singing hymns. After a sermon, it is time for dinner-on-the-ground. Members of the congregation set up tables and fill them with platters of food. Traditional dishes include fried chicken, chicken and dumplings, ham, potato salad, green beans with fat back, deviled eggs, macaroni and cheese, candied yams, cornbread, and plenty of pies, cobblers, and cakes.

If a cemetery is associated with the church, tending to graves is also part of the observance. Many families who get together at black church homecomings take the opportunity to clean up old burial sites and to preserve genealogical records and the history of a community.

At historic Asbury United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C. (founded in 1836), homecoming events take place in late September and may span an entire weekend. Some years the Asbury homecoming kicks off with a concert of gospel or other sacred music. Outdoor activities, including games for children and young people, are held on the street in front of the church, and the homecoming worship service traditionally features a guest preacher. Occasionally, homecoming has been augmented by a revival (*see also Church Revivals*). Asbury’s homecoming in 2000 included a theatrical production titled *Escape on the Pearl*. The play dramatizes the story of more than 70 enslaved peo-



*Men prepare food for this benefit dinner-on-the-ground held in August 1940  
at St. Thomas's Church near Bardstown, Kentucky.*

ple, including members of Asbury, who attempted to escape to freedom in 1848 aboard the *Pearl*, which was to take them to a stop on the Underground Railroad. But they were soon captured, and the incident added fuel to the national debate on slavery.

A church called Roberts Chapel, in a small Indiana community known as Roberts Settlement, has been holding homecomings on July 4th since 1923. About 150 people attend each year, coming from northeastern states, California, and Florida. An important part of the event is preserving the cemetery that has been an African-American burial site since the 1830s. Children from nearby schools come to Roberts Chapel and the cemetery to learn about the community's history.

## **Contact and Web Site**

Asbury United Methodist Church  
926 11th St., N.W.

Washington, DC 20001  
202-628-0009; fax: 202-783-0519  
<http://www.asburyumcdc.org>

### **Further Reading**

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# Church Revivals

*Date Observed: Varies*  
*Location: Churches nationwide*

**C**hurch revivals are religious gatherings that became popular during the early 19th century. Traditionally, revivals are Methodist, Protestant, or Evangelical Christian events intended to help church members renew their faith and also to welcome new members into the church.

## Historical Background

In the late 1700s and throughout the 1800s, traveling preachers often visited rural areas for several days at a time. During these visits, people would gather to listen to the preachers speak. These gatherings served to create a sense of community for isolated people who lived demanding lives on farms, plantations, or the western frontier. These early revivals were called camp meetings or tent revivals because people sometimes traveled a great distance to attend, and then camped in wagons or tents for the duration of the revival. Camp meetings were especially popular in the South, and usually occurred once a year in late summer or fall, after crops were harvested but before winter set in.

Many early traveling preachers did not discriminate and would preach to everyone in the area. As a result, camp meetings often included men and women, whites and African Americans, free people and slaves, and people of all Christian denominations. Although African Americans were not usually allowed in white churches, and women were expected to be silent and reserved during worship, at these early revivals anyone could participate in any way. At camp meetings, it was not uncommon for African Americans and whites to join together for singing or praying, although this did not generally occur outside of the revival tent. Women were also allowed to sing or speak in response to the preacher. In these ways, revivals changed the way people prayed by allowing attendees to express themselves in ways that were normally frowned upon during a church service.

## **Creation of the Observance**

It is difficult to say exactly when and where camp meetings first took place, although historians believe that these gatherings were occurring as early as the 1700s. One of the first documented camp meetings was in 1803, on Shoulderbone Creek in Hancock County, Georgia. Revivals grew in popularity through the 1800s and were considered to be one of the most effective methods of preaching.

Revivals have taken many forms over their long history, depending on factors such as the time of year, the number of preachers in attendance, and geographical location. The earliest revivals held in the East were planned as structured and organized events. By contrast, the camp meetings of the South and West tended to be more spontaneous events that depended upon the availability of traveling preachers. No matter where they were held, revivals could go on for days, sometimes with continuous preaching throughout the day and night. Camp meetings could be unruly, with people jumping up and shouting or singing during the preaching, often at the invitation of the preacher. One early camp meeting tradition involved the use of the “anxious bench,” where those who wanted to repent for their sins would sit, under the attention of the entire revival, until they were converted. Revivals often concluded when everyone in attendance was physically exhausted by the energetic, continuous preaching.

## **Observances**

Revivals are now held all over the country by both rural and urban churches. Individual churches determine their own schedule for revivals, and most still follow the basic model of the earliest camp meetings. There is always at least one preacher in attendance, and people gather to reaffirm their faith, sing hymns, and listen to sermons. These gatherings are held throughout the year, indoors or outside, for varying lengths of time. Hundreds of camp meeting sites exist throughout the country, and old-fashioned camp meetings are still held for extended revivals. Tent revivals are popular in southern churches, particularly among Southern Baptists, Methodists, and Pentecostals.

Many churches find ways to organize a revival while still allowing for spontaneous creative expression. The revival event is usually well planned, with arrangements for preachers and other speakers made far in advance. Some revivals focus on a specific theme, such as faith renewal, community building, involvement of young people, or attracting new members to the church. Other revivals cover many different themes in one event, by choosing topics for preachers to focus on during specific days or sessions. Revivals are seen as time set apart from daily life and normal worship activities, and are intended to give people the opportunity to focus on spiritual matters and recommit to their faith.

## Further Reading

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# Corn-Shucking Festival

***Date Observed: Between early November and mid-December***

***Location: Southern plantations***

**C**orn shucking was a harvest festival held between early November and mid-December on plantations in areas around the Chesapeake, in the Carolinas, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and east Texas. Plantation owners encouraged slaves to compete (usually in teams) to see who could shuck the most corn. Afterward, slaves shared a feast and held a dance.

## **Historical Background**

The harvest period in the pre-Civil War South meant extensive labor for slaves. They harvested crops such as cotton and tobacco, and then had to cut the field corn and remove the husks — time-consuming and tedious tasks when no modern machinery was available. Following the harvests, they had to prepare the fields for the next year's plantings.

## **Creation of the Festival**

Corn-shucking festivals emerged during the late 18th century. Plantation owners wanted to speed up the corn-husking process so their slaves could go back to their field work. Owners created incentives for their slaves to work quickly by promising such rewards as feasts, whiskey, and socializing. A planter would invite slaves from nearby plantations to gather at his barn, usually at night after the day's labor was done.

## **Observance**

Neighboring plantation owners allowed their slaves to attend corn-husking festivals, because they expected to be compensated in the same way. Slaves came from miles around, looking forward to the shucking because they could take part in a community gathering in which work and recreation were combined. At some corn shuckings, whites and blacks worked together, but that was the extent of their socialization.

Before the event itself, slaves pulled corn (still in husks) from stalks in the field and hauled the crop to the plantation yard. There they would pile bushel upon bushel of corn in a high mound. When slaves had gathered, the mound was divided into two sections with a fence rail or pole, and two teams were chosen to compete in husking the corn. Or, huskers simply competed among themselves, and the person who shucked the most corn won an award, sometimes cash or a suit of clothes. Anyone who found a red ear of corn also received a reward—perhaps a kiss from a young woman or a jug of whiskey.

As the corn husking continued, a captain led the singing, making the job easier as the workers kept up with the rhythmic songs: “Come to shuck that corn to-night/Come to shuck with all your might...” Much of the singing was call and response, a verse and chorus, verse and chorus, many times over. Singing might stop for a time, and jokes and stories flew back and forth.

While the shucking was going on, plantation owners provided the workers with jugs of whiskey, and slave women prepared a huge supper which everyone could enjoy, slaves and planters alike. Late at night after the work was done, the frolic began. Fiddlers and banjo players created the music, and dancing went on for hours, sometimes until dawn.

Because of the festive nature of corn shuckings, some historians concluded that slaves were “happy” captives on the plantation. But others point out that slaves viewed this event as a rare opportunity to socialize and to have some relief from debilitating field work. Still, corn-shucking festivals continued even after emancipation into the 20th

### Shucking the Corn

**S**huckers were usually men, and they worked swiftly and efficiently. As Roger D. Abrahams, a professor of folklore, explained:

The men would stand or sit around the edges of the pile, in a ring. The shuckers picked up an ear with their left hand with the silk top facing upward, and tore downward with their rights, often with the aid of a hardwood pin strapped onto and emerging from the palm of the right hand. Their left hand then fastened on the back half of the shuck and tore it off to the shank, or butt. The ear was then broken off, the shuck thrown behind the shucker, and the ear thrown back into the pile. A good shucker could do the sequence in a matter of seconds.

century, including among freedmen farmers who assisted each other with the huge task (*see also* **Emancipation Day**).

### **Contact and Web Site**

"Abstracts to the Maryland Slave Narratives of the Federal Writers' Project 1936-1938"  
Montgomery County Historical Society  
111 W. Montgomery Ave.  
Rockville, MD 20850  
<http://www.montgomeryhistory.org/MDSlaveNarr.htm>

### **Further Reading**

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# Crispus Attucks Day

*Date Observed: March 5*

*Location: Boston, Massachusetts, and New Jersey*

**C**rispus Attucks was the first American to die during the Boston Massacre on March 5, 1770, a key event leading up to the Revolutionary War. For this reason, he is considered the first American fatality of the War. Crispus Attucks Day, or Boston Massacre Day, has been observed since 1771, mainly in Boston, Massachusetts. Since 1949, Crispus Attucks Day has also been a legal day of observance in the state of New Jersey.

## Historical Background

Since the 1760s Britain had been imposing more and more taxes on the American colonists. The colonists protested the taxation was illegal, since they could not elect their own representatives to the British Parliament, as accorded in the British constitution. Thus, a clamoring cry helped to rally leading patriots behind the cause of America's coming Revolutionary War: "No taxation without representation!" When King George III sent British troops across the Atlantic Ocean to keep the colonists in line, the colonists responded with boycotts of British goods. Middle-class merchants and businessmen suffered the harshest losses, as did their employees and laborers.

Additionally, the advent of British troops on American shores meant that soldiers were literally headquartered among the populace, walking the same streets, frequenting the same drinking establishments, and vying for the same young ladies. There was economic competition as well, since off-duty troops looked to supplement their earnings by working part-time hours, at lower wages than locals required for full-time employment. Another cause of tension, particularly between Americans of African descent and the British, was the constant concern that the latter might conscript the former into service in the Royal Army or Navy.

On Friday, March 2, 1770, tensions came to a head outside the Old State House in Boston, Massachusetts, where a skirmish took place between some locals and British



*In 1996 President Bill Clinton directed the U.S. Mint to create this commemorative coin in honor of Crispus Attucks. The front shows a portrait of Attucks, and the reverse illustrates the design of a planned Black Patriots Memorial to be placed on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.*

soldiers. One of those involved was Crispus Attucks. Born into slavery in nearby Framingham, he had escaped and spent nearly two decades of his adult life in and out of the Boston seaport, working on whaling ships and as a rope maker. Reputed to have a fiery temperament, Attucks also is commonly reported to have been the ringleader of the tensions that built up over the course of the next few days.

On the evening of Monday, March 5, the prior week's scuffle escalated into a full battle. First-hand accounts vary on how it all began. Some contend that church bells rang out—which at the time was a common fire alarm—and someone yelled "Fire!" that could have signaled a command to shoot. When the shooting stopped, five colonists were dead, among them Attucks. All were immediately elevated to martyrdom status, and their burial rites at Faneuil Hall days later involved 10,000 of the town's 16,000 citizens. Although customs of the time precluded it, Attucks was accorded an honored burial alongside his fallen white comrades.

This event became known as the Boston Massacre and, for those anxious to break ties with the British Crown, it became a propitious propaganda tool in their arsenal of arguments. Prior to this event, agitators for independence had carefully distanced themselves from the mobs and their street violence. Now they embraced it, sensing a chance to unite the colonists by portraying the "massacred of Boston" as heroes.



Attucks's death that day in 1770 helped to turn the tide in the nation's quest for independence. Just a few years later, on April 19, 1775, at Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill, the Revolutionary War began. The colonists' fight for independence from Britain was now being fought in earnest, with American blood being shed on the battlefield christened by Attucks.

In addition to the role that Attucks played in America's road to independence, he can also be credited with inspiring others of African heritage to seek personal freedom and liberty. Authors Sydney and Emma Kaplan wrote in their book *The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution*, "His spirit doubtless spurred New England Blacks to openly question the anomaly of human bondage in a nation about to be born and fighting for its independence under the slogan 'Liberty or Death!'" They add that, in succeeding years, slaves commonly wrote to government officials using the argument that, in one slave's words, "We expect great things from men who have made such a noble stand against the designs of their fellow-men to enslave them."

In 1888, a Crispus Attucks Monument was erected in Boston Commons to commemorate the man, over the objections of both the Massachusetts Historical Society and the New England Historic Genealogical Society.

### **Creation of the Observance**

The Boston Massacre and Crispus Attucks's death have been commemorated in Boston since 1771, the year following the event.

In 1858 black abolitionists in Boston set aside March 5 as Crispus Attucks Day. They believed that Crispus Attucks's contributions to America's independence from Britain had been grossly unrecognized. Not only did they feel that it was unjust for Attucks not to receive acclaim as a great American hero, they also felt that such recognition would bolster their cause, that is, help others come to the belief that blacks should not be enslaved. For an unknown number of years thereafter, abolitionists paid tribute to the man who was the first to die in the fight for his own and his fellow man's liberty.

On April 25, 1949, the state of New Jersey entered Crispus Attucks Day as a designated day of observance into its state statutes.

From 1966 to 1976 there was an annual Crispus Attucks Parade in Newark, New Jersey. During the 1990s organizers revived the event, but renamed it the African American Heritage Parade.

## **Observance**

Each year the Boston Massacre is reenacted outside the Old State House, where a circle of cobblestones marks the historic event. The reenactors are members of two groups: the Massachusetts Council of Minutemen and Militia, representing the Americans, and His Majesty's 5th Regiment of Foot, representing the British soldiers. Attendees can also view exhibits and listen to talks at the Old State House museum.

In 1996 President Bill Clinton signed a law that directed the U.S. Mint to design and strike a commemorative Black Patriots Coin. Today Crispus Attucks's likeness adorns one side of a collectors-only available coin, while the other side depicts the still-to-be constructed Black Patriots Memorial to be symbolically situated on the capitol's National Mall. At the same time, a four-postage stamp set was approved, consisting of Attucks, Frederick Douglass, Salem Poor, and Harriet Tubman (*see also **Frederick Douglass Day and Harriet Tubman Day***).

## **Contact and Web Site**

Black Revolutionary War Patriots Foundation  
1612 K St., N.W., Ste. 1104  
Washington, DC 20006  
202-452-1776; fax: 202-728-0770

## **Further Reading**

Bradley, Patricia. *Slavery, Propaganda, and the American Revolution*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999.

Kaplan, Sydney, and Emma Nogrady Kaplan. *The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989.

Lanning, Michael Lee. *The African-American Soldier: From Crispus Attucks to Colin Powell*. New York: Kensington/Citadel Press, 2004.

Zobel, Hiller B. *Boston Massacre*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1996.



# DanceAfrica

*Date Observed: Varies according to location*  
*Location: Brooklyn, New York; Washington, D.C.;*  
*and Chicago, Illinois*

**D**anceAfrica is a festival of African and African-American dance founded in 1977 by dancer and choreographer Chuck Davis in Brooklyn, New York. The event seeks to educate diverse peoples about the rich heritage of African-influenced music and dance.

## Historical Background

Enslaved Africans brought their dancing traditions to the Americas and the Caribbean islands. On the slave ships, Africans frequently were brought up from the hold to the deck to dance, sometimes forced with a whip.

For slaves, dance became a way to mock slave owners as well as communicate with each other. The “cakewalk,” for example, derives from a competitive couples dance that parodied European pattern dances, such as quadrilles and cotillions.

Some plantation owners forbade slave dances, and even the mere act of raising a foot could be interpreted as dancing. Thus, many slaves took to gliding and limiting their arm and torso movements as much as possible.

As time passed, however, and as slaves were allowed and even encouraged to worship as Christians, they began to integrate traditional African dance rituals into ceremonies. Plantation owners were swayed, in time, to encourage dance events and make them competitive.

For whites, slave dances were a form of entertainment. Whites in blackface traveling in minstrel shows in the late 1700s through the late 1800s helped to popularize the cakewalk, waltz, shuffle, and other dances. The minstrel show, however, perpetuated a distorted view of blacks within white society, especially when a white performer Thomas

"Jim Crow" Rice imitated an elderly lame slave, keeping a caricature of African Americans alive for decades.

The stereotypical view of black entertainers did not change until after World War I. By that time many African Americans had migrated from the South to the North and West. In the 1920s the Harlem Renaissance generated an explosion of literary, artistic, and musical creativity (*see also African American Day Parade and Harlem Week*). All aspects of the arts were impacted and dance no less notably. During this period, the old plantation standard of tap dancing was revived, combined with elements of shuffling and acrobatics, and was featured on stages from Broadway to Chicago.

The development of juke joints and speakeasies of the era offered venues for African Americans to experiment and create their own forms of dance art. Thus, the Charleston, Ballin' the Jack, and the Jitterbug were born.

Several African Americans founded important dance companies during the 20th century. In 1937 dancer, choreographer, and anthropologist Katherine Dunham established the Negro Dance Group in Chicago, Illinois. Dunham's travels to the Caribbean inspired her to create a dance company that helped establish the credibility of African ritual dances as an art form. Anthropologist Pearl Primus, born in Trinidad, made a similar impact. In 1946 she founded a dance company in New York City. In 1958 dancer and choreographer Alvin Ailey started his renowned company. And, in 1967 Chuck Davis, founder of DanceAfrica, formed his dance company at Bronx Community College in New York.

## **Creation of the Festival**

In 1977 Chuck Davis, dancer and choreographer, conceived the idea for the festival after watching an old Tarzan movie, in which the "natives" are depicted as primitive stereotypes. He decided to show that people of African descent were "not about 'ooga-booga,'" and that was the origin of DanceAfrica.

Davis produced the first DanceAfrica festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music with just his own company. By year two, the roster had notably expanded to include Charles Moore and Dances and Drums of Africa; International African-American Ballet; Nana Dinizulz and His Dancers, Drummers and Singers; and Arthur Hall Afro-American Dance Ensemble.

The festival was so successful it spread to other cities over the years. In 1988 the first DanceAfrica in Washington, D.C., was held. And in 1991 DanceAfrica was inaugurated in Chicago, Illinois.

### Praise for Davis

In *Dance Magazine* K. C. Patrick summarizes what artistic director Chuck Davis has done with DanceAfrica performances: building and “crossing a bridge—a bridge constructed through the years by Davis to connect the roots and branches of Africa and African American dance. He shows the whole spectrum, from traditionalists to the avant-garde. It wasn’t always so; what now seems self-apparent exists because Davis started building the bridge twenty-five years ago.”

### Observance

The original DanceAfrica in New York takes place over Memorial Day weekend, at the end of May, each year. It is hosted by the Brooklyn Academy of Music. DanceAfrica in Washington, D.C., is hosted at the Dance Place each year during the second week in June. The Dance Center of Columbia College is headquarters for DanceAfrica Chicago, where the annual festival occurs in late October.

Each DanceAfrica festival showcases African and African-American dance in all its varieties. Performances draw upon authentic African components—from the use of traditional percussion instruments and rhythmic beats to the exquisitely designed and colored costumes. The desire is to create a cultural bridge, uniting people of all ages, genders and races.

### Contacts and Web Sites

DanceAfrica in Brooklyn  
Brooklyn Academy of Music  
Peter Jay Sharp Bldg.  
30 Lafayette Ave.  
Brooklyn, NY 11217  
718-636-4100  
<http://www.bam.org>

DanceAfrica Chicago  
312-344-7070  
<http://www.danceafricachicago.com>

DanceAfrica in Washington, DC  
Dance Place  
3225 8th St., N.E.  
Washington, DC 20017  
202-269-1600; fax: 202-269-4103  
<http://www.danceplace.org/>

"Free to Dance," an online companion to the 2001 PBS documentary  
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/freetodance/index.html>

Office of Community Arts Partnerships  
Columbia College Chicago  
312-342-8850  
<http://www.colum.edu/ocap/>

### **Further Reading**

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- Patrick, K. C. "Chuck Davis and Dance Africa." *Dance Magazine*, April 2004.
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# DC Caribbean Carnival

*Date Observed: Last weekend in June*

*Location: Washington, D.C.*

**T**he DC Caribbean Carnival is an annual colorful, educational, and cultural event held in the nation's capital. Since 1993, it has showcased the diverse cultures of Caribbean immigrants who make their homes in the Washington metropolitan area.

## Historical Background

Between 1980 and 2000, the Caribbean-born population in Washington, D.C., grew to more than 27,000. At least 7,000 islands, islets, reefs and cayes make up the geographical area known as the Caribbean, or West Indies. Twenty-five territories make up the West Indies, including sovereign states, overseas departments and dependencies (Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands are two of three U.S. dependencies; the third is Navassa Island). The countries and islands of the Caribbean are located south and east of Mexico and north and west of Venezuela in South America.

Most of the Caribbean came under European rule from the 15th to the 19th centuries. The Spanish, French, Dutch, and English each carved out portions of the islands for themselves, and some transported enslaved Africans to work on plantations. In 1804 Haiti was the first Caribbean nation to gain independence, and it is also the world's oldest black republic and the second oldest republic in the Western Hemisphere. Its path to freedom was begun by a slave rebellion, the Haitian Revolution, led by Toussaint Louverture (*see also Haitian Flag Day*). Many other Caribbean nations gained their freedom from European nations during the 19th century. However, some are still governed by them today.

## Creation of the Festival

The first DC Caribbean Carnival was held in 1993. The not-for-profit organization that organized the event, DC Caribbean Carnival, Inc., sought to bring an authentic Carib-

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*Costumed children at the 1998 DC Caribbean Carnival.*

bean-style parade to Washington, D.C. Additionally, organizers hoped to encourage cross-cultural awareness of the Caribbean to the Washington metro area in an entertaining way, educating both adults and youths about the arts, crafts, and culture of the Caribbean. In that first year, nine local bands participated in the parade and the event drew about 150,000 spectators.

## **Observance**

The DC Caribbean Carnival is held over the last full weekend in June. The highlight of the festival takes place on the opening day: a five-hour-long Carnival Parade. Partici-



pation has increased to more than two dozen bands—steel bands, calypso, and soca, all culled locally—and about 5,000 masqueraders, whose colorful costumes are also mostly homemade. The route begins on Georgia Avenue from Missouri Avenue, N.W., and proceeds to Banneker Field, directly across from historic Howard University.

Banneker Field is the site where “De Savannah,” the International Marketplace, is host to local and international artisans, live entertainers, food vendors, and others. The carnival now draws in excess of 300,000 people each year.

### Contacts and Web Sites

DC Caribbean Carnival, Inc.  
4809-A Georgia Ave., N.W., Ste. 112  
Washington, DC 20011  
202-726-2204; fax: 202-726-8221  
<http://www.dccaribbeancarnival.com>

Washington, D.C. Convention and Tourism Corporation  
901 7th St., N.W., 4th Fl.  
Washington, DC 20001-3719  
202-789-7000; fax: 202-789-7037  
<http://www.washington.org>

### Further Reading

Carr, Robert T. *Black Nationals in the New World: Reading the African-American and West Indian Experience*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002.  
Haviser, Jay B., ed. *African Sites: Archeology in the Caribbean*. Princeton, NJ: Marcus Wiener Publishers, 1999.



# Denver Black Arts Festival

*Date Observed: Five days in mid-July*

*Location: Denver, Colorado*

**T**he Denver Black Arts Festival, held for five days in July each year, is designed to raise public awareness and appreciation for black arts and their beneficial impact on the Denver community. The festival provides opportunities for African Americans in the visual and performing arts to showcase their talents.

## **Historical Background**

In the past, like many other cities and communities across the United States, there have been limited resources and opportunities in Denver for African Americans to exhibit their art and present musical, dance, and other performances. But with the combined efforts of volunteers, local businesses, cultural institutions, and the media, plus grants from foundations, the city's first African-American arts festival took place in 1987.

## **Creation of the Festival**

In 1986 Perry Ayers, his brother Oye Oginga, and a group of artists and art lovers formed a committee to launch an arts festival the next year. The first festival took place during two days of rain, so the committee decided to plan subsequent festivals in July to avoid what are called the August monsoons in Colorado. Attendance has grown with each succeeding festival, from more than 30,000 in 1989 to double that number the following year. Today the festival attracts more than 100,000 attendees.

## **Observance**

Over a long weekend in mid-July, the venues for the Denver Black Arts Festival have included a comedy showcase; exhibits of artwork and crafts by local artists and vendors; American and African dance companies; marching bands; drill, step, and drum teams; historical exhibits at various institutions; a people's marketplace offering African-

American, African, and Caribbean merchandise; performance stages that feature dance troupes, poetry readings, and gospel singers; a children's pavilion with such activities as dance and storytelling; community mural painting; a sculpture garden; and an African compound, a living exhibit called Joda Village.

The festival also celebrates top African-American achievements in performing and visual arts by presenting an annual award for excellence. On Saturday of the weekend event, there is a Boogaloo Celebration Parade that includes floats, bands, step and drill teams, and school and church groups.

Along with all the celebratory events, there are health and civic pavilions. Businesses or organizations may offer health screening, volunteer opportunities, and distribute promotional materials.

### **Contact and Web Site**

Denver Black Arts Festival  
2721 Welton St.  
P.O. Box 300577  
Denver, CO 80203  
303-860-0040; fax: 303-377-4631  
<http://www.denbaf.org/index.html>



# Denver Pan African Film Festival

*Date Observed: Last week in April*

*Location: Denver, Colorado*

The Denver Film Society and the Starz Entertainment Group co-sponsor the week-long Denver Pan African Film Festival each April. Held at Colorado's state capital, the festival hosts local, national and international visitors who gather at this award-winning competitive showcase and educational exchange about black filmmaking.

## Historical Background

Long before there were Pan African film festivals or motion pictures of any kind, the term "Pan Africanism" has signified the idea that Africans and Africans of the diaspora, wherever they are located, share a common history and culture and should unify in efforts to gain equality through social, political, and economic power. These concepts were expressed at the First Pan African Congress in London in 1900, and also at similar congresses in other countries later in the century.

Since the early 1900s in the United States, Pan Africanism has found a voice through nationalists, such as Marcus Garvey, and through such art forms as literature, music, dance, and films. (*See also African Film Festival; African World Festival in Detroit, Michigan; African World Festival in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; DanceAfrica; Ghanafest; Marcus Garvey's Birthday; Odunde Festival; and Pan African Film & Arts Festival*).

## Creation of the Denver Festival

The first Denver Pan African Film Festival was held in 2000 and was organized under the auspices of the Pan African Arts Society, a Denver metro area non-profit organization that focuses on cultural arts as a means to bring about social change. Founder Ashara Saran Ekundayo calls herself an "activist artist," and she established the festival in order to showcase feature films, shorts, documentaries, videos, and other art forms from the African diaspora to prompt dialogue on social issues.

## Observance

The Denver Pan African Film Festival extends a full week in April each year. Dozens of films from around the globe—North and South America, Europe, the Caribbean—are screened throughout the week. Juries present awards such as the SoulSpirit Award, given to a film director, producer, or actor whose work raises the social consciousness of audiences and prompts people to be socially responsible or to become activists. In 2005, the SoulSpirit Award went to Don Cheadle, an actor who merges his art with social justice issues. At the 77th Annual Academy Awards, he was a nominee for best actor for his lead-role performance in *Hotel Rwanda* (2004).

The Denver festival also includes workshops, panel discussions, and an educational youth fest. In 2006, an African marketplace was added to garner exposure of black fine art craftsmanship.

## Contacts and Web Sites

Denver Film Society  
1725 Blake St.  
Denver, CO 80202  
303-595-3456  
<http://www.denverfilm.org>

Pan American Arts Society/Denver Pan African Film Festival/Café Nuba  
909 Park Ave. W.  
Denver, CO 80205  
303-298-8188; fax: 303-298-8804  
<http://www.panafricanarts.org>

## Further Reading

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- Kennedy, Lisa. "A Festival Filled with Powerful Moments." *DenverPost.com*, November 25, 2005. [http://www.denverpost.com/search/ci\\_3247160](http://www.denverpost.com/search/ci_3247160).
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# Down Home Family Reunion

***Date Observed: Third weekend in August***

***Location: Richmond, Virginia***

**T**he Down Home Family Reunion in Richmond, Virginia, is an annual festival of African-American folklife during the third weekend in August. The Reunion's events demonstrate and celebrate the connections between west African and African-American cultures.

## **Historical Background**

The Down Home Family Reunion is presented by the Elegba Folklore Society, which was formed in 1990 to provide a forum for the diversity of African culture through the arts and to link west African and African-American cultural traditions. The society is named for the orisha or deity Esu Elegbara (eh-shew eh-leg-bah-rah), a spirit or force of nature in the tradition of the Yoruba people, a language and cultural group of west Africa.

According to Yoruba beliefs, Esu Elegbara (also known as Ellegua) is a gatekeeper who opens the way to, and also guards the paths of, communication between the divine and humanity. *Elegba* in Yoruba means "messenger of the gods," a mythical messenger of destiny who keeps people connected. He also is known as a trickster who can open or close doors that lead to a happy or sorrowful life; he knows the fate of each person.

## **Creation of the Observance**

The Elegba Folklore Society began the annual Down Home Family Reunion in 1991 with the support of the City of Richmond and various businesses. It also presents **Juneteenth** and **Kwanzaa** celebrations.

## **Observance**

During the Down Home Family Reunion, more than 20,000 people take part in two days of dance, oral traditions, music, children's events, down-home food, and crafts. Activi-

ties have included an oral historian of the late 1800s, who tells stories in rhyme about love and life; blues and reggae performances; African dance music; songs about life in Africa; gospel singers; and demonstrations of the chants and rhythms of railroad workers, who laid rail long before machinery was available to do the hard labor. Children can take part in making crafts, and a Heritage Market offers an assortment of unique items.

### Contacts and Web Sites

Elegba Folklore Society  
101 E. Broad St.  
Richmond, VA 23219  
804-644-3900  
<http://www.elegbafolkloresociety.org>

Richmond Metropolitan Convention & Visitors Bureau  
401 N. 3rd St.  
Richmond, VA 23219  
800-370-9004  
<http://www.visit.richmond.com/>



## **DuSable Museum Arts & Crafts Festival**

*Date Observed: Second weekend in July*

*Location: Chicago, Illinois*

**T**he DuSable Museum of African American History in Chicago has presented the annual Arts & Crafts Festival since 1974. Each year, over the second weekend in July, local artists and craftspeople exhibit works that relate to African-American history and culture.

### **Historical Background**

The DuSable Museum of African American History is the first and oldest museum in the nation devoted to African-American cultures. In 1961 a group of Chicago artists, among them artist and educator Margaret Goss Burroughs and her husband Charles Burroughs, founded the museum. The museum site was the Burroughs's home, a mansion that had once been a boardinghouse for black railroad workers. First called the Ebony Museum and later named the Museum of Negro History and Art, it was designed to present black history and culture, which were only slightly or never included in most museums and educational institutions of the time. The museum was again renamed in 1968, after a black Haitian fur trader, Jean Baptiste Pointe DuSable (1745?-1818). Historical accounts indicate that DuSable was the first non-native person to settle in Chicago.

After the Chicago Park District granted the museum use of a former administration building in Washington Park, the DuSable Museum of History and Art moved to that location in 1973. It became a memorial to DuSable and a home for permanent collections of such items as African and African-American artifacts, rare books, slave documents, civil rights memorabilia, paintings, photographs, films, wood and ivory carvings, sculpture, and African masks and statues.



## Creation of the Festival

In 1974, one year after the DuSable Museum moved to Washington Park in Chicago, the museum held its first festival with eight artists participating. Margaret Burroughs and Sophie Wessell were among them, and the two decided to organize an annual event that would allow artists to exhibit their work without juries or critics. In addition, young artists from Chicago schools would be included.

In 1984 the curator, the late Ramon Price, established a Purchase Award Program in which a panel of judges recommended purchase of outstanding works for inclusion in the museum's collection of contemporary African-American art. The collection is loaned for exhibitions at such institutions as the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, and Columbia College in Chicago.

## Observance

The 32nd annual DuSable Museum Arts & Crafts Festival was held on the second weekend in July 2006. Like previous festivals, it was a showcase for local artistic talent. In recent years, almost 200 artists and craftspeople have taken part in the festival.

During the 30th festival, a special "claymation" workshop for children was held. Participants learned how industry experts mold figures out of clay, or a clay-like substance called plasticine, for animated cartoons.

Besides the Arts & Crafts Festival, the DuSable Museum also conducts celebrations of **Juneteenth** and **Black Music Month** in June.

## Contact and Web Site

DuSable Museum of African American History  
740 E. 56th Place  
Chicago, IL 60637  
773-947-0600  
<http://www.dusablemuseum.org>

## Further Reading

Dickerson, Amina J. "DuSable Museum." Encyclopedia of Chicago, an online cooperative effort of the Chicago Historical Society, the Newberry Library and Northwestern University. <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/398.html>.

Feldman, Eugene Pieter Romayn. *The Birth and the Building of the DuSable Museum*. Chicago: DuSable Museum Press, 1981.

Lindberg, Richard C. "DuSable, Jean Baptiste Pointe." In *African American Lives*, edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.



# Emancipation Day

*Date Observed: January 1, September 22, and Other Dates*

*Location: Communities nationwide*

**D**uring the Civil War, on September 22, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln issued a preliminary proclamation to free slaves in states and parts of states “in rebellion against the United States.” The famous Emancipation Proclamation became effective on January 1, 1863, and African Americans across the nation gathered together on the eve of that New Year (*see also Watch Night*) and on New Year’s Day. Since the signing of the proclamation, Emancipation Day, sometimes called Jubilee Day, has been observed on January 1 in many areas of the United States. Some communities celebrate the September 22 anniversary of the preliminary proclamation. Others commemorate local anniversaries of emancipation, such as April 16 in Washington, D.C. (*see Emancipation Day in Washington, D.C.*), and May 29 in Upson County, Georgia.

## Historical Background

Long before the Civil War began in 1861, abolitionists and pro-slavery advocates were embroiled in political, economic, moral, and religious conflicts over the institution of slavery. Anti-slavery groups such as the Society of Friends (Quakers) and Mennonites in Great Britain and colonial America were active during the 1700s. The first American abolitionist society was founded a year before the 1776 Continental Congress declared the colonies independent and free of British rule.

After the American Revolutionary War, political efforts to abolish slavery included an attempt in the U.S. Congress to ban slavery in the Northwest Territory, from which states would be formed to become part of the union. The proposal was defeated. But in the years during and following the Revolutionary War, whites and blacks in northern states noted the hypocrisy of fighting for fundamental human rights while at the same time holding men, women, and children in bondage. Vermont became the first state to remedy this injustice when it outlawed slavery in 1777.



Artist W. Roberts produced this engraving around 1864 to celebrate President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.

In 1787, the Free African Society (FAS) formed in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, under the leadership of Absalom Jones, who became the first black pastor of the Episcopal Church, and Richard Allen, who founded the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church (*see also Founder's Day/Richard Allen's Birthday*). The FAS promoted abolition and provided financial and medical assistance for African Americans.

By 1804, all northern states had passed laws prohibiting slavery, but most of these laws allowed only gradual emancipation, which meant that slavery was slowly abolished over a set time period. With gradual emancipation, children born into slavery remained in bondage until a certain age, ranging from ages 21 to 28. In some cases, gradual emancipation meant being enslaved until the end of a specific number of work years.

Following the British example, in 1807, of banning the importation of slaves, the United States legally prohibited the slave trade on January 1, 1808. For some free-born African Americans this was a time to celebrate. Certainly that was the view of Reverend Absalom Jones, who urged that January 1 be an annual day of thanksgiving. During a worship service on January 1, 1808, his congregation at St. Thomas AME Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, joined in a song of praise written especially for the celebration.

However, the 1808 ban did not stop smugglers from bringing tens of thousands of enslaved Africans into the country and selling them to southern cotton planters. Eli Whitney's invention of a cotton gin, a device that removed seeds from cotton, made it possible to boost production. Slaves had previously performed this task by hand—a time-consuming job. As the demand for cotton grew, planters could increase their wealth by purchasing more slaves to plant and raise ever more cotton.

### Abolitionist Societies

Opponents of slavery continued to speak out and form abolitionist societies in most states, including some in the South where an abolitionist movement flourished between 1816 and 1817. Some African Americans belonged to white organizations; others established many of their own abolitionist groups. In addition, dozens of African-American orators, preachers, and writers advanced the abolition cause.

By the 1830s, a widespread abolitionist movement was under way. During the decade, an evangelistic fervor swept through the land, and Christians—black and white—began to denounce slavery as sinful and morally indefensible.

The American Anti-Slavery Society, established in 1833, was a major force in campaigns to eradicate human bondage. It was responsible for getting thousands of anti-slavery

petitions signed and sent to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1836. But because of gag rules (procedures that limit or prevent debate on particular issues) in effect at the time, Congress did not discuss proposals to end slavery. Free debate returned, however, when the gag rules were repealed in 1844.

Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, abolitionists published a great variety of materials to present the case against slavery. Newspapers, magazines, children's books, autobiographies of former slaves, advertisements and handbills announcing anti-slavery rallies, sheet music, and printed sermons were all part of the effort.

Whatever the abolitionist materials, they did little to persuade most southerners that the slave system should be outlawed. Instead, southerners argued that they needed slave labor to maintain the South's economy. Some also viewed slavery as a way to convert Africans to Christianity and to control bondspersons, whom they considered inferior.

### **A Speech Before the Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society**

**A**nti-slavery societies of the 1830s and 1840s included numerous women's groups, such as the Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society of Philadelphia. In 1836, the group invited James Forten Jr., son of an outspoken black abolitionist, to present a speech. In a forceful and dramatic style, Forten urged the women to continue their anti-slavery efforts. He noted in part:

It is not by force of arms that Abolitionists expect to remove one of the greatest curses that ever afflicted or disgraced humanity; but by the majesty of moral power. Oh! How callous, how completely destitute of feeling, must that person be, who thinks of the wrongs done to the innocent and unoffending captive, and not drop one tear of pity — who can look upon slavery and not shudder at its inhuman barbarities? It is a withering blight to the country in which it exists — a deadly poison to the soil on which it feeds, like a vulture, upon the vitals of its victims. But it is in vain that I attempt to draw a proper likeness of its horrors; it is far beyond the reach of my abilities to describe to you the endless atrocities which characterize the system. Well was it said by Thomas Jefferson, that "God has no attribute which can take sides with such oppression."

As abolitionists increased their accusations that owning slaves was wrong, southerners resisted by attempting to ban anything and anyone from the North—books, mail, and people opposing slavery. Hostility also flared in the North. Pro-slavery gangs frequently attacked homes of people suspected of harboring runaway slaves, broke up anti-slavery meetings, and tried to destroy abolitionist newspapers. In 1837, for example, a mob in Illinois set fire to a warehouse for an abolitionist newspaper, killing editor Elijah Lovejoy, who was trying to guard his new printing press.

### The Compromise of 1850

In 1850, the nation had become increasingly divided over the slavery issue, and tensions between the North and South mounted as western territories sought to enter the United States. California, for instance, wanted to join as a free state. The union then consisted of 30 states, and admitting California as a free state would tip the balance of 15 slave and 15 free states. The U.S. Senate had to decide not only California's fate, but also the status of other western lands.

After months of debate on the slavery issue, the Senate passed the Compromise of 1850, which was actually a series of laws that supposedly would settle North-South conflicts. The act provided that California would be admitted as a free state; western territories that included New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona, and Utah would be allowed to decide for themselves whether to apply for statehood as free or slave states; and the slave trade would be banned in Washington, D.C. As a concession to the slave states, the Compromise also revised the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act to provide for more stringent enforcement.

The Fugitive Slave Act proved to be the most contentious of the statutes and the most devastating for African Americans—free or slave. The act mandated that citizens help capture runaway slaves and return them “to the State or Territory from which such persons may have escaped or fled.” Law officers were required to use all the means necessary to carry out provisions of the act or face a fine of \$1,000.

Along with escaped slaves, free African Americans in the North were captured and, without a trial or any legal recourse whatsoever, sent to slaveholders in the South. After passage of the law, hundreds of African Americans immediately fled to Canada. Between 1850 and 1860, an estimated 20,000 fugitives and free blacks escaped across the U.S.-Canadian border. It was during this time that escaped slave Harriet Tubman returned to the South and led her family and others to freedom via the Underground Railroad (*see also Harriet Tubman Day and Sugar Grove Underground Railroad Convention*).

The Fugitive Slave Law prompted many abolitionists to become more active in the Underground Railroad. Abolitionists also became more vocal and took part in direct

action to prevent the return of fugitives. In 1851, for example, abolitionists rescued an escaped slave named Shadrach from a Boston, Massachusetts, courtroom, and in Syracuse, New York, a crowd from an anti-slavery convention forced law officials to surrender captured runaway slave William Henry Jerry (see **Jerry Rescue Day**).

However, Anthony Burns, who fled from Virginia to Boston, met another fate in 1854. His owner hunted him down and had him arrested. While he was imprisoned inside the courthouse, about 2,000 anti-slavery citizens gathered and a small group managed to break down the door in an attempt to free Burns. The state militia and federal troops were called in to stand guard and await the decision to return Burns to his owner. Charlotte Forten, the sixteen-year-old granddaughter of black abolitionist James Forten, expressed disgust with a government that "cowardly assembles thousands of soldiers to satisfy the demands of slaveholders."

## **Escalating Conflicts**

White sympathy toward fugitive slaves in the North could not counter the growing hostility in the South. Many southern planters believed that the activities of abolitionists were encouraging slaves to run away. They feared as well that escaped slaves and free blacks were plotting attacks against white planters and industrialists.

Between 1850 and 1860, conflicts over the institution of slavery escalated. As the decade progressed, many abolitionists began to lose hope that slaves could be emancipated by peaceful or political means. Some of the events of the decade indicate not only the deep divisions within the nation but also the violence that was a prelude to the outbreak of Civil War.

Consider reactions to the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, which provided for the doctrine of "popular sovereignty." That meant people living in the Kansas-Nebraska Territory could decide for themselves whether they should be admitted to the Union as a slave or free state. Armed pro-slavery and anti-slavery forces rushed to Kansas to gain control and to determine the outcome. Bloody confrontations raged until 1861, when Kansas was admitted as a free state.

Another event that created great discord was the highly controversial decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in the Dred Scott case (*Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 1857). The case concerned Dred Scott, a slave whose owner years before had taken him from the slave state of Missouri to Illinois and the Wisconsin territory, where slavery was banned. Scott tried several times to gain his freedom. After returning to Missouri, he filed a lawsuit in 1847, claiming that since he had lived on free land, he should be free. In 1857 the Court declared that no matter where Scott had traveled, he was still a slave, and he did not



## Uncle Tom's Cabin

According to some historians, anti-slavery opinions were bolstered in the North by a novel titled *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The novel, which was published first in magazine serial format and then as a book in 1852, sold 500,000 copies worldwide within a year.

Written by Harriet Beecher Stowe, the novel tells the story of Uncle Tom, a pious slave who faithfully serves his owner. After his owner's death, Tom is sold to Simon Legree, a barbaric Yankee plantation owner who beats Tom to death. The story also revolves around other characters who are slaves, slaveholders, and traders, and depicts the evils of the slave system and the strength of slaves who have faith in God and Christianity.

Stowe, who lived in the free state of Ohio, was motivated to write the novel as a response to the Fugitive Slave Law and the repression of free blacks wherever they were located. She based her work on her contacts with Underground Railroad workers and slaveholding relatives in Kentucky.

The sentimental and emotional story of slave suffering and courage in the face of death had an enormous impact on readers, gaining sympathy for the abolitionist movement and infuriating its opponents. In recent years, the book has been criticized for its stereotypes that have carried over to this day. The term "Uncle Tom" is one example. It has been used to negatively label a black person who is subservient to a white person. Critics also have denounced the book for its depiction of African Americans as childish, ignorant, and non-resistant. Still, in its time, the novel played a role in bringing about emancipation.

have the right to sue because he was not a Missouri citizen. In the majority decision, the Court also determined that the U.S. Constitution did not give African Americans the right to citizenship, and territories had no power to abolish slavery until the people applied for statehood.

The decision delighted southerners who were convinced that slavery could now expand into the territories. Northerners promised a fight to overturn the ruling. In short, the rift between North and South widened further.



*This photo depicts a May 20 Emancipation Day celebration at Horseshoe Plantation, near Tallahassee, Florida, during the 1930s. On May 20, 1865, Union General Edward McCook announced and read the Emancipation Proclamation in Tallahassee—an anniversary that continues to be observed into the 21st century.*

Slave rebellions and uprisings added to the debate. Armed slave revolts had already taken place during the early part of the 1800s, and rumors that blacks were plotting to kill whites were constantly circulating. In 1859, one of those plots became a reality, but it was initiated by a white man, John Brown. A Kansas abolitionist, Brown, along with a small group of followers, carried out a plan to seize the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. Brown hoped to arm slaves for a rebellion. But slaves did not rise up, and Brown was captured a day after his attack. He was arrested, convicted of treason, and executed by hanging.

Some abolitionists declared that Brown was a martyr to the anti-slavery cause and called for slave revolts. This further alarmed people in the South who began to talk about seceding—pulling out of the Union—as their only means to protect themselves.

During the presidential campaign of 1860, four major parties ran candidates for the presidency. Only the Republican Party was anti-slavery, albeit in a token way. Republicans

did not advocate abolition, but instead wanted to prevent the extension of slavery into the territories.

When Republican Abraham Lincoln was elected president, Southerners believed that the “Black Republicans,” as the party sometimes was called, would violate states’ rights and ban slavery. For many Southerners, the only recourse was secession. Even before Lincoln took office, South Carolina seceded in December 1860. Seven other southern states followed in February 1861, forming the Confederate States of America with its own military.

Lincoln took office in March 1861, and he still hoped to hold the Union together by political means. He moved cautiously, offering to reimburse slaveholders if they voluntarily freed their slaves over a gradual time period. It was an attempt to keep some slaveholding border states from seceding. But Lincoln’s plan was soundly rejected.

In the meantime, Confederate forces began to take over federal arsenals and forts. When Confederates attacked Fort Sumter in South Carolina on April 13, 1861, civil war could no longer be avoided. The Union and Confederate soldiers would fight each other for four long years.

Many fugitive slaves fled to Union forces. The escaped slaves, abolitionists, and some members of Lincoln’s administration began to pressure for emancipation, and in 1862 the U.S. Congress abolished slavery in the District of Columbia (*see **Emancipation Day in Washington, D.C.***). Congress also outlawed slavery in western territories, setting the stage for Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. Although slaves in Confederate states were freed, the proclamation did not apply to slaves in Union areas or border states loyal to the Union. Slavery was not completely abolished until ratification of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution on February 1, 1865 (*see **National Freedom Day***).

### Creation of the Observance

Whether in slave quarters, in the fields, or towns and cities, wherever slaves received the news that they were free, celebrations occurred. Free African Americans gathered in the North on New Year’s Eve to hold vigil. In Washington, D.C., where slaves were freed in 1862, African Americans gathered to celebrate. At one church, the pastor read the Emancipation Proclamation that was printed in the *Washington Evening Star*. “This was the signal for unrestrained celebration characterized by men squealing, women fainting, dogs barking, and whites and blacks shaking hands,” according to historian John Hope Franklin, writing in *Prologue* magazine. He also noted that “the Washington celebrations continued far into the night. In the Navy Yard, cannons began to roar and continued for some time.”

## **The Emancipation Proclamation**

January 1, 1863

By the President of the United States of America:

### **A Proclamation.**

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

“That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

“That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, shall on that day be, in good faith, represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States.”

Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days, from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New Orleans) Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth), and which excepted parts, are for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.

By the President: ABRAHAM LINCOLN

WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State

Some slave owners refused to tell their slaves about the proclamation immediately. In addition, news traveled so slowly that, in some locales, days or weeks went by before slaves knew they were free. Slaves in Upson County, Georgia, did not learn about the declaration of their freedom until May 29, 1863. In Texas, that news did not arrive until June 19, 1865, and the 19th eventually became a state holiday celebrating freedom (*see Juneteenth*).

## **Observance**

Following the first Emancipation Day celebration, the anniversary was widely commemorated into the 20th century. In 1916, for example, a Columbus, Ohio, newspaper announced a “monstrous” celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation.

Over the years, musicians composed Emancipation Day songs that were performed at celebrations. One composition was titled “On Emancipation Day,” with words by poet Paul Laurence Dunbar and music by Will Marion Cook. For the 50th anniversary of emancipation, James Weldon Johnson wrote a poem titled “Fifty Years” that the *New York Times* published on January 1, 1913.

Celebrations of emancipation have not always been held on January 1, however. In Washington, D.C., April 16 commemorates the day slaves were freed in the nation’s capital. African Americans in Maryland have celebrated November 1, the anniversary of the day the state constitution abolished slavery in 1864. Since 1863, an annual Emancipation Day celebration in Upson County, Georgia, has taken place on May 29, the day slaves there learned of their freedom.

Tallahassee, Florida, celebrates Emancipation Day on May 20. That is the date in 1865 that Union General Edward McCook of the occupying army read the Emancipation Proclamation.

July 5 is Emancipation Day in Rochester, New York. The celebration commemorates July 4, 1827, when a state law freed slaves.

In some states, Emancipation Day has been observed on September 22 to commemorate the preliminary proclamation, which has been the case in Gallia County, Ohio, since 1863. According to Gallia County, its celebration is the longest continuous emancipation observance in the United States.

On September 22, 1962, a centennial celebration was held in Washington, D.C., to mark the 100th anniversary of Lincoln’s preliminary proclamation. The original document went on display, and New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller gave a speech about its importance.

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*In 2005 Harrison Elementary School students in Washington, D.C., participated in a celebration of the display of an original copy of the Emancipation Proclamation at the African-American Civil War Memorial Museum.*

In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, **National Freedom Day** is observed on February 1, which some regard as the real emancipation day. On February 1, 1865, President Lincoln signed the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which banned slavery throughout the United States. The U.S. House and Senate passed legislation in 1947 making February 1 National Freedom Day. Since then, all Philadelphia mayors, as well as Pennsylvania governors, have declared that February 1 should be observed as Freedom Day.

Emancipation celebrations began to diminish by the 1950s and 1960s, when the emphasis was on gaining civil rights and equality, which were still being denied African Americans. Where Emancipation Day is observed today, a parade and speeches highlight the importance of freedom.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

"The African American Mosaic: A Library of Congress Resource Guide for the Study of Black History & Culture"

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african/afam005.html>

Annual Emancipation Celebration Day, Inc.

P.O. Box 511

Gallipolis, OH 45631

<http://www.emancipation-day.com>

"The Emancipation Proclamation," an online exhibit at the New York State Library Cultural Education Center

Empire State Plaza

Albany, NY 12230

518-474-5355 (reference desk)

<http://unix2.nysed.gov/library/features/ep/>

John G. Riley Center/Museum of African American History and Culture

419 E. Jefferson St.

Tallahassee, FL 32301

850-681-7881; fax: 850-681-7000

<http://www.rileymuseum.org>

Landmark Society of Western New York

133 S. Fitzhugh St.

Rochester, NY 14608

585-546-7029; fax: 585-546-4788

<http://www.landmarksociety.org>

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

8787 Georgia Ave.

Silver Spring, MD 20910

301-563-3400 or 301-495-4600

<http://www.mc-mncppc.org/>

"The Slave Experience: Freedom and Emancipation," part of the PBS online exhibit "Slavery and the Making of America"

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/slavery/experience/freedom/history.html>

Thomaston-Upson Chamber of Commerce

213 E. Gordon St.



P.O. Box 827  
Thomaston, GA 30286  
706-647-9686; fax: 706-647-1703  
<http://www.thomastonchamber.com>

"Treasures of Congress," an online exhibit at the National Archives and Records Administration  
8601 Adelphi Rd.  
College Park, MD 20740  
866-272-6272  
[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/treasures\\_of\\_congress/site.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/treasures_of_congress/site.html)

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- McKissack, Patricia C., and Fredrick L. McKissack. *Days of Jubilee: The End of Slavery in the United States*. New York: Scholastic, 2003. (young adult)
- Wiggins, William H., Jr. *O Freedom! Afro-American Emancipation Celebrations*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000.



# Emancipation Day in Hutchinson, Kansas

*Date Observed: Early August*

*Location: Hutchinson, Kansas*

The Emancipation Day celebration in Hutchinson, Kansas, commemorates the abolition of slavery. Originally celebrated in Atchison, Kansas, on September 22—the anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln’s preliminary proclamation of 1862—the event eventually moved to Hutchinson, and organizers rescheduled the festival to be held in August.

## Historical Background

During and after the Reconstruction period (1867-1877), when the federal government and local Republicans governed former Confederate states, the majority of freed African Americans did not have equality or protection from discrimination. Former slaves worked on plantation lands as tenant farmers (renters), often paying their rent with a portion of their crops. These arrangements left black farmers and their families poor, since white owners continued to own the land and tools, and demanded payments that left many barely able to subsist.

In general, blacks were able to vote and some were elected to government offices. But the majority faced white racist attitudes and groups intent on destroying black voting rights, educational opportunities, and economic advances. During a period known as “redemption,” southern supremacists—those who believed whites were superior to blacks—fought to overthrow Reconstruction policies. Organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan terrorized African Americans with arsons, whippings, and murders.

Freed blacks in the South feared they would once again be in the same situation that had existed during slavery, and in 1879 thousands migrated to Kansas where they could find refuge. During what was called the Kansas Fever Exodus, an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 African Americans left the South for Kansas, where they hoped to claim free land as pro-

vided in the Homestead Act of 1862. The Act allowed people to select a plot owned by the federal government, live on and cultivate the land, and after five years, receive a deed for the property.

Some “Exodusters,” as these African Americans were called, established their own colonies in Kansas (*see also* **Nicodemus Emancipation and Homecoming Celebration**). Others settled in towns like Topeka, Atchison, and Hutchinson.

### Creation of the Observance

During the late 1800s, African Americans from across Kansas and nearby states attended an Emancipation celebration in Atchison, Kansas. The event was called the “Lincoln Day Celebration,” and it was celebrated on September 22, the anniversary of the day President Abraham Lincoln issued his preliminary emancipation proclamation in 1862. But in 1889, organizers decided to hold the Emancipation Day festival in Hutchinson, Kansas, because of its central location in the state. By the 1930s, the observance was held in early August. It is possible that the August date was chosen in remembrance of the **West Indies Emancipation** of August 1, 1838, but this is not verified by available records.

In 1931, Hutchinson Mayor I. E. Lewis Oswald proclaimed August 4 “a legal holiday for all members of the Negro race in the city of Hutchinson” and expressed “admiration for their efforts toward their won advancement and their unselfish contribution to the welfare and happiness of all people.”

### Observances

Throughout the 1900s and into the 21st century, the Hutchinson Emancipation Day celebrations have been launched with a parade. Festivities have included a barbecue picnic, a baseball game, basketball tournament, and other sporting events (such as boxing and wrestling matches), bathing beauty and diving contests at the municipal pool, and an evening dance. Well-known musicians have played for the dances, such as the famed Lionel Hampton Orchestra. The event has grown over the years with an increased number of activities and wider community involvement for the three-day celebration. Some of the highlights of the event are a jazz concert, art show, gospel music fest, and a golf tournament.

### Contacts and Web Sites

City of Hutchinson  
125 E. Ave. B

Hutchinson, KS 67501  
620-694-2611; fax: 620-694 2673  
<http://www.hutchgov.com/>

Hutchinson Emancipation Day Committee, Inc.  
P.O. Box 701  
Hutchinson, KS 67504-0701  
620-663-6673 or 620-669-3931  
<http://www.shopkansas.net/eday/misc.html>

Hutchinson/Reno County Chamber of Commerce  
P.O. Box 519  
117 N. Walnut  
Hutchinson, KS 67504  
620-662-3391  
<http://www.hutchchamber.com/community/index.htm>



# Emancipation Day in Washington, D.C.

*Date Observed: April 16*  
*Location: Washington, D.C.*

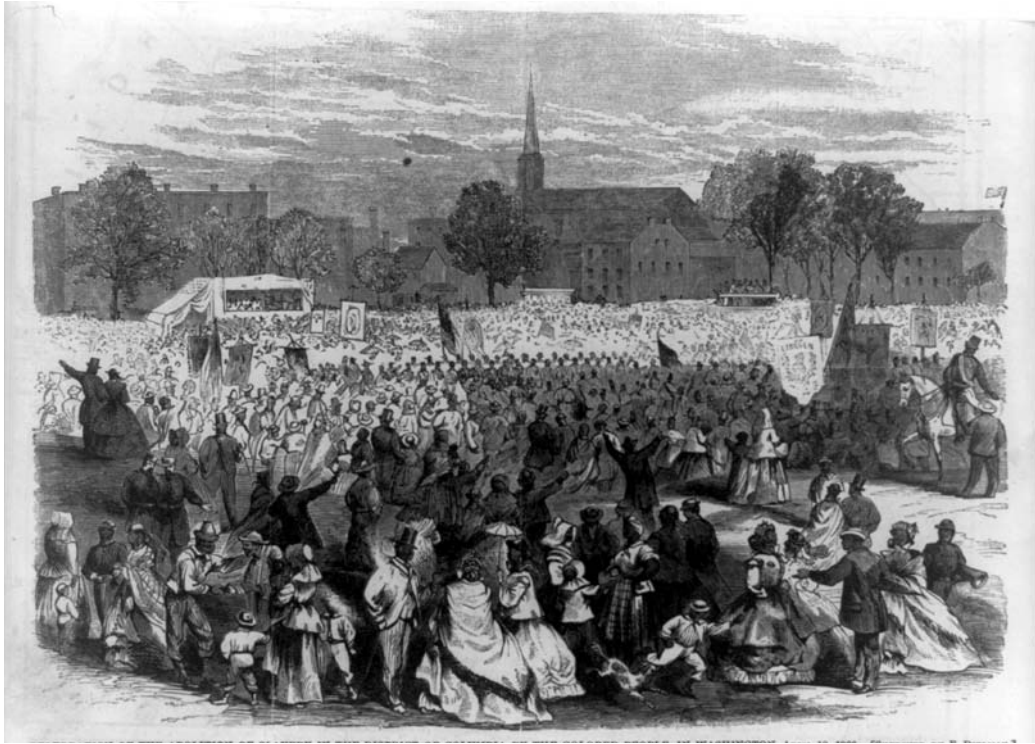
**E**mancipation Day celebrates the freedom of more than 3,000 slaves in the District of Columbia on April 16. On that date in 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Compensated Emancipation Act, which freed enslaved persons in the District nine months before the president issued the Emancipation Proclamation. The day became an official holiday in Washington, D.C., in 2005.

## Historical Background

The District of Columbia Emancipation Act of 1862 freed all slaves in the District and granted compensation of up to \$300 for each slave to loyal Unionist slaveholders. The law also provided \$100 to each former slave who voluntarily left the United States for colonies in Africa.

The proposal that African Americans emigrate to Africa had been argued since the 1700s by both blacks and whites. The American Colonization Society (ACS) was founded in 1816. Made up primarily of prominent white men, the ACS persuaded some black leaders to promote the cause. They contended that blacks could succeed in Africa but could not in America.

A small number of African Americans did emigrate to west Africa and settle in a colony named Liberia on land that the ACS purchased. However, most African Americans were opposed to colonization plans. They believed that America was their country, a nation they had helped build and for which they had fought and died. This attitude prevailed when the 1862 Emancipation Act passed, and the majority of former slaves did not emigrate. Yet colonization proposals continued, and evolved into the Back-to-Africa movement in the 1900s (*see also* **Marcus Garvey's Birthday**).



*This 1866 sketch by Frederick Dielman illustrates the first Emancipation Day celebration in Washington, D.C., on April 19, 1866. It was published in Harper's Weekly, May 12, 1866.*

## **Creation of the Holiday**

The first Emancipation Day celebration in Washington, D.C., was held in 1866. More than 5,000 marchers wound through downtown and stopped at Franklin Square for speeches. Over 10,000 spectators were part of the event. A parade was held thereafter each year until 1901, when it was discontinued due to lack of leadership and funds to sponsor activities.

In 2002, D.C. Councilman Vincent B. Orange Sr. introduced a bill to make Emancipation Day a legal public holiday in the District. He and others believed the day should be memorialized, and it became an official public holiday in 2005.

## **Observance**

The first observance as a public holiday took place over the weekend of April 14 through April 17, 2005. A parade and festival commemorated this event, which also included

step shows, poets, choirs, and a variety of activities for children. One of the celebrities in attendance was Frederick Douglass IV, the great-great-grandson of the famous abolitionist who was partly responsible for persuading President Lincoln to abolish slavery in the nation's capital (*see also* **Frederick Douglass Day**).

## Contacts and Web Sites

District of Columbia Emancipation Day Foundation  
4101 South Dakota Ave., N.E.  
Washington, DC 20017  
202-529-4833  
<http://www.dcemancipation.org>

"Emancipation Day"  
District of Columbia Mayor's Office  
John A. Wilson Bldg.  
1350 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20004  
202-727-1000  
<http://dc.gov/mayor/emancipationDay/index.shtm>

Franklin Square/Emancipation Day Parade  
[http://www.culturaltourismdc.org/info-url3948/info-url\\_show.htm?doc\\_id=204782](http://www.culturaltourismdc.org/info-url3948/info-url_show.htm?doc_id=204782)

"Treasures of Congress," an online exhibit at the National Archives and Records Administration  
8601 Adelphi Rd.  
College Park, MD 20740  
866-272-6272  
[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/treasures\\_of\\_congress/site.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/treasures_of_congress/site.html)

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# Festival Sundiata

*Date Observed: Third weekend in February*

*Location: Seattle, Washington*

**F**estival Sundiata is an African and African-American cultural arts festival held since 1981 in Seattle, Washington. Presented over the third weekend in February, the event brings together people of African descent in the Pacific Northwest as well as those of other cultural backgrounds.

## Historical Background

The festival was named after a 13th-century king of the Mali Empire in west Africa, Sundiata Keita (1210-1260). He was known for reigning over a flourishing economic and cultural period of the kingdom.

Legends about the king have been passed on for centuries. According to the stories, Sundiata was the son of the Mandingo king Nare Fa Maghan and his second wife. Prophecy said that the second wife would produce a child who would become the greatest king of Mali. However, Sundiata's childhood did not bode well for someone who would be king. He was sickly and developed slowly; he still could not walk at the age of seven. Yet Maghan declared Sundiata heir to the throne, a decision that angered Maghan's first wife, mother of the king's first son. After Maghan died, the first son, a teenager, was placed on the throne.

The first wife berated Sundiata's mother for having a handicapped child. Then, in a miraculous effort Sundiata was able to stand and walk. By the time he was 10 years old, Sundiata appeared to be a threat to the teenage king, and the first wife hatched a plot to kill him. But Sundiata's mother fled with her son and two other children to another kingdom hundreds of miles away.

In exile, Sundiata developed in physical and mental strength and became a powerful fighter. He eventually assembled an army and marched on Mali, which was no longer con-

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*This book by D. T. Niane tells the story of Sundiata and the rise of the Mali Empire. Originally published in English in 1965, Niane wrote that he heard this version of the epic from a griot (an African oral historian) named Djeli Mamadou Kouyate.*

works. They can hear tributes to black professionals and black pioneers; enjoy gospel music, hip hop, jazz, rap, rhythm and blues; and watch cooking demonstrations by the Smokin' Black Chefs of the Northwest, top barbecuers. Children's activities, such as mask making and storytelling, are part of the festival as well. An estimated 50,000 people attended the 2006 festival, the 26th annual event.

The 1990 festival was one of the most memorable. On February 11, the first day of the festival, anti-apartheid leader Nelson Mandela was freed after 27 years of imprisonment in South Africa. Mandela went on to negotiate the end of apartheid in South Africa and become the country's first black president. Attendees were ecstatic at the news, which occasioned a joyful beginning to the festival that year, according to founder Terry Morgan.

trolled by his half-brother but had been conquered by another king. Sundiata and his army took back the territory and set up the foundation for an empire.

## **Creation of the Festival**

In 1981 Terry Morgan of Modern Enterprises, a Seattle promotion company, and the Seattle Center created Festival Sundiata to gather African Americans in the Pacific Northwest for a celebration of African heritage. Unlike some other cities in the United States, Seattle's blacks are scattered throughout the city as well as surrounding areas and make up only three percent of the population. Thus, the festival provides an opportunity for African Americans and Africans to meet and participate in a shared culture.

## **Observance**

Traditional African drumming and dance opens Festival Sundiata. During the weekend, attendees can visit a black art exhibition with paintings, sculptures, quilts, photographs, and multimedia

## Contact and Web Site

Sundiata African American Cultural Association  
P.O. Box 24723  
Seattle, WA 98124  
206-329-8086  
<http://www.festivalsundiata.org/>

## Further Reading

Banner, Ellen M. "Festival Sundiata Brings African-American Community Together." *Seattle Times*, February 20, 2006. <http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/home/>.

Holdcroft, Leslie. "Festival Sundiata: It's a Fun Time of African and African American Culture Appreciation." *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, February 17, 2006. [http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/lifestyle/259786\\_fam17.html](http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/lifestyle/259786_fam17.html).



# Fillmore Jazz Festival

***Date Observed: The weekend nearest July 4***

***Location: San Francisco, California***

**T**he Fillmore Jazz Festival is a free outdoor event held on the Saturday and Sunday closest to Independence Day, July 4. This annual celebration of jazz music and culture on San Francisco's historic Fillmore Street draws an average of 90,000 visitors each year.

## **Historical Background**

San Francisco's ethnically diverse Fillmore neighborhood has a long and colorful history. Known as "the Fillmore," the neighborhood has been the scene of important moments in jazz and rock music history. After San Francisco was devastated by a major fire and earthquake in 1906, rebuilding efforts transformed Fillmore Street into an entertainment district. Many theaters were built for public performances, and young artists, such as Al Jolson, began their careers there in the 1920s and 1930s.

Jazz reigned on Fillmore Street throughout the World War II years. Dozens of jazz nightclubs opened on Fillmore Street. These clubs featured performances by well-known artists such as Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, John Coltrane, Charlie Parker, Louis Armstrong and Billie Holiday (*see also* **Charlie Parker Jazz Festival** and **Satchmo SummerFest**). During the 1960s the neighborhood became a haven for artists representing all forms of entertainment, including writers, actors, and musicians of all types.

The Fillmore has developed into one of the most culturally diverse neighborhoods in the U.S., becoming home to communities of Filipino, Mexican, African-American, Japanese, Russian, and Jewish residents. The neighborhood, which has always included a mix of homes and businesses, was revitalized by an infusion of new development in the 1980s. In 1999 the Fillmore Jazz Preservation District was dedicated in recognition of the street's history as a cultural landmark. The neighborhood now hosts a wide variety of gourmet restaurants, boutiques, and specialty shops, including Marcus Books,

the nation's largest African-American bookstore. Today, Fillmore Street continues its long tradition of celebrating art and culture by hosting numerous festivals and street fairs throughout the year.

### Creation of the Festival

The Fillmore Merchants Association helped to launch the first Fillmore Jazz Festival in 1985. The festival was intended to celebrate the roots of jazz and the importance of the Fillmore Street nightclubs during the early days of jazz music. In its first year, the festival was held on three blocks of Fillmore Street and showcased all forms of jazz from fusion to Latin, as well as jazz standards.

### African Americans and Jazz

Jazz began as a distinctly African-American musical genre, developing from two older styles of African-American music — blues and ragtime. The roots of the jazz sound can be traced even farther back to African rhythms, drums, call-and-response singing, foot stomping, and hand clapping. These musical elements became part of the essential foundation of jazz music. They were layered with more complex sounds to create the modern variations of jazz heard today.

The first African-American jazz bands were formed in New Orleans, Louisiana, in the early 1900s. As jazz grew in popularity throughout the country, African-American musicians traveled to different cities to perform. By the 1920s, jazz clubs were opening in many larger cities such as Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles. Once jazz spread geographically, rather than remaining concentrated mostly in one city, different forms of jazz music began to emerge. African-American musicians created new styles of jazz as the genre evolved. Louis Armstrong pioneered the jazz solo in the 1920s, and in the 1930s, musicians like Duke Ellington and Count Basie popularized the big band swing jazz sound. By the mid-1940s, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, and Thelonius Monk were focusing on smaller bands and an innovative performance style that became known as bebop. The 1960s saw the emergence of fusion, free jazz, and cool jazz that was played by such artists as Miles Davis and Ornette Coleman. More recently, jazz musicians like Wynton Marsalis are reviving the more traditional styles heard in the early days of jazz.

## **Observance**

The Fillmore Jazz Festival is widely considered to be the largest free jazz festival on the West Coast. Now organized by Hartmann Studios, an event production company, the festival has grown to include more than 13 city blocks and three stages of continuous music. Performers representing the entire spectrum of jazz music are showcased during the two-day event. In addition to nonstop music, the festival also includes eight city blocks of arts, crafts, and other merchandise for sale. Hundreds of vendors sell clothing, jewelry, art, home furnishings, and food.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

Hartmann Studios  
100 W. Ohio Ave.  
Richmond, CA 94804  
800-731-0003 or 510-970-3217  
<http://www.fillmorestreetjazzfest.com>

Fillmore Merchants Association  
<http://www.fillmorestreetsf.com/>

## **Further Reading**

- "A Fair to Remember: Throngs Shop, Eat, Bounce Along to Jazz at the Fifteenth Annual Festival Despite Cold." *San Francisco Examiner*, July 2, 2000.
- Goines, Leonard. "Jazz." In *The African-American Experience: Selections from the Five-Volume Macmillan Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History*, edited by Jack Salzman. New York: Macmillan, 1998.
- "Music: Major African American Musical Forms." *New York Public Library African American Desk Reference*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1999.



# Football Classics

*Date Observed: Varies*

*Location: Varies*

**A**n annual football games known as Classics are held at various locations throughout the country. Most Classics take place as part of a weekend full of social activities including reunions, parades, and marching band competitions.

## Historical Background

Football rivalry is a tradition as old as the game itself, and many Classics were formed around a longstanding competition between two schools. In these Classics, the same two schools play each other every year. The Turkey Day Classic, held on Thanksgiving, has played out the traditional rivalry between Alabama State University and Tuskegee University for more than 80 years. The Orange Blossom Classic began as a contest between Florida A&M and Howard University in 1933. Other examples of this type of Classic include the Morehouse-Tuskegee Classic, the Southern Heritage Classic played by Jackson State University and Tennessee State University, the Atlanta Football Classic played by Florida A&M and Tennessee State University, the Bayou Classic played by Grambling State University and Southern University, and many more.

Other Classics are hosted by the same team every year, but the match is against a different opponent each time. These games are normally always played in the same location. Still other Classics feature two different teams each year, but again usually in the same location. These Classics are similar in concept to the various post-season Bowl games played around the country, but include all the extra activities normally associated with Football Classics. The Circle City Classic in Indianapolis, Indiana, is one of the largest Classics of this type (*see* **Indiana Black Expo's Summer Celebration**).

## Creation of the Observance

It is unclear when the first Football Classic game was played between African-American collegiate teams, although Classics were being played as early as 1924. In that year, Ala-

## **African Americans in the Early Days of Football**

**F**ootball became a popular sport in the U.S. in the late 1800s, and African-American players immediately excelled at the game. The first African Americans to play football held positions on the teams of white universities, which were generally the only organizations with enough money to have teams at that time. The first football game between historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) took place in North Carolina in 1892 (Biddle defeated Livingstone, 4-0). However, it would be nearly 20 years later before most HBCUs would be able to establish football teams.

During the early years of the sport, African-American players endured racial discrimination on and off the field. African-American students who attended white colleges and universities were not allowed to live in dormitories, and the cost of living off campus added to the financial burden of going to school. Some players enrolled in white colleges anyway, specifically because they wanted to play football, only to be told that they would not be allowed to join the team. Some schools limited the number of African Americans allowed on the team to only one or two. If they were accepted on the team, African-American players would have to sit out a game if the opposing team was segregated and refused to play against them. African Americans also often suffered brutal treatment in the course of the violent game, as white players sometimes took the opportunity to act on racial hatred. Rough tackles resulting in broken bones or even more serious injuries were quite common. In spite of all this, African Americans continued to play and to distinguish themselves as football athletes mainly because, at that time, there were no other real opportunities for African-American participation in major competitive team sports.

African Americans won more places on collegiate teams during the 1920s. In the 1930s, dozens of African Americans playing for white colleges earned reputations as football stars. By this time, African-American colleges had created their own southern football conference, featuring many outstanding and talented players. Teams at Morgan College (now Morgan State University) and Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University) dominated black college football through the 1930s and early 1940s. Interest in football at HBCUs continued to grow and eventually developed into a tradition of annual matches known as Classics.





*The Florida A&M University "Marching 100" marching band.*

bama State played Tuskegee in the first Turkey Day Classic held in Montgomery, Alabama. Since then, numerous Classics have been created and many traditions have formed around these events. Far more than just another college football game, the Classics give participating schools a chance to showcase the African-American college experience.

## Observances

Numerous Classics are held all over the country each year, with many occurring over Labor Day weekend or on Thanksgiving Day. Dates, locations, and schedules for the games and related events are determined by the participating schools and vary from year to year. Football Classics are attended by thousands of people, with most games selling out far in advance.

The football game is the focal point of a weekend full of social, cultural, and educational activities. There is usually a large parade with floats, marching bands, and appearances by various dignitaries and celebrities. At half-time or immediately after the game, there is often a battle of the bands, which pits the rival schools' marching bands against each other in competition. Most Classics include tailgate parties, step shows, pep rallies, and concerts given by popular artists. Educational activities often include college preparation workshops, college recruiting fairs, and job or career fairs. Charitable activities include fundraisers and scholarship award ceremonies. Some Classics also include a beauty pageant, golf tournament, football and cheerleading clinics, prayer and worship services, awards and recognition programs, reunions, and special luncheons or dinners.

## **Web Sites**

Atlanta Football Classic

<http://www.atlantafootballclassic.com/>

Bayou Classic

<http://www.statefarmbayouclassic.com/>

Southern Heritage Classic

<http://www.southernheritageclassic.com>

## **Further Reading**

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Smith, Jessie Carney. *Black Firsts: 4,000 Ground-Breaking and Pioneering Historical Events*. 2nd ed., revised and expanded. Canton, MI: Visible Ink Press, 2003.

Smith, Thomas G. "Football." In *The African-American Experience: Selections from the Five-Volume Macmillan Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History*, edited by Jack Salzman. New York: Macmillan, 1998.



# Founder's Day/Richard Allen's Birthday

*Date Observed: Mid-February*  
*Location: AME churches worldwide*

**F**ounder's Day in African Methodist Episcopal (AME) churches marks the birthday of Richard Allen on February 14. He founded the Bethel AME Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, which was dedicated in 1794. AME churches across the United States and around the globe commemorate Founder's Day, usually on or around Allen's birth date.

## Historical Background

Born a slave in Philadelphia on February 14, 1760, Richard Allen and his family became the property of Dover, Delaware, resident Stokley Sturgis in 1768. Sturgis allowed Allen to attend Methodist meetings held by itinerant preachers. This exposure led Allen to convert to Methodism, a religion founded by John Wesley who was steadfastly opposed to slavery. After listening to a Methodist preacher, Sturgis also converted and became convinced that slavery was morally wrong. Because Sturgis was in debt, he offered to let Allen buy his freedom for \$2,000.

Richard Allen worked at various jobs over several years to pay Sturgis. After he gained his freedom in the 1780s, Allen became a Methodist circuit rider, preaching without pay to blacks and whites in several states. He was asked to preach to African-American church members at St. George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia, and he eventually settled in the city. He worked as a shoemaker to support himself and his wife, Flora (who died in 1791), and later his second wife, Sarah, and the couple's six children.

In 1787, Allen helped form the Free African Society of Philadelphia, a mutual aid organization. When he learned two years later that the nondenominational society planned to become an affiliate of the Episcopal Church, Allen's dedication to Methodism prompted him to leave the organization.



*This lithograph, produced around 1876, gives a portrait of Richard Allen (center), circled by other bishops of the AME Church. Their portraits are framed by places and scenes associated with the AME Church, such as Wilberforce University (top left) and the Payne Institute (top right)*

Allen continued to preach at St. George's, increasing the membership of black parishioners. Because of the growing number of black members, the white congregation became uneasy. In response, Allen requested a separate church for African Americans so they could worship in their own spontaneous and traditional ways. Instead, the white leaders decided to increase the seating in the church by constructing a new balcony over an existing one. African Americans helped build the new gallery and then were forced to sit there rather than in the older gallery over the main part of the church. This segregation angered Allen, but he stayed with St. George's until one Sunday in November 1787.

On that day, black members, including Reverend Absalom Jones (who later became the first black Episcopal priest in the United States), were on their knees praying in the

gallery when a church official pulled Jones by the arm and ordered him and the others to get up and leave. Allen, Jones, and other African Americans not only left the area, they left the church and founded their own place of worship.

### **“Let Us Pray”**

Years after being forcefully removed from St. George's Methodist Church, Richard Allen wrote about the incident:

When the colored people began to get numerous in attending the church, they moved us from the seats we usually sat on, and placed us around the wall, and on Sabbath morning we went to church, and the sexton stood at the door, and told us to go in the gallery . . . we would see where to sit. We expected to take the seats over the ones we formerly occupied below . . . just as we got to the seats, the elder said, “Let us pray.” We had not been long upon our knees before I heard considerable scuffling and low talking. I raised my head up and saw one of the trustees . . . having hold of the Rev. Absalom Jones, pulling him up off of his knees, and saying, “You must get up—you must not kneel here.” Mr. Jones replied, “Wait until prayer is over.” Mr. H\_\_ M\_\_ said, “No, you must get up now, or I will call for aid and force you away.” . . . With that he beckoned to one of the other trustees, Mr. L \_\_ S\_\_ to come to his assistance. He came, and went to William White [another prominent black member] to pull him up. By this time prayer was over, and we all went out of the church in a body, and they were no more plagued with us in the church.

Allen and others who left St. George's rented a vacant store to use for worship services for a time. While Jones went on to lead an Episcopalian congregation, Allen remained a Methodist and established his church on a plot of land that he had purchased years earlier. The church was dedicated in 1794 as Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, frequently called Mother Bethel Church.

Yet, the church was not completely free of conflicts with St. George's. Pastors and trustees at St. George's wanted to force Allen to bow to their authority and tried to control financial affairs of Allen's church; in one instance, they attempted to take over church property. But Allen was determined to maintain a church that allowed African Americans to handle their own affairs while subscribing to Methodism. A lawsuit that reached the Pennsylvania Supreme Court eventually decided the outcome. The court ruled on January 1, 1816, that Allen's church was legally independent.

### **Adding Insult to Injury**

**I**n 1793 a yellow fever epidemic hit Philadelphia, killing thousands. Because of the erroneous belief that African Americans were less likely to get the disease, the mayor of Philadelphia and prominent physician Dr. Benjamin Rush asked Richard Allen and Absalom Jones to help victims. In spite of their fears, Allen and Jones enlisted the help of other blacks to visit homes and to aid the suffering. They also helped remove the dead. Yet their efforts were attacked by a Philadelphia publisher Mathew Carey. He accused African Americans of making a profit on the sick and stealing from victims' homes.

The mayor placed ads in newspapers defending the African Americans and criticizing Carey. In addition, Allen and Jones published a pamphlet titled *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People, during the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia, in the Year 1793: And a Refutation of some Censures, Thrown upon them in some late Publications*. In the pamphlet the authors refuted Carey's arguments and pointed out that they had saved the lives of hundreds of people, adding:

We feel ourselves sensibly aggrieved by the censorious epithets of many, who did not render the least assistance in the time of necessity, yet are liberal of their censure of us, for the prices paid for our services, when no one knew how to make a proposal to any one they wanted to assist them. At first we made no charge, but let it to those we served in removing their dead, to give what they thought fit—we set no price, until the reward was fixed by those we had served. After paying the people we had to assist us, our compensation is much less than many will believe.

The pamphlet also included detailed listings of cash the men and their workers received for burying the dead and their contaminated beds. For coffins they "received nothing."

Blacks in other states followed Allen's example and established independent African Methodist churches. Allen oversaw the rapid growth of the AME's Mother Church in Philadelphia, which grew to 7,500 members in the 1820s.

Several months later, at Allen's request, ministers of African-American churches from Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania met in Philadelphia to form the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The representatives elected Allen as the first bishop of the denomination, which quickly expanded across the United States and to other countries, such as Canada and Haiti. The denomination became, by all accounts, the most significant black institution in the 19th century. By the 21st century, the AME had more than 6,000 churches and over 2 million members.

### Legacy

During his lifetime, Richard Allen's achievements went beyond establishing the AME church. He was a leader in the community and helped form numerous organizations established to improve the lives of African Americans, among them schools for black children. During the War of 1812 (1812-1814)—a nearly forgotten war waged against Great Britain to control the seas—the British threatened to attack Philadelphia. Allen, Jones, and others recruited black soldiers to serve, primarily with the U.S. Navy. Allen also wrote pamphlets and preached sermons against slavery.

In 1830, Allen presided over the first National Negro Convention in the Bethel Church, which was convened to encourage improvement in African-American lives through education, pursuit of professional occupations, and resistance to oppression. From the convention the American Society of Free Persons of Color was formed. The society published a document, signed by Richard Allen, that included an "address to the free persons of colour," criticizing the American Colonization Society that advocated relocating free blacks to Africa. At first Allen had not opposed the society, but later came to the conclusion that African Americans who left the United States would be forsaking their brothers and sisters in slavery.

Allen died in Philadelphia in 1831. Since then, he has been honored by religious, educational, and cultural institutions that bear his name. These include the Greater Allen Cathedral of New York; the Allen Temple in Cincinnati, Ohio; the Richard Allen Cultural Center in Leavenworth, Kansas; the Richard Allen Center for Culture and Art in New York City; and the Richard Allen Museum that is part of Bethel Church in Philadelphia.

### Creation of the Observance

AME churches individually organize their own Founder's Day celebrations, which are often held on a Sunday closest to or on February 14, Richard Allen's birthday. Even

though this date falls within **African-American History Month** and may be part of that celebration, Founder's Day is frequently a separate observance in many churches.

## **Observance**

Before AME Founder's Day worship services, some churches may hold a parade. In Savannah, Georgia, for example, the Sixth Episcopal District's parade has included horse-drawn carriages, a high school marching band, and floats.

A service usually begins with a procession of bishops, other church leaders, and a choir. In some churches choir members dress in handmade African garments. Some services include liturgical dancers. Some present dramatic renderings of Richard Allen and Absalom Jones being thrown out of St. George's Church.

One common element for Founder's Day observances is a focus on the life of Bishop Richard Allen and the founding of Mother Bethel Church. Along with honoring Allen and his wife Sarah, churches frequently recognize other AME church pioneers. In addition, several churches in an area may join together for services. Part of the message delivered may be a reminder that Richard Allen believed the church could perform four basic functions: spiritual support, evangelism, education, and building black pride.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

African Methodist Episcopal Church  
500 8th Ave. S.  
Nashville, TN 37203  
615-254-0911; fax: 615-254-0912  
<http://www.ame-church.com/>

Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church and Richard Allen Museum  
419 Richard Allen Ave.  
Philadelphia, PA 19147  
215-925-0616  
<http://www.motherbethel.org>

## **Further Reading**

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*Year of Our Lord 1793: With an Address to the People of Colour in the United States. Written by Himself.* Philadelphia: Martin & Boden, 1833.

Jones, Absalom, and Richard Allen. *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People, during the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia, in the Year 1793: And a Refutation of some Censures, Thrown upon them in some late Publications.* Philadelphia: Printed for the authors, by William W. Woodward, 1794.

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Nash, Gary B. "Allen, Richard." In *The African-American Experience: Selections from the Five-Volume Macmillan Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History*, edited by Jack Salzman. New York: Macmillan, 1998.



# Frederick Douglass Day

*Date Observed: On or around February 14*

*Locations: Communities nationwide*

**T**he birthday of famed abolitionist, orator, writer, and escaped slave Frederick Douglass is celebrated during the second week of February in many locations across the United States. February 14 is generally the date on which Douglass's birthday is observed (though there are not historical records that confirm the date).

## Historical Background

Born into slavery in February 1818, Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey was the son of Harriet Bailey, a slave. He never knew his father, a white man, and he seldom saw his mother, who worked in the corn fields on a plantation near Easton, Maryland. His maternal grandmother, who lived in a nearby cabin, cared for him until he was six years old, when she took him to the Lloyd Plantation where he was to join his brother and two sisters—siblings he did not know. It was on this plantation that he learned of the terrible brutality of slavery and “the bloody scenes that often occurred” there.

Frederick himself became a victim of brutal beatings and the depravity of various slave masters. But, while in bondage to Hugh and Sophia Auld in Baltimore, he learned to read and write, even though this was forbidden or illegal in much of the South. In Baltimore, Frederick heard and read about the work of abolitionists and as a teenager began to dream about emancipation. However, freedom seemed an impossible dream when he was sent to the plantation, owned by Hugh's brother Thomas, to work in the fields. Still, he managed to organize a secret school for slaves, which Thomas Auld and other whites quickly broke up.

Frederick was sent once more to Hugh Auld in Baltimore, where he began to make plans to escape. He also met a group of educated free blacks, among them a free black woman, Anna Murray. The two fell in love and were engaged in 1838, which added to Frederick's frustration and bitterness over his slave status.



*This sketch depicts Frederick Douglass in his office while he served as U.S. marshal for the District of Columbia. It was published in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper on April 7, 1877.*

In September 1838 he dressed as a sailor and with a friend's certificate documenting that he was a free black man, Frederick made his way to free soil in Pennsylvania and then to New York City. There he met David Ruggler, a leader in the Underground Railroad network, with whom he stayed until Anna Murray could join him. The couple were married and traveled to New Bedford, Massachusetts, where Frederick found work as a day laborer. He also began using Douglass as his last name in order to shield his fugitive status.

In New Bedford, Douglass became involved in the abolitionist movement and soon was making speeches before anti-slavery groups. Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison hired Douglass to be an agent for the Massachusetts branch of the American Anti-Slavery Society, and within a short time, Douglass became well known among abolitionists in the United States and also in England and Ireland, where he spent two years speaking out against slavery and for women's rights. In his speeches, Douglass often described his years as a slave and also documented those years in his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*. His speeches and writings countered the propaganda by southern writers who declared that slaves had an easy, contented life and were treated kindly.

### **Excerpt from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass***

**F**rederick Douglass wrote about the first bloody scene that he witnessed as a young child when slave master Aaron Anthony whipped his aunt. This excerpt is from Chapter 1 of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845):

Before he commenced whipping Aunt Hester, he took her into the kitchen, and stripped her from neck to waist, leaving her neck, shoulders, and back, entirely naked. He then told her to cross her hands, calling her at the same time a d—d b—h. After crossing her hands, he tied them with a strong rope, and led her to a stool under a large hook in the joist, put in for the purpose. He made her get upon the stool, and tied her hands to the hook. She now stood fair for his infernal purpose. Her arms were stretched up at their full length, so that she stood upon the ends of her toes. He then said to her, “Now, you d—d b—h, I’ll learn you how to disobey my orders!” and after rolling up his sleeves, he commenced to lay on the heavy cowskin, and soon the warm, red blood (amid heart-rending shrieks from her, and horrid oaths from him) came dripping to the floor. I was so terrified and horror-stricken at the sight, that I hid myself in a closet, and dared not venture out till long after the bloody transaction was over.

During the Civil War, Douglass met with President Abraham Lincoln and helped in the formation of the Massachusetts 54th and 55th black regiments who fought on the Union side (*see also* **Battle of Olustee Reenactment**). After the war and throughout the rest of his life, Douglass worked for the civil rights of African Americans and served in a variety of government positions—U.S. marshal of the District of Columbia, D.C. recorder of deeds, and minister to the Republic of Haiti.

Meantime, Douglass continued to speak and write, producing numerous documents, letters, and books. He tirelessly campaigned for anti-lynching laws, voting rights for African Americans, and social and economic reforms to counteract the widespread dis-

criminatorial practices that prevented equal treatment for blacks in public places. On the evening of February 20, 1895, after spending the day at a women's rights meeting, Douglass died of a heart attack in his Washington, D.C., home.

### Creation of the Observance

Harvard scholar Carter G. Woodson was responsible for designating a week in February that would include the birthday commemoration of Frederick Douglass. In 1926 Woodson initiated the first Negro History Week to take place during the second week of February. He chose this date to correspond with the birthday observances of Frederick Douglass and President Abraham Lincoln, both of whom had a great impact on African Americans. Eventually, the week became **African-American History Month**, during which numerous African-American contributions are highlighted.

### Observances

A Frederick Douglass birthday tribute takes place each year around February 14 at the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site in Washington, D.C. The site is the home where Douglass lived during the years he was in the nation's capital. Events include speakers, musical performances, and a speech contest.

The New Bedford (Massachusetts) Historical Society hosts a Frederick Douglass Read-a-thon each February. Participants read aloud from the *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. In addition, locals observe September 17, the anniversary of the day in 1838 when Douglass and his wife arrived in the city via the Underground Railroad.

Frederick Douglass is also remembered with churches, museums, bridges, memorial halls on college campuses, and other places bearing his name. In Rochester, New York, where Douglass lived and did much of his work, his home is preserved. The city also has a statue of Douglass, and Mt. Hope Cemetery marks his burial place.

### Contacts and Web Sites

Frederick Douglass National Historic Site  
1411 W St., S.E.  
Washington, DC 20020-4813  
202-426-5961  
<http://www.nps.gov/frdo/>

Frederick Douglass Papers  
Library of Congress  
101 Independence Ave., S.E.  
Washington, DC 20540  
202-707-5000  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/doughtml/doughome.html>

Frederick Douglass Papers Project  
Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis  
Dept. of History  
425 University Blvd.  
CA406  
Indianapolis, IN 46202  
317-274-5834; fax: 317-278-7800  
<http://www.iupui.edu/~douglass/index.htm>

### **Further Reading**

McCurdy, Michael, ed. *Escape from Slavery: The Boyhood of Frederick Douglass in His Own Words*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994. (young adult)  
McFeely, William S. *Frederick Douglass*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991.  
Preston, Dickson J. *Young Frederick Douglass: The Maryland Years*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.

### **Writings by Frederick Douglass**

*Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. Hartford, CT: Park Publishing Company, 1881.  
*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself*. Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845.



# George Washington Carver Day

*Date Observed: January 5*

*Location: Various U.S. Communities*

**G**eorge Washington Carver Day is observed on January 5, the day on which the pioneering botanist and educator died in 1943, in remembrance of his outstanding contributions to the nation and to the world of science.

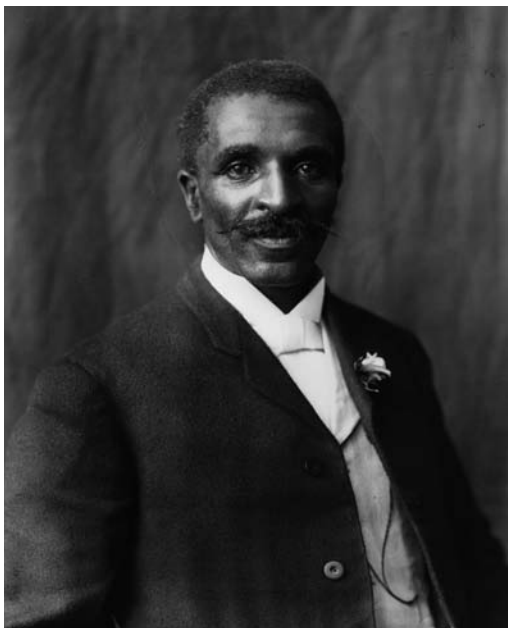
## Historical Background

George Washington Carver was born into slavery around 1864 or 1865, just prior to the end of the Civil War. He and his mother were stolen by Confederate raiders; Carver was returned, orphaned, to his owners Moses and Susan Carver, with whom he remained even after emancipation.

The majority of slaves in the United States did not have educational opportunities. Legislation banning the education of slaves was not uncommon. Literate slaves were not only frowned upon but also often feared. For years after the Civil War, blacks' access to education remained limited, which also restricted occupational choices. It took many efforts to begin breaking down the barriers of racial discrimination. The biggest early strides were made by a small number of determined and talented individuals who proved that skin color was no impediment to achieving greatness. Carver was one of the first African Americans to do so.

Frail and sickly from birth, Carver was drawn to nature and earned the nickname "plant doctor." He was one of the fortunate few to receive a formal education. After graduating from high school, Carver applied and was accepted at Highland College in Kansas—even meriting a scholarship. Upon his arrival at Highland, however, the school president turned him away with the words, "Why didn't you tell me you were a Negro?"

Undefeated, Carver went on to Iowa's Simpson College, initially indulging his love of art. One of his instructors, Etta Budd, recognized Carver's horticultural skills and advised him to study at Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (now Iowa State University). After graduating from the institution, he joined the faculty and soon there-



*George Washington Carver in 1906.*

after earned his master's degree. Before long, Carver's research was drawing wide notice. In 1896 Booker T. Washington, one of the most prominent African-American leaders of the time, asked Carver to join the faculty of Tuskegee Institute, now Tuskegee University (*see also Tuskegee Airmen Convention*). There Carver taught students the value of understanding and applying the forces of nature to agriculture.

Carver turned his attention to the plight of the southern farmer, hit hard by the boll weevil. He educated farmers in the art of crop rotation, knowing that the peanut plant had powers to restore nitrogen to the depleted soil, which in turn would increase both the quantity and quality of staple cotton and tobacco crops, as well as increase the value of the

peanut crops. Carver earned his "Mr. Peanut" title by finding ways for farmers to make use of the vast amounts they were able to produce. He was similarly inventive with sweet potatoes and other crops.

Due to his overwhelming contributions, Carver was showered with recognition and attention during his lifetime. He was a consultant to the U.S. Congress as well as to titans of business and industry, and was considered both peer and friend of Henry Ford and Thomas Edison. He gave nutritional advice to Mahatma Gandhi, acted as consultant to the Russian government, and provided massage therapy to the Iowa State football team.

Yet Carver remained a modest and simple man. He was convinced that science held the answers to all of life's questions and that one just needed to have a "receptive ear." Carver chose to secure a mere three patents and was highly respected for his non-profiteering nature. He was noted as repeatedly saying about his ideas and discoveries, "God gave them to me. How can I sell them to someone else?" He helped pave the way for other African-American scientists and inventors to make their contributions with greater facility.

George Washington Carver believed strongly that nature was God's laboratory. In his words, "We get closer to God as we get intimately and understandingly acquainted with the things he has created." In a brief essay on this topic, he wrote in part:



The study of nature is not only entertaining, but instructive and the only true method that leads up to the development of a creative mind and a clear understanding of the great natural principles which surround every branch of business in which we may engage. Aside from this it encourages investigation, stimulates and develops originality in a way that helps the student to find himself more quickly and accurately than any plan yet worked out.

The singing birds, the buzzing bees, the opening flower, and the budding trees, along with other forms of animate and inanimate matter, all have their marvelous creation story to tell each searcher for truth. . . .

More and more as we come closer and closer in touch with nature and its teachings are we able to see the Divine and are therefore fitted to interpret correctly the various languages spoken by all forms of nature about us.<sup>1</sup>

Upon Carver's death in 1943, his birth site and surrounding area were designated historic sites and a monument was erected in his honor.

## Creation of the Observance

According to Gloria Sanders McCutcheon in an article for the South Carolina *Times and Democrat* newspaper, as of 2003, about 10 U.S. states had declared annual Carver recognition days. The American Chemical Society had plans to lobby the remaining 40 states to extend similar recognition to Carver.

## Observance

Tuskegee University, where Carver taught and conducted so much of his research, honors him in several ways. Since 1984, the George Washington Carver Public Service Award has been given annually to individuals whose work mirrors the philosophy of the world-recognized scholar. In 1999 Tuskegee began holding a yearly George Washington Carver Convocation. The ceremonies are held in late January or early February in the school's chapel, near Carver's burial site. The event celebrates Carver's life and legacy, recognizing his contributions to science, agriculture, and the humanities. In addition, the school selects a recipient for a George Washington Carver Distinguished Achievement Award. The award recipient is chosen based upon merits that mirror the standards set by Carver, and he or she offers remarks at the Convocation.

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<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from *George Washington Carver: In His Own Words* by Gary R. Kremer, by permission of the University of Missouri Press. Copyright © 1987 by the Curators of the University of Missouri.

### **Carver Peanut Products**

**T**he Carver Museum compiled a list of more than 100 peanut products and by-products attributed to George Washington Carver, including foods, beverages, cosmetics, dyes, medicines, and many other items. The list appears online at <http://www.nps.gov/gwca/expanded/peanut.htm>.

Carver's memory and contributions have been and continue to be honored in ways other than acknowledgment on one particular annual date. On July 17, 1960, for example, the George Washington Carver National Monument, located near his birthplace in Diamond, Missouri, was dedicated. In addition, many elementary and high schools across the country are named after him. Science fairs and science project events frequently evoke Carver's name. Two U.S. stamps and a commemorative coin bear his likeness, and two U.S. submarines, now decommissioned, were named in his honor. Carver received honorary doc-

torates and memberships in professional organizations, both while living and posthumously. In fact, as recently as 2005, the entire body of Carver's work was designated a National Historic Chemical Landmark.

Perhaps least surprising of all, Carver is well remembered by the National Peanut Board. This not-for-profit organization established its own Dr. George Washington Carver Award in 2001 with prize monies awarded to undergraduate and graduate students; matching funds are donated to their academic institutions.

### **Contacts and Web Sites**

George Washington Carver Museum & Foundation  
Tuskegee University  
Tuskegee, AL 36088  
334-727-3200  
<http://www.nps.gov/tuin/pphtml/facilities.html>

George Washington Carver National Monument  
5646 Carver Rd.  
Diamond, MO 64840  
417-325-4151  
<http://www.nps.gov/gwca/>

George Washington Carver Papers  
Iowa State University

403 Parks Library  
Ames, IA 50011  
515-294-6672  
<http://www.lib.iastate.edu/arch/rgrp/21-7-2.html>

### Further Reading

- Gibbs, C. R., and Dayo Akinsheye, ed. *Black Inventors: From Africa to America, Two Million Years of Invention and Innovation*. Silver Spring, MD: Three Dimensional Publishing, 1995.
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- Reed, Christopher Robert. *"All the World Is Here!": The Black Presence at White City*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.
- Sanders McCutcheon, Gloria. "George Washington Carver: A Blend of Business and Science, He Left Legacy of Agricultural Research Still Applicable Today." *The Times and Democrat* (Orangeburg, SC), February 17, 2003. <http://www.thetandd.com/articles/2003/02/17/features/features1.t>.



# Georgia Sea Island Festival

***Date Observed: Third weekend in June***

***Location: St. Simons Island, Georgia***

The annual Georgia Sea Island Festival at St. Simons Island, Georgia, celebrates African and African-American history and the heritage of Gullah, or Geechee, people. The terms describe the people, their language, and culture that have been maintained since slavery and are on display during the summer weekend festival.

## **Historical Background**

St. Simons Island is one of the Sea Islands, a cluster of islands along the coasts of South Carolina and Georgia. It is the historic site where in 1803 a group of Igbo slaves were brought from the region of west Africa that is now southern Nigeria. In Savannah, Georgia, they had been auctioned off to two plantation families on the island and transported on a small ship. While below decks, the Igbo, known to be fiercely independent, rebelled against their agents and forced the white men to jump overboard.

When the group of chained Igbo came on to the dock at the Dunbar Creek landing, they refused to go ashore and instead followed Chief Obo, chanting along with him, "The Sea brought me and the Sea will bring me home." They drowned themselves in Dunbar Creek rather than accept a life of slavery. The site is now known as Ebo Landing and was consecrated in 2002 as holy ground, although there is no historical marker to commemorate the site.

Numerous versions of the Ebo Landing story have been passed on in the oral tradition of African slaves. Many of these oral histories were collected in the late 1930s by the Federal Writers Project and have been published in *Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies among the Georgia Coastal Negroes*.

From the early 1800s to the present day, people of west African descent on St. Simons Island have preserved their language and culture. Through the generations they have passed on their traditions and celebrate them during the Georgia Sea Island Festival.

## Creation of the Festival

The festival originated in 1977 with the assistance of the Georgia Sea Island Singers, who perform nationwide. It was an annual celebration until 1998 and was revived in August 2002, when the St. Simons African-American Heritage Coalition hosted the event. The coalition formed in 2000 because of the loss of black-owned property on the island. Although African Americans once owned the entire island, only a few hundred remain among the 20,000 or more residents. Historical buildings have been torn down and replaced with expensive resort homes. Thus, to preserve the St. Simons heritage, the coalition implemented a “Don’t Ask, Won’t Sell” campaign to educate the community about the value of their property. As part of the preservation campaign, the coalition brought back the Georgia Sea Island Festival.

## Observance

Traditional Gullah arts and crafts, food, and musical performances are part of the annual festival. The Georgia Sea Island Singers often perform as well. Highlighted are drums, rhythms, dance performances, basket weaving, carpentry, and fish-netting demonstrations. There are also exhibits of carvings and wood sculptures, pottery, and quilting. A Children’s Corner offers storytelling along with music and dance.

The festival provides a way to educate the public about the history and language of African and African-American people who not only survived, but also created a life beyond the horrors of slavery. For Africans of the diaspora who participate, the festival is also a way to maintain bonds.

*See also Native Islander Gullah Celebration and Penn Center Heritage Days.*

## Contact and Web Site

St. Simons African American Heritage Coalition  
P.O. Box 20145  
5800 Frederica Rd.  
St. Simons Island, GA 31522  
<http://www.ssafricanamerheritage.org/>

## Further Reading

Georgia Writers Project, Work Projects Administration. *Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies Among the Georgia Coastal Negroes*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986.

- Goodwine, Marquette L., ed. *The Legacy of Ibo Landing: Gullah Roots of African American Culture*. Atlanta, GA: Clarity Press, 1998.
- Pollitzer, William S. *The Gullah People and Their African Heritage*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999.
- Tanenbaum, Barry. "Living History." *Shutterbug*, October 2003. [http://shutterbug.com/features/1003sb\\_living/](http://shutterbug.com/features/1003sb_living/).



# Ghanafest

*Date Observed: Last Saturday of July*

*Location: Chicago, Illinois*

**G**hanafest is a festival of thanksgiving that celebrates the heritage of Ghanaians in the metropolitan Chicago area. It has been held in various incarnations since 1987.

## Historical Background

The Ghana Club of Chicago (GCC) is a socio-economic organization that has, over the years, come to be an umbrella group for the various peoples from Ghana who live in the Chicago area. In 1987 the GCC joined with the Ga-Dangme community (an expatriate ethnic group from Ghana) to co-celebrate the Ga-Dangme Homowo Festival of Thanksgiving. This communal celebration was successful and had a broad-based appeal across the Ghanaian community. The decision was made to repeat the event and seek funding and support from the city of Chicago. A grant was received, and in 1988, monies, tents, toilets, parking space, other forms of sponsorship were provided. In addition, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley himself made an appearance at that year's Homowo celebration (*see also Homowo Festival in Portland, Oregon*).

In 1989 GCC negotiated with the Okupaman Association (which represented another Ghanaian ethnic group) to merge the Homowo celebration with the Odwira festival. In doing so, they sought to create a "Ghanaian Durbar"—a gathering that is rather like a rulers' court with music and dance, ceremonies to honor ancestors, and opportunities to unify the people. This merger furthered the recognition of the festival, and it began to draw more attention on the local, national, and international levels.

## Creation of the Festival

In 1990 the Ghanaian organizations met and agreed to expand the festival to represent all Ghanaian ethnic groups. GCC Vice-Chairman A. C. Eddie-Quarterly coined "Ghanafest" as the all-inclusive title that would be used from that time forward.

### **Words from the Ghana National Council of Chicago**

**D**uring the 2002 Ghanafest, Clement Timpo, president of the Ghana National Council of Metropolitan Chicago, noted:

Whatever way one may look at it, as Ghanaians in this Diaspora, our faith, progress and basic economic and socio economic survivals are intricately linked to the progress and stability in Ghana. We therefore share in the dilemma, and the economic and socio economic frustrations and survival of Ghana.

Even though we have been away for far too long, we are still an integral part of Ghana; we have loved ones and relatives at home; we send money to our loved ones and relatives regularly; we help in the local community developments; at our council and affiliate organization meetings, we are always thinking, and concerned with, and deliberating on the developmental progress of local councils and local communities in Ghana.

We are continuously organizing fundraisers for the hospitals, clinics and other local economic infrastructures in Ghana . . . even though we are now part of North America, we! are also an integral part of Ghana.

### **Observance**

Beginning mid-morning and lasting until nearly day's end, Ghanafest is rife with the sights, sounds and smells of the native western coast of Africa from which its traditions hail. Local chieftains, queen mothers, their princes, princesses, and other court members parade majestically in opulent regalia. Drums beat out rhythmic melodies. Regional cuisine is dished out as liberally as the hospitality. Both the national anthems of the United States and Ghana are played, reminding attendees of the bonds that cement these two countries. Native-born Americans intermingle with citizens of Ethiopia, Liberia, and Nigeria—some distant, or possibly not too distant, kin. There is dancing and merriment, art and excitement, and, most important of all, thanksgiving for the abundance of the camaraderie of spirit inherent in this annual festival.



## Contact and Web Site

Ghana National Council of Metropolitan Chicago  
4433 N. Ravenswood Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60640  
773-561-5498; fax: 773-271-0335  
<http://www.ghananationalcouncil.org>

## Further Reading

"Ghanafest 2002 in Chicago." GhanaHomePage Diasporan News, August 1, 2002. <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=26116>.  
Gocking, Rogers. *History of Ghana*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005.  
Salm, Steven J., and Toyin Falola. *Culture and Customs of Ghana*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002.



# Goombay!

***Date Observed: Last weekend in August***

***Location: Asheville, North Carolina***

**G**oombay! is an outdoor festival held every August in Asheville, North Carolina (*see also Miami/Bahamas Goombay Festival*). It stresses appreciation of African and West Indian traditional music and dance in commemoration of the emancipation of Caribbean slaves (*see also West Indies Emancipation Day*).

## **Historical Background**

Goombay! is a celebration that dates back hundreds of years among slaves in the Caribbean. *Goombay* is a Bantu word for a goatskin drum that is beaten with the hands; it also refers to music associated with the drum.

On August 1, 1834, Great Britain abolished slavery throughout its Caribbean territories. Ever since, that date and event have been heartily commemorated in the Caribbean as well as in the United States before emancipation (*see also Emancipation Day*).

## **Creation of the Festival**

The Young Men's Institute Cultural Center, Inc. (YMICC) organized the first Goombay! celebration in 1982. The mission of YMICC is to celebrate African-American culture and diversity in the community. YMICC's desire to preserve the past and create a bridge to the present and future laid the groundwork for the creation of Goombay! The festival continues to grow in popularity and is now put on through the cooperative efforts and assistance of Asheville's Parks and Recreation Department, the North Carolina Arts Council, the Community Arts Council of Western North Carolina, and the Friends of YMI Cultural Center.

The YMICC is housed in a landmark building on the National Register of Historic Places, commissioned by George Vanderbilt in 1892. It was built by and for the same black workmen who constructed Mr. Vanderbilt's own famed Biltmore House in Asheville.

At 18,000 square feet, YMICC housed everything from the corner drugstore to the public library to bathing facilities. For Asheville's black population, it was the hub of almost every facet of their lives for decades.

In 1980 a major renovation program was undertaken and YMICC took on the role it holds today, offering direction and leadership to the African-American constituents whom it serves.

## Observance

Goombay! is held each August over a three-day weekend. Events begin about midday. The first two days of the festival run until late evening; on the final day, closing ceremonies conclude around 6 P.M.

Goombay! is family-oriented, so activities are planned for all ages, with both a main and a children's stage providing entertainment. In any given year, attendees can expect to see drum circles, steel drums, stilt-walkers, traditional African-American dancers replete with feathered headdresses and elaborate costumes, contemporary rhythm bands, and much more. The "Isle of Delight Café" serves up authentic Caribbean cuisine, and vendors display African and Caribbean arts and crafts.

## Contacts and Web Sites

Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau  
151 Haywood St.  
Asheville, NC 28802  
828-258-6103  
<http://www.exploreasheville.com>

YMI Cultural Center  
Administrative Office  
39 S. Market St.  
Asheville, NC 28801  
828-252-4614; fax: 828-257-4539  
<http://www.ymicc.org>

## Further Reading

Hull, Arthur. *Drum Circle Spirit: Games, Exercises and Facilitation*. Northampton, MA: White Cliffs Media, Inc., 1998.

Olatunji, Babatunde, with Robert Atkinson. *Beat of My Drum: An Autobiography*. Foreword by Joan Baez. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005.



# Greek Organizations' Conventions

*Date Observed: Varies*

*Location: Varies*

**T**he national conventions of African-American fraternities and sororities are held in various locations throughout the year. These gatherings serve as annual reunions and provide opportunities for socializing, networking, business-related meetings and workshops, and celebration of brotherhood and sisterhood.

## **Historical Background**

Greek letter fraternal organizations have existed in the U.S. since 1776. The first fraternities were founded at colleges and universities on the East Coast, and they were intended primarily as social clubs for white men. As the idea of college fraternities began to gain widespread popularity, some organizations broadened their focus to include scholarship, spirituality, and brotherhood in addition to purely social objectives. Sororities, Greek letter organizations for women, did not begin to form until around the 1850s. For the most part, these fraternities and sororities were not integrated and very few African Americans were accepted as members.

African-American Greek letter organizations began to form in the early 1900s. Most of the African-American fraternal clubs that are active today were founded at Howard University, a historically black university in Washington, D.C. These fraternities and sororities were founded in part to create stronger bonds among African Americans, who faced racial discrimination on and off campus. Some groups welcomed all African-American students while others were created for specific professions or areas of study, such as education or business. Major African-American fraternities include Alpha Phi Alpha, Kappa Alpha Psi, Omega Psi Phi, Phi Beta Sigma, and Sigma Pi Phi. Major African-American sororities are Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, Sigma Gamma Rho, and Zeta Phi Beta.

## **Sigma Pi Phi**

**S**igma Pi Phi is generally recognized as the oldest black fraternity in the U.S. It was founded in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1904 by six African-American men. The founders were all educated professionals and included a pharmacist, a dentist, and four physicians. Sometimes called the Boulé, Sigma Pi Phi differed from other fraternities by placing its emphasis on life after college instead of on the undergraduate years. Traditionally, Sigma Pi Phi members are college graduates who have achieved a level of status in their communities. It is considered to be a very elite fraternity for only the most successful black men. For this reason, Sigma Pi Phi membership numbers remained lower than other African-American fraternities. By 1954, there were only 500 members. Membership grew to about 3,000 by 1992; by 2004, it exceeded 4,000. The Sigma Pi Phi annual convention is known as the Grand Boulé and is usually attended by several thousand members and their spouses.

## **Alpha Kappa Alpha**

**T**he first black sorority was formed in 1908 by nine women at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Alpha Kappa Alpha was the first African-American fraternal organization to be founded at a historically black college or university (HBCU). The sorority had strict standards from the beginning, requiring that prospective members complete the first half of their second year of studies while maintaining high grades. Alpha Kappa Alpha has become the largest African-American sorority with more than 120,000 student and alumni members in more than 800 chapters worldwide.

Over the years, Alpha Kappa Alpha has made many important contributions on international, national, and local levels. In 1938 the sorority founded a full-time lobbying organization to work for passage of civil rights legislation. In the late 1940s, Alpha Kappa Alpha became an accredited observer organization at the United Nations. In 1948, Alpha Kappa Alpha created the American Council for Human Rights, inviting the other major African-American Greek societies to work together to end racial discrimination. Their "Black Faces in Public Places" project supported the establishment of public monuments to important African Americans in the 1980s. The annual Alpha Kappa Alpha convention draws tens of thousands of members for a weeklong celebration and reunion.

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*On November 3, 2005, Jessica Lawrence, vice president of Alpha Kappa Alpha at Clemson University in South Carolina, lit candles during a vigil for Rosa Parks, who had passed away on October 24 of that year.*

These organizations soon became a powerful influence on college campuses as well as on the African-American community as a whole. Throughout their history, African-American fraternal clubs have focused on serving the needs of the larger community in addition to sponsoring social activities. Many chapters maintain ongoing local community service projects, while others have established charitable foundations to provide scholarships and other opportunities for young people. African-American fraternal groups have also emphasized involvement in politics, and have been instrumental in the civil rights movement. Alumni members generally take on leadership positions at the national level and set goals for the fraternal clubs as a whole, often conducting this business at the national convention.

### **Creation of the Observance**

The national conventions were established by individual fraternities and sororities as a means of gathering together all members for a program of activities based on shared

interests and experiences. Over the years, these annual gatherings came to be known as boulés (pronounced "boo-lays.")

### Observances

Each national convention is different, but there are general similarities among the gatherings. The conventions function as reunions where members can reconnect with each other and renew old friendships. Programs and symposia are offered on such topics as African-American health concerns, African-American social issues, current events and politics affecting African Americans, and African-American community service. Educational workshops and training sessions are often held, along with general meetings of organization leadership and committees. The achievements of individual members and chapters are usually celebrated in an awards ceremony, and special recognition is given to those who have been members for a certain amount of time (for example, 50 or 75 years). Some conventions include a memorial service for deceased members. Conventions usually also include at least one black-tie formal event for socializing or fundraising for a particular project.

### Contacts and Web Sites

Alpha Kappa Alpha  
5656 S. Stony Island Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60637  
773-684-1282  
<http://www.aka1908.com/>

Alpha Phi Alpha  
2313 St. Paul St.  
Baltimore, MD 21218  
410-554-0040  
<http://www.alphaphialpha.net/>

Delta Sigma Theta  
1707 New Hampshire Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20009  
202-986-2400  
<http://www.deltasigmatheta.org/>

Kappa Alpha Psi  
2322-24 N. Broad St.

Philadelphia, PA 19132  
215-228-7184  
<http://www.kappaalphapsi1911.com/>

Omega Psi Phi  
3951 Snapfinger Pkwy.  
Decatur, GA 30035  
404-284-5533  
<http://www.oppf.org>

Phi Beta Sigma  
145 Kennedy St., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20011  
<http://www.pbs1914.org/>

Sigma Gamma Rho  
1000 Southhill Dr., Ste. 200  
Cary, NC 27513  
888-SGR-1922  
919-678-9720  
<http://www.sgrho1922.org/>

Sigma Pi Phi  
<http://www.sigma-pi-phi.net/>

Zeta Phi Beta  
<http://www.zphib1920.org/>

## **Further Reading**

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# Haile Selassie's Birthday

*Date Observed: July 23*

*Location: Rastafarian communities*

To African Americans and Africans of the diaspora who practice the Rastafarian religion, Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I, was and is considered to be *Jah*, "God incarnate," by followers of the Rastafarian faith. Also known by the honorific Ras Tafari, his birth date, July 23, is deemed one of the holiest days of the year for Rastafarians and a cause for great celebration.

## Historical Background

Selassie was named Tafari Makonnen at his birth on August 23, 1892, in Ejarsagoro, Harar, Ethiopia. According to legend, his lineage is traceable to King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Selassie was raised as a Christian in the royal court of Addis Ababa. At a young age, he was said to have demonstrated an excellent memory, a capacity for hard work, and a mastery of detail. By age 14, he had been appointed governor of Gara Maleta, a province of Harar; by age 20, he was *dejazmatch* (commander) of Sidamo province. In 1916, he was regent (acting ruler in the absence of the Empress) and heir to the throne of Ethiopia, going by his birth name Tafari, with the honorific "Ras."

Selassie's interests in modernizing the nation were often contrary to the conservative philosophies of Empress Zawditu during the time that they shared power. In 1923 Selassie negotiated Ethiopia's admittance to the League of Nations. In 1930, the Empress died, and he was named Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, *Negusa Negast* (King of Kings). In addition, he assigned himself the title "His Imperial Majesty, Emperor Haile Selassie I, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion the Tribe of Judah, Elect of God."

Selassie was viewed as an autocratic leader, with an eye towards moving his nation into the modern world. He introduced a written constitution in 1931, for the first time allowing non-noble participation in official government politics. However, he also reaffirmed royal succession to his direct bloodline and maintained much actual control.



*Haile Selassie at his palace in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in the early 1940s.*

In 1936 Italy invaded Ethiopia and Selassie went into exile. He sought aid, unsuccessfully, from the League of Nations. He was able to return in 1941, thanks to the resistance of his countrymen and the Allied troops. During his time away, Selassie had gained some international stature and was named *Time* magazine's "Man of the Year" for 1935. Selassie enjoyed the spotlight, and eager to have his nation recognized by the western world, supported Ethiopia's becoming a charter member of the United Nations.

In the years that followed his homecoming, Selassie's critics say he was more focused on his world presence than with happenings in Ethiopia; they contend that, while he spoke of change, he did little to effect it. Selassie did revise Ethiopia's constitution in time for the celebration of his coronation's Silver Jubilee in 1955. In it, as Emperor, he retained significant powers but did extend popular political participation by making the lower house of parliament an elected body. A 1960 coup attempt caused Selassie to respond with more conservative policies, which were not viewed favorably.

## Rastafari

Rastafari is a religion, a culture, and a social movement. According to Randal L. Hepner, in the *Encyclopedia of African and African-American Religions*, "Rastafari prefer the term *livity*, contending that Rastafari is a way of life informed by theocratic [divine governance] principles." Two main tenets guide Rastafari: (1) Haile Selassie I is the true and living God (Jah) and (2) for black people, salvation is only possible by freeing oneself from the white domination of the Western world (Babylon) and returning to Africa (the black Zion). Rastafarians base their way of life on biblical references, which, in their interpretation, confirms that God is black, and God—Jah—is a transcendent being and present in all beings.

There are no fixed rules or practices to the religion, although most are vegetarians and take care to respect the laws of nature (for example, eating and using natural and organic products and avoiding environmental pollution). Most avoid drinking alcohol and follow biblical injunctions against eating pork.

While there are no formal marriage rites, fidelity between couples is considered an important principle, and children are sometimes blessed by their elders in rites of passage. There are several Rastafarian organizations, such as the Ethiopian World Federation, Inc., and the Twelve Tribes of Israel, but very few Rastafarians formally affiliate with these groups. Worship ceremonies vary widely and are commonly held in people's homes. Singing and dancing, often to the accompaniment of reggae music, are part of the event. There are usually long sessions of debate or discussion (called "reasoning") and the cannabis herb, *ganja*, is often used to facilitate this. Contrary to common belief, Rastafarians do not smoke marijuana recreationally, only sacramentally; there are some who do not use it in their religious practices at all.

Another myth is that all Rastafarians wear dreadlocks; only the one group that abides by the biblical injunction that men should not cut their hair follow this fashion. Rastafarians are noted for often wearing African garb and for wearing the distinctive color-pattern of red, gold, green, and black. The colors respectively symbolize bloodshed/historic Rastafarian struggles, faith/prosperity/sunshine, the land and its produce, and the color of the Rastafarian people. Many wear lion medallions, the symbol of Ras Tafari's imperial Ethiopian throne, or crosses, standing for the burden of life.

On May 25, 1963, Selassie welcomed 32 African heads of state and government to Addis Ababa and presided over the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Selassie's welcoming address helped to set the tone that would lead to the adoption of a charter:

We seek, at this meeting, to determine whither we are going and to chart the course of our destiny. An awareness of our past is essential to the establishment of our personality and our identity as Africans. . . . Today, We name as our first great task the final liberating of those Africans still dominated by foreign exploitation and control. . . . We look to the vision of an Africa not merely free but united. . . . History teaches us unity is strength and cautions us to submerge and overcome our differences in the quest for common goals, to strive, with all our combined strength, for the path to true African brotherhood and unity.

Selassie's overall popularity among his own people came to an abrupt end. Dissatisfaction grew rapidly across the land, and even abroad, as news came to light about mass famine and other tragedies that had, up until then, been unreported. Selassie was placed under house arrest in September 1974. On August 27 of the following year, it was announced that he had died.

## **Creation of the Observance**

Upon Selassie's coronation in 1930, Marcus Garvey and his followers established the Rastafarian religion in Jamaica (*see also* **Marcus Garvey's Birthday**). Garvey espoused a pan-African philosophy and had prophesied in 1927 that an African ruler would arise and champion the cause of people of African descent around the world. In his view, Selassie was that champion, and many others agreed.

By the 1940s, Rastafarians were celebrating Haile Selassie's birth—as well as his coronation and Marcus Garvey's birth.

## **Observance**

Some Rastafarians observe Haile Selassie's birthday by holding a *binghi*, a celebration that can include prayers, reggae music, and dancing. Rastafarians regard Haile Selassie I's birthday as the holiest of celebrations, closely followed by the anniversary of his coronation and the birth of Marcus Garvey. Two other dates many Rastafarians mark are Grounation Day, April 21—the date in 1966 that Haile Selassie I arrived for his one and only visit to the island of Jamaica—and February 6, the birth date of Jamaican reggae singer Bob Marley in 1945. Ethiopia allowed Marley to be commemorated with an annual festival in the country beginning in 2004.

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## Writings by Haile Selassie

*The Autobiography of Emperor Haile Selassie I: King of Kings and Lord of All Lords; My Life and Ethiopia's Progress 1892-1937 (Vol. 1)*. Translated by Edward Ullendorff. New York: Frontline Books, 1999.

"Address Delivered by His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie 1st at the Conference of the Heads of States and Governments." Speech delivered at Addis Ababa, May 25, 1963. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. <http://www.uneca.org/adfiii/rief/forts/ref/speech/Ethiopia.pdf>.



# Haitian Flag Day

***Date Observed: May 18***  
***Location: Haiti and some U.S. cities***

**H**aitian Flag Day is observed on May 18 in Haiti and in a number of U.S. cities with large populations of Haitian Americans. Many Africans of the diaspora, regardless of their ancestry, also join in the holiday celebration, because it commemorates the slave revolt in Haiti that led to the country's independence from France and also prompted slave uprisings in America.

## **Historical Background**

During the 1700s in the French West Indies colony of St. Domingue (later renamed Haiti), a few French families owned huge sugar plantations and brought in more than one half million slaves from Africa to work the fields. As in some other parts of the Western Hemisphere, many plantation owners treated slaves brutally, often working them to death.

In 1789 a revolution broke out in France, and the ideals of liberty and equality expressed by the revolutionaries quickly spread to the colonial plantation owners and merchants, who demanded freedom from French rule. Free blacks and people of mixed race wanted social justice. And slaves were ready to fight for their freedom.

The most successful slave uprising in history began in August 1791. A former Creole slave, Toussaint Louverture (too-SAN loo-vehr-TYOOR), was a leading figure in the revolution. He trained an army of slaves who fought against tens of thousands of French, Spanish, and British soldiers. An estimated 350,000 people died, most of them slaves, in the Haitian Revolution before independence was won in 1804.

The French captured Toussaint in 1802 and sent him to France, where he died in prison in 1803. Two other Haitian leaders took up the fight: Jean Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe.

### Creation of the Holiday

When Dessalines and other leaders decided to march on what is now Port-au-Prince, they wanted to carry a flag that would represent their troops. On May 18, 1803, they pieced together a design for the official flag. Since then, May 18 has been known as Haitian Flag Day.

The design of the new flag began with the French flag made up of blue, white, and red bands. The white band was removed to indicate that the French no longer controlled the colony. A woman named Catherine Flon sewed the new flag together, using vertical bands of blue and red cloth. Blue represented blacks and mixed-race people, and red symbolized their blood.

Over the years the nation's flag has been modified several times, but Flag Day itself has remained the same as the day the nation's flag was first sewn together. May 18 is a major national holiday in Haiti.

### Observance

Haitians celebrate Flag Day on the grounds of the national palace, and Haitians in the diaspora also honor the Haitian flag. In the United States, for example, Haitian Flag Day is celebrated in public and private schools in cities with Haitian-American populations. Students are likely to carry the Haitian flag with them during a week of commemoration, and school events emphasize Haitian history and culture.

Each year on the last Sunday in May, New York City's Haitian Day Parade processes down Toussaint Louverture Boulevard (also known as Nostrand Avenue) in Brooklyn. Organized by the Haitian-American Carnival Association since 2002, the parade is followed by a festival featuring Haitian music and food.

Boston observes May as Haitian Heritage Month. Events include a Flag-Raising Day as well as a parade. In Florida, Haitian Flag Day is celebrated in cities such as Tampa, Delray Beach, Miami, Fort Lauderdale, Fort Myers, and others, and events include Haitian food, music, and art exhibits.

### The Haitian Flag

The current Haitian flag is made up of two horizontal bands: a blue one on top and a red one below. Red symbolizes the blood and the sacrifices made during the Haitian Revolution, and blue stands for hope and unity. The slogan on the flag reads *L'union fait la force*, "In unity we find strength."

In 2004 special festivities in such cities as Brooklyn, New York, and Miami, Florida, marked the 200th anniversary of Haiti's independence.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

Haitian-American Carnival Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 863

Wall St. Station

New York, NY 10268

718-434-9250

<http://www.haitianparade.com>

Haitian Americans United

10 Fairway St., Ste. 218

P.O. Box 260440

Mattapan, MA 02126

617-298-2976

<http://www.hauinc.org/html/programs/indexFlag.asp>

Haitian Bicentennial Committee

<http://www.miamigov.com/haiti2004/index.htm>

Tampa Haitian Flag Day Festival

Motown Maurice Productions

P.O. Box 272507

Tampa, FL 33688

813-951-0794

<http://www.tampahaitianflagday.com>

## **Further Reading**

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# Harambee Festival

*Date Observed: Last Saturday in February*

*Location: Benedict College, Columbia, South Carolina*

**T**he Harambee Festival is part of Benedict College's annual **African-American/Black History Month** celebration. The one-day event aims to draw in the larger community for African-American art, music, workshops, and health screenings.

## Historical Background

*Harambee* (haa-RAHM-bay) is a Bantu word from Kenya that translates literally as "let us all pull together." According to Susan Njeri Chieni of Moi University in Kenya, Harambee "embodies the idea of mutual assistance, joint effort, mutual social responsibility and community self-reliance." From her vantage point, Harambee is a principle that has more or less always existed in traditional Kenyan societies: the security and prosperity of the individual and the group have always been intertwined; for the group to benefit and survive, each person has always had to be cognizant of the needs of others; one can not succeed when another fails.

The modern Harambee movement emerged during the 1960s, the early years of Kenya's independence. Harambees became widespread communal activities that undertook sorely needed projects, such as building schools. Projects are intended to benefit the majority rather than reap individual gain or profit.

## Creation of the Festival

The first Harambee Festival at Benedict College was held in 1989. The festival was the vision of George Devlin, the associate vice president of student affairs, who has directed the event since its inception. Organizers hope to start a scholarship fund from festival proceeds. Following the spirit of "Harambee," the event also aims to unify the college community and the general public in a day of inspirational and enjoyable activities.

## **Observance**

The Harambee Festival takes place at the college's Benjamin E. Mays Resource Center arena. The College's gospel choir, dance company, and jazz ensemble perform, as do rap artists and student poets. Other features include art exhibits, health screenings, workshops, and vendors offering food, clothing, jewelry, and other items.

## **Contact and Web Site**

Harambee Festival  
Benedict College  
1600 Harden St.  
Columbia, SC 29204  
803-253-5174; fax: 803-253-5178  
[http://www.benedict.edu/events/afr\\_hist\\_mth/bc-afr\\_hist\\_mth-events.html](http://www.benedict.edu/events/afr_hist_mth/bc-afr_hist_mth-events.html)

## **Further Reading**

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- Widner, Jennifer A. *The Rise and Fall of a Party State in Kenya: From Harambee! to Nyayo!* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.



# Harlem Week

*Date Observed: August*

*Location: Harlem, New York*

**H**arlem Week takes place in Harlem in New York City's borough of Manhattan. In past years, festivities took place over a week's time, and the celebration was called "Harlem Week." The name has stuck even though, in recent years, a wide range of events have been scheduled throughout the month of August. Harlem Week celebrates the past, present, and future glories of Harlem, as well as the people who comprise the community.

## Historical Background

During the 1600s, the Dutch settled in a rural area of New York that they called New Haarlem, named for a Dutch city. The settlers imported African slaves to work the farms, and the area was primarily farmland and country estates until the late 19th century (*see also* **Pinkster**). It became rapidly urbanized with the construction of housing and elevated railroads.

During the first decade of the 20th century, blacks began to move into Harlem in large numbers, and the neighborhood became an African-American cultural hub. The area earned worldwide fame with the advent of the Harlem Renaissance—a literary and artistic flowering that occurred from the late 1910s through the mid-1930s. Luminaries of the movement included poets Langston Hughes (1902-1967) and Countee Cullen (1903-1946), and writer and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960). Other notable residents were labor leader A. Philip Randolph (1889-1979), singer and actor Paul Robeson (1898-1976), and businesswoman Madame C. J. Walker (1867-1919). (*See also* **Paul Robeson's Birthday and Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Arts and Humanities; for more on Harlem, see also African American Day Parade**).

## Creation of the Festival

In 1974 a group of residents organized Harlem Day in order to celebrate and preserve Harlem's cultural history. The festival proved to be so successful that, over the years,



*A bookseller on Harlem's 125th Street in 1943.*

organizers added new activities. The festival's growth prompted "Harlem Day" to become "Harlem Week."

## **Observance**

Harlem Week's schedule of events offers a great variety of activities. There are musical and dance performances, a film festival, a food festival, special children and family events, a health fair and sports clinic, a fashion show, an auto show, basketball and tennis classics, the National Historic Black College Fair and Exposition, and more. Near the end of the month, the National Black Sports and Entertainment Hall of Fame holds its annual induction and awards ceremony.

## Contacts and Web Sites

Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce  
200A W. 136th St.  
New York, NY 10030-7200  
212-862-7200; fax: 212-862-8745  
<http://www.harlemdiscover.com>

"Harlem, 1900-1940, An African-American Community, An Exhibition Portfolio from  
The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture"  
Cultural Heritage Initiatives for Community Outreach  
School of Information  
University of Michigan  
1085 S. University Ave., 304 West Hall  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1107  
734-763-2285; fax: 734-764-2475  
<http://www.si.umich.edu/chico/Harlem>

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture  
New York Public Library  
515 Malcolm X Blvd.  
New York, NY 10037  
212-491-2200  
<http://www.nypl.org/research/sc/sc.html>

## Further Reading

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# Harriet Tubman Day

***Date Observed: March 10***  
***Location: Communities nationwide***

**H**arriet Tubman, one of the most courageous conductors of the Underground Railroad, is honored on March 10, the date of her death in 1913. In 1990 the U.S. Congress designated March 10 as Harriet Tubman Day “to be observed by the people of the United States with appropriate ceremonies and activities.”

## **Historical Background**

Born around 1820 (estimates range from 1819 to 1822) in Dorchester County, Maryland, Harriet Tubman was named Araminta Ross by her slave parents. Years later she adopted her mother’s first name, Harriet. She grew up among both slave and free African Americans who worked in plantation fields. Her father, Ben Ross, gained his freedom according to provisions of his owner’s will. But the rest of the family, which included nine children, remained enslaved and in 1824 became the property of Edward Brodess.

In order to pay the costs of operating his land holdings, Brodess “rented” out his slaves or sold them to slaveholders in other states. Brodess sold some of Harriet’s siblings and rented her to various planters, most of whom were cruel and given to beating slaves. Under harsh conditions she was forced to work at tasks ranging from long hours of housekeeping to heavy field work and felling timber. On one occasion, Harriet refused to help an overseer tie up a slave so he could be punished with a beating. The overseer threw a two-pound lead weight at her, hitting her in the head. She suffered an injury that caused periodic seizures for the rest of her life.

About the mid-1840s, she married John Tubman, a free African American. Harriet Tubman soon planned to escape slavery, hoping to take some of her family with her. But John Tubman refused to leave, and during her first effort to run away, her brothers turned back. In 1849, Tubman escaped alone, making her way on foot at night. During the day, she hid and slept. She traveled through Delaware to Pennsylvania, where slavery had been gradually outlawed but did not end completely until 1847.



*The photo of Harriet Tubman on the left is believed to have been taken sometime between 1860 and 1875.  
The one on the right was taken about two years before her death.*

Tubman found work in Philadelphia, saved money, and returned to Maryland to guide family members and friends through the Underground Railroad, a secret network of former slaves, free blacks, and whites who helped escaped slaves to freedom in Canada (*see also **Sugar Grove Underground Railroad Convention***). With the aid of then-Senator William H. Seward (later U.S. secretary of state), she bought a home in Auburn, New York. In one of her most daring escape plans, she arranged for a wagon driver to bring her elderly parents to Auburn to live with her.

Between 1849 and 1860, Tubman, known as the “Moses of Her People,” may have freed up to 300 slaves, although accounts vary on the actual number of escapees. Regardless, none of the slaves were lost, primarily due to the many techniques Tubman used to prevent detection, including threatening to kill anyone who wanted to retreat, tranquilizing babies so they would not cry, and constantly urging and prodding her charges to persevere.

During the Civil War, Tubman nursed many of the wounded and also served as a spy for the Union. After the war, she married a former Union soldier, Nelson Davis, but kept the surname Tubman. Her work during the late 1800s included support for women’s

“I looked at my hands to see if I was the same person,” Harriet Tubman recalled, after she safely reached Pennsylvania and freedom. “There was such glory over everything; the sun came like gold through the trees, and over the fields, and I felt like I was in heaven.”

—Harriet Tubman, in Sarah H. Bradford's *Harriet Tubman: The Moses of Her People*.

rights and numerous fund-raising efforts to establish schools for newly freed black children and to support elderly and poor African Americans. She spent her last two years in the Harriet Tubman Home for Aged and Indigent Colored People, which she established. She died there in 1913.

### **Creation of the Observance**

In 1990 the 101st Congress passed Public Law 252 that designated March 10 as the day to commemorate Harriet Tubman's life and deeds. In 2001 the state of Maryland marked March 10 to honor Tubman,

and in 2003, the state legislature in New York passed a law making the Harriet Tubman Day of Commemoration official statewide. Other states and local communities also have established the day in tribute to Tubman.

Over the years, Harriet Tubman has been highly praised and widely honored for her heroism. Some other tributes include a World War II ship named for her, the designation of her home as a historic landmark in 1974, and a commemorative postage stamp with her image issued in 1978.

### **Observance**

Harriet Tubman Day is marked in a variety of ways across the United States. In Auburn, New York, a commemoration may include a tour through the historic Harriet Tubman Home and a reenactment of her life. In addition, the Home hosts an annual Tubman Pilgrimage over Memorial Day weekend.

The Harriet Tubman Organization, formed in 1989, conducts tours in Dorchester County, Maryland, where Tubman was born. On her commemorative day, as at other times of the year, a tour may include a visit to the Harriet Tubman Memorial Garden in Cambridge and a stop at a roadside marker near the farm where she was raised. Walking tours guide visitors through the fields where Tubman worked while a slave.

In Houston, Texas, a re-enactor performed “The Resurrection of Harriet Tubman” on Harriet Tubman Day in 2005. The performance took place at the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum (*see also* **Buffalo Soldiers Commemorations**).



## Contacts and Web Sites

Dorchester County Tourism Department  
2 Rose Hill Place  
Cambridge, MD 21613  
410-228-1000 or 800-522-TOUR (8687)  
<http://www.tourdorchester.org>

Harriet Tubman Historical Society  
P.O. Box 832127  
Stone Mountain, GA 30083  
<http://www.harriettubman.com/index.html>

Harriet Tubman Home  
180 South St.  
Auburn, NY 13201  
315-252-2081  
<http://www.nyhistory.com/harriettubman/>

Harriet Tubman Organization  
424 Race St.  
P.O. Box 1164  
Cambridge, MD 21613  
410-228-0401  
<http://www.intercom.net/npo/tubman/>

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- Cannon, Angie. "Secret Paths to Freedom." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 24, 2002.
- Clinton, Catherine. *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2004.
- . "On the Road to Harriet Tubman: She Has Become One of the Most Famous of All American Women, But to the Biographer She Is a Tantalizingly Elusive Quarry." *American Heritage*, June-July 2004.



# Hollywood Black Film Festival

***Date Observed: One week in June***

***Location: Hollywood, California***

The Hollywood Black Film Festival has fast become an industry-recognized cinematic event since its inception in 1999. The June festival highlights the talents of both up-and-coming and established African-American men and women in the filmmaking profession.

## Historical Background

African-American filmmakers have been producing movies since the early 1900s, particularly after the release of D. W. Griffith's 1915 film, *The Birth of a Nation*. That silent film depicted the post-Civil War South being overtaken by blacks, glorified the racist and violent actions of the Ku Klux Klan, and generally characterized African Americans (usually played by whites in blackface) as disreputable, stupid, and devious. To counter the stereotypes, which were widely accepted by white America at that time, black filmmakers produced motion pictures that presented African Americans in positive, real-life portrayals. But African-American producers did not work within the Hollywood environment. Rather, they were independent and sought their own financing, distribution, and audiences.

One of the independent moviemakers was the famed Oscar Micheaux (1884-1951), the son of former slaves, who began his own film company and released his first film in 1919. From that date until 1948, he produced dozens of silent and "talking" (sound) films. He was the first African American to produce a feature movie in sound. His work was part of a genre called race films, because they were directed to primarily black audiences.

Over the years, black filmmakers have continued to make movies aimed at African-American viewers, but they have also made films that are considered "cross-overs" — appealing to a wide range of audiences. In order to get their movies noticed, independ-

ent black filmmakers depend on festivals and similar events for showings, such as the African Diaspora Film Festival, New York, New York; Colored Pictures, Durham, North Carolina; Pan African Film & Art Festival, Beverly Hills, California; Houston Black Film Festival, Houston, Texas; and Reel Black Men, Los Angeles, California (*see also African American Women in Cinema Film Festival; American Black Film Festival; Denver Pan African Film Festival; and Pan African Film & Arts Festival*).

### Creation of the Festival

In 1999 the Hollywood Black Film Festival screened its first films in an effort to unite black filmmakers, television and film actors, writers, directors, industry executives, up-and-coming talent, and new audiences. By bringing these varied groups together, organizers aimed to help launch careers and movies that otherwise might languish from want of exposure.

### Observance

The main thrust of the festival is to screen a wide variety of independent films submitted from all parts of the globe. Entries include features, shorts, documentaries, student films, and music videos. Screenings are held at the Harmony Gold Preview House located on Sunset Boulevard. Juried prizes are a highlight of the week's closing events.

An Infotainment Conference is also scheduled in concert with the festival. Talk-show style forums comprised of top stars, directors, producers, agents, business managers, and the like are a popular draw. Conference classes run the gamut from film distribution and production to writing for film and TV to pitching a script; even actor-specific workshops are offered.

### Contacts and Web Sites

Harmony Gold Preview House  
7655 Sunset Blvd.  
Hollywood, CA 90302  
310-712-3998; fax: 928-447-2127

Hollywood Black Film Festival, Inc.  
4201 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 600  
Los Angeles, CA 90010  
323-526-5742; fax: 310-943-2326  
<http://www.hbff.org>

### **Further Reading**

Johnson, Lynn d. "The Distribution of Black Films." *Bright Lights Film Journal*, April 2002. <http://www.brightlightsfilm.com/36/distribution1.html>.

Sylvester, Melvin. "African-Americans in Motion Pictures: The Past and the Present." Schwartz Memorial Library, Long Island University, 1999 (updated 2005). <http://www.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/library/african/movies.htm>.



# Homowo Festival

*Date Observed: August*  
*Location: Portland, Oregon*

The Homowo Festival held each summer in Portland, Oregon, is named for a traditional harvest festival that takes place in Ghana. In Portland, the event had been celebrated with drumming, dancing, and singing over a weekend in August. In 2005 the festival became a one-day event focusing on one of Africa's ancient traditions: storytelling.

## Historical Background

Every year, the Ga people in the west African nation of Ghana observe a thanksgiving festival for the harvest. Centuries ago, the Ga migrated across Africa to the west coast, and during their years of travel they were faced with famines. But they helped one another survive and reached what is now the Accra region. There they settled to grow crops, particularly millet, which they believe the gods ordained because the harvest was so plentiful. The solution to famine allowed the people to laugh at hunger, which is the meaning of the word *homowo* (hoh-moh-woh)—“hooting at hunger.”

Each year, between four and six weeks before the harvest, the Ga people in Accra ban music, and everyone becomes quiet as they pray that their crops will be bountiful. They believe that noise will hurt those who are hungry and may be dying of starvation. When the crop grows, however, the drumming and festivities begin for Homowo.

## Creation of the Festival

In 1990 Obo Addy, a master drummer from Ghana, brought the Homowo tradition to Portland, Oregon, where he works as a teacher and performer. Called an American “king” of African music, Addy has performed in numerous shows across the nation and has appeared frequently at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. He is artistic director of Homowo African Arts and Culture, a non-profit group that tours the country to share traditional music and dance of Ghana and also to create awareness of African culture through its festival.

**To view this text, please refer to the print version of this book.**

## **Observance**

The annual Homowo Festival in Portland takes place in early August. In past years, it included dancing, drumming, and singing by performers from the Homowo African Arts and Culture organization. Food and craft vendors, children's activities, and workshops also have been part of the event. In 2005, however, the festival organizers decided to scale back the festival to a one-day celebration of traditional African storytelling. (*See also **National Black Storytelling Festival and Conference***).

## Contact and Web Site

Homowo African Arts & Cultures  
4839 N.E. Martin Luther King Blvd., Ste. 209  
Portland, OR 97211  
503-288-3025; fax: 503-331-6688  
<http://www.homowo.org/festival.html>

## Further Reading

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# Honoring Santería Orishas

*Date Observed: Varies*

*Location: Santería homes and communities nationwide*

**F**ollowers of the Santería faith honor several orishas (aw-REE-SHAWs), intermediary deities or spirits, on days that correspond to certain Roman Catholic saints' days.

## Historical Background

The Santería religion emerged in Cuba, where, from the 1500s to the late 1800s, many thousands of enslaved Africans were shipped to labor on plantations. Cuba was ruled by Spain, a Roman Catholic country, until 1902. Under Spanish law, slaves were forced to follow the Roman Catholic faith. Yoruba slaves, mainly from Nigeria, noted similarities between their traditional faith and the new religion. Like the Christian god, the Yoruba have a supreme god, Olodumare (oh-low-DOO-may-ray), who created the universe. And like Roman Catholic saints, Yoruba orishas are considered to be spiritual beings who can serve as intermediaries to the supreme god on behalf of humans. By honoring orishas as Roman Catholic saints, slaves found ways to continue their own faith while outwardly appearing to adhere to Roman Catholicism. Thus, the religion became known as Santería, meaning "the way of the saints."

After slavery was abolished, Santería practices continued in Cuba, although they were often suppressed. Devotees carried their belief system with them when they fled Cuba after the revolution of 1959. Thousands of exiled Cubans, many of whom were Santería believers, found refuge in the United States, settling in south Florida, New Jersey, and New York. Some went to Puerto Rico. In the early 1990s, there were an estimated one million adherents of Santería in the United States.

Because Catholic clerics imposed the Santería name on practitioners, some current devotees and scholars prefer to call their religion Lukumí (loo-koo-ME), a word for the Yoruba language and culture. Or they use the term *la regla de ocha*, meaning "the rule of the orishas."



## Creation of the Observances

The honoring of Santería orishas harks back to ancient Yoruba religious practices of worshipping orishas. Various ceremonies and rituals, including prayers, offerings, and divination, are used in honoring orishas.

Santería and its practices frequently have been presented as “idolatrous, dangerous, or a product of a backward people,” according to religious scholar Miguel A. De La Torre, who grew up in a Santería household and is a former believer. But in his book on Santería, De La Torre disputes these stereotypes and points out the spirituality and rituals that are part of this faith tradition.

People of west African heritage in the United States also observe Santería rituals. Some of these believers reject the Catholic influence, considering it a vestige of slavery; instead, they follow the religious rituals as practiced in west Africa. Black nationalists in New York City, for example, accepted some aspects of Santería but developed their own form of the religion. The Oyotunji African Village, established in the 1970s in South Carolina, is an attempt to connect to the original Yoruba religious practices (*see also Ifa Festival and Yoruba National Convention and Olokun Festival*).

## Observance

Ceremonies to honor Santería orishas take place wherever there are large communities with African-Cuban roots, as well as in places where people of the Yoruba diaspora have settled, such as in the Americas and Caribbean Islands. People may worship in their own homes or gather at the home of a local priest or priestess. Although tributes vary depending on the community and individual adherents, devotees usually set up a shrine or altar for each orisha, who is assigned certain colors, numbers, and objects (*see Table*). There are many *ebbos* (offerings) of food also. Praise songs and drummers are



To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*A worshipper (left) prays to Shango at his altar in a church in Hialeah, Florida, in the company of the church's head priest.*

part of community ceremonies, as are dancers, who perform movements characteristic of the orisha being honored.

During honoring ceremonies, Santería followers often recall the *patakis*, or legends, about the orisha being honored. There is no standard text or holy book in the tradition, but legends, poetry, history, and proverbs concerning orishas are now contained in a text known as the Corpus of Ifá. However, the text is never completed; priests and priestesses transcribe their varied experiences in notebooks and these are passed on to followers.

Some major orishas, their *patakis*, and associated Roman Catholic saints are outlined below.

**Babalú-Ayé** (bah-bah-LOO-eye-ay) is considered equivalent to St. Lazarus, and both are honored on the saint's day, December 17. Devotees believe that people with broken limbs and many of the poor could be personifications of Babalú-Ayé, and that the orisha will punish those who do not help and respect the unfortunate. One legend about Babalú-Ayé claims he was a promiscuous deity and was punished by contracting a venereal disease. Sometime this story is told to educate people about AIDS and HIV. Another version says that because Babalú-Ayé did not show respect for elder orishas, he was infected with smallpox.

Cuban entertainer Desi Arnaz, who played Ricky Ricardo in the 1950s sitcom "I Love Lucy," frequently sang to Babalú-Ayé while keeping the beat on a drum. Very few viewers were aware that "Ricky Ricardo was singing to Babalú-Ayé," according to author Miguel De La Torre. Ricky "was engaged in a sophisticated choreography that descended from the African civilization of the Yoruba, long before Europe was ever deemed civilized."

**Obatala** (aw-bah-tah-LAH) is honored at the same time as the Roman Catholic saint, Our Lady of Mercy, also known as Our Lady of Ransom, who is commemorated on September 24. According to legend, Obatala is the chief spirit who descended from heaven on a golden chain to spread soil over a watery earth. Obatala eventually landed on earth at a place that became what is the Nigerian city of Ile-Ife (ee-LAY-ee-FAY), where tradition says creation began. It is said that Obatala created the world and humankind and encompasses both genders. Obatala's creative powers can bring forth a great variety of humans with diverse physical abilities and challenges. This deity also enforces justice and can bring peace, compassion, and intelligence to the world.

**Ogun** (aw-GOON) is another better known orisha. Ogun's Catholic counterpart is St. Peter the Apostle, whose feast day is June 30. The guiding spirit of iron and metals, Ogun also is characterized as a fierce, fully armed warrior. However, because he over-

### Oriki Ogun — Praising the Spirit of Iron

This is a traditional prayer offered by devotees to praise Ogun.

**Ogun awo, Olumaki, alase a juba.**  
Spirit of the mystery of Iron, Chief  
of Strength, the owner of power, I  
salute you.

**Ogun ni jo ti ma lana lati ode.**  
Spirit of Iron dances outside to open  
the road.

**Ogun oni're, onile kangun-dangun  
ode Orun, egbe l'ehin,**  
Spirit of Iron, owner of good fortune,  
owner of many houses in Heaven,  
Help those who journey,

**Pa san bo pon ao lana to.**  
Remove the obstructions from our  
path.

**Imo kimo 'bora, egbe lehin a nle a  
benge ologbe.**  
Wisdom of the Warrior Spirit, guide  
us through our spiritual journey  
with strength.

**Ase.**  
So be it.

sees all mechanical things, he is responsible for farming tools, surgical instruments, and medicine. In other words, he can destroy as well as rebuild or restore all things.

**Oshun** is honored along with Our Lady of Charity on September 12, or September 8 in some locations. She is a compassionate goddess of fertility and sexuality and is associated with the arts and creativity. According to centuries-old legends, Oshun is the owner of all rivers and fresh waters. Devotees may toss offerings to her into a river or lake, a practice also followed during a festival that takes place each year in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (*see also Odunde Festival*).

**Oya** has power over fire, and is recognized on February 2, which is the feast day of Our Lady of the Presentation of Our Lord (Santa Virgen de la Candelaria; *Candelaria* means "conflagration" or a huge fire). Oya has power over the winds, storms, tornados, and hurricanes. She also guards the gates of cemeteries. She represents death and rebirth into a new life. The mythical Oya is a warrior queen and the god Shango's favorite wife, fighting alongside him and using thunderbolts to aid him in battle.

**Shango** (or Chango; shan-GO) is on the feast day of St. Barbara, December 4. Some accounts say that Shango personifies the king of ancient Oyo, Nigeria, and that he experimented with magic, which caused a violent storm. Lightning struck his palace and

### **Items Associated with Selected Orishas**

<b>Orisha</b>	<b>Colors</b>	<b>Foods</b>	<b>Objects &amp; Number</b>
Babalú-Ayé	purple	popcorn, sesame seed candy, grains	icon in sack cloth, crutches, dog figurines No. 17
Obatala	white with accent colors such as red, purple, green	bread, rice, meringue, white wine	silver coins, white beads & flowers No. 8
Ogun	green and black	honey, palm oil, fruits, rum	knife, any iron or steel item No. 7 or 3
Oshun	amber, yellow, coral	pumpkins, honey	copper pennies No. 5
Oya	brown, red, burgundy, copper	palm oil, corn meal, grapes, plantains, okra, fish, beans with rice	buffalo horn, jars of water, flowers or flowerly materials No. 9
Shango	combination red & white	bananas, corn meal, okra	mortar to mix spells, warrior image holding a hatchet in one hand and a sword in the other Nos. 4 & 6

killed many of his wives and children. As a result, Shango hung himself, and people in Oyo held him in contempt. That brought more storms, which Shango devotees believe was the orisha's revenge.

### **Contacts and Web Sites**

"At the Crossroads: Afro-Cuban Orisha Arts in Miami," online exhibit  
Historical Museum of Southern Florida  
101 W. Flagler St.  
Miami, FL 33130  
305-375-1492  
[http://www.historical-museum.org/exhibits/orisha/orisha\\_start.htm](http://www.historical-museum.org/exhibits/orisha/orisha_start.htm)

Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye  
P.O. Box 22627  
Hialeah, FL 33002  
<http://www.church-of-the-lukumi.org/>

Church of the Seven African Powers  
P.O. Box 453336  
Miami, FL 33245

Eleda.org, presented by Miguel Ramos, a Santería/Lukumi oba in Miami, Florida  
<http://ilarioba.tripod.com/>

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- Sanchez, Sara M. "Afro-Cuban Diasporan Religions: A Comparative Analysis of the Literature and Selected Annotated Bibliography." Occasional Paper Series, Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies, University of Miami, August 2000. <http://www.miami.edu/iccas/AFRO2.pdf>.

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this book.

*The Idlewild Jazz Festival poster from 2003.*



# Idlewild Jazz Festival

*Date Observed: Mid-August weekend*

*Location: Idlewild, Michigan*

**T**he Idlewild Jazz Festival is an annual August event in historic Idlewild, Michigan, known as the “Black Eden.” The festival features outdoor entertainment, jazz movies, local documentaries, and workshops for high school students.

## Historical Background

Idlewild is one of the oldest African-American resorts in the United States. Founded in 1912, the community is on an island with foot bridges connecting it to the mainland. Idlewild was established as a place where black urban professionals, most of them affluent, could relax and enjoy recreational activities—hunting, fishing, swimming, boating—far from the racism and discrimination so prevalent elsewhere during the early part of the 20th century.

In 1912 white developers formed the Idlewild Resort Company (IRC) and bought 2,700 acres of land and the island. The developers organized train and bus tours to bring African Americans from midwestern cities like Chicago, Illinois; Detroit, Michigan; and St. Louis, Missouri, to the resort.

In the mid-1920s the IRC turned the island over to prominent African Americans who formed the Idlewild Improvement Association (IIA). The IIA then sold property to such well-known African Americans as W. E. B. Du Bois, millionaire businesswoman Madame C. J. Walker, and novelist Charles Waddell Chesnutt.

As an increasing number of African Americans visited or bought property in and around Idlewild, the area became known as “Black Eden.” A dozen jazz clubs, such as the Flamingo and the Paradise Club, and other businesses developed. By the 1950s, numerous black entertainers were appearing at the night spots. Among the nationally known performers were Della Reese, Count Basie, Sarah Vaughn, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, and many more (*see also Satchmo SummerFest*). Idlewild historians say it

is likely that every major African-American entertainer visited the resort at one time or another. In addition, a variety of political activists visited, including members of Marcus Garvey's organization (*see also* **Marcus Garvey's Birthday**).

During the late 1960s and through the 1970s, the resort area began to decline. With the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, African Americans began to find more choices in where and how they could vacation. The Idlewild resort seemed to be of little interest to a younger generation.

By the 1990s, however, the resort began to revive. Businessman John O. Meeks formed the Idlewild African-American Chamber of Commerce in 2000. The Idlewild Jazz Festival is also part of the effort to carry on revitalization and to attract new businesses and tourists.

## **Creation of the Festival**

The festival was originated in 2002 by Idlewild history buffs who hoped that they could help connect the present with the past. They wanted a celebration that would replicate the resort's heyday. One of the events linked to times past was an amateur hour on the first night, and top blues and jazz performers on Saturday. Gospel music took center stage on Sunday.

## **Observance**

The annual Idlewild Jazz Festival held in mid-August includes jazz, blues, and soul performances. It has featured such artists as Eric Alexander, Rod Hicks, and harpist Onita Sanders. At the 2005 festival Eric Alexander arrived by boat on Lake Idlewild, and trumpeter Jim Rotondi left the stage to walk aboard a boat, playing while sailing away. High school musicians, food vendors, jazz movies, a marketplace, writers' workshops, and a book tent are also part of the festivities.

Festivalgoers may visit the Idlewild Museum, where they can learn about the founders of the resort. Exhibits also show how famous African Americans from many walks of life built summer homes or permanent residences in Idlewild.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

Friends of Historic Idlewild  
Idlewild Museum  
P.O. Box 221



Idlewild, MI 49642  
<http://www.historicidlewild.com/>

Idlewild African-American Chamber of Commerce  
P.O. Box 435  
Idlewild, MI 49642  
800-745-2611  
<http://www.iaacc.com/>

Idlewild Foundation  
1150 Griswold, Ste. 2100  
Detroit, MI 48226  
<http://www.idlewildjazzfest.com/main.html>

Idlewild Historic & Cultural Center  
5583 Broadway Ave.  
Idlewild, MI 49642  
231-745-7541

### **Further Reading**

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# Ifa Festival and Yoruba National Convention

***Date Observed: First weekend in July***  
***Location: Oyotunji African Village, South Carolina***

**T**he Ifa Festival and Yoruba National Convention is held each year in July, in the Oyotunji African Village in Beaufort County, outside Sheldon, South Carolina. Yoruba religious devotees from across the United States and other countries gather to honor Ifa (ee-FAH), considered the wisest of all orishas (or deities) and the chief counselor of the supreme being Olodumare (oh-low-DOO-may-ray).

## **Historical Background**

*Oyotunji* means “rises again” in the Yoruba language, and Oyotunji Village is a kingdom patterned after kingdoms in west Africa’s Yorubaland. At one time, there were about 20 such kingdoms, and each one was ruled by its own king.

The founder of Oyotunji was Walter King, who was initiated into the Yoruban religious society of Ifa. He changed his name and became Oba (King) Osejeman Adefunmi I, who has been called the father of the African cultural restoration movement. His Royal Highness Oba Osejeman was crowned in 1981 in Ife, Nigeria. He reigned until his death in February 2005. A new king, Osejeman Adefunmi II, was crowned in July 2005.

During the 1960s, when African Americans were seeking to assert their own cultural and spiritual identities, Osejeman Adefunmi I established several Yoruba temples in Harlem. In the mid-1960s he sought a rural area to continue to develop the religious movement. In 1970 he bought land where the village exists today. It is the only traditional African village in the United States, and a sign greets visitors: “Welcome to Oyotunji. You are now leaving the United States of America and about to enter the Yoruba kingdom of Oyotunji African Village.”

The number of Oyotunji villagers fluctuates, but since the 1990s, eight or nine families have been residents under the rule of the king and a council of chiefs. Village children attend a private school called the Royal Academy. Students learn not only subjects required by the state of South Carolina, but also Yoruba language, culture, and history.

Residents in this small village hold festivals for specific orishas each month except November (*see also Olokun Festival*). The festivals are part of a Yoruba way of life dating back centuries.

### Creation of the Festival

The Ifa Festival in Oyotunji began with the founding of the village, which is similar to a small village in what is now Nigeria. Following the Yoruba tradition, the festival focuses on Ifa, who knows the destiny of each person, including which orisha she or he is destined to worship (*see also Honoring Santería Orishas*).

### Observance

The July festival in the Oyotunji Village brings together those who follow traditional Yoruba religious practices. There are dances, drum performances, and recitations to Ifa, the deity of destiny. Participants may also seek guidance from psychic readers and listen to lectures by the king and chiefs.

Because Ifa is also a form of divination, a high priest referred to as *babalawo* (bah-bah-LAH-woe), meaning “father of secrets,” calls upon Ifa, the oracle of divination, to mediate between the orishas, ancestors, and participants. The priest scatters cowry shells or palm nuts and then reads the patterns into which they fall to determine how supernatural forces may affect a particular person. As a result, the *babalawo* can suggest actions a person can take to better her or his life.

### Contacts and Web Sites

Kingdom of Oyotunji African Village  
Highway 17, P.O. Box 51  
Sheldon, SC 29941  
843-846-8900  
[http://www.oyotunjivillage.net/oyo2\\_007.htm](http://www.oyotunjivillage.net/oyo2_007.htm)

Ile Orunmila Temple I.F.A., Inc.  
166 N.W. 48th St.

Miami, FL 33127-2418

<http://www.ifainc.org/temple/temple.html>

### **Further Reading**

"An Interview with Oba Osijeman Adefunmi I of Oyotunji, South Carolina." *Isokan Yoruba Magazine*, Fall 1996-Winter 1997. <http://www.yoruba.org/Magazine/Winter97/Win9706.htm>.

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# Indiana Black Expo's Summer Celebration

*Date Observed: Mid-July*

*Location: Indianapolis, Indiana*

The Summer Celebration in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the Indiana Black Expo's largest annual fundraising event. This 10-day festival highlights the importance of African-American artistic, cultural, and historic contributions and draws more than 300,000 visitors annually.

## Historical Background

In the midst of the ongoing racial discrimination and inequality that characterized the early 1970s, the Indiana Black Expo worked to encourage African Americans to achieve their highest potential. Early organizers sought advice from prominent African Americans, such as Rev. Andrew J. Brown of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and local businessman James C. Cummings Jr. Cummings became the organization's first chairman, and formed a plan for the first Summer Celebration. This major event was intended to honor African-American culture, while raising financial support for the development of additional programs that would benefit the African-American community. By presenting positive images of successful African Americans, the Indiana Black Expo hoped to inspire young people to greatness.

## Creation of the Festival

The first Summer Celebration was held in 1971 at the Indiana State Fairgrounds. More than 50,000 people attended the two-day event. This overwhelming success prompted organizers to move the event to the Indianapolis Convention Center in 1972. Several major new events were introduced to Summer Celebration that year, including the Muhammad Ali Amateur Boxing Tournament and the Star Quest talent competition. Since then, Summer Celebration has grown substantially, attracting more

## **Indiana Black Expo**

The Indiana Black Expo was created in 1970 with the goal of becoming an effective voice and vehicle for the advancement of African Americans. Founded by a small group of community leaders in Indianapolis, the Indiana Black Expo has grown to include eleven chapters throughout Indiana. The organization has had a profound impact on African Americans in Indiana and surrounding areas.

Many events are sponsored throughout the year, with Summer Celebration being the largest. The group also produces an **African-American History Month** Celebration, Back to School Rallies, a television newsmagazine show, numerous programs to address poverty, and many special programs for youth. The Circle City Classic weekend in October includes a football game played by teams from historically black colleges and universities, or HBCUs (*see also Football Classics*). The events held on this weekend typically raise many thousands of dollars that benefit students at HBCUs.

than 300,000 people to Indianapolis for the 10-day festival each year. The focus of Summer Celebration has also grown to include the entire African-American community across the U.S.

## **Observance**

Summer Celebration, also known simply as the Expo, is a massive event featuring African-American art, culture, entertainment, and educational programming. More than 25 large-scale programs are run during Summer Celebration, covering topics including health education, political activism, business development, personal development, entertainment, a film festival, and activities for children and young people.

Business networking among African Americans is promoted at the Black Business Conference, which includes the Black Enterprise Wealth Building Seminar, employment opportunity job fairs, and a Youth Entrepreneur Seminar. The largest Black and Minority Health Fair in the U.S. is held in conjunction with Summer Celebration, where the Indiana Black Expo recently introduced the Rev. Charles Williams Prostate Cancer Mobile Unit to raise awareness and provide onsite diagnostic screenings. Various reli-

gious services are held, a celebrity basketball game is played, and notable African Americans are honored each year with the Founder's Award and the Freedom Award.

Special guest speakers are invited each year to present the keynote address at the Summer Celebration Corporate Luncheon. In 2005 the Indiana Black Expo made national news headlines when President George W. Bush spoke at the luncheon. This marked the first time a sitting U.S. president attended Summer Celebration.

### Contact and Web Site

Indiana Black Expo, Inc.  
3145 N. Meridian St.  
Indianapolis, IN 46208  
317-925-2702  
<http://www.indianablackexpo.com/>

### Further Reading

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"Indiana Black Expo." The Indianapolis Star Indystar.com Library Factfiles, July 2005. [http://www2.indystar.com/library/factfiles/organizations/black\\_expo/black\\_expo.html](http://www2.indystar.com/library/factfiles/organizations/black_expo/black_expo.html).

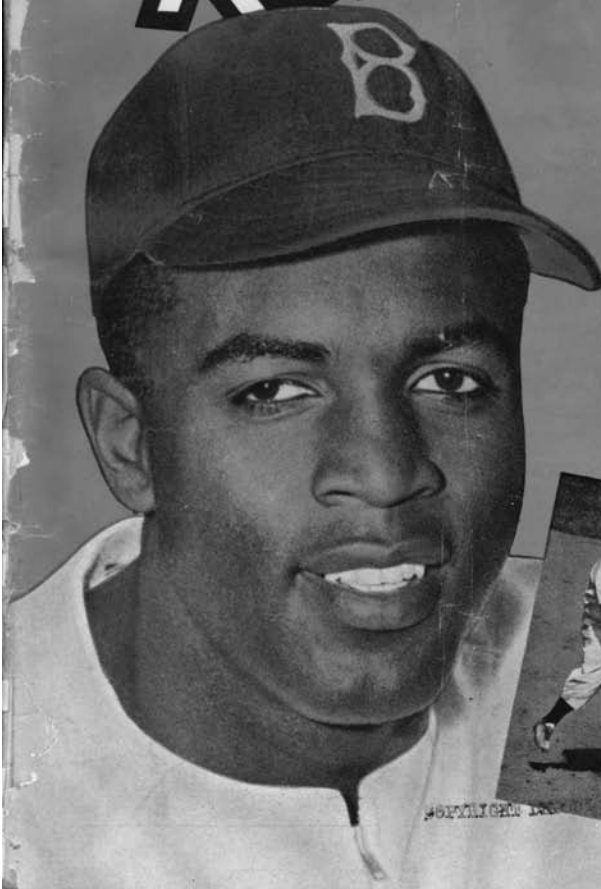
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# Jackie Robinson

NO. 5



10¢



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CAMP!

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Cover of a 1951 Jackie Robinson comic book.





# Jackie Robinson Day

*Date Observed: On or around April 15*  
*Location: Major league ballparks in the U.S.*

Jackie Robinson Day pays tribute to the first African-American man to break the color barrier in America's national pastime, the game of professional baseball. In recognition of the date on which Jackie Robinson played his first major league game, on or around April 15 each year, commemorative celebrations are held at professional baseball stadiums across the country.

## Historical Background

Born in Cairo, Georgia, in 1919, Jack Roosevelt Robinson, called "Jackie," was the son of Jerry Robinson, a plantation farm worker, and Mallie McGriff, a domestic worker. Jackie was one of five children in the family. Robinson's father left his family not long after Jackie's birth, and his mother sought a better life and income in California. Urged by his mother to "turn the other cheek" to incidents of racial intolerance, Jackie experienced discrimination of the 1920s and 1930s first-hand and sometimes failed to heed her words of restraint when rocks were thrown his way or crosses burned nearby.

Robinson began his sports career in college at the University of California at Los Angeles, demonstrating broad athletic abilities by lettering in baseball, basketball, football, and track and field. He left school in his senior year, joining the army to serve in World War II. Robinson successfully pushed for admittance to Officer Training School and was a first lieutenant when honorably discharged in 1944. He had risked court-martial for refusing to move to the back of a military bus and later was cleared of insubordination.

Upon his return to civilian life, Robinson tried out for the Kansas City Monarchs, a black baseball club. Scouts working for Brooklyn Dodgers President Branch Rickey spotted Robinson and soon he was on Rickey's short list of African Americans slated to be the first to transition to the big leagues. Although Major League Baseball Commissioner "Happy" Chandler had set up a Committee on Baseball Integration, many of Rickey's fellow managers were not supportive. So, initially, Rickey allowed everyone to believe that,

## **Early Baseball Segregation**

**T**he Weeksville of New York beat the Colored Union Club 11-0 on September 28, 1860, at the first black versus black baseball game, held at Elysian Fields in Brooklyn, New York. After the Civil War, the first professional baseball team, the Cincinnati Red Stockings, was organized in 1869. In 1871 the National Association of Professional Baseball Players was chartered (this would one day evolve into today's National League). Throughout the decade additional leagues formed, one being the Western League, which became the American League.

Up until the mid-to-late 1870s, around the end of the Reconstruction period and the institution of Jim Crow laws, some blacks did play baseball with minor league clubs and even a rare few with major league teams. But they were commonly subjected to verbal and physical abuse from teammates, competitors, and spectators. In 1868, white-run baseball took the official stance of prohibiting the hiring of blacks. That same year, the National Association of Baseball Players voted unanimously to bar "any club which may be composed of one or more colored persons." In 1887 the Chicago White Stockings threatened to boycott a game against the integrated Newark Giants.

With such segregationist attitudes working against them, blacks began decades of struggle to develop and maintain various leagues that would allow them to take part in America's national pastime. Today, these endeavors are collectively referred to as "The Negro Leagues."

The first professional black baseball team was formed in 1885 by a white businessman of Trenton, New Jersey, Walter Cook, who came across a group of Argyle Hotel waiters and porters playing for fun in Babylon, New York. Cook was successful in attracting more white fans to games by naming his team the Cuban Giants.

In 1920 Andrew "Rube" Foster, known as the Father of Black Baseball, founded the first Negro professional league — the National Negro Baseball League. In the following years other black leagues were formed. All the while, a parallel all-white baseball system was in operation. These two segregated sporting systems continued through the early 20th century.

up until the last possible moment, he was scouting black players to field his own Negro League. But, when he met with Robinson on August 28, 1945, he made certain that Jackie knew otherwise. Reports of that meeting are legendary, having Rickey hurling vile racial invectives at Robinson to see if the athlete had the fortitude to weather the verbal abuse to which he would be subjected as a black man in the world of white baseball. As recounted in historian Jules Tygiel's book, Robinson eventually responded, "Do you want a ballplayer who's afraid to fight back?" Rickey replied, "I want a player with guts enough not to fight back."

By 1947, Robinson had made it to the big leagues and his name had been added to the Brooklyn Dodgers roster. The announcement prompted death threats against Robinson and his family. At odds with the naysayers, however, was Robinson's sheer ability to play ball. In his first year in the majors, he was named Rookie of the Year, and his contributions undeniably helped lead the Dodgers to win the pennant.

Although Robinson never did completely shy away from speaking up for himself when he believed the occasion warranted it, he also became a great role model in the school of "letting talent speak for itself." Not long after Robinson was signed to the Dodgers, other teams began to look to the Negro Leagues to supplement their traditional talent pools. Before long, Major League Baseball was designating those it had previously denied admittance as some of its "greats."

Robinson accomplished much on the field of baseball. Highlights during his 1947-1956 career with the Dodgers include stealing home base 19 times; being named National League All Star six times; earning the 1949 National League batting title with a .342 average and being awarded the League's Most Valuable Player title that same year. Robinson chose to retire in 1957 upon learning that he was to be traded to the Dodgers' archrival, the New York Giants.

But as much as Robinson racked up impressive statistics, his actions and presence—both on and off the playing field—contributed just as much to his legacy. During his playing career and after, Robinson advocated for integration and cooperation between the races. He was a strong proponent of greater minority hiring in baseball, additionally pressing for representation in management and ownership.

Robinson had many detractors during his day, but he also had supporters. In 1962 Robinson became the first African American admitted into the Cooperstown, New York, Baseball Hall of Fame. He died of a heart attack in 1972.

In 1997, to honor the 50th anniversary of Robinson's first game with the Dodgers (the team has since moved to Los Angeles) Major League Baseball permanently retired his

“42” uniform number—it would never be given to another player on any team. In March of 2005, Robinson was awarded a Congressional Gold Medal.

## **Creation of the Observance**

In 2004, organized baseball took steps to honor Robinson’s memory and achievements in an annual fashion by designating every April 15 Jackie Robinson Day. In an MLB press release, Commissioner Alan H. “Bud” Selig noted:

By establishing April 15 as “Jackie Robinson Day” throughout Major League Baseball, we are further ensuring that the incredible contributions and sacrifices he made—for baseball and society—will not be forgotten.

April 15, 2004, marked the first of what continues to be seen as a celebration of a truly remarkable man, John “Jackie” Roosevelt Robinson, honored as much for his baseball prowess as for his betterment of the human condition in his quest for the equal treatment of minorities.

## **Observance**

Each year, on or about April 15 (depending upon scheduled game days), Major League Baseball teams across the nation collectively celebrate the memory and accomplishments—both on and off the field—of Jackie Robinson.

There are some consistencies in the ways that the 14 American and 16 National League teams honor Robinson each year. The ceremonies are coordinated by whichever team is at home on Jackie Robinson Day. The majority of ceremonies are typically conducted pre-game, although some events may run concurrently with the actual game (for example, trivia quizzes run on electronic scoreboards).

Often, Jackie Robinson Foundation scholarship recipients are invited to participate in some manner, for example, throwing out a ceremonial first pitch. Major League Baseball provides the home teams with commemorative bases to use at the games, as well as ceremonial first pitch home plates. Special line-up cards are typically issued, and memorabilia, such as photos of Robinson, old team photos, and Negro League-related items, may be offered as special crowd giveaways.

Prominent people associated with Major League Baseball, the Jackie Robinson Foundation, other charitable youth organizations and many accomplished, inspirational African Americans have taken part in the event. Throughout the American and National Leagues, teams have become quite creative in the ways that they recognize Robinson’s

In His Big League Debut

JACKIE SCORES WINNING RUN



Here are some of the fans who crowded Ebbets Field in Brooklyn to see Jackie Robinson as he made his debut with the Dodgers.



Jackie Robinson looks to the future.

Robbie's Bunt Turns Tide

By WENDELL SMITH, Courier Sports Editor. FRESH BUNT, Ebbets Field, Brooklyn, N. Y.—Play-

The big play came in the seventh inning. At that point, the "Bums" were leading the Braves, 3 to 1. Ed Stanky started the Yankees' rally.

Then little Pete Belton got the game on its slipping side of base's fast bunt high up on the right field corner, starting Stanky with the third run and Robinson with the fourth and the winning marker.

Police Halt Flareup at Chapel Hill

By LEO GARDNER Jr., Pittsburgh Courier Staff Writer. CHAPEL HILL, N. C.—

WASHINGTON Edition of Pittsburgh Courier logo and date information: VOL. XXXVIII—No. 18 PITTSBURGH, PA., SATURDAY, APRIL 19, 1947 PRICE TWELVE CENTS

Jackie Now Darling of the Brooks'

By WENDELL SMITH, Courier Sports Editor. BROOKLYN—Jackie Robinson

Big Day for Dodgers

Table with columns for 'Pitcher', 'Innings', 'Runs', 'Hits', 'Errors', 'Batter', 'Runs', 'Hits', 'Errors'. Lists game statistics for the Dodgers vs. Yankees.

Robinson Mobbed by Cameramen and Fans At Historic Opener

By WENDELL SMITH, Courier Sports Editor. BROOKLYN—History was made here Tuesday afternoon in Brooklyn's Big Stadium, now named Ebbets Field

Jackie Roms Home From Second Base As 26,000 Cheer

By WENDELL SMITH, Courier Sports Editor. FRESH FIELD, Brooklyn, N. Y.—Here in the play

Wesley Won't Be Forced Out

By LEO GARDNER Jr., Pittsburgh Courier Staff Writer. WASHINGTON—Despite an effort

AKA's Pledge White Student

By LEO GARDNER Jr., Pittsburgh Courier Staff Writer. WASHINGTON—Despite an effort

Slain Man's Family May Sue Railroad

By H. H. RIVERA Jr., Pittsburgh Courier Staff Writer. SMITHFIELD, N. C.—

Dining Car Suit Dismissed

By LEO GARDNER Jr., Pittsburgh Courier Staff Writer. WASHINGTON—Despite an effort

Robinson's Game Record

Table with columns for 'Date', 'Opposition', 'Innings', 'Runs', 'Hits', 'Errors', 'Batter', 'Runs', 'Hits', 'Errors'. Lists Jackie Robinson's performance in his debut game.

Your Public Conduct logo with the slogan 'If you have a gripe, leave it at home'.

How The Courier Covered The Jackie Robinson Story... Nashville Lawyer Seeks City Post

Early into his rookie year with the Dodgers, Jackie Robinson's talents attracted attention. Such feats as those documented on this front page of the Pittsburgh Courier from April 19, 1947, led to Robinson being named Rookie of the Year.

legacy. Most employ a significant amount of community outreach in their planning for the annual event, involving numerous facets of the community, often on both the local and state levels. Similarly, many teams use the opportunity to draw attention not only to the athletic component of Robinson's achievements, but also to focus on a broad spectrum of African-American culture and accomplishments in their communities.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

"Baseball and Jackie Robinson"

Library of Congress

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/robinson/index.html>

Jackie Robinson Foundation

3 W. 35th St., 11th Fl.

New York, NY 10001-2204

212-290-8600; fax: 212-290-8081

<http://www.jackierobinson.org>

Jackie Robinson Information Archives

Major League Baseball

c/o MLB Advanced Media, L.P.

75 Ninth Ave., 5th Fl.

New York, NY 10011

<http://mlb.mlb.com/NASApp/mlb/mlb/events/jrd/index.jsp>

Negro Leagues Baseball Museum

1616 E. 18th St.

Kansas City, MO 64102

816-221-1960 or 888-221-6526; fax: 816-221-8424

<http://www.nlbm.com>

Official Web Site of Jackie Robinson, presented by CMG Worldwide, agent of the Estate of Jackie Robinson

<http://www.jackierobinson.com>

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### Writings by Jackie Robinson

- Baseball Has Done It*. Introduction by Spike Lee. Brooklyn, NY: Ig Publishing, 2005.
- With Alfred Duckett. *I Never Had It Made: An Autobiography of Jackie Robinson*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003.



# Jerry Rescue Day

***Date Observed: October 1***  
***Location: Syracuse, New York***

**T**his observance celebrates the rescue of William Jerry Henry. Known as “Jerry,” Henry was a fugitive slave who was captured in Syracuse, New York, but freed from jail on October 1, 1851, with the help of abolitionists. Originally a protest against the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, the “Jerry Rescue” was commemorated on that day each year from 1852 to 1859, and on occasion after that time.

## Historical Background

William Jerry Henry was a runaway slave working as a barrel maker in Syracuse, New York, when a harsher version of the 1793 Fugitive Slave Law passed as part of the Compromise of 1850 (*see also Emancipation Day*). Black and white abolitionists operated a station on the Underground Railroad in Syracuse. Among them was Jermain W. Loguen, an escaped slave from Tennessee who became a bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. They were adamantly opposed to the Fugitive Slave Law and vowed to thwart it, in spite of criticisms from then-U.S. Secretary of State Daniel Webster, who insisted the law would be carried out.

On October 1, 1851, U.S. marshals arrested Jerry at his workplace, charging him with theft. Once he was in shackles, marshals told Jerry the real reason for his arrest: the Fugitive Slave Law that required federal officials and citizens to capture runaways and return them to their owners or face steep fines. Jerry fought his captors but was restrained with chains and forced to face a U.S. commissioner in his office. Abolitionists managed to get into the office and free Jerry, but he was quickly recaptured.

While Jerry was being held, news of his arrest circulated quickly at the Liberty Party’s Anti-Slavery Convention taking place in a nearby church. Following a pre-arranged signal, the church bells began to ring and about 2,500 people gathered in the street. With a battering ram, men broke down the door to the commissioner’s office. Confronted



with such a huge crowd, marshals surrendered Jerry to his rescuers. For several days, Jerry, who had been injured, hid in an abolitionist home until a wagon driver was able to take him to Lake Ontario, where he crossed by ship into Canada. Jerry died there a few years later.

## Creation of the Observance

Gerrit Smith, a strong abolitionist who was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1852, supported members of a Jerry Rescue Committee in initiating an annual event that became known as the “Jerry Rescue” in Syracuse. Each year between 1852 and 1858, Smith delivered speeches on October 1, or a day near that date, addressing abolitionist issues and praising those who had freed William Jerry Henry. The 1858 commemoration included a speech by famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass. In an earlier letter to Smith, Douglass had called the Jerry Rescue “one of the most important and honorable events in the history of American liberty” (*see also Frederick Douglass Day*).

In 1859, Smith declined an invitation to give a speech at the annual commemoration. He wrote to John Thomas, chairman of the Committee, that he was frustrated and disappointed with efforts to abolish slavery. He believed that there would be no end to it, because abolitionists had been unable to change the views of the majority of the public.

## Observance

A reenactment of the “Jerry Rescue” took place in Syracuse on the 150th anniversary of the event in 2001. Since then, commemorations of the Jerry Rescue have included ceremonies at a permanent monument in Clinton Square in downtown Syracuse. In addition, the Onondaga County Historical Association Museum offers an audio-visual show that relives the Jerry Rescue and a permanent exhibit called “Freedom Bound: The Story of Syracuse and the Underground Railroad.”

## Contact and Web Site

Onondaga Historical Association Museum & Research Center  
321 Montgomery St.  
Syracuse, NY 13202  
315-428-1864; fax: 315-471-2133  
<http://www.cnyhistory.org/>

### **Further Reading**

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Smith, Gerrit. Letter to John Thomas, chairman of the Jerry Rescue Committee, August 27, 1859. Gerrit Smith Broadside and Pamphlet Collection, Syracuse University Library. <http://libwww.syr.edu/digital/collections/g/GerritSmith/521.htm>.



# J'Ouvert Celebration and West Indian-American Day Carnival

*Date Observed: First Monday in September*

*Location: Brooklyn, New York*

The J'Ouvert Celebration and West Indian-American Day Carnival draw upon island traditions that involve art, craftsmanship, cuisine, dance, and music. The Carnival has been held in September since the 1940s, while J'Ouvert began in the 1980s. The celebration has become one of the most prominent multi-ethnic festivals in the city.

## Historical Background

Carnival originated in medieval Roman Catholic Europe as feasting parties held before the beginning of Lent in late February or early March. During Lent, Roman Catholics were obligated to abstain from certain foods, so many participated in Carnival as a last indulgence before the 40 days of Lent. As countries such as Spain and France colonized the Americas beginning in the 16th century, their Carnival celebrations came with them. After the abolition of slavery in the West Indies in 1834, free blacks began to have a strong influence on the celebrations of Carnival, adding street theater and their own musical and dance traditions (*see also West Indies Emancipation Day*).

The term J'Ouvert (joo-VAY) combines the French words *jour* and *ouvert* and means the "beginning of the day." The J'Ouvert procession has been the traditional opening of Carnival in the West Indies nation of Trinidad and Tobago for more than 100 years and kicks off at the break of dawn. J'Ouvert is said to have derived from a much earlier festival that was held at night by slaves gathered to celebrate their emancipation. It included masquerading, singing and dancing, and eventually got swept up into the Trinidadian Carnival festivities.

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*Trinidadian dancers at the 2002 West Indian-American Carnival parade.*

## **Creation of the Festival**

Brooklyn is home to the largest West Indian population outside of the Caribbean. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the prevalent custom of celebrating Carnival traveled with those who emigrated to New York. In the 1920s and 1930s, Carnival was mostly observed in the form of indoor balls, due to the colder temperatures found in the North during the traditional time for the pre-Lenten festival. Jessie Wattle (or Waddle), a Trinidadian woman, and others from the West Indies are reported to have organized such events in Harlem ballrooms.

In the 1940s Wattle sought and obtained a street permit for a outdoor Carnival parade in Harlem, replete with bands and costumed masqueraders; this event was held in September because the weather was more pleasant.

Various racial tensions and unrest during the mid-1960s led to the revocation of the Harlem event permit, so others — led by Rufus Goring, a costume designer from Trinidad — organized a Carnival parade in Brooklyn, where it has remained ever since. A few

years later, Goring passed the leadership baton off to Carlos Lezama, who formed the group that now coordinates the annual parade: the West Indian-American Day Carnival Association (WIADCA).

The J'Ouvert part of the celebration began during the 1980s, when members of the Pan Rebels Steel Orchestra ventured out in the wee hours and began performing for some all-night partiers. This led to a spontaneous parade — with some masqueraders reputed to be costumed only in their pajamas — heading down the street, picking up others until they numbered 100. In 1994 the nonprofit J'Ouvert City International, Inc., was formed to coordinate the pre-dawn event.

### Observance

Approximately two million people participate in the Labor Day festivities in New York each year. About 10 percent of that number, a hardy 200,000 revelers, take part in J'Ouvert that commences at 2 A.M. on the first Monday of September. This is characterized by a gathering of steel bands, playing traditional pan music without any influence from or bowing to modern culture. The musical groups are joined by hordes of costumed masqueraders who dance along. Some are dressed elaborately, others in tatters and rags. They paint their faces and their bodies, some with mud, others with talcum. Some dress as devils, witches, and all manner of evil spirits; others choose to satirize politicians of the day through their dress and via the placards they carry. Innocent bystanders must beware of having mud, paint, or powder flung on them from the barrels of such substances wheeled along the route for “refreshing” the masqueraders throughout their revelry.

The West Indian-American Day Carnival begins with its parade at 11 A.M. and lasts until 6 P.M. Similar to J'Ouvert, there are costumed and masqueraded participants at this event. The music, however, is more varied; much of it is blared from sound trucks and ranges from calypso to soca to reggae to the latest pop music offerings from any of the Caribbean isles. Those who come to line the two-mile parade route are urged to “Bring your flag! Represent your country with your national flag or rag,” further underscoring the broadening of the event from its Trinidadian roots.

Food is a central part of the day and has gravitated from pure Trinidadian-based dishes to those that will provide attendees with the opportunity to experience a broad culinary spectrum: jerk chicken, chicken stew, fried chicken, beef stew, oxtail, rice and peas, salad, macaroni pie, fried flying fish, curry goat, roti, callaloo, souse, salt fish, fried bake, coconut bread and more. Non-food vendors are on hand, as well, displaying arts and crafts and other African-American and Caribbean-related wares.

## **Steel Band Music**

**T**he steel band, which is an integral part of Carnival, is said to have originated in Trinidad around the 1930s, although historians debate both the location and date. Today, the bands are popular throughout the Caribbean, as well as in the United States, during West Indian celebrations.

Steel bands are comprised of pan players who make music on instruments fashioned from the heads of used oil drums, pounded into a concave shape, and tuned by creating flattened areas that produce a variety of tones when struck. Pan players also have created percussion instruments from other kinds of metal containers such as biscuit tins, trash barrels, and paint cans.

The forerunners of steel bands were bamboo tamboo stick bands, which came about when British rulers in Trinidad banned drumming among blacks because whites viewed it as rebellious activity. To replace the drum, Africans created a different kind of music, using bamboo to beat on boxes and metal pieces. Eventually a rhythmic music called bamboo tamboo evolved, and an ensemble of players used thick bamboo from four to six feet long as instruments by pounding them on the ground and beating them with sticks. The open end of the sticks hitting the earth created a deep sound, with variations in tone depending on the size of the bamboo.

Bamboo tamboo bands marched in Carnivals and other festive events. About the mid-1930s these bands became a mixture of bamboo instruments and metal pans, although accounts about how that fusion began vary considerably. Basically, so the story goes, a bamboo band was parading in Trinidad and one of the members broke the bamboo he was using, and supposedly picked up a pan or can and began beating on it.

Whatever the makeup of a band, none paraded during World War II when Carnival was banned. Following the war, parades again took place, especially during celebrations of victories in Europe and Japan in 1945. By that time, steel bands were the rage and ever since have continued to evolve. Some have become professional companies that perform internationally.

## Contacts and Web Sites

Brooklyn Tourism and Visitors Center  
Brooklyn Borough Hall  
209 Joralemon St.  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
718-802-3846  
<http://www.brooklyntourism.org>

J'Ouvert City International, Inc.  
13 Atlantic Common Blvd.  
Brooklyn, NY 11217

West Indian-American Day Carnival Association  
323 Rogers Ave.  
Brooklyn, NY 11225  
718-467-1797  
<http://www.wiadca.org>

## Further Reading

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# Jubilee Festival of Heritage

***Date Observed: Last weekend in August***

***Location: Columbia, South Carolina***

**T**he annual Jubilee Festival of Heritage in Columbia, South Carolina, celebrates African-American heritage and culture as well as the life of Celia Mann, a freed slave who was a midwife in Columbia before the Civil War. Many of the festivities take place over the last weekend in August at or near the Mann-Simons Cottage, named for Celia Mann, her second husband Bill Simons, and their descendents.

## **Historical Background**

Celia Mann first lived in the one-room Columbia home about 1844. She was born a slave in 1799 in Charleston, South Carolina, and gained her freedom sometime during the 1840s. No record of how she was freed has been located. According to legend, she traveled from Charleston to Columbia on foot.

Along with earning her living as a midwife, Celia Mann helped establish the First Calvary Baptist Church in Columbia. The congregation originally met in the basement of the cottage.

## **Creation of the Festival**

The Historic Columbia Foundation has managed the annual Jubilee Festival of Heritage since 1979. Organized in 1961, the Foundation preserves and restores homes of historic significance in Columbia, South Carolina. Among these house museums is the Mann-Simons Cottage, which was the home of Celia Mann from about 1844 until 1867. The home remained in the family until the 1960s when it was sold to the Columbia Housing Authority. As a result of a grassroots effort to preserve the home, the Historic Columbia Foundation gained supervision of the Mann-Simons Cottage in 1978, and since then has conducted tours of the home and other house museums, and maintains artifacts connected with Celia Mann and her descendents.



## Observance

Each year the Jubilee Festival at the Mann-Simons Cottage demonstrates the heritage of African Americans as represented by the Mann-Simons family, who lived in the home for more than 100 years. Artifacts in the cottage show that members of the Mann-Simons family earned their livelihoods as bakers, tailors, seamstresses, and musicians. In the 1900s, some became educators. Exhibits also provide information on how the cottage was restored.

The festival has grown over the years, and now includes additional venues with trolley tours to African-American sites called "Homeplaces, Workplaces, Resting Places." Buffalo Soldiers reenactments, musical performances, African-American storytelling, African drumming, and craft demonstrations from basket-weaving to carving wooden walking sticks have been featured (*see also* **Buffalo Soldiers Commemorations**). Local African-American authors have appeared as well for book signings. Food vendors and craft activities for children are also part of the festival.

## Contacts and Web Sites

Historic Columbia Foundation  
1601 Richland St.  
Columbia, SC 29201  
803-252-7742; fax: 803-929-7695  
<http://www.historiccolumbia.org>

Mann-Simons Cottage  
1403 Richland St.  
Columbia, SC 29201  
803-252-7742  
[http://www.historiccolumbia.org/history/mann\\_simons.html](http://www.historiccolumbia.org/history/mann_simons.html)

## Further Reading

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"Jubilee! Historic Columbia Celebrates African-American Heritage This Weekend with Singing, Art, Dance, Drama." *Leisure Magazine, The Times and Democrat* (Columbia, SC), August 25, 2004. <http://www.timesanddemocrat.com/articles/2004/08/25/pm/pml.txt>.



# Juneteenth

*Date Observed: June 19*

*Location: Communities nationwide*

**J**uneteenth marks the anniversary of June 19, 1865, the day that Texas slaves learned they were free. It is commemorated across the United States and is an official state holiday in Texas.

## Historical Background

The Emancipation Proclamation, issued by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, freed slaves in Confederate states and areas not under Union control, but the slaves in Texas were not told they were legally free for more than two years. They had no idea that emancipated slaves, as well as free blacks and white abolitionists, were celebrating freedom on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day in 1863 (*see also **Emancipation Day and Watch Night***). The Proclamation was not enforced in Texas because of the lack of Union soldiers. But on June 19, 1865, two months after the Civil War had ended, a regiment of Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas, and Major General Gordon Granger, representing the U.S. government, read from the President's General Order No. 3, which began:

The people of Texas are informed that in accordance with a Proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and free laborer. The freedmen are advised to remain quietly at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts and that they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere.

This order freed the remaining slaves in the United States—250,000 of them—and thousands immediately began to celebrate. Many crowded courthouses to get licenses to legally marry. According to historical accounts, some newly freed slaves threw away

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*Juneteenth celebrants in 1900 at "East Woods" in Austin, Texas*

their tattered clothing and dressed in clothes taken from their former owners. Many left the plantations and went to neighboring states to reunite with family members in Louisiana, Arkansas, and Oklahoma.

### **Creation of the Holiday**

The first major Texas commemoration of June 19 was held in 1866 on the first anniversary of the state's emancipation day, which soon became known as Juneteenth. It also has been called the African-American Independence Day or Freedom Day (not to be confused with **National Freedom Day**, the anniversary of the 13th Amendment). At the state capital, the first Juneteenth celebration was held in 1867. The celebration spread to other states via African Americans who moved out of Texas and took their commemorative activities with them.

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*At the annual Juneteenth celebration in Galveston, reenactors listen during the ceremony in which the Emancipation Proclamation is read.*

During the 1960s, the emphasis on civil rights overshadowed Juneteenth celebrations. In fact, many African Americans did not want to be reminded of slavery and instead were actively involved in efforts to gain social and economic equality. As author Charles Taylor put it in the *Madison (Wisconsin) Times*, "while the painful side of slavery makes it difficult for many blacks to celebrate Juneteenth, it is the positive legacy of perseverance and cooperation that makes it impossible for others to ignore."

By the 1970s, African Americans in Texas were renewing interest in their heritage and ties with ancestors who were freed on June 19. People began campaigning for a state holiday and a bill was introduced in the Texas House of Representatives. The legislature passed an act in 1979 making Juneteenth a paid holiday, and the first official celebration was held in 1980.

## **Observance**

During early observances of Juneteenth, some Texas officials forced African Americans to celebrate outside their city limits. But black organizations formed and raised funds to

buy acres of land where celebrations could be held. These sites were commonly called Emancipation Parks.

Over the years, people have traveled for miles to attend Juneteenth celebrations. For example, more than 5,000 African Americans from across Texas congregate in Denton for its annual celebration, which includes a Ms. Juneteenth Pageant and gospel extravaganza. Festival goers from other states also make the pilgrimage to observe Juneteenth with family and friends in Texas.

Usually there is a thanksgiving service, which includes a group rendition of “Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing.” Readings of the Emancipation Proclamation, the 13th Amendment, and General Order No. 3 are common during observances. Celebrations consist of barbecues—centerpieces of most commemorations—in public parks, along with recalling family histories, playing or watching baseball games (a favorite activity), listening to political speeches, and taking part in numerous other activities.

### **Nationwide Observances**

The celebration of Juneteenth spread across the United States over the years. By 2006, Juneteenth was recognized as an unpaid state holiday observance in Oklahoma, Florida, Delaware, Idaho, Alaska, Iowa, California, Wyoming, Missouri, Connecticut, Illinois, Louisiana, New Jersey, New York, Arkansas, Kentucky, Michigan, New Mexico, and the District of Columbia. In Washington, D.C., the National Juneteenth Observance Commission sponsors an annual event in the capital. The commission, along with advocates across the country, have campaigned for a National Juneteenth Independence Day. Some members of the U.S. Congress have urged the president to issue a special proclamation for a national observance, but, as of 2006, the White House had not acknowledged such requests.

Even where there is no official recognition of Juneteenth, however, observances take place in diverse towns and cities. In Mississippi, for example, Natchez observes a Juneteenth celebration that draws hundreds of thousands of participants from the Mississippi-Louisiana area as well as from Texas, Alabama, and Tennessee. A libation ceremony to give thanks for African-American heritage is part of the observance; the theme in 2005 was “Remembering the Greatest Generation of Enslaved Foreparents.” Other Mississippi celebrations occur in Tupelo, Jackson, Brookhaven, Meridian, and Hattisburg.

In 1991 Florida legislation recognized Juneteenth as a statewide observance, and cities such as Miami, Lakeland, and St. Petersburg hold Juneteenth festivals. In 1987 Jeanie

## **The Negro National Anthem**

**I**n 1920 poet James Weldon Johnson wrote the lyrics and his brother John Rosamond composed the music for "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing," the song that would become known as the Negro National Anthem.

Lift every voice and sing  
Till earth and heaven ring.  
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;  
Let our rejoicing rise  
High as the listening skies,  
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.  
Sing a song full of the faith that the  
dark past has taught us,  
Sing a song full of the hope that the  
present has brought us;  
Facing the rising sun of our new day  
begun,  
Let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,  
Bitter the chastening rod,  
Felt in the days when hope unborn  
had died;  
Yet with a steady beat,  
Have not our weary feet  
Come to the place for which our  
fathers sighed?  
We have come over a way that with  
tears has been watered

We have come, treading our path  
through the blood of the  
slaughtered  
Out from the gloomy past  
Till now we stand at last  
Where the white gleam of our bright  
star is cast.

God of our weary years,  
God of our silent tears,  
Thou who has brought us thus far on  
the way:  
Thou who has by Thy might,  
Led us into the light.  
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.  
Lest our feet stray from the places,  
Our God, where we met Thee,  
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine  
of the world, we forget Thee,  
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,  
May we forever stand.  
True to our God,  
True to our native land.

Blue, a resident who had recently moved back to Florida from Texas, organized the first Juneteenth celebration in St. Petersburg. She had been inspired by the commemorations she observed in Texas. The St. Petersburg Juneteenth celebration includes live entertainment, storytelling, and health booths.

In Kansas, Kansas City and Witchita hold celebrations, but the largest and oldest Juneteenth observance in the state is in Topeka. The Stardusters Juneteenth has been host-

ing events since 1976, with activities conducted over a three-day period. Because attendance has grown over the years, the celebration in 2005 took place in Topeka's largest park, Gage Park, which is the site of a world-famous zoo, an amphitheater, rose gardens, swimming pool, baseball diamonds, and other features offered free for one day to Juneteenth participants.

Juneteenth is also observed annually on numerous college campuses. For example, Indiana University's Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center features a parade, musical performances, and a drama about the Underground Railroad.

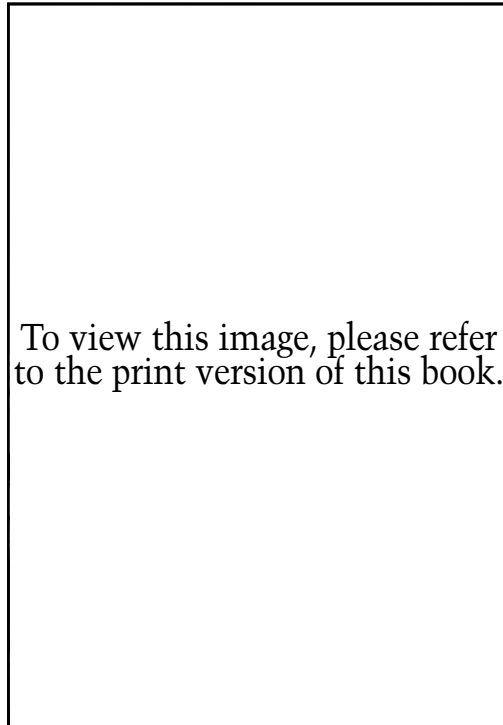
## Contacts and Web Sites

Denton Juneteenth  
 Celebration Committee  
 1300 Wilson St.  
 Denton, TX 76205  
 940-349-8575  
<http://www.dentonjuneteenth.org>

"Juneteenth"  
 Texas State Library & Archives Commission  
<http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/ref/abouttx/juneteenth.html>

"Juneteenth," an article in the *Handbook of Texas Online*, a project of The General Libraries at the University of Texas at Austin and the Texas State Historical Association  
<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/JJ/lkj1.html>

Juneteenth.com offers a database of celebrations in the U.S. and around the world  
 P.O. Box 871750  
 New Orleans, LA 70187  
 504-245-7800  
<http://www.juneteenth.com/>



To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*At Virginia Key Beach in Miami, Florida, a 2005 Juneteenth observance at sunrise included gathering offerings for ancestors, placing them on a raft, and sending them out to sea.*

National Juneteenth Christian Leadership Council  
201 N. George Lee Ave.  
P.O. Box 269  
Belzoni, MS 39038  
662-247-1471; fax: 662-247-1384

National Juneteenth Observance Foundation  
1100 15th St., N.W., Ste. #300  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-331-8864; fax: 202-331-8876  
<http://www.juneteenth.us/>

Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center  
Indiana University  
275 N. Jordan Ave., Ste. A226  
Bloomington, IN 47405  
812-855-9271; fax: 812-855-9148  
<http://www.indiana.edu/~nmbcc>

St. Petersburg/Clearwater Area Convention and Visitors Bureau  
13805 58th St. N., Ste. 2-200  
Clearwater, FL 33760  
877-352-3224 or 727-464-7200  
<http://floridasbeach.com>

Stardusters Juneteenth  
Stardusters Crime Prevention, Inc.  
917 S.E. 12  
Topeka, KS 66607  
785-233-5834

## **Further Reading**

- Abernethy, Francis Edward, ed. *Juneteenth Texas: Essays in African American Folklore*. Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1996.
- Anyike, James C. *African American Holidays: A Historical Research and Resource Guide to Cultural Celebrations*. Chicago: Popular Truth, 1991.
- Pemberton, Doris Hollis. *Juneteenth at Comanche Crossing*. Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1983.



Taylor, Charles A. *Juneteenth: A Celebration of Freedom*. Greensboro, NC: Open Hand Publishing, 2002. (young adult)

———. "The Black Church and Juneteenth." *Madison (WI) Times Weekly Newspaper*, June 17-23, 2005. [http://www.madtimes.com/archives/june2005\\_3/madtimes\\_063.htm](http://www.madtimes.com/archives/june2005_3/madtimes_063.htm).

Wiggins, William H., Jr. *O Freedom! Afro-American Emancipation Celebrations*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000.



# Junkanoo

***Date Observed: December 26 to January 1***

***Location: West Indies and formerly in the  
southeastern United States***

**J**unkanoo is a Christmas-time celebration that originated among slaves in the British West Indies and spread to the southern United States as early as the 18th century. While Junkanoo is no longer held in the United States, it continues to be a major national cultural event in the Caribbean, particularly in the Bahamas, and also in Jamaica, Guyana, Bermuda, and other former British colonies. Depending on where it is celebrated, Junkanoo is known by a variety of names, such as Jonkanoo, Johnkankus, John Canoe, John Kuner, John Kooner, and Kunering.

## **Historical Background**

There are numerous word-of-mouth accounts on the origins of Junkanoo — both the festival and the etymology of the word itself. For example, some attribute the name to Scottish settlers in the Bahamas. Junkanoo paraders' attire was composed of at-hand materials, such as shrubs, leaves, stones, bottles, and paper. It is said that Scots referred to the costumes as *junk enoo*, which translates as "junk enough." Another suggests French lineage; the definition of *gens l'inconnu*, meaning "unknown people," speaks to the secret identities of the masked Junkanoo participants. Further French attribution has been given to the festival's short prominence in the eastern United States, where sugarcane field hands were referred to as *jeunes caneurs*. Another theory is that the name might have referred to a type of small household canoe that parade participants carried.

Most Bahamians and scholars who have researched various possibilities have found common ground in the person of John Canoe (also known as John Connu, Jony, Jonny, John Kooner, and Junkanoo). This African chief was born around 1720 in Ghana along the Ivory Coast. Reputed to be influential in the West Indian slave trade, John Canoe reportedly outwitted the Dutch and English, gaining control of Fort Brandenburg on the coast of Ghana, which furthered his hero-like status among his people.

Another traditional tale also links Junkanoo's roots to Africa. The name of Yokonomo, or Jankomo, was recorded nearly two and one-half centuries before slaves were transported to the Bahamas. He is said to have created the hypnotic one-step-forward/two-steps-backward dance that is one of the central components of the modern Junkanoo.

## Creation of the Festival

Junkanoo celebrations stem from west Africa, dating back to at least the 18th century when slaves were brought to the West Indies and the southeastern coast of America. In the West Indies, slaves were given three days off per year — January 1, December 25, and December 26 — with permission granted to perform cultural observances on the first and last of these dates (*see also* **West Indies Emancipation Day**).

West Indian practices spread with slaves taken to the port cities of North Carolina, where they carried on the tradition at Christmas, calling it Johnkankus, John Kooner, or a similar name (*see also* **Slaves' Christmas**).

## Observance

To prepare for the festival, participants made drums out of animal skins stretched over frames and other musical instruments from animal bones, sticks, and triangles. Costumes were fashioned from a variety of found materials. On Christmas morning, the masqueraders would parade through town, entertaining onlookers. They would also stop at wealthy homes to dance and sing in return for gifts. African-American observances of Junkanoo diminished after the Civil War. Freed slaves were not interested in maintaining connections with their former lives of bondage, and Junkanoo died out around 1865. However, at about the same time, young whites revived the ritual and called it "cooning." During the Christmas holidays, they would parade around in old clothes, looking bedraggled. By the early 1900s, though, the custom was no longer practiced.

In the Bahamas, however, Junkanoo remains a major event. About 50,000 people attend the Junkanoo events in Nassau. Locals — and the more adventuresome tourists — become active participants, starting out as "standees" and then turning into "revelers," who rush along designated city blocks as the spirit moves them. Each day's parade (as the celebration is commonly called) begins at 1:00 A.M. and lasts until 9 A.M.

There are three main components to Junkanoo: music, dance, and costume. Each intertwines into a kaleidoscope of color and sound that has become an intrinsic part of the Bahamian culture, so much so that the Ministry of Youth Sports and Culture has jurisdiction over the official competitions which judge Junkanoo participants and award cov-

eted prizes. Entrants begin preparations as much as six months in advance and are subsidized by corporate sponsors; costs can run as high as \$100,000.

Entrants known as "Groups" are drawn from almost all of the 14 islands and commonly consist of 500-1,000 people. Four major groups, the Valley Boys, the Saxon Superstars, Roots, and One Family, compete today, with dozens of others also participating at lesser competitive levels. Until the 1960s, paraders were male only. Now, competition is co-ed, and there is even a Junior Junkanoo Parade in an effort to apprentice cultural craftsmanship and foster Bahamian heritage.

Elaborate costumes are designed around each group's particular and highly guarded theme. Materials have evolved from at-hand, "junk enough" to six simple items: corrugated cardboard, crepe paper, aluminum rods, tie wire, contact cement and glue. The Junkanoo beat is created by a mélange of goatskin-covered drums, cowbells, horns, whistles and brass instruments. The centuries-old one-step-forward/two-steps-backward dance remains central. However, variations such as the "Vola Shuffle" have appeared upon the scene and even professional choreographers have been introduced into the mix.

## **Contact and Web Site**

Government of the Bahamas  
Ministry of Youth Sports and Culture  
E. Hill St., 7th Fl., Post Office Bldg.  
P.O. Box N-4891  
Nassau, N.P. The Bahamas  
242-322-6250/3; fax: 242-322-6546  
<http://www.bahamas.gov.bs>

## **Further Reading**

- Barlas, Robert. *Cultures of the World: Bahamas*. New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2000.
- Eklof, Barbara. *For Every Season: The Complete Guide to African American Celebrations, Traditional to Contemporary*. New York: HarperCollins, 1997.
- Gulevich, Tanya. "Jonkonnu." In *Encyclopedia of Christmas and New Year's Celebrations*. 2nd ed. Detroit: Omnigraphics, 2003.
- Smalls, Irene. "Roots of an African-American Christmas." <http://www.melanet.com/johnkankus/roots.html>.
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# Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival

*Date Observed: Late September*

*Location: Crownsville, Maryland*

**T**he annual Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival is a two-day event that marks the arrival of Kunta Kinte, an African ancestor of acclaimed novelist Alex Haley, on the Annapolis, Maryland, docks on September 29, 1767. Since 1987 the festival has educated, entertained, and energized participants about black experience and culture.

## Historical Background

During the 1960s and 1970s, Alex Haley researched his genealogy. In 1976 the story of his family's origins in Africa was published in *Roots*, which quickly became a bestseller. Haley had traced his great, great, great, great-grandfather Kunta Kinte back to his ancestral roots in The Gambia. It was here that Kinte was born and lived prior to being captured, then transported across the Atlantic Ocean and ultimately sold into slavery on the shores of North America.

Over the course of its history, The Gambia witnessed many stories similar to that of Kunta Kinte. The region was once part of the Ghana and Songhai empires. Several European countries struggled for control of the area from the 15th through the 18th centuries. It was a valuable trade base for gold, ivory, and human slaves. Of the latter, most were initially sent to Europe, but as the need for labor expanded with growing colonization of new lands, Gambian slaves soon found themselves on ships bound for the West Indies and North America.

Slave trading was abolished by the British Empire in 1807, which, at that time, had a substantial yet shared interest in The Gambia. However, various efforts by the British to put an end to the region's slave trade were subsequently unsuccessful. It was not until passage of a 1906 ordinance, sometime after The Gambia had become a self-governing British Crown colony, that slavery was officially abolished.

## Alexander Murray Palmer Haley

Alex Haley was born in Ithaca, New York, and, during his first career in service with the U.S. Coast Guard, spent 30 years on the high seas and in various locales. Regardless, Haley considered himself to be a native son of the state of Tennessee.

Both of Haley's parents were teachers: Simon, his father, was a college professor and his mother, Bertha, taught grade school. The eldest of three sons, Alex spent a good deal of his youth with his mother's mother in Henning, Tennessee. At her side, young Haley first heard the family tales of his ancestors.

After completing high school at age 15, Haley attended college for two years, then enlisted in the Coast Guard. Writing was his passion, and he practiced his craft while onboard ship, submitting manuscripts and receiving rejection letters for eight years before his work gained some acceptance. Thirteen years after his enlistment, the U.S. Coast Guard created a new rating for Haley, that of Chief Journalist. Haley remained in the service for seven more years, until he decided to pursue writing full-time.

Haley's first published book was *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965). He spent hours talking with Malcolm X to put the black leader's life story into prose (see also **Malcolm X's Birthday**). The book became a classic. From there, Haley researched and then wrote the epic novel *Roots* that would change his life—and those of many others, particularly African Americans. Based upon his extensive genealogical investigation, Haley discovered that his maternal great, great, great, great-grandfather was a man named Kunta Kinte born in The Gambia, a region of west Africa, and sold into slavery. Haley's compelling storytelling, which traced his family lineage from Kunta Kinte to his own family's arrival in Henning, Tennessee, vaulted *Roots* into becoming the #1 bestselling hardback book in U.S. publishing history. The tale was made into a television mini-series in 1977, attracting a record-breaking viewing audience.

Many would make a strong case that, with *Roots*, Haley did as much to strengthen black pride and to increase awareness of the many indignities and injustices wrought upon people of color over the past centuries as did almost any African-American leader of the 20th century.

## Kunta Kinte's and Alex Haley's Roots

One day, while out in the west African jungle making a drum near his native town of Jufferee in The Gambia, 17-year-old Kunta Kinte was accosted by four men. Before long, he and 139 others were aboard the *Lord Ligonier*, a slave ship setting sail on July 5, 1767, and bound for Annapolis, Maryland. When the ship docked on September 29 that year, 42 of its human cargo had perished.

On October 7, Kunta Kinte became the property of John Waller of Spotsylvania County, Virginia. Despite being renamed "Tobey," Kunta Kinte demanded that his fellow slaves call him by his birth name. He made repeated escape attempts, the fourth of which resulted in a choice of punishments: castration or amputation of his foot. Kinte chose the latter and ended up being taken in by Waller's brother, a doctor, who was horrified by John's cruel retribution. Kinte remained with Dr. Waller for the rest of his life, working as a gardener and buggy driver. At Dr. Waller's home he met Bell, the woman with whom he would father Kizzy, ensuring the future of his lineage. From the time that she was born, Kizzy was regaled with Kunta Kinte's stories of his African youth; she learned the words of his native tongue and of the value he placed on human freedom.

At age 16, Kizzy was sold to a North Carolina plantation owner, to whom she bore a son, to be one day known as Chicken George due to his skills as a gamecock trainer. He went on to marry Matilda; they and their family of eight children were eventually sold to a man named Murray. The fourth of these eight children was named Tom. He married a slave girl (also of half-Indian blood) named Irene. They, too, raised a family of eight.

Once emancipation was declared in the United States, Chicken George and his numerous offspring banded together with Tom and his large family (*see also Emancipation Day*). They headed west and ended up in Henning, Tennessee. There, one of Tom's daughters, Cynthia, met and married William Parker. Their daughter, Bertha, would give birth to Alex Haley in 1921.

Haley's literary saga, *Roots*, first appeared in print in 1976 and received the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize. It has since been translated into more than three dozen languages.

## Creation of the Festival

In 1987 Kunta Kinte Celebrations, Inc., coordinated the first Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival. Nearly 10 years after the publication of Alex Haley's *Roots*, there was a desire to celebrate the author and his book, as well as to commemorate the arrival of Haley's now world-famous ancestor, Kunta Kinte. Organizers selected the site of Kunta Kinte's disembarkment in America as the ideal location for the event.

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*Alex Haley's research led him to believe that Kunta Kinte was one of the Africans advertised for sale in this notice that appeared in the October 1, 1767, issue of the Maryland Gazette.*

However, the festival was created not only as a means of commemorating two men. Organizers also aimed to educate people about the broader cultural contributions of African Americans. The festival was designed to provide a prominent showcase for individuals and groups from a vast array of literary, performing and visual arts.

## **Observance**

The Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival is held at the Anne Arundel County Fairgrounds located on Route 178 in Crownsville, Maryland. Events run from approximately 10 A.M. until 7 or 8 P.M. on a late September weekend. The date is selected to closely coincide with the timing of Kunta Kinte's arrival in America at the Maryland docks, recorded as September 29, 1767.



The festival is heavily family oriented, and all age groups are encouraged to attend and participate. There is a Family Education Tent with booths manned by a variety of organizations and businesses with displays on social issues, health, and history. Black authors, storytellers and oral historians are also popular annual draws at this venue.

More specifically for young people, the Chesapeake Children's Museum offers such activities as instrument and mask making, and traditional storytelling. Staff members share Kunta Kinte's tale and life lessons.

Two stages, main and performing arts, ensure that the entertainment bill holds something for everyone. In addition to nearly non-stop live musical entertainment that spans such styles as Caribbean, gospel, hip hop, jazz, rap, and rhythm and blues, African dancers, marching bands, magicians, steel drum bands, storytellers and others perform.

In addition, the Kunta Kinte-Alex Haley Foundation, Inc., assists with numerous genealogical efforts each year, as individuals and families — anticipating or inspired by the festival — seek to reconnect and/or discover their own personal “roots.”

### Contacts and Web Sites

Kunta Kinte-Alex Haley Foundation, Inc.  
31 Old Solomons Island Rd., Ste. 102  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
410-841-6920; fax: 410-841-6505  
<http://www.kintehaley.org>

Kunta Kinte Celebrations, Inc.  
P.O. Box 314  
Arnold, MD 21012  
410-349-0338; fax: 410-439-0069  
<http://www.kuntakinte.org>

### Further Reading

Burroughs, Tony. *Black Roots: A Beginner's Guide to Tracing the African American Family Tree*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001.

Eichholz, Alice, and James M. Rose. *Black Genesis: A Resource Book for African-American Genealogy*. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2003.

Haley, Alex. *Roots*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976.



# Kuumba Festival

***Date Observed: Four days in early June***

***Location: Knoxville, Tennessee***

**T**he annual Kuumba Festival is a four-day event in early June designed to convey the beauty and diversity of African-American culture through showcasing a wide variety of music, dance, art, and food.

## **Historical Background**

Kuumba (koo-OOM-bah) is a Swahili word meaning “creativity,” and it also is the term designating the sixth day of **Kwanzaa** when participants pledge to make their communities and homes better than they found them. They also promise to use their talents and energies to improve young minds and hearts.

## **Creation of the Festival**

The Kuumba Festival began in 1989 as a modest two-day celebration in a local park. Its organizers were mostly neighborhood artists and activists looking for a venue from which to increase community awareness of African-American cultural heritage in Appalachia. In the early 1990s, they established African-American Appalachian Arts, Inc., and hired an executive director to oversee the annual event.

Each year, Kuumba has grown in attendance numbers, ambition, scope, and recognition. The festival has been honored with the City of Knoxville’s “Mayor’s Art Award for Special Programs.” In addition to its original Chilhowee Park location, its venues now include the Museum of Art, Market Square, Gay Street, and other downtown areas.

## **Observance**

Some artists and vendors who participate in Knoxville’s Kuumba Festival are drawn from diverse areas across the United States. Others come from the African continent. However, most who participate live in the area. Total attendance ranges between 10,000 and 15,000.

There are multiple activities scheduled during each of the four days and nights. The Taste of Africa Buffet is one of the most popular venues, serving Senegalese and Gullah cuisines, as well as traditional southern favorites such as barbecue and fried green tomatoes. The African Marketplace has vendors offering authentic African arts and crafts. Children and adults equally appreciate the Gay Street Junkanu parade (*see also Junkanoo*). Live entertainment is served up on multiple stages; musical selections have included gospel, soul, doo-wop, and rhythm and blues.

Each year, the Kuumba Festival organizers aim to draw in a more ethnically diverse attendance. Through broader community-wide participation, Knoxville's Kuumba celebrants share their rich heritage.

### Contacts and Web Sites

African-American Appalachian Arts, Inc.  
Emporium Bldg.  
100 S. Gay St., Ste. 106  
Knoxville, TN 37920  
<http://www.discoveret.org/aaaa>

Knoxville Tourism & Sports Corporation  
One Vision Plaza  
301 S. Gay St.  
Knoxville, TN 37902  
800-727-8045

Kuumba Festival  
P.O. Box 6774  
Knoxville, TN 37914  
865-546-9705  
<http://www.kuumbafesttn.com>



# Kwanzaa

***Date Observed: December 26 - January 1***

***Location: Communities and homes nationwide***

**T**he seven-day Kwanzaa holiday is observed by millions of African Americans as well as by people of African descent worldwide. It was created to be a holiday for black Americans to honor and celebrate their African heritage and also serve as an alternative to Christmas. Celebrations take place in homes and communities from December 26 through January 1.

## **Historical Background**

Although Kwanzaa is a relatively recent African-American holiday that has spread worldwide, its customs and symbols are said to be rooted in ancient Africa. The name itself—Kwanzaa—comes from the Swahili phrase *matunda ya kwanza*, or “first fruits.” The extra “a” at the end of Kwanzaa was added to indicate that the term stood for an African-American celebration. First fruits refers to the ancient tradition of harvest festivals in Africa that celebrate the first crops of the season.

The Kwanzaa holiday has gone far beyond the founder’s creation. It began as a way to reject white culture and focus on African traditions and black power, but has become a holiday that emphasizes bringing people together and appreciating African culture and heritage. In the United States Kwanzaa is embraced by a broad range of African Americans, educational and religious institutions, museums, corporations, the media, and federal and state governments.

## **Creation of the Holiday**

Maulana Karenga, a professor of Black Studies at California State University at Long Beach, created Kwanzaa in 1966 in order to establish a holiday controlled by blacks and especially for people of African descent. He hoped to bolster the bonds between African Americans and Africa.



*A table set for Kwanzaa.*

Karenga was given the name Ronald McKinley Everett when he was born in 1941 in Maryland. After moving to California to go to college, he earned a degree at Los Angeles City College and began his work on a doctorate at the University of California, but dropped out to take part in the Black Power Movement in the 1960s, a time of racial unrest and upheaval. He eventually earned a doctorate in political science at the U.S. International University and a doctorate in social ethics from the University of Southern California.

As a 1960s radical black nationalist, he took the name Maulana Karenga and supported Malcolm X and the concepts of black power (*see also* **Malcolm X's Birthday**). He also

created an organization known as US or Us, whose mission was and is to liberate blacks from white oppression. He and members of US were involved in violent activities that resulted in Karenga's imprisonment in 1971. Several years after his release in 1974, he was hired to the faculty of the Black Studies Department at California State University at Long Beach. Karenga has continued his involvement with US, which promotes Kwanzaa through its web site, and with a publishing arm in Los Angeles called University of Sankore Press.

To symbolize Kwanzaa, Karenga chose the colors black, red, and green, which were used decades earlier by Marcus Garvey to represent black nationalism (*see also Marcus Garvey's Birthday*). According to Karenga in a 1998 interview with *Ebony*, "Black is for Black people, first. . . . red is for struggle, and green is for the future and the promise that comes from struggle."

## Observance

Candles in black, red, and green are an important part of any observance of Kwanzaa. They are usually displayed in a seven-tiered candelabra called a *kinara*, with one black candle in the middle, three red candles on the right and three green ones on the left. Together, these candles are known as the *mishumaa saba* (seven candles). A candle is lit each night of the holiday to represent Kwanzaa's seven basic principles called *nguzo saba*. Each night of the week-long celebration is dedicated to one of those principles. Umojo (oo-MO-jah) or Unity is represented by the black candle. Three principles are represented by red candles: Kujichagulia (koo-gee-cha-goo-LEE-yah) or Self-determination; Ujima (oo-GEE-mah) or Collective Work and Responsibility; and Ujamaa (oo-JAH-mah) or Cooperative Economics. The remaining principles represented by green candles are Nia (nee-YAH) or Purpose; Kuumba (koo-OOM-bah) or Creativity; and Imani (ee-MAH-nee) or Faith.

Each African-American household may celebrate Kwanzaa in its own way, but there is usually a display of symbolic objects on a table covered with a colorful cloth in African designs. A *mkeke* or straw place mat is the foundation (representing African heritage) for the kinara and other meaningful items: *muhindi*, ears of corn that represent all children of the community, not just the immediate family; and *kikombe cha umoja*, a unity cup which holds a libation, or liquid, to recall and welcome ancestral spirits (all present may sip from the cup). *Mazao*—fruits and vegetables in a bowl made of natural materials—is likely to be on the table to represent the harvest. And *zawadi* (gifts) of books and other educational materials about African culture also may be displayed.

When a Kwanzaa family celebration takes place, it begins on the first night—December 26—by placing the seven candles in the holder and lighting the black candle for unity.

## Foods for Kwanzaa

**F**oods prepared for a Kwanzaa feast frequently are linked to traditional dishes of the African diaspora, from African-American soul foods to those from the Caribbean, South America, and Africa. In recent years, recipes for dishes and desserts to serve at a Kwanzaa feast have been published in newspapers, magazines, and books, or posted on the Internet. Some of the items served include (but certainly are not limited to):

Roast turkey	Southern-style green	Red beans and rice
Fried chicken	beans	Benne cakes
Sweet potato dishes/pies	Black-eyed peas	Pecan pie
Cornbread	Potato salad	Peanut soup
Collard greens	Southern-fried okra	Biscuits
	African vegetarian stew	Lemonade

Author Antoinette Broussard explains her family's tradition after the first night in her book *African-American Celebrations and Holiday Traditions* (2004):

On the second night of Kwanzaa, the family gathers and the black candle for unity is lit along with the red candle for self-determination. . . .On the third evening . . . the black candle and the red candle...and the green candle for collective work and responsibility [are lit]. This sequence of lighting the candles and discussing the principle of the day extends through the seven days of Kwanzaa. . . .The discussion each evening centers around what that day's particular principle means to each individual, and how each has applied it in his or her life. All the participants commit to practice that particular principle throughout the coming year.

Some families observe at least one evening of Kwanzaa with relatives — perhaps several generations of a family — or with friends. Educational or handmade gifts may be presented to the children, and on December 31st especially, Kwanzaa observers enjoy a feast.

## City and Community Celebrations

Across the United States, as well as in other countries, cities and communities may set aside the week, or a day or two, to observe Kwanzaa and include people of diverse ethnic backgrounds, although the celebration remains Afrocentric.

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*A libation ceremony was part of the 2003 Kwanzaa observance at the African Burial Ground in New York City. Reverend Stephen Marsh (right) poured water to honor the ancestors. Attendees included New York City councilman Charles Barron (left) and Reverend Herbert Daughtry (center).*

In Chicago, Illinois, one of the largest celebrations in the nation takes place at Malcolm X College. In 1995 the president of the college, Zerrie D. Campbell, spearheaded the first Kwanzaa celebration. It is a joint endeavor with Chicago's Afrocentric school called Shule Ya Watoto. During the week the Kwanzaa celebration includes African-inspired ceremonies, music and dance, fashion show, African marketplace, and traditional African foods.

The Kwanzaa Capital City Festival is a one-day celebration in Richmond, Virginia. It is presented by the Elegba Folklore Society, a nonprofit organization that promotes activities focusing on African-American culture. The name of the organization comes from Esu Elegbara (AY-shew eh-lehg-bah-rah), a deity or saint in the west African Yoruba tra-



dition who is the guardian of the crossroads and keeps people connected. Since 1990, the festival has been a celebration of the holiday—not the holiday itself. It draws three to four thousand people and has featured an African market, children's craft making, dance performances, and poets. In 2005, Harlem's The Last Poets appeared, blending spoken-word poetry with African percussion.

In New York, the American Museum of Natural History holds a Kwanzaa celebration over three days. It includes activities for the entire family, such as African folklore performances, workshops, a marketplace, and Kwanzaa foods in the Museum's Cafe 77 and Food Court.

The Kwanzaa Heritage Festival in Los Angeles, California, begins with a colorful parade. The two-day festival features African dance groups, drumming, poetry and folktale performances, a children's village, and an international food court.

Wherever Kwanzaa celebrations are held, it is common for many participants to wear kente cloth, a traditional African garment. Kente cloth originated in Ghana during the 12th century and was once worn only by kings and queens for special ceremonies. Weavers made the cloth out of four-inch wide strips in complex designs and bright colors; the strips were woven together to make garments of various sizes.

African Americans now wear kente cloth, sometimes as a shawl or as a full-length wrap, to show pride in their African heritage. Head ties, which also are part of traditional African attire, may be worn by African-American women during Kwanzaa as well.

### **Kwanzaa Products**

As Kwanzaa celebrations have spread across the United States, many merchants have reported that sales of items for the holiday have been in great demand, such as candles, candle holders, mats, cloths with African designs, and books and games about Kwanzaa. Although such items are part of family celebrations, they are also used in schools, libraries, museums, religious institutions, and other public places during educational programs about the holiday. In addition, a variety of videos, coloring books, e-cards, printed greeting cards, clip art, crafts, and software related to Kwanzaa are being advertised and sold on the Internet. With all of these varied products being marketed, some Kwanzaa participants worry that commercialization will diminish the values of the holiday. Others contend that the proliferation of Kwanzaa items can help create public awareness of African culture, heritage, and pride.

In 1999 the U.S. Postal Service issued the first Kwanzaa stamp. In 2004, a new first-class postage stamp featuring Kwanzaa was issued by the Postal Service at the DuSable Mu-

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*The Restoration Dance Company performed at the 2002 Kwanzaa celebration at  
New York City's Museum of Natural History.*

seum of African American History in Chicago, Illinois. Artists who created the design endeavored to balance formality with a celebratory, festive mood. Seven figures in colorful robes represent the seven days of Kwanzaa, and the seven principles they signify.

### **Contacts and Web Sites**

American Museum of Natural History  
Central Park W. at 79th St.  
New York, NY 10024

212-769-5000  
<http://www.amnh.org>

Capital City Kwanzaa Festival  
101 E. Broad St.  
Richmond, VA 23219  
804-644-3900; fax: 804-644-3919  
<http://www.elegbafolkloresociety.org>

Kwanzaa Heritage Foundation  
Leimert Park Village  
Los Angeles, CA 90008  
213-955-5239

Malcolm X College  
1900 W. Van Buren  
Chicago, IL 60612  
312-850-7000  
<http://malcolmx.ccc.edu>

Official Kwanzaa Web Site  
African American Cultural Center  
3018 W. 48th St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90043-1335  
323-299-6124; fax: 323-299-0261  
<http://www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org/index.shtml>

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Karenga, Maulana. *Kwanzaa: A Celebration of Family, Community and Culture*. Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press, 1998.

Riley, Dorothy Winbush. *The Complete Kwanzaa: Celebrating Our Cultural Harvest*. New York: Perennial, 1996.



# Maafa Commemoration

*Date Observed: Third week in September*

*Location: Brooklyn, New York*

**D**uring the Maafa Commemoration in Brooklyn, New York, members of the African-American community come together to memorialize and honor the millions of Africans who suffered the horrors of the TransAtlantic Slave Trade and Middle Passage of the 1700s. It is held each year during the third week in September.

## Historical Background

*Maafa* (mah-AH-fah) is a Kiswahili term meaning “great disaster” or “terrible occurrence.” It has come to refer to what some call the African Holocaust — the transporting of millions of Africans in the holds of ships through the Atlantic Ocean to lives of slavery. Those who survived these indignities and peril arrived in foreign lands, no longer in control of their own destinies, subject in most cases to decades of oppression, emotional and physical injury, and even death.

Dr. Marimba Ani is credited with appropriating the word “maafa” to collectively commemorate this historical occurrence. In a 2000 *Essence* article, Ani noted:

We needed a term that would let us claim this experience for ourselves. So I contacted friends who knew various African languages and asked for a term for disaster. The Middle Passage and slavery had their own horror, which brought on a new kind of horror. We have been duped into believing that we are free and healthy, but we are still living in Maafa. Only by going through the pain and the grief can we find our way to Sankofa, an acceptance of our being, our spirit.

## Creation of the Observance

In 1995 New Orleans-born preacher Johnny Youngblood, pastor of New York City’s St. Paul Community Baptist Church, organized the first Maafa Commemoration to help African Americans heal from the psychic and spiritual damage that he felt had gone undetected and untreated for centuries.

Since that time, the annual Maafa observance at St. Paul's Community Baptist Church has grown considerably. Through word-of-mouth and outreach efforts, other religious communities have been receptive, and the practice of commemorating Maafa has spread to other locations in the U.S.

## **Observance**

Various activities occur throughout the Maafa Commemoration. There are repeated performances of a moving theatrical production, "Maafa Suite—A Healing Journey," that is aimed at educating, reconciling, and healing collective memories. In addition, there are worship services, lectures, tours of the Maafa Museum, opportunities to participate in a Garden of Gethsemane Sweat Lodge Journey, workshops on resisting institutional racism, special programs for both seniors and youth, and a ceremony on the shores of the Atlantic.

## **Contact and Web Site**

St. Paul's Community MAAFA Resource Center  
859 Hendrix St.  
Brooklyn, NY 11207  
718-257-2884; fax: 718-257-1965  
<http://www.themaafa.com>

## **Further Reading**

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# Malcolm X's Birthday

*Date Observed: May 19*

*Locations: Communities nationwide*

**M**ay 19 marks the birth of Malcolm X, given the name Malcolm Little at birth on May 19, 1925. Malcolm X is remembered on his birthday in cities across the United States and in other countries for his leadership and activism for civil rights on behalf of African Americans and people of African descent everywhere. Hundreds of public forums pay tribute to Malcolm X on his birthday, but only in Berkeley, California, is the date an official holiday with city offices and schools closed.

## Historical Background

During the 1950s and early 1960s and after his death in 1965, Malcolm X was a highly controversial figure among the predominately white American public but an icon to many African Americans, especially on college campuses. He advocated black nationalism, which meant promoting cultural pride among African Americans, rebuffing racial integration, working to advance black economic power, and developing African-American political organizations. Black nationalists also promoted interaction between people of African descent wherever they happened to live. His ideas, however, developed over his short and sometimes volatile lifetime.

Born on May 19, 1925, in Omaha, Nebraska, Malcolm was one of eight children of Earl and Louise Little. Malcolm's father was a Baptist minister who spoke out for civil rights. He supported Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, whose purposes included unifying people of African descent whatever their nationality, improving their living conditions, founding black businesses, and establishing independent black states in Africa (*see also* **Marcus Garvey's Birthday**).

Earl Little's advocacy for racial justice brought death threats from a white supremacist group known as the Black Legion. In an attempt to escape the threats, the family moved to Lansing, Michigan, but in 1929 their home was burned down. Another tragedy struck

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*Malcolm X in 1962.*

in 1931, when Malcolm's father was found dead on the trolley tracks. The Little family was convinced that the Black Legion was responsible, but according to police both the arson of the Little home and death of Earl Little were accidental.

Following his father's death, Malcolm's mother had an emotional breakdown and had to be institutionalized. As a result, the children were separated and sent to different foster homes and juvenile facilities. Malcolm was an excellent student and hoped to become a lawyer, but he became disillusioned when a teacher told him that a black man in the 1940s could not realistically achieve that goal. He left school and drifted into a life of crime in Harlem and Boston.

In 1946 Malcolm was arrested for burglary in Boston. He received a sentence of 10 years in prison and served seven years. There, he was exposed to the teachings of the Nation of Islam — Black Muslims. He was determined to turn his life around and became a follower of the religion and the teachings of Minister Elijah Muhammad. It was then that he took the surname X, in keeping with the Nation of Islam's practice to symbolize that a person was an ex-Christian, ex-Negro, and ex-slave. In other words, the X meant that Malcolm would no longer be known by a name that came from a white slave owner.

## **Nation of Islam Leader**

After he was paroled in 1952, Malcolm X became a preeminent spokesperson for the Nation of Islam, helping to increase membership by the thousands. He often bitterly denounced white domination of African Americans and was a fervent supporter of black nationalism.

The concept of black nationalism did not begin with the Nation of Islam. During the 1800s and early 1900s, black leaders such as Paul Cuffe (1759-1815), Martin Delaney (1812-1885), and Marcus Garvey (1887-1940) urged African Americans to find true equality by creating a separate black nation rather than being assimilated into the white-



dominated United States. With the rise of the Nation of Islam, racial separatism became a religious doctrine, and Elijah Muhammad publicly rebuked whites as being an "evil race" and misleading black people with their emphasis on wealth and power. In a July 1970 issue of *Muhammad Speaks Newspaper*, he wrote: "Black Man, these are your days. The white man's days are gone."

At the same time, however, Muhammad stressed that African Americans should seek their own individuality and not accept the "Negro" and "colored" identity as defined by the dominant white society. He also emphasized economic independence. His sermons and writings often focused on "Knowledge of Self" and "Do for Self."

Echoing these themes, Malcolm X continued to proselytize for the Nation of Islam, and by 1954, Muhammad had appointed him minister of New York Temple No. 7 in Harlem. In 1957, he became the Nation's national representative, second in rank to Muhammad himself. The following year, Malcolm X married Betty Sanders, who became Betty Shabazz, and the couple had six daughters. While raising their family, Betty Shabazz earned a master's degree in public health administration and a doctorate in education from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

During the 1960s, Malcolm X was ever more militant in his fiery speeches. After President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, Malcolm X publicly declared that the president's death amounted to "the chickens coming home to roost, that the hate in white men had not stopped with the killing of defenseless black people, but that hate, allowed to spread unchecked, had finally struck down this country's Chief of State."

Because of the public outrage that followed, Elijah Muhammad banned Malcolm X from speaking publicly for three months, which was extended to a longer period. The ban was one reason Malcolm X resigned from the Nation of Islam. He also became disillusioned after learning that Elijah Muhammad had fathered children with two of his former secretaries. The act of adultery would be reason to expel any other Muslim, but Muhammad kept his high position in the Nation of Islam.

In 1964 Malcolm X established his own Organization of Afro-American Unity and the Muslim Mosque, Inc., which held a series of Sunday night public rallies in Harlem. There, Malcolm gave speeches and also appeared in other cities outlining his militant philosophy. He declared that blacks should carry weapons to defend themselves against whites, arguing that blacks were justified in arming themselves because the government would not do its job and protect African Americans. In his view, the only way blacks could truly be free and achieve equality was through revolution. During one talk in 1964 at Palm Gardens in New York, he declared, "Historically, you just don't have a peaceful revolution. Revolutions are bloody, revolutions are violent, revolutions cause bloodshed

and death." He noted that revolution could be achieved in the United States "without violence and bloodshed. But America is not morally equipped to do so." On April 3, 1964, Malcolm X gave his famous and controversial "The Ballot or the Bullet" speech in Cleveland, Ohio, which added that African Americans needed to recognize their common oppression and use either votes or guns to stop the racial exploitation.

Malcolm frequently criticized Martin Luther King Jr. for promoting nonviolence and civil disobedience. He believed these were fruitless strategies that appeased whites and made "Uncle Toms" of African Americans. He also argued against integration and for African Americans to separate themselves from the dominant white society.

## **A Life Change**

During 1964, Malcolm made the Hajj—the pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia—and thus fulfilled one of the pillars of Islam. The trip changed his life. He met people of other cultures and was treated with respect. From Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Malcolm X wrote a letter to his family and friends about his impressions. This excerpt of his letter appears in his *Autobiography*: "There were tens of thousands of pilgrims from all over the world. They were of all colors, from blue-eyed blondes to black-skinned Africans. But we were all participating in the same ritual, displaying a spirit of unity and brotherhood that my experiences in America had led me to believe never could exist between the white and non-white."

After completing the pilgrimage, he took the Muslim name El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, and returned to the United States a changed person. He was ready to lead a movement for racial justice and to unify African Americans in the struggle. Although he still did not agree with King's approach, Malcolm offered to help in the nonviolent civil rights movement by sending armed units to defend King and other leaders. But King refused such an approach on moral grounds.

Even as he talked of defending others, Malcolm himself was threatened and several attempts were made on his life, including a firebombing of his home. Tragically, he was assassinated on February 14, 1965, at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem where he was to deliver a speech. As he stood to speak, three men in front of him fired guns at the same time, killing him. Three Nation of Islam members were convicted of murdering Malcolm X: Talmadge Hayer, Norman 3X Butler, and Thomas 15X Johnson.

After Malcolm's funeral, Martin Luther King sent a telegram to Betty Shabazz, saying, "While we did not always see eye-to-eye on methods to solve the race problem, I always had a deep affection for Malcolm and felt he had a great ability to put his finger on the

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*Malcolm X speaking at a rally in Harlem, New York, on June 29, 1963.*

existence and root of the problem. He was an eloquent spokesman for his point of view and no one can honestly doubt that Malcolm had a great concern for the problems we face as a race."

### **Legacy of Malcolm X**

The legacy of Malcolm X is not always easy to see because people generally "don't think about the internal change it produced," according to James H. Cone, professor of religious studies at Union Theological Seminary in New York and author of *Martin and Malcolm and America: A Dream or a Nightmare*. In comparing the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X for a *News & Observer* (Durham, North Carolina) reporter, Cone noted: "King changed the way white people think about black people; Malcolm changed the way black people think about themselves." Sonia Sanchez agreed, speaking during a PBS documentary: "He expelled fear for African Americans. That's why we loved him. He said it out loud, not behind closed doors. He took on America for us."

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*In 1992 Spike Lee released his film Malcolm X. In February 2005, this DVD was issued as a special edition set to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Malcolm X's death.*

African Americans who were clearly influenced by Malcolm X included leaders in the black power movement, such as Stokely Carmichael/Kwame Toure, who articulated a political philosophy that demanded liberation and self-determination for African Americans. Many African Americans began to embrace the "Black is Beautiful" concept. In schools, there were demands for black studies and respect for the African roots of black Americans.

Since his death, Malcolm X has been recognized increasingly by people of many ethnic backgrounds for his efforts to fight racism, poverty, and the repression of African people in America and elsewhere. Films such as Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*, music videos, poetry, political essays, and biographies honor him. So do t-shirts and posters with Malcolm X's words "By whatever means necessary" — doing whatever it takes to empower the oppressed.

In the words of Malcolm X scholar Manning Marable: "Malcolm X was the most remarkable historical figure produced by Black America in the 20th century. That's a heavy statement, but I think that in his 39 short years of life, Malcolm came to symbolize Black urban America, its culture, its politics, its militancy, its outrage against structural racism and at the end of his life, a broad internationalist vision of emancipatory power."

## **Creation of the Holiday**

One of the first Malcolm X birthday celebrations was held in Washington, D.C., where the Malcolm X Cultural Education Center was established in 1971 to honor his life and legacy. Between 50,000 and 75,000 people attend this event each year.

In 1977 the city of Berkeley, California, designated Malcolm X's birthday, May 19, to be an official city holiday. Citizens had petitioned the city council to do so since the late 1960s. The law became effective in 1979.

## Observance

Celebrations of Malcolm X's life occur annually in most major American cities on his birthday May 19, or for several days around that time. Some occur on the third Sunday in May. Malcolm X may also be commemorated during **African-American History Month**.

Celebrations conducted across the United States take varied forms. In Lansing, Michigan, for example, the El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz Charter School celebrated Malcolm's life in 2005 with a jazz concert and multi-media presentation on the history of African-American education.

In New York, the Malcolm X Commemoration Committee and the Sons and Daughters of Afrika conduct an annual pilgrimage and caravan to the gravesite of Malcolm X. First conceived by Malcolm's sister Ella Little-Collins, the pilgrimage includes participants who come from as far south as Baltimore and Washington, D.C., and from as far north as Boston.

At the Audubon Ballroom, where Malcolm X was murdered, people gather to honor his life. The Harlem ballroom was reopened on May 19, 2005, as the Malcolm X and Dr. Betty Shabazz Memorial and Education Center.

Other events include the annual photo exhibit of Malcolm X at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem; Malcolm X Jazz Festival in Oakland, California; and Malcolm X events on college campuses across the United States.

## Contacts and Web Sites

Malcolm X and Dr. Betty Shabazz Memorial and Education Center  
3940 Broadway  
New York, NY 10032-1543

Malcolm X Cultural Education Center  
2100 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., S.E.  
Washington, DC 20020  
202-678-8352  
[http://www.brothermalcolm.net/archivedsites/2092351029\\_page2.htm](http://www.brothermalcolm.net/archivedsites/2092351029_page2.htm)

Malcolm X Jazz Festival  
Eastside Arts Alliance  
P.O. Box 17008

Oakland, CA 94601  
<http://www.eastsideartsalliance.com>

Malcolm X Project, directed by Manning Marable with the Shabazz family  
Center for Contemporary Black History  
760 Schermerhorn Extension – MC 5512  
Columbia University  
1200 Amsterdam Ave.  
New York, NY 10027  
212-854-7080; fax: 212-854-7060  
<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ccbh/mxp/index.html>

“Malcolm X: A Search for Truth,” online exhibit  
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture  
515 Malcolm X Blvd.  
New York, NY 10037  
212-491-2200  
<http://www.nypl.org/research/sc/malcolmx>

Official Web Site of Malcolm X, presented by CMG Worldwide, agent for the Estate of  
Malcolm X  
[www.cmgww.com/historic/malcolm/home.php](http://www.cmgww.com/historic/malcolm/home.php)

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### Writings by Malcolm X

- The Autobiography of Malcolm X: As Told to Alex Haley*. New York: Grove Press, 1966.
- "The Ballot or the Bullet." Speech delivered April 3, 1964, in Cleveland, OH. <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/malcolmxballot.htm>.



## Marcus Garvey's Birthday

*Date Observed: August 17*

*Location: Varies*

**T**he birthday of Marcus Garvey is celebrated on or around August 17 each year by members of the organization he founded, the Universal Negro International Association (UNIA), as well members of the Rastafarian faith.

### Historical Background

Marcus Mosiah Garvey was born in St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica, on August 17, 1887. At the age of 14, he left school and took a job as an apprentice printer to help support his family. During his teen and early adult years, Garvey was exposed to significant economic and political unrest in his native land that would act as a foundation for his developing philosophies.

Garvey traveled, first throughout Latin America and then to England, broadening his outlook. It was in London where his thinking was most greatly influenced. There, he learned about the developing Pan-African movement and read Booker T. Washington's book, *Up from Slavery* (see also **Pan African Bookfest and Cultural Conference**). After returning to Jamaica in 1914, Garvey's exposure to new concepts about his African heritage inspired him to found the UNIA. Its motto: "One God! One Aim! One Destiny!"

Initially, Garvey's approach to uplifting the Negro condition was to focus on hard work and demonstrating good moral character. He felt that politics would only interfere with and cloud advancement of the cause. His view changed, however, when he began traveling throughout the United States. Disillusioned about the prospects of racial equality, especially upon seeing how blacks were being treated when they returned home from service in World War I, Garvey became convinced that racial integration would never occur until blacks achieved economic, political, and cultural success by means of their own aggressive efforts.





*Marcus Garvey in 1924.*

Garvey went to Harlem and established what would become the headquarters of the UNIA in the United States. From there, Garvey began to spread a message of black nationalism, calling for unity, pride in one's African cultural heritage, and complete autonomy from any other race or entity. Central to Garvey's message was a call for blacks to return to the African homeland, a goal that became known as the back-to-Africa movement. In 1920 Garvey developed what he called the Liberia Plan, and even negotiated a deal with the Liberian government for land on which to settle displaced black peoples from the U.S., the Caribbean, Central and South America, and elsewhere.

Garvey had both supporters and detractors among African Americans. He came under particularly heavy criticism from fellow blacks after a 1922 meeting with the Klu Klux Klan to discuss miscegenation (marriage between races) and social equality. By Garvey's account, UNIA's membership numbered in the millions, and indeed, it had branches throughout the United States, Caribbean, Canada, and Africa.

Even allowing for inflated statistics, Garvey inarguably led the largest mass movement known to date in African-American history. UNIA's endeavors were varied: the organization owned grocery stores, published newspapers, and operated a factory and a shipping line. In 1922 the U.S. government brought charges of mail fraud against Garvey in connection with the shipping business, the Black Star Line. He was convicted on June 21, 1923. Following bail and deportation hearings, Garvey was incarcerated on February 8, 1925. In December 1927, he was released and deported to Jamaica, where he launched the People's Political Party (PPP) and the Jamaica Workers and Labourers Association, but most of his efforts stalled. In 1934, Garvey relocated to London, where he resided until his death in 1940.

In its online biography of Garvey, the University of Northern Colorado's Marcus Garvey Center for Black Cultural Education concludes its assessment of his life in this way:

Marcus A. Garvey captured the interest of the ordinary Negro as no other leader before or since, but his dream was based on a fatal flaw: his failure to understand that the overwhelming mass of Negroes considered America their rightful home and had no real desire to leave it. His weakness lay in thinking that the Negro, after helping to build America, would abandon it. His greatness lies in this daring to dream of a better future for Negroes somewhere on earth.<sup>1</sup>

## **Creation of the Observance**

Celebrations of Marcus Garvey's birthday originated in various years, depending on the location. In Jamaica, for example, on the centennial anniversary of Garvey's birth in 1987, the government declared August 17 a public holiday in St. Ann. Since then, annual celebrations have been held at 32 Market Street, St. Ann's Bay, where Garvey was born.

## **Observance**

Marcus Garvey's birthday is celebrated in his homeland, Jamaica, and also in Trinidad, where the Abiadama Centre for Lifelong Learning commemorates Garvey with lectures,

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<sup>1</sup> Reprinted with permission from the University of Northern Colorado.

displays of African artifacts, music, and food. Barbados and other West Indies isles also celebrate Garvey's birthday.

Many Rastafarians in the United States commemorate Garvey's birthday as well. Some celebrate just the date, August 17, while others stretch the commemoration throughout an entire week. Still others honor Garvey with events during the whole month of August each year (*see also* **Haile Selassie's Birthday**). So, while celebrations of Garvey's contributions vary, partly dependent upon the geographic locale of the event, observances often include the recitation of inspiration poems and speeches (sometimes those of Garvey himself) and performance of traditional African dances and drumming. Larger events might also include the display of African arts and crafts and presence of native foodstuffs.

Reggae musicians, many of whom are Rastafarians, often hold festivals and concerts around Garvey's birth date as a way to commemorate him.

In 2005 Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrión and the Jamaica Progressive League hosted a civic ceremony to celebrate Garvey's birthday. The event also served as a show of support for efforts led by U.S. Representative Charles Rangel of New York to have the U.S. government exonerate Garvey.

In Wisconsin, the Black Historical Society Museum in Milwaukee held its 17th annual Garvey Birthday Celebration in 2005. Each year organizations and vendors set up booths outside the museum for a day-long gathering to commemorate Garvey.

### Contacts and Web Sites

"The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers Project"

UCLA International Institute

African Studies Center

10244 Bunche Hall

P.O. Box 951310

Los Angeles, CA 90095

310-825-3686; fax: 310-206-2250

<http://www.international.ucla.edu/africa/mgpp>

Marcus Garvey Cultural Center for Black Cultural Education

University of Northern Colorado

928 20th St.

Greeley, CO 80634

970-351-1159; fax: 970-351-2337

<http://www.unco.edu/garvey/index.asp>

Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League  
Thomas W. Harvey Memorial Division #121  
1609-11 Cecil B. Moore Ave.  
Philadelphia, PA 19121  
215-236-0782  
<http://www.unia-acl.org/>

Wisconsin Black Historical Society Museum  
2620 W. Center St.  
Milwaukee, WI 53206  
414-372-7677  
<http://www.wbhsm.org>

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# Mardi Gras in African-American Traditions

*Date Observed: Carnival period before Lent  
(between February 3 and March 9)  
Location: New Orleans, Louisiana*

People of all races and backgrounds take part in Mardi Gras, which is a French term meaning “Fat Tuesday.” The period before Lent is traditionally a time for feasting and merrymaking. The following day is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the Christian season of Lent—a 40-day period of fasting and spiritual preparation for Easter. The carnival period that begins two weeks before Fat Tuesday also is known generally as Mardi Gras. During this time, some festivities are based on African-American traditions, such as the Zulu parade and the appearance of Black Indians in handmade, colorful regalia.

## Historical Background

Although Mobile, Alabama, claims title to the oldest Mardi Gras celebration in the United States, the New Orleans carnival is the best known, and, in fact, symbolizes the city. Festivities stem from masked balls and processions that French settlers brought with them in the 1700s. Some scholars speculate that these festivals may have roots in the spring rites of ancient Rome.

In 1857, New Orleans held its first Mardi Gras parade, presented by the Mistik Krewe of Comus, the first krewe—a private club or committee—to organize. Dozens of krewes formed later, sponsoring parades during the carnival. The krewe known as Rex (King) organized in 1872 and held a procession led by a “king” in costume followed by hundreds of people dressed as servants, clowns, saints, or devils.

The number of krewes has grown over the years, and among them are African-American groups. These private clubs organize the dinners, balls, processions, marching bands, floats, and pageants that are part of Mardi Gras and take place at different times during the carnival season.



*A drum major participates in a Mardi Gras parade.*

## Creation of the Observance

A black support group in New Orleans, the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club, sponsored the first African-American parade during Mardi Gras in 1901, but the group did not become known as the Zulus, or Zulu krewe, until 1909. Members of the organization based their parade themes on satire, making fun of white parade kings, similar to the slave parodies during **Pinkster** and **Negro Election Day and Coronation Festivals** in New England. The Zulu, however, organized in protest of the exclusive all-white krewes and from the beginning mocked the stereotyped portrayal of blacks by putting on exaggerated blackface of minstrel shows and grass skirts.

Black Indians known as Mardi Gras Indians make up krewes, also called gangs or tribes, that have created some of the most colorful parades in New Orleans. Their handmade regalia and music mesh Native-American and African-

American customs. Scholars speculate about the origin of this tradition but many believe that African Americans were motivated by the Plains Indians whom African Americans from New Orleans fought when they joined the **Buffalo Soldiers** during the late 19th century. In addition, the heritage of some Mardi Gras Indians includes both African and Indian ancestry, and they have carried on ancient rituals and warrior traditions of both peoples.

## Observance

More than 80 cities in Louisiana celebrate Mardi Gras, and thousands of people gather in New Orleans for the annual event—even in 2006 when there was concern that the celebration would not occur because of the severe damage from Hurricane Katrina the previous year. The 2006 celebration was the 150th anniversary of the city's first formal parades. Following custom, streets were lined with spectators eager to capture

“throws” — beads, trinkets, and other items tossed to the crowd by costumed people in parades.

Traditionally, the Zulu parade is held on the Monday before Fat Tuesday, when the Zulu king and queen arrive on a barge for a riverside festival. Before dawn the next day, the Zulus get on their floats and others prepare to march. Along the route, they distribute throws that are highly prized hand-painted coconuts.

### Black Indians

**M**any African-American families understand from oral histories and written records that their heritage may include Native-American ancestors. The two groups share a long history of efforts to escape white domination and discrimination and claim their own identities. But there have been few studies of connections between the two groups, and certainly, Black Indians have not found a place in most textbooks or been identified for their contributions. Nor have they been depicted in movies and TV shows about the western frontier and cowboys on the range (*see also Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo and Black Cowboy Parade*).

The heritage of Black Indians includes runaway black slaves who found refuge in Native villages and intermarried, producing offspring who helped build a nation. Undeniably, some indigenous people—known as the “Five Civilized Nations” (the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Creek, and Seminole) because they had adopted European (white) ways—also were slaveholders, with the exception of the Seminole. For the other tribes, slavery was an important aspect of their lives, although “the chains of slavery were fitted rather loosely on black people owned by Indians,” according to William Katz, author of *Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage*. “Only the Chickasaws had a reputation for treating their slaves as badly as white people.”

After the Civil War, some former slaves owned by Indians adopted Native-American culture just as escaped slaves had done in earlier times. This is obviously apparent with the pageant of the Mardi Gras Indians. The Creole Wild West Krewe was founded in 1885 by Becate Batiste, a man of African, French, and Choctaw ancestry.

The Mardi Gras Indians perform on Fat Tuesday. There are dozens of tribes known by such names as Hard Head Hunters, Red Hawk Hunters, Mohawk Hunters, Creole Wild West, Black Seminoles, and Golden Blades. They parade in highly structured suits (as they are called), decorated with beads, feathers, and sequins or rhinestones and topped with elaborate headdresses. Each suit is assembled annually, created from parts of the costume that were used the previous year as well as new components. The suits can weigh over 100 pounds and are expensive to create, costing up to thousands of dollars.

During the march, the Mardi Gras Indians perform a ritual of song and dance in a call-and-response style closely related to African music. Each tribe has a "big chief" who heads the pageant that includes spy boys and flag boys who march in front of the krewe. The first spy boy looks out for any rival tribes who may be encountered for mock battles. In earlier days, physical clashes were real, but rivalry in modern pageants is primarily competition over the costuming.

Another Mardi Gras custom that originated with the all-white Comus krewe, but has been carried on by African Americans, is the flambeaux spectacle. Parades at night are led by African Americans with torches that not only light up the sky but also are part of the black tradition and total pageantry displayed at Mardi Gras.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

Mardi Gras Indians

<http://www.mardigrasindians.com/>

"Mardi Gras Traditions"

New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corp.

<http://www.neworleansonline.com/neworleans/mardigras/mgtraditions.html>

New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau

2020 St. Charles Ave.

New Orleans, LA 70130

800-672-6124

<http://www.neworleanscvb.com/>

Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club, Inc.

732 N. Broad St.

New Orleans, LA 70119

504-827-1661

<http://www.experienceneworleans.com/zulu/main.html>



**Further Reading**

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Katz, William Loren. *Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage*. New York: Atheneum, 1986.

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# Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday

***Date Observed: Third Monday in January***

***Location: Communities nationwide***

The third Monday in January is a federal holiday that commemorates Martin Luther King Jr.'s life and contributions to the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. The holiday, which is celebrated nationwide, falls on or near King's birthday on January 15.

## **Historical Background**

Before Martin Luther King Jr. became involved with the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, African Americans were struggling to overcome segregation and oppression in the United States. For example, an early civil rights organization, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), formed in 1909 and began crusades to pass anti-lynching laws and to overturn legal segregation.

One of the NAACP's important members and promoters was W. E. B. Du Bois (1868-1963), professor, scholar, author, and activist. In 1910, Du Bois became editor of the NAACP's monthly journal *Crisis*, which reached a large readership of African Americans and helped gain support for the organization's civil rights programs.

Another significant African American fighting for civil rights in the early decades of the 1900s was Asa Philip Randolph (1889-1979). He was a tireless activist for the rights of black workers and often risked his personal safety and life to obtain equal job opportunities for African Americans. He is best known for founding the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in 1925. By 1937, under Randolph's leadership, the union had won the right to negotiate with the Pullman Company, which made railroad cars and was the largest single employer of blacks in the United States. The corporation agreed to raise wages and reduce work hours for porters from 400 to 200 hours per month.

Randolph also led an effort in 1940 to try to convince President Franklin D. Roosevelt to integrate the armed forces and defense industries. When Roosevelt refused, Randolph announced that he would organize a protest march on Washington, D.C. That prompted

Roosevelt to sign an executive order to prohibit discrimination in defense industries and established the Fair Employment Practices Committee. Randolph then called off the march, which some blacks denounced because they thought there should be a demonstration of black power. However, Randolph continued his fight for black civil rights over the years. He later helped organize the 1963 March on Washington that brought more than 200,000 people to Washington, D.C., where they listened to Martin Luther King Jr. deliver his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

## **Martin Luther — A Preacher's Son**

Born on January 15, 1929, Martin Luther King Jr. was originally named Michael. His father later adopted the name Martin, and when Michael was about six years old, his name also was changed to Martin. His family included an older sister and younger brother.

King's maternal grandfather, Reverend Adam Williams, was pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church, and following Williams's death, King's father became pastor of the church. King, too, served the church as co-pastor with his father.

From his mother, Alberta Williams King, a former school teacher, King gained a love for books and was reading by the time he entered first grade. He was an excellent student and graduated from high school at the age of 15, passing an entrance examination to enroll in Morehouse College, a prominent African-American school. For a time he considered studying medicine or the law, but majored in sociology and decided to enter the ministry. After graduating from Morehouse in 1948, he attended Crozer Theological Seminary, where a lecture on the life of Mohandas Gandhi and his quest for *ahimsa*, or nonviolence, sparked King's interest and desire to learn more about the Indian leader.

King earned a bachelor of divinity degree in 1951 and began doctoral studies at Boston University. There he met Coretta Scott, whom he married in 1953. The couple eventually had four children, Yolanda, Martin III, Dexter, and Bernice.

*Martin Luther King Jr. preaching at Ebenezer Baptist Church in 1960.*

In 1954, King accepted the position of pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, where he served until 1960. Those years were momentous times in the civil rights movement.

## **The Struggle for Civil Rights**

From the mid-1950s through the 1960s, the struggle against racism and for the civil rights of people of color frequently meant putting one's life on the line. Some historians have called the civil rights movement a revolution in that activists set out to change a way of life, particularly in southern states where segregation laws established separate facilities, such as restrooms and water fountains for "white" and "colored." Apartments and hotels carried signs to indicate "white only" or "colored only." Restaurants, laundromats, and movie theaters owned or operated by whites refused to serve people of color.

Discrimination against people because of their skin color was not confined to the South, however. Across the nation African Americans were barred from certain jobs and professions, were not allowed to rent or buy homes in certain neighborhoods, and usually attended separate schools with far fewer resources than all-white schools.

One of the first major changes in federal laws that helped propel the civil rights movement was the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. Oliver Brown, an African-American man in Topeka, Kansas, wanted his daughter Linda to attend an all-white school just a few blocks from where the family lived, but the school board refused to let Linda enroll. The state had set up segregated schools, which was allowed years earlier in a High Court ruling (*Plessy v. Ferguson*) that segregation was legal according to a federal law requiring "separate but equal" facilities.

The educational facilities for blacks and whites were not equal, however. Most black schools lacked basic materials such as books, desks, or even a safe, heated building for students. Whites on the other hand were able to attend schools that not only had sufficient supplies but also were conducive to learning.

With the help of the NAACP, Oliver Brown sued the Topeka school board and the case went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which in 1954 overturned the earlier federal "separate but equal" law and ordered that public schools be desegregated "with all deliberate speed."

## **The Montgomery Bus Boycott**

A major civil rights effort to overturn laws that segregated public transportation in the South began in late 1955. African Americans were forced to ride in the back of public

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buses and had to stand even when there were empty seats. When Rosa Parks (1913-2005), a black woman who had been working all day, got on a public bus in Montgomery, Alabama, and refused to move to the rear of the vehicle, she broke one of the state's segregation laws. She was arrested and jailed (*see also* **Rosa Parks Day**).

A trial for Parks, an NAACP official, was scheduled a few days after her arrest, and NAACP leaders quickly formed the Montgomery Improvement Association. They elected one of their members, Martin Luther King Jr., as president. King organized a boycott of the bus system, which lasted more than a year. The boycott financially hurt the bus company and businesses that catered to riders, who were primarily African Americans.

Following King's lead, blacks refused to ride the public buses, a major form of transportation, but instead created car pools, which police tried to break up. Drivers were sometimes arrested on fabricated charges. King himself was arrested and jailed for allegedly exceeding the speed limit. It was just one of many arrests and imprisonments that he endured in the years ahead.

On February 2, 1956, the NAACP filed a lawsuit in a U.S. district court charging that segregation in public transportation facilities was unconstitutional. Less than three weeks later, King and more than 100 other African Americans were indicted on charges of conspiring to prevent the bus company from doing business.

By June of 1956, the federal court ruled that segregation on city bus lines was unconstitutional, and the U.S. Supreme Court upheld that ruling in November. By December 21, 1956, the successful boycott was over.

## **A Force against Segregation**

Beyond efforts to integrate public transportation systems, the civil rights movement became a driving force against segregation in all types of public facilities. Throughout the rest of the 1950s, African Americans made additional strides toward equality. The Voting Rights Act, the first civil rights act since the days of Reconstruction after the Civil War, passed in 1957, authorizing the U.S. Justice Department to file lawsuits on behalf of blacks who had been denied their right to vote. More public services, such as city swimming pools, were integrated.

Expanding the civil rights efforts in the South was one of King's priorities in 1957. He brought together African-American ministers who were committed to civil rights, and they formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Members elected King president of the SCLC, and he led a pilgrimage to Washington, D.C., where he gave his first major speech that received national coverage.

In 1960, King and his family moved to Atlanta, Georgia. He became co-pastor, with his father, of the Ebenezer Baptist Church; he also continued his involvement with the civil rights movement. By the early 1960s, the movement was making some gains. Nonviolent student sit-in protests brought nationwide media attention to segregated restaurants, theaters, hotels, libraries, and other public places, which eventually led to desegregation. Freedom Riders—blacks and whites from the North and South—rode interstate buses to protest segregated bus stations, and in 1961, the Interstate Commerce Commission banned segregation in bus terminals. There also were numerous voter registration drives to help blacks throughout the South exercise their right to cast ballots.

King supported or took part in numerous nonviolent protests and was frequently jailed on charges such as violating state trespassing laws, obstructing the sidewalk, parading without a permit, failing to obey a police officer sent to stop a prayer vigil at the Albany, Georgia, city hall. In April 1963, King participated in sit-in demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama, and was again arrested and jailed. While in the Birmingham City Jail, he wrote an open letter to white clergymen who had criticized his actions.

### **Letter from Birmingham City Jail**

In reaction to King's protests, eight white religious leaders issued "An Appeal for Law and Order and Common Sense," a public statement arguing against civil disobedience. The statement also inferred that King was an "outside agitator." In his letter, King pointed out that he was hardly an "outsider," since he was president of the SCLC that had affiliates across the South. More important, though, was his argument that direct action was needed to counteract Birmingham's "ugly record of police brutality" and "unjust treatment of Negroes in the courts." He also responded to the religious leaders' charges that protests were "untimely." King wrote in part:

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King's letter was published in pamphlet form by the American Friends Service Committee (a Quaker organization) and was widely quoted. Parts of the letter were reprinted in newspapers and magazines. In addition, the letter or portions of it are read aloud during some celebrations of **African-American History Month**.

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*The March on Washington, August 28, 1963.*

## March on Washington

In the summer of 1963, a massive March on Washington was planned to support a new civil rights bill that President John F. Kennedy had sent to Congress. Organizers of the march hoped to pressure congressional members to pass the bill. More than 200,000 black and white marchers gathered before the Lincoln Memorial in Washington on August 28, 1963, and listened to Martin Luther King Jr. present an eloquent address that was televised across the nation. King noted that African Americans were ready to collect on the “promissory note” of equality specified in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. He ended with the celebrated words that are repeated time and again during the King holiday: “even though we must face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed — we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”<sup>2</sup>

In 1964, King became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. He was 35 years old. When he learned about his selection, he declared that he would donate the prize money to the civil rights movement. In his acceptance speech, he said that the

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award was “a profound recognition that nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral question of our time—the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to violence and oppression. . . .Negroes of the United States, following the people of India, have demonstrated that nonviolence is not sterile passivity, but a powerful moral force which makes for social transformation.”<sup>3</sup>

## **Confrontations and Violence**

Advances toward full citizenship rights for African Americans were not peaceful, however. Frequently, nonviolence was met with violent backlashes. One such attack in 1963, perpetrated by members of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), a racist hate group, killed four girls in the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham.

Brutal attacks greeted civil rights activists who planned to march from Selma, Alabama, to the state’s capital in Montgomery. In early 1965, King helped organize the march designed to call for African-American voting rights. When the demonstration began on Sunday, March 7, police were on hand with tear gas and clubs, beating marchers as they crossed a bridge leading out of Selma. This “bloody Sunday,” as the day was called, is commemorated with a reenactment in the annual **Bridge Crossing Jubilee**. Three weeks later with the help of federal officials, the march was completed. Such demonstrations helped gain support for a new Voting Rights Act.

After the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963, Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson took office as President. In 1965, he signed a new Voting Rights Act and invoked the slogan of the civil rights movement and title of its anthem: “We Shall Overcome.”

Yet, overcoming racism, prejudice, and discrimination against African Americans was a daunting task, one that had to be tackled in the North as well as the South. In 1966 King went to Chicago where he hoped to campaign against urban poverty. But he had difficulty organizing blacks who came from diverse economic backgrounds and did not necessarily share the same goals. This was also a time when many black militants were denouncing King’s nonviolent approach and his call for racial integration (*see also Malcolm X’s Birthday*).

King continued his message of nonviolence, however, applying it to the Vietnam War and taking an antiwar stance. He also persisted in his antipoverty efforts, forming the Poor People’s Campaign in 1967. Less than a year later he was in Memphis, Tennessee, where he addressed a church audience. The next night, April 4, 1968, while standing on the balcony of a Memphis motel, he was shot and killed. James Earl Ray, a white segregationist, was convicted of assassinating the great civil rights leader.

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<sup>3</sup> © 1964 The Nobel Foundation.

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*On Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday in 2006, Reverend Al Sharpton and hundreds of healthcare workers marched in New York City for economic justice for home health workers, some of the lowest-paid employees in the state.*

After her husband's death, Coretta Scott King said that she was "more determined than ever that my husband's dream will become a reality." A forceful activist in her own right, she immediately founded the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change and began a campaign to establish her husband's birthday as a national holiday. For the rest of her life she was an advocate for peace and human rights, traveling the globe and speaking out about racial and economic injustice. She died in 2006.

## **King's Legacy**

The legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. persists to this day. He has been remembered over the decades for his nonviolent protests and passive resistance to achieve civil rights.

Also among his most important contributions were his efforts on behalf of legislation to end racial segregation in public facilities through the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and to expand voting rights with passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Because of King's example, thousands of people in the United States as well as around the world have committed themselves to community service. His brief life also has inspired others to develop programs that foster mutual respect among diverse groups and to work for world peace.

## **Creation of the Holiday**

Four days after King's assassination, U.S. Representative John Conyers of Michigan introduced a bill to create a national holiday to commemorate Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. The bill stalled in Congress, but during each congressional session over a 15-year period the proposal was resubmitted.

Although many African Americans signed petitions and lobbied Congress for the holiday, there was stiff opposition from diverse groups. Some congressional members claimed that the holiday would cost the federal government \$18 million in lost services if employees got the day off. State governments and private businesses were equally concerned as estimates of total costs for the holiday reached \$8 billion.

Another argument against the holiday came from those who thought that King was being given preferential treatment over other famous individuals. Certainly some opposition stemmed from racist attitudes.

Meantime, though, states began to create their own King holidays. Finally in 1983, the U.S. Congress passed legislation to establish a Martin Luther King Jr. federal holiday, which became effective in 1986.

## **Observance**

Across the United States, the King holiday is frequently observed with solemn reflection on the principles for which the civil rights leader stood. Many churches hold ecumenical memorial services, bringing together people of diverse racial, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds.

The weekend of the holiday is also a time for families and friends to meet in private homes. Civic gatherings take place as well, with prominent individuals delivering speeches that recount King's deeds and how he inspired people around the world to seek peace and freedom. Some organizations encourage people to volunteer and spend the day in service to those less fortunate.

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*For Martin Luther King Jr. Day, 2004, volunteers in Washington, D.C., assembled and delivered disaster-preparedness kits to residents of a low-income apartment complex.*

During the holiday (and all through the year as well) individuals, families, and tour groups may visit the Martin Luther King Jr. Historic Site established in 1980 by the National Park Service. The site is east of downtown Atlanta, Georgia, and includes the home where King was born, the church where he worshipped, and his burial place.

Although public schools are closed for the holiday, King is honored in classrooms on the days before the observance with readings from books about his life, artwork depicting King, choral groups singing "We Shall Overcome," and numerous other activities.

From coast to coast, annual marches and parades are held to honor King in such cities as Albany, New York; Raleigh, North Carolina; Washington, D.C.; and St. Petersburg, Florida.

Since 1982 a nonprofit group called MLK365 has organized events in Sacramento, California. The celebration begins with a 2.5-hour march—a visual portrayal of King's dream with people of diverse backgrounds, races, and ages coming together to show their support. The march ends at the Sacramento Convention Center, where there are job and health fairs and workshops, activities for children, and musical performances.

In Oakland, California, a Mormon Temple has an annual Down Home Martin Luther King Potluck Celebration in which participants bring their favorite dish from “back home” to share. They also see films of significant events from King’s life and listen to readings from his works.

In Rockville, Maryland, 500 residents celebrated the 2006 holiday by listening to prominent speakers, among them retired Brigadier General Clara Adams-Ender, an African American who came from a low-income family and during her military career rose to become a U.S. Army general. She is the author of *My Rise to the Stars: How a Sharecropper’s Daughter Became an Army General*. The celebration also included choir, drum, and dance performances.

At various venues in the metropolitan area of Detroit, Michigan, celebrations took place all weekend of the King holiday in 2006. There was a King “Appreciation Day” at all the Metroparks. Featured speakers appeared at area colleges, such as Oakland University, Michigan State University, and Wayne County Community College. Concerts were also held at the schools. A King Day breakfast was held at Detroit’s Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, and there was even a give-away of free roses at a florist shop in the city.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History  
315 E. Warren Ave.  
Detroit, MI 48201  
313-494-5800  
<http://www.maah-detroit.org/>

Civil Rights Movement Veterans  
<http://www.crmvet.org/>

Down Home Martin Luther King Potluck Celebration  
Mormon Temple  
4780 Lincoln Blvd.  
Oakland, CA 94602  
510-654-2592

“Martin Luther King Jr. and Black History Month”  
Louisiana State University Libraries  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

225-578-5652; fax: 225-578-6825  
<http://www.lib.lsu.edu/hum/mlk/index.html>

Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change  
449 Auburn Ave., N.E.  
Atlanta, GA 30312  
404-526-8900  
<http://www.thekingcenter.org>

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service  
Corporation for National and Community Service  
1201 New York Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20525  
202-606-5000; TTY: 202-606-3472  
<http://www.mlkday.org/>

Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site  
450 Auburn Ave., N.E.  
Atlanta, GA 30312  
404-331-5190; fax: 404-730-3112  
<http://www.nps.gov/malu/index.htm>

Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute  
Martin Luther King Jr. Papers Project  
Cypress Hall D-Wing  
Stanford University  
Stanford, CA 94305-4146  
<http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/>

MLK365  
650 Howe Ave., Ste. 1014  
Sacramento, CA 95825  
916-479-1918  
<http://www.mlksacramento.org>

Rockville (Maryland) Human Rights Commission  
City Hall  
111 Maryland Ave.  
Rockville, MD 20850  
240-314-8316

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# Miami/Bahamas Goombay Festival

*Date Observed: First weekend in June*  
*Location: Coconut Grove neighborhood,*  
*Miami, Florida*

**T**he Miami/Bahamas Goombay Festival is an annual street festival held during the first weekend in June in the Coconut Grove neighborhood of Miami, Florida. This massive event celebrates the community's Caribbean—and particularly Bahamian—roots, and features the arts, music, and food.

## Historical Background

Since at least the early 19th century, Bahamians have sailed to nearby south Florida, especially the Keys, for fishing and trading with the native Seminole Indians. During the latter part of the 19th century, Bahamian craftsmen came to the Coconut Grove area in large numbers. Many worked in construction, building the new city of Miami. One can still see many examples of their handiwork in resorts and homes, in the style of landscaping that remains popular, and in street names. According to the U.S. Census of 2000, the state of Florida leads the nation in resident Bahamians with a population nearing 20,000.

## Creation of the Festival

In 1977 William R. Rolle and several other local citizens produced the first Miami/Bahamas Goombay Festival as a way of honoring the contributions of early Bahamian immigrants. The Goombay Festival is a vehicle for showcasing the contributions of Bahamians to the city of Miami. The name *goombay* is a Bantu word for a goatskin drum that is beaten with the hands; it also refers to music associated with the drum. Goombay has been celebrated by African slaves in the Caribbean for centuries (*see also Goombay!*).

## Conch Fritters

Conch fritters are a popular treat at the festival. Conch (pronounced “konk”) is a seafood found inside a brightly colored spiral shell. The meat can be eaten raw or cooked, and a common cooked dish is conch fritters. There are numerous recipes for this traditional Bahamian food. Generally, they are made with ground conch (sometimes shrimp or crab meat is substituted, or even calamari) mixed with chopped celery, peppers, onion, and parsley; pressed garlic and various spices; eggs, oil, and pancake mix or flour. The mixture is formed into rounded, spoon-sized shapes and deep fried or sautéed. Usually, a dipping sauce is served with the fritters.

## Observance

The Miami/Bahamas Goombay Festival features the sounds of Bahamian and African-American music — an annual favorite is the Royal Bahamas Police Band. Calypso, blues, reggae, and steel bands perform alongside rappers. There’s also a **Junkanoo** band with festive, costumed dancers, accompanied by whistles, cow bells, and washboards.

Hundreds of vendors offer such goods as authentic Bahamian craftwork, tie-dye t-shirts, Bahamian food, and the most popular food fare of all, conch fritters. Estimated attendance is more than 300,000.

## Contacts and Web Sites

African Heritage Cultural Arts Center  
6161 N.W. 22nd Ave.  
Miami, FL 33142  
305-638-6771

Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau  
701 Bricknell Ave., Ste. 2700  
Miami, FL 33131  
800-933-8448 or 305-539-3000  
<http://www.gmcvb.com>

Miami/Bahamas Goombay Festival  
P.O. Box 330052  
Miami, FL 33133  
800-891-7811; fax: 954-442-0427  
<http://www.goombayfestivalcoconutgrove.com/>

### **Further Reading**

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## **Millions More March**

***Date Observed: October 14, 2005***

***Location: Washington, D.C.***

**T**he Millions More March was held on October 14, 2005, to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Million Man March. Both rallies called for African Americans' increased individual responsibility and community involvement.

### **Historical Background**

Many African-American communities have been plagued with social problems, such as poverty, crime, violence, drug use, lack of education, and unemployment. Louis Farrakhan, minister and leader of the Nation of Islam, believed that a positive step would be to mobilize African-American men to take action against these widespread problems. In 1995 he decided to plan the Million Man March, hoping to gather one million black men in Washington, D.C., for a national day of atonement and reconciliation for African-American men. Benjamin Chavis Jr., former chairman of the NAACP, served as the march organizer. The event drew the support of prominent African-American leaders, such as Rosa Parks, Rev. Jesse Jackson, African-American governmental leaders and ministers across the country, and several black members of Congress.

This historic event called for African-American men to take a public pledge to better themselves and to work for the betterment of all African Americans. This rally was one of the largest gatherings of African-American men ever organized, and it made news headlines around the country as well as internationally. Women were excluded from participating in the event, but were instead asked to observe a "day of absence" — by not going to work and not shopping or spending any money on that day. This was done as a show of support for the men who were participating in the rally, and also as a demonstration of the economic power of African Americans.

It is unclear exactly how many African-American men gathered on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., on October 16, 1995. Estimates range from 400,000 to two million. Men came from all over the country, some arriving the night before to sleep on the

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*On May 2, 2005, veterans of the 1995 Million Man March—from left to right in the foreground: former Washington, D.C., Mayor Marion Barry, Reverend Jesse Jackson, and Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan—held a news conference to announce the Millions More March.*

ground or stay awake all night in anticipation of the next day's march. The event resembled a rally more than an actual march, with numerous speakers calling for African-American men to take responsibility for themselves, their families, and their lives. Attendees were urged to fight against rampant poverty, violence, substance abuse, and unemployment.

Many march attendees returned home determined to make lasting changes in their lives and to become more involved in their communities. March organizers claim credit for the more than one million African-American men who registered to vote afterwards, and also for the thousands of applications that were submitted to adopt African-American children in the weeks following the march.

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*A scene from the Millions More March in Washington, D.C., on October 15, 2005.*

## **Creation of the Observance**

In the late 20th century and early 21st century, similar marches followed in the wake of the Million Man March. On October 16, 2000, the Million Family March was held to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the Million Man March. This rally focused attention on public policy issues that impact the quality of life for everyone, not just African Americans. The success of the Million Man March and the Million Family March resulted in Farrakhan's creation of the Millions More Movement in early 2005. This movement encouraged the development of African-American community-based service organizations to continue the work outlined at the two previous marches. Plans also began at that time for the Millions More March.

In addition, other unrelated groups organized their own rallies using Farrakhan's event as a model. The Million

Women March was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on October 26, 1997, bringing together more than 300,000 African-American women to address social issues. In the Harlem neighborhood of New York, the Million Youth March to empower young African Americans was held on September 5, 1998. The first Million Mom March was organized on May 14, 2000, in Washington, D.C., to protest gun violence and call for stricter gun laws. On October 17, 2004, the Million Worker March took place in Washington, D.C., to draw attention to issues faced by workers around the world.

## **Observance**

The 10th anniversary of the Million Man March was observed with the Millions More March. This rally took place in Washington, D.C., during the weekend of October 14, 2005. The Millions More March was intended to give African Americans an opportunity to focus once again on pressing social issues. Particular attention was given to unity within the African-American community, spiritual values, education, economic devel-

opment, political power, reparations for slavery, eradication of improper law enforcement tactics, health concerns, artistic and cultural development, and peace. The Millions More March was a much more inclusive event, welcoming interested men, women, and children of all races and ethnicities.

## Contact and Web Site

Million Man March 1995, Inc.  
7351 S. Stony Island Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60649  
773-324-6000  
<http://www.millionsmoremovement.com>

## Further Reading

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# Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival

*Date Observed: Third Saturday in September*

*Location: Greenville, Mississippi*

The Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival is held in Greenville, Mississippi, on the third Saturday in September. Sponsored by the Mississippi Action for Community Education, Inc., since 1978, the festival's purpose is to celebrate the birth of the blues in the region and raise funds for civil rights, anti-poverty, and educational programs. Blues enthusiasts from across the United States and around the world attend the festival.

## Historical Background

Blues as a distinctive musical form evolved under nebulous circumstances in the latter 19th century. Proto-blues songs may have existed as early as the 1860s, but it is generally believed that blues sounds were codified in the 1890s among New Orleans street musicians. Blues then migrated to the rural deep South, where it took on a history of its own. This genre of music has been described in numerous ways: an emotional expression, poetry, or, technically, as music with "simple, usually three-chord progressions" that allows for improvisation.

Historically, the blues developed from slave music in the South, such as field chants and hollers, spirituals, and dance music. As the blues grew and spread, musicians performed lyrical monologues whose most prominent subjects were romantic complaints, sexual boasts, rambling by foot or rail, ballad-like tales of violent conflict, physical labor, humorous narratives, and more. Singers usually accompanied themselves on guitar or piano.

Early blues songs were passed on orally as folk songs. Educated composers, such as **W. C. Handy**, collected and revised some of this traditional material and published it under their own by-lines. In the 1920s the commercial music industry learned that southern black people (and many white people, too) had a taste for what it called "race



music." Singers such as **Bessie Smith**, Ma Rainey, Mamie Smith, and others recorded urbanized, jazz-inflected pop versions of blues, while rural folk-blues artists, such as Texas' Blind Lemon Jefferson and Mississippi's Charlie Patten — along with hundreds of their contemporaries in the southern countryside and African-American districts of such cities as Memphis, Tennessee, and Atlanta, Georgia — recorded prolifically.

### Creation of the Festival

The Mississippi Action for Community Education, Inc., organized the first Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival in 1978 as a fundraiser. The first festival was a simple community get-together in a rural village of less than 100 people with a flatbed trailer as a stage. As the festival has grown, it has encouraged the development of other festivals throughout the Delta and beyond.

### Observance

Known as the second oldest blues festival in the nation, the Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival has drawn people from countries around the world as well as top performers. B. B. King, Sam Chatmon, Son Thomas, Willie Foster, Ruby Wilson, Robert Cray, John Lee Hooker, Muddy Waters, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Albert King, Bobby Rush, and Denise LaSalle have all appeared at the festival in various years. Concerts are presented on two stages, and food and crafts vendors are also on hand for the festivities.

### Contact and Web Site

Mississippi Action for Community Education, Inc.  
119 Theobald St.  
Greenville, MS 38701  
888-812-5837 or 662-335-3523; fax: 662-334-2939  
<http://www.deltablues.org/MACE/home.htm>

### Further Reading

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Titon, Jeff Todd. "Blues, The." In *The African-American Experience: Selections from the Five-Volume Macmillan Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History*, edited by Jack Salzman. New York: Macmillan, 1998.



# MOJA Arts Festival

***Date Observed: Late September to early October***

***Location: Charleston, South Carolina***

**T**he MOJA Arts Festival celebrates African and Caribbean influences on African-American culture, bringing together theater, dance, music, films, and art shows over a 10-day period. The festival takes place in Charleston, South Carolina, from the end of September to early October.

## **Historical Background**

African-American heritage and culture abounds throughout Charleston, South Carolina, which was a major port for slave traders bringing captured Africans to North America. Slaves were also imported or sent to the nearby Sea Islands where African-American Gullah/Geechee culture maintains its roots in west Africa (*see also Georgia Sea Island Festival; Native Islander Gullah Celebration; and Penn Center Heritage Days*).

African slaves helped establish the first colony in South Carolina near what is now Charleston (first called Charles Town). The forced labor of slaves created great wealth for plantation owners growing rice, indigo, and cotton during the 1700s. Yet, slaves resisted by damaging tools, acting sick or dim-witted, or running away. In 1739 about 100 slaves staged a rebellion, hoping to get to Spanish-controlled St. Augustine, Florida, where they would be granted freedom. But the slaves were captured and most were executed.

In 1822 Denmark Vesey led another revolt. It also ended with executions. Later planned uprisings were uncovered before they could take place. When the Civil War began, the Union army gained control of the Sea Islands, where enslaved people found refuge; Union forces considered the runaways free people.

After the Civil War, African-American accomplishments in Charleston included the founding of the Avery Normal Institute, now called the Avery Research Center for African-American History and Culture. During the MOJA Festival, the Center is one of more than 90 venues for presentations of African-American art forms.

## Creation of the Festival

African-American arts were first celebrated in Charleston in 1979 and again in 1981 and 1983. In 1984, the first annual MOJA Arts Festival began. Although MOJA appears to be an acronym, it is the capitalized version of *moja*, which is Kiswahili for “one.” The festival is under the direction of the City of Charleston Office of Cultural Affairs in partnership with community arts groups and civic leaders.

## Observance

The MOJA Arts Festival is an assortment of artistic events: visual arts; classical music; gospel, jazz, and rhythm and blues concerts; poetry and storytelling; theatrical productions; crafts and children’s activities; and, of course, ethnic food. Many award-winning artists appear. In addition, there is an annual Caribbean parade and reggae block dance with an estimated crowd of 15,000 people.

In 2005 a “Ceremony for the Unknown Africans” commemorated the many enslaved Africans who died after arriving in Charleston and were placed nameless in the morgue of the Old Slave Mart. There was also an exhibit, “Dialogues from the Diaspora: Art in an Age of Authenticity,” at the City Gallery.

Visitors to Charleston who attend the MOJA Festival are encouraged to tour the numerous historical sites that are part of African-American history in the area. These include the Old Slave Mart Museum, Denmark Vesey’s house; the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, the second oldest AME Church in the world (*see also Founder’s Day/Richard Allen’s Birthday*); Catfish Row, which inspired George Gershwin to use it as a setting for his opera *Porgy and Bess*; slave quarters throughout the city; and the Gullah Sweetgrass Basket Makers in Charleston’s historic market.

## Contacts and Web Sites

Avery Research Center for African-American History and Culture  
66 George St.  
Charleston, SC 29424  
843-953-7609; fax: 843-953-7607  
<http://www.cofc.edu/avery/>

Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau  
423 King St.  
Charleston, SC 29403

843-853-8000

<http://www.charlestoncvb.com/>

MOJA Arts Festival

City of Charleston, South Carolina

Office of Cultural Affairs

133 Church St.

Charleston, SC 29401

843-724-7305; fax: 843-720-3967

<http://www.mojafestival.com>

"Official Visitors Guide for African-American History and Culture," an online guide published by the Avery Research Center for African-American History and Culture (*see contact above*)

<http://www.charlestonblackheritage.com/>

### **Further Reading**

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# NAACP Image Awards

*Date Observed: February*

*Location: Los Angeles, California*

**T**he NAACP Image Awards is a gala event that recognizes the achievements and contributions of African Americans and other people of color in entertainment and the arts. Honorees, presenters, and performers include celebrities, political and social leaders, and other dignitaries. The event normally takes place in February and is usually televised in March.

## **Historical Background**

In the early days of radio, motion pictures, and television, African Americans had few opportunities to find work in these industries. The few roles that did exist were often stereotypical portrayals of African Americans and did not reflect the true experiences of most people. At the same time, the contributions and talents of African-American entertainers went largely unrecognized by performing arts awards organizations, such as the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences that presents the Oscars.

The NAACP Image Awards were created to reward positive, non-stereotypical representations of African Americans in entertainment and the media. Believing that social norms and beliefs are heavily influenced by images presented in movies, television shows, and popular music, organizers instituted the awards to draw attention to the achievements, successes, and positive portrayals of African Americans in the entertainment industry.

## **Creation of the Observance**

Originally conceived as a fundraising dinner for the Los Angeles chapter of the NAACP, the awards have become one of the most celebrated events in the African-American community. The first event was produced in 1962 by Sammy Davis Jr. and included a gala dinner and a separate awards ceremony at the Coconut Grove nightclub in Hollywood, California. Many celebrities and political leaders were in attendance, including Sidney Poitier, Berry Gordy Jr., Diana Ross and the Supremes, Frank Sinatra, Dean

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*In 2005 Julian Bond, chairman of the NAACP, presented Senator Barack Obama with the Chairman's Award.*

Martin, the mayor of Los Angeles, and the governor of California. Most of the awards presented the first year were given to white producers and directors who had displayed sensitivity to African-American concerns, and who made efforts to provide more opportunities for African-American entertainers.

The awards soon grew from a local chapter event into one of the largest and most popular national fundraisers for the NAACP. In 1967 the event became officially known as the NAACP Image Awards. Public interest grew along with the event, and in the late 1980s the awards ceremony began to be filmed so that it could be televised later. For several years, the Image Awards aired in a late-night time slot on the NBC network. The Los Angeles chapter continued to produce the event until 1991 when the national NAACP organization took over. In 1996, the awards moved to a prime time slot on the Fox network. The sale of tickets to the awards events, paid advertising on the television broadcast, and donations from corporate sponsors raises more than a million dollars for the NAACP each year. Beyond the importance of the event as a fundraiser, the NAACP Image Awards are valued for their recognition of positive public images of African Americans.

## Observance

Several events are now held each year as part of the NAACP Image Awards. An invitation-only luncheon is held for nominees a few weeks before the awards ceremony. The awards ceremony weekend includes a celebrity golf game, and pre-show gala, a pre-show brunch, the awards ceremony itself, and a post-show gala.

Awards are given in more than 40 competitive categories covering motion pictures, television, music, and literature. Honorary awards are also given to acknowledge special achievements, public service, and contributions to racial equality. The Chairman's Award recognizes the dignified representation of people of color, and the Corporate Award acknowledges companies that make commitments to diversity. The NAACP Image Awards Hall of Fame celebrates the lifetime career achievements of notable individuals. The President's Award is given to those who work to further the causes of civil rights. Past President's Award recipients include former President Bill Clinton and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

## Contact and Web Site

NAACP Image Awards  
4929 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 310  
Los Angeles, CA 90010  
323-938-5268  
<http://www.naacpimageawards.net>

## Further Reading

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# National Baptist Convention, USA, Annual Session

*Date Observed: First week in September*

*Location: Varies*

**T**he National Baptist Convention, with more than seven million members, is one of the largest African-American religious groups in the United States and holds its Annual Session during the first week in September, including the Labor Day holiday. Various cities across the country have hosted the Convention, which draws thousands of delegates each year.

## **Historical Background**

Since before the Revolutionary War period, black preachers—Baptists and Methodists—have organized congregations and churches. Black Baptists were among the first Americans to establish foreign missions. During the 1780s, former slave George Liele of Georgia, for example, founded churches in Jamaica, and David George, a slave, established a Baptist church in Savannah, Georgia. After joining British troops and gaining his freedom during the Revolution, George organized Baptist congregations in Nova Scotia, Canada, and Sierra Leone in west Africa.

Numerous African-American Baptist congregations existed before the Civil War, but these independent churches in the South were not allowed to function without being affiliated with white organizations. In the North, however, Baptists in Ohio and Illinois organized associations during the 1830s. By 1840, the American Baptist Missionary Convention was founded, bringing together African-American Baptists in New York and mid-Atlantic states. Other black Baptist conventions formed in the West and the South during the 1860s, and after the Civil War, African-American Baptists in the South created state organizations.

During the 1870s, regional conventions organized in the West and East, but it was not until 1880 that the beginning steps were taken for a national convention. About 150



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*At the 1996 National Baptist Convention, USA, in Orlando, Florida, Reverend Henry J. Lyons (left), President Bill Clinton, and Reverend Roscoe Cooper (third from left) listened as Angella Christie played the saxophone.*

Baptist ministers met in Montgomery, Alabama, where they formed the Baptist Mission Convention. Fifteen years later, the National Baptist Convention of the United States of America (NBCUSA) was born when the Mission Convention joined forces with two other conventions—the Foreign Mission Convention and the National Baptist Educational Convention.

Although the NBCUSA organized operations among the varied African-American Baptist churches, unity did not prevail. Conflicts developed over the location of the Foreign Mission Board, ownership of the Publishing Board of the NBCUSA, and cooperation with white Baptists. Arguably the split that received the most attention was the formation of the Progressive National Baptist Convention in 1961, which left the NBCUSA because of its lukewarm support for the civil rights movement and its leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (*see also* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**).

Another rocky time for the NBCUSA occurred in the mid-1990s, when the president of the convention, Henry J. Lyons of St. Petersburg, Florida, became embroiled in legal problems over finances. Lyons eventually served a prison term of nearly five years for grand theft racketeering. A new president, Reverend William Shaw took over in 1999, and after paying off the debt for NBCUSA's headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee, and establishing new financial controls, he was reelected in 2004.

In spite of NBCUSA's ups and downs, the convention spearheaded an assembly of delegates from four major African-American Baptist groups—the NBCUSA, the National Baptist Convention of America, the Progressive National Baptist Convention, and the National Missionary Baptist Convention of America. In 2005 delegates representing 15 million believers gathered in Nashville to participate in a dialogue about social and political issues affecting African Americans. Reverend Jesse Jackson, who attended and spoke at the convention, noted in the *Chicago Tribune*: “We can be out of slavery, out of segregation, have the right to vote, but still starve to death unless you get to the fourth stage, access to capital, industry and technology. . . . That’s what the four conventions reconnecting is about.”

## **Creation of the Annual Session**

The 1880 meeting of Baptist pastors in Montgomery is considered the origin of the Annual Session of the NBCUSA held each year during the first week of September. Since its inception, the Annual Session convenes to address the business of the Convention, provide opportunities for Christian fellowship, and offer instruction for delegates on various economic, health, and civil rights issues.

## **Observance**

Cities such as Washington, D.C.; Cincinnati, Ohio; Denver, Colorado; Miami, Florida; Atlanta, Georgia; and New Orleans, Louisiana, have hosted NBCUSA Annual Sessions. Each Session begins with messages from officials. As the week progresses there are prayer breakfasts; worship services and sermons; reports on Christian education, prison ministries, housing, and evangelism; addresses by leaders of auxiliaries; and receptions, banquets, and concerts.

## **Contact and Web Site**

National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.  
1700 Baptist World Center Dr.

Nashville, TN 37207  
866-531-3054  
<http://www.nationalbaptist.com>

### **Further Reading**

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# National Black Arts Festival

***Date Observed: Ten days beginning the third weekend in July***

***Location: Atlanta, Georgia***

**T**he National Black Arts Festival is a 10-day festival held since 1988 throughout the Atlanta, Georgia, metropolitan area. It strives to bring diverse communities together through art and culture to celebrate the artists of the African diaspora.

## Historical Background

Although a majority of Atlanta's population today is African American, a significant black presence was not established in the area until after the Civil War. By the late 19th century, nearly half of the citizenry was balanced between whites and blacks, but there was not a similar harmony between the two races. Into the following 20th century and the current day, the Atlanta community has negotiated a challenging course in the evolution of race relations. To many, Atlanta stands as one of best examples of U.S. cities in its attempts to balance both racial unity and diversity.

In 1981 metropolitan Atlanta boasted a population of two million, 66 percent of whom were black. As Atlanta crossed into the 21st century, its metro area topped four million, with its African-American representation holding strong at approximately 60 percent. Each mayor elected since 1973 has been black — a first for any major metropolitan area in the United States. Atlanta has witnessed not only population growth in past years, but also commercial and economic growth.

## Creation of the Festival

In 1987 Michael L. Lomax, chair of the Fulton County Board of Commissioners and president and chief executive officer of the United Negro College Fund, founded the nonprofit National Black Arts Festival (NBAF). The first festival was held in 1988. In the earlier 1980s the Fulton County Arts Council had commissioned a study to assess the potential of a festival that would celebrate and advocate works of African artists in Atlanta. The results of the study showed great promise for such an event, and the festival was born.

Initially, NBAF was set up with a limited scope: mainly to host a biannual arts festival. Over time, with the increased popularity and success of the summertime festival, the organization felt the need to broaden its reach. In 2001 the festival became an annual event. That year NBAF also added year-round programming in education and the humanities.

### Observance

More than half a million people take part in the more than 100 program offerings of the annual National Black Arts Festival. Venues for these programs are located throughout the Atlanta area. For example, an Artists Market, which features juried exhibits of original works by visual artists available for purchase, might be located at a major Atlanta mall; the popular Vendors Marketplace, where wares primarily reflecting the African diaspora are sold, would be at an entirely different site. Screenings are held to the delight of film fans, eager to see the works of known and unknown cinematic artists. Concert halls across the city fill with listeners coming to hear their favorites: rhythm and blues, gospel, jazz, and more. Famous names in literature also draw crowds. All events are aimed at providing audiences with creative experiences from the arts and crafts of the African diaspora.

### Contacts and Web Sites

Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau  
233 Peachtree St., N.E., Ste. 100  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
404-521-6600; fax: 404-577-3293  
<http://www.atlantaheritage.com>

National Black Arts Festival  
659 Auburn Ave., N.E., Ste. 254  
Atlanta, GA 30312  
404-730-7315; fax: 404-730-7104  
<http://www.nbaf.org>



# National Black Family Reunion Celebration

*Date Observed: Second weekend in September*

*Location: Washington, D.C.*

**T**he National Black Family Reunion Celebration is a two-day festival held each September on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Sponsored by the National Council of Negro Women, Inc., the celebration is intended as a reunion for all African-American families and highlights their historic strengths and values.

## Historical Background

During the 1980s, media attention increasingly focused on the black family as “disappearing” and “disintegrating.” A 1986 CBS documentary by Bill Moyer, for example, was titled *The Vanishing Family: Crisis in Black America*. After viewing that film, Dr. Dorothy I. Height, civil rights activist and chair of the National Council of Negro Women, decided to organize a cultural festival that would nourish and support African-American families.

## Creation of the Observance

Dr. Height met with Washington, D.C., officials to discuss her idea—a complex of pavilions providing information on education, health care, and economic empowerment as well as live entertainment. The officials were not enthusiastic at first and told her she could have a tent in a park. But Height accomplished her vision with the first Black Family Reunion Celebration in 1986.

## Observance

During the two-day reunion on the Mall, more than 15 booths and tents offer a mix of information and musical performances. Attendees can get free health screenings, listen

to local musicians, learn about job opportunities, or shop at an international arts and crafts marketplace. Soul food, Caribbean food, and other types of food are available from vendors.

Throughout the weekend, a variety of celebrities make special appearances. Rhythm and blues and other musicians entertain, and there is a gospel concert.

Other cities such as Atlanta, Chicago, and Los Angeles also have held reunions. Cincinnati, Ohio, holds a regional Midwest reunion each year, and in Rockford, Illinois, the 12th annual Black Family Reunion Celebration was held in 2005. The one-day Rockford event takes place in August and is sponsored by the Rockford Section of the National Council of Negro Women, with people attending from northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin. Washington, D.C., remains the center for the National Black Family Reunion Celebration.

### Contact and Web Site

National Council of Negro Women, Inc.  
633 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20004  
202-737-0120  
<http://www.ncnw.org/blackfamily.htm>

### Further Reading

Chambers, Melanie. "The History of the Black Family Reunion." *The Hilltop-Metro* (Howard University, Washington, DC), September 6, 2005. <http://www.thehilltoponline.com>.

Height, Dorothy I. *Open Wide the Freedom Gates: A Memoir*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2003.

National Council of Negro Women. *The Black Family Reunion Cookbook: Recipes and Food Memories from the National Council of Negro Women*. New York: Fireside/Simon & Schuster, 1993.



# National Black Storytelling Festival and Conference

*Date Observed: A week in mid-November*

*Location: Varies*

The National Association of Black Storytellers (NABS) sponsors the National Black Storytelling Festival and Conference over a week in mid-November each year. Master storytellers perform at a selected location on a given year, sharing stories in the tradition of the griot (GREE-oh), a west African storyteller who carries on the oral history of a village or family.

## Historical Background

In 1982 two African-American storytellers—Mary Carter Smith of Baltimore, Maryland, and Linda Goss of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—founded the National Association of Black Storytellers. The purpose of the organization was, and is, to provide opportunities to share and preserve the African oral tradition.

Smith is the official griot of Baltimore. She began to perfect her art form during the 1960s, as she witnessed the lack of understanding among varied groups of people. In a statement of purpose posted on the NABS Web site, she declared “I am among those who fight misunderstanding. The weapons I use are stories, drama, songs, poetry and laughter. I bring entertainment with a purpose.”

Smith has traveled extensively in the United States, Europe, the Caribbean, and Africa to entertain and inform. Her performance materials are based on her years growing up in Birmingham, Alabama, and her experiences in Kentucky, West Virginia, Ohio, and Maryland. She also has been a teacher, librarian, and community activist, has presented programs on numerous television and radio shows, and has written books of poetry.

Philadelphian Linda Goss is official storyteller for her city, and she also has performed in numerous U.S. and Canadian communities. An award-winning recording artist and



To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*Linda Goss prepares to tell a story at the 2003 National Black Storytelling Festival and Conference in Providence, Rhode Island.*

author, she is considered an expert in contemporary storytelling. During her presentations, Goss shares African-American legends she has collected over the years and retells some of the stories she learned from her grandfather, who grew up under slavery. She also relates tales from other family members and neighbors in Alcoa, Tennessee, where she was born and reared. As part of her performance, Goss uses field hollers and praise singing to augment a story, and encourages her audiences to participate through call-and-response techniques.

As artist-in-residence at the Rosenbach Museum in Philadelphia, Goss has been presenting *Words and Wisdom: African American Literature from Slavery to the Civil Rights Movement* to hundreds of students each year since 2001. With jazz musician Alfie Pollitt, *Words and Wisdom* focuses on the contributions of African-American writers of the last two centuries.

## **Creation of the Festival**

In 1983 Mary Carter Smith and Linda Goss initiated the first National Black Storytelling Festival in Baltimore and held a second in Philadelphia in 1984. That year the NABS was formally organized; it was incorporated in 1990. The organization sponsors the National Black Storytelling Festival and Conference, which is held in a selected city in November each year.

NABS has a dozen affiliates across the United States. These include the African Folk Heritage in New York City; North Carolina Association of Black Storytellers in Raleigh; Cleveland (Ohio) Association of Black Storytellers; Detroit (Michigan) Association of Black Storytellers; Griots' Circle of Maryland in Baltimore; Keepers of the Culture in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Kuumba Storytellers of Georgia in Atlanta; Black Storytelling League of Rochester, New York; Black Storytelling Association of San Diego, California; Chicago (Illinois) Association of Black Storytellers; Rhode Island Black Storytellers in Providence; and the Florida Black Storytellers Alliance in Tampa, which became the 12th affiliate in 2005.

## **Observance**

The NABS and their affiliates represent about 400 storytellers who base their performances on African and African-American experience. They present programs for schools, senior centers, corporate and civic gatherings, religious institutions, and varied special events. Dressed in colorful African-inspired attire, they may read their own storybooks or act out tales that involve audience participation. Some storytellers may include drums or other instruments during their performances.

Festival attendees learn the importance of the storyteller (griot) in Africa and how storytelling conveys the history of African Americans. At the festival, storytellers also conduct workshops for people interested in using the African oral tradition to communicate with an audience — young or old of whatever skin color, socio-economic background, or cultural heritage.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

National Association of Black Storytellers, Inc.  
P.O. Box 67722  
Baltimore, MD 21215  
410-947-1117  
<http://www.nabsinc.org/home.asp>

Rhode Island Black Storytellers  
P.O. Box 25323  
Providence, RI 02905  
401-273-4013, ext. 2  
<http://burrowsweb.com/ribs/>

### **Further Reading**

- Hajdusiewicz, Babs Bell. *Mary Carter Smith: African-American Storyteller*. Berkeley Heights, NJ: Enslow Publishers, 1995. (young adult)
- Hale, Thomas A. *Griots and Griottes: Masters of Words and Music*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.
- Pershing, Linda. "'You can't do that, you're the wrong race': African American Women Storytellers at a Contemporary Festival." *Women and Language*, Spring 1996.



# National Black Theatre Festival

***Date Observed: Last week in July during odd-numbered years***

***Location: Winston-Salem, North Carolina***

**T**he National Black Theatre Festival celebrates stage productions by, for, and about African Americans. More than 100 productions are staged during the biennial week-long festival, which also offers a wide variety of theater-related programs and workshops.

## **Historical Background**

In the late 1700s, the earliest days of American theatrical performances, African Americans had few opportunities to perform on stage. The roles that did exist were minor parts in plays written and produced by whites. These were often stereotypical portrayals of African Americans that disregarded the true experiences of most people. African-American characters were clownish, servile, unintelligent, and usually only present for comic relief. During this time, there was no real chance for an African-American play to be produced.

The first African-American theater company was formed in 1821. Called the African Grove Theater, it was founded by members of New York City's free African-American community. The first plays staged there were works by Shakespeare. The first play written and produced by an African American was performed there in 1823. It was a work by Henry Brown titled *The Drama of King Shotaway*. Performances were fairly well-attended, although the theater was raided several times by police due to disturbances between white and African-American audience members. The theater was nearly destroyed in one of these raids, and it closed later that same year. Many of the African Grove actors went on to perform plays in rented locations throughout New York City.

The era of African-American minstrels began around the 1850s, although minstrels did not become truly established as stage performers until after the Civil War. Minstrels were limited in what they could perform, and minstrel shows portrayed mostly negative stereotypes of African Americans. In the late 1800s, African-American performers want-

ed to present a more accurate representation of African-American characters, and new productions began to appear. Musicals written, produced, and performed by African Americans gained popularity, and by the 1920s, African Americans were staging many successful productions each year. But in general, African Americans were still not allowed on the stages of white America.

In the vaudeville era of the 1920s, African Americans created a thriving circuit of traveling performers within the African-American community. African-American singers, dancers, and comedians became so popular that some were eventually able to perform on mainstream stages in white vaudeville revues. During this time, many African-American performers achieved great success in Europe, where audiences were generally not as fixated on the race of talented performers.

The 1930s saw a rise in the popularity of African-American musicals, with *Porgy and Bess* becoming the biggest all-African-American production of the decade. All theater productions in America declined during the 1940s and 1950s, due first to World War II and then the invention of television. African-American musicals were still being staged during this time, but theater attendance was down and roles were scarce for everyone. Renewed interest in African-American theater began in 1961. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, African-American musicals, dramas, and comedic plays were produced regularly, many running for hundreds of performances. However, the contributions and talents of African-American theater professionals were still largely unrecognized by the mainstream theater world.

### Creation of the Festival

In 1989 Larry Leon Hamlin, founder of the North Carolina Black Repertory Theater, created the National Black Theatre Festival in an attempt to develop a sense of community among African-American theater companies. At that time, many companies were financially challenged, somewhat isolated, and geographically scattered throughout the U.S. The festival was intended to build an environment in which African-American theater professionals and aspiring amateurs could create relationships that would ultimately ensure the survival and continued success of African-American theater. By providing increased visibility and performance opportunities for established theater companies as well as newer groups, the festival gave African-American writers, directors, producers, and actors much-needed exposure.

In creating the first National Black Theatre Festival, organizers sought the involvement of such celebrities as Sidney Poitier, Oprah Winfrey, and Maya Angelou, who was the festival's first chairperson. The involvement of such well-known personalities drew sub-

stantial attention to the festival, as well as national and international media coverage. More than 10,000 people attended 30 performances staged by 17 professional African-American theater companies.

It is difficult to clearly define what is classified as African-American theater today. The concept includes plays written and produced by African Americans, starring African-American actors, focusing on African-American stories, or staged within the African-American community. Festival organizers use somewhat loosely defined criteria in selecting productions for each festival, and each festival is distinctly unique. For this reason, the festival has been called one of the most historic and culturally significant events in the history of African-American theater and American theater in general. The National Black Theatre Festival has grown larger each time it has been held.

## **Observance**

Held during odd-numbered years (for example, 2005, 2007, etc.), the festival attracts more than 60,000 people. Productions are staged in theaters, community centers, and university campus facilities all over Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Various non-theatrical events are also held as part of each festival, such as a formal opening night gala and an international vendors market. Readings and recitations are presented along with seminars and workshops for aspiring writers, directors, producers, and actors. In addition to more traditional stage plays, the festival also spotlights spoken word and poetry performances. These are supplemented with nightly poetry jams in which anyone can participate. Theater professionals and amateurs find many opportunities for networking during scheduled programs or at social receptions held each night. In 1999, the festival introduced its Fringe program, which was intended to provide a showcase for college and university theater programs.

## **Contact and Web Site**

National Black Theatre Festival  
610 Coliseum Dr., Ste. 1  
Winston-Salem, NC 27106  
336-723-2266  
<http://www.nbtf.org>

## **Further Reading**

Burger, Mark. "Behind the Scenes: Technical Crew Prepares Path for the National Black Theater Festival." *Winston-Salem Journal*, July 31, 2005.

Demaline, Jackie. "Black Theater Festival Organizers Aim Higher." *Cincinnati Enquirer*, August 19, 2001. [http://www.enquirer.com/editions/2001/08/19/tem\\_black\\_theater.html](http://www.enquirer.com/editions/2001/08/19/tem_black_theater.html).

Dewan, Shaila. "A Six-Day Bash Celebrates Black Theater." *New York Times*, August 6, 2005.

Lehman, Jeffrey, ed. *The African American Almanac*. 9th ed. Detroit: Gale, 2003.

Weber, Bruce. "Black Theater: Beyond Definition." *New York Times*, August 8, 2003.



# National Freedom Day

***Date Observed: February 1***  
***Location: Communities nationwide***

**N**ational Freedom Day commemorates the day in 1865 when President Abraham Lincoln signed the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which outlawed slavery in the United States. In 1948 President Harry S. Truman issued a presidential proclamation calling for the observance of National Freedom Day. Fifty years later, Congress entered February 1, National Freedom Day, into the U.S. Code of laws as an official national and patriotic observance.

## Historical Background

President Lincoln signed the 13th Amendment to the Constitution on February 1, 1865. It reads as follows:

### AMENDMENT XIII

#### Section 1.

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

#### Section 2.

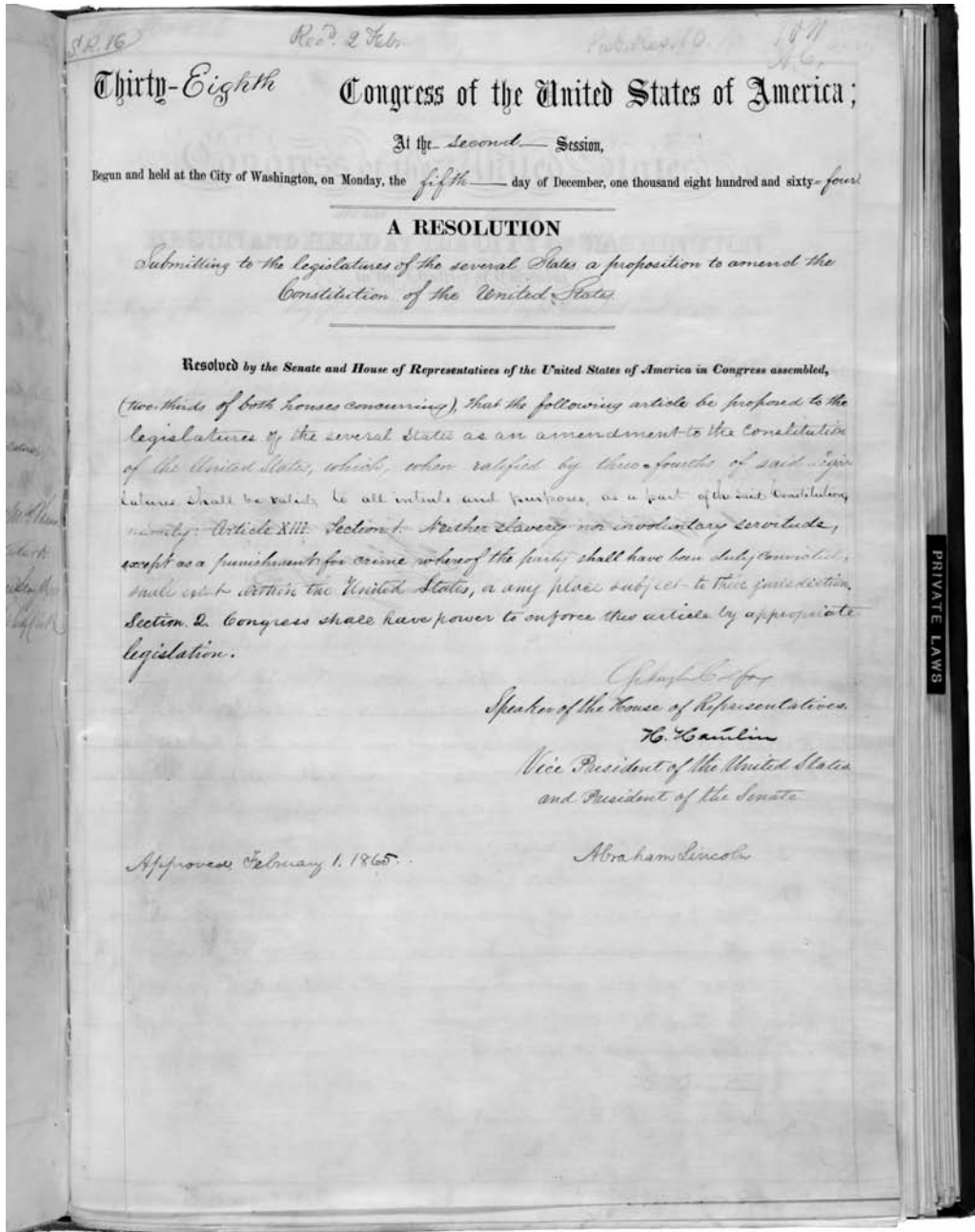
Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

*Passed by Congress January 31, 1865. Ratified December 6, 1865.*

*Note: A portion of Article IV, section 2, of the Constitution was superseded by the 13th amendment.*

Freedom days or **Emancipation Day** celebrations to commemorate the end of slavery in the United States have been held on a variety of dates. In some states, emancipation is celebrated on June 19th or **Juneteenth**, the date when slaves in Texas learned of their freedom. Kentucky also commemorates Juneteenth National Freedom Day each year.





The 13th Amendment to the Constitution was passed by Congress on January 31, 1865, and signed by President Lincoln the next day.

Other states hold freedom days on January 1 to mark the date when the Emancipation Proclamation was issued in 1863. Some celebrate September 22, the day in 1862 that Lincoln issued the preliminary proclamation. Washington, D.C. observes Emancipation Day on April 16 because that was the date slaves were freed in the district.

## **Creation of the Observance**

The first Freedom Day celebration took place on February 1, 1942, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where a wreath was placed at the base of the Liberty Bell. But it was not yet an official observance.

Former slave Richard Robert Wright Sr. (1855-1947) spent many years attempting to establish a National Freedom Day on February 1. Wright, along with his mother and two siblings were freed after the Civil War. He became a teacher, principal, college president, publisher, and banker. He also attained the rank of major during service in the 1898 Spanish-American War fought in Cuba, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico.

Wright believed February 1 was the true emancipation day, because it was the date Lincoln signed the proposed 13th Amendment. In 1948, a year after Wright's death, President Truman signed a bill stating that "The President may issue each year a proclamation designating February 1 as National Freedom Day to commemorate the signing by Abraham Lincoln on February 1, 1865, of the joint resolution adopted by the Senate and the House of Representatives that proposed the 13th amendment to the Constitution." In subsequent years, various governors and all mayors of Philadelphia have issued proclamations designating February 1 as National Freedom Day.

On August 12, 1998, the U.S. Congress designated February 1 as National Freedom Day to be an annual national and patriotic observance.

## **Observance**

A notable National Freedom Day celebration takes place in Philadelphia. Ceremonies are held at Independence Hall, near where the Liberty Bell is housed. There may be speeches, choral groups singing "We Shall Overcome," and other public presentations emphasizing liberty and the role of Richard Robert Wright Sr. in establishing National Freedom Day.

In public schools, it is common to observe National Freedom Day on the first day of **African-American History Month** in February. Students take part in activities focusing on such topics as the Bill of Rights, the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, and the history of the abolitionist movement.

## Contacts and Web Sites

Independence Hall Visitor Center  
143 S. Third St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
215-965-2305; fax: 215-597-1548  
<http://www.nps.gov/inde/>

"National Freedom Day: A Local Legacy"

Library of Congress  
[http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/es/pa/free\\_1](http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/es/pa/free_1)

## Further Reading

Morris, Robert C. "Wright, Richard Robert, Sr." In *African American Lives*, edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Patton, June O. "'And the truth shall make you free': Richard Robert Wright, Sr., Black Intellectual and Iconoclast, 1877-1897. (Vindicating the Race: Contributions to African-American Intellectual History)." *The Journal of Negro History*, January 1996.

Wiggins, William H., Jr. *O Freedom! Afro-American Emancipation Celebrations*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000.



# Native Islander Gullah Celebration

*Date Observed: Month of February*

*Location: Hilton Head Island, South Carolina*

**T**he Native Islander Gullah Celebration is a series of events that are held on Hilton Head Island throughout the month of February each year. Developed to create economic opportunities for minority residents, the cultural festivities also add to area tourism and spotlight the uniqueness of the Gullah people living in the region, which includes a chain of isles known as the Sea Islands (*see also Georgia Sea Island Festival and Penn Center Heritage Days*).

## Historical Background

In 1663 an English sea captain named William Hilton found an island off the coast of South Carolina. At the time, although both English and Spanish explorers had come aground and settled on nearby isles, only native Indian peoples inhabited what would come to be named Hilton Head Island. After Hilton's "discovery," the British took control of the island and established a plantation system to grow indigo, and later, cotton.

During the Civil War, the Confederates first occupied the island, but their position eventually was usurped by Union forces. When the War ended, many of the island's prior residents left, and the majority who remained were newly freed slaves.

The isolation of Hilton Head Island allowed residents to preserve much of their culture, primarily because they were cut off from the mainland and were able to maintain a close community, passing on their beliefs, folktales, crafts, language, and foods over the generations. The Gullah people are direct descendents of the first west Africans brought to the area as slaves. "Gullah" refers to the language, the culture, and the peoples along the southern Carolina, Georgia, and northern Florida coasts. The language is a mixture of Creole, English, and African, heard and only truly understood by someone born and bred in the "low country."

The word *Gullah* may be a derivative of the name of the southwestern African country of Angola; many Gullahs trace their lineage to this region. Another school of thought

attributes the word's origin to the Gola tribe that inhabits the border between Liberia and Sierra Leone. Various sources put forth both theories. Although there seems to be no complete resolution on the issue, there is basic agreement about the west African root of the word.

Because Hilton Head was, in effect, cut off from much of the modern world from the end of the Civil War through the mid-20th century, the Gullah people maintained a lifestyle unique in almost every aspect: how they farmed and fished, sewed and cooked, sang and praised during worship, and educated their children.

The Island seemed to escape the notice of the outside world until it caught the eye of hunters and developers in the 1950s. Three years into that decade, the first car ferry was operational; three years after that, a toll bridge connected Hilton Head Island to the mainland, and its days of seclusion were at an end.

Not surprisingly, however, development of the Island did not automatically bring prosperity to the native islanders. Regardless, the Gullah remain a proud people who are determined to cherish and retain their cultural heritage. In efforts to reach out to their extended west African family members, Gullah groups have traveled to Sierra Leone to participate in homecomings in 1989, 1997, and 2005.

### **Creation of the Festival**

In 1996 the Native Islander Business and Community Affairs Association, Inc., (NIBC-CA) hosted the first annual Native Islander Gullah Celebration. The event's initial aims were: (1) to create economic opportunities for Hilton Head Island's minority business owners; (2) to develop a cultural tourism market for the region; and (3) to significantly increase visitor traffic during the island's slowest tourism month, which, at the time, was February.

### **Observance**

Every day in February can be viewed, unofficially, as part of the annual Native Islanders Gullah Celebration on Hilton Head Island. Officially, there is a published schedule of events each year detailing specific dates and activities. In order to capitalize on the growing number of state, national, and even international tourists who are attracted to the celebration, the major events tend to be scheduled, whenever possible, on Valentine's Day, Presidents' Day, weekends, and around schools' winter breaks.

In addition to a month-long art exhibit, an Arts/Crafts/Food Expo offers demonstrations of such crafts as the age-old art of sweet grass basket sewing and indigo dying. The year-

ly Ol' Fashioned Barbecue offers live entertainment as well as food. Gospel music may be part of the program, or a speaker, or an African dance group. **National Freedom Day** always draws a crowd, with its varied and inspired agenda. Some of the most noted highlights of the celebration month are the panel discussions in which guest residents share some aspect of Gullah traditions.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

Chicora Foundation, Inc.

P.O. Box 8664

861 Arbutus Dr.

Columbia, SC 29202

803-787-6910

<http://www.sciway.net/hist/chicora/mitchelville-6.html>

Coastal Discovery Museum

100 William Hilton Parkway

P.O. Box 23497

Hilton Head Island, SC 29926

843-689-6767

<http://www.coastaldiscovery.org>

Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce and Visitor & Convention Bureau  
1 Chamber Dr.

P.O. Box 5647

Hilton Head Island, SC 29938

843-785-3673 or 800-523-3373

Native Islanders Business and Community Affairs Association

21 Cardinal Rd.

Hilton Head Island, NC 29926

843-689-9314

Hotline: 877-650-0676 or 843-682-3742

<http://www.gullahcelebration.com>

## **Further Reading**

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Orangeburg, SC: Sandlapper Publishing Company, 2005. (young adult)

Coakley, Joyce. *Sweetgrass Baskets and the Gullah Tradition*. Mount Pleasant, SC:

Arcadia Publishing, 2006.

- Goodwine, Marquette L., ed. *The Legacy of Ibo Landing: Gullah Roots of African American Culture*. Atlanta, GA: Clarity Press, 1998.
- Miller, Edward A. *Gullah Statesman: Robert Smalls from Slavery to Congress, 1839-1915*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995.
- Pollitzer, William S. *The Gullah People and Their African Heritage*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999.



# Negro Election Days and Coronation Festivals

*Date Observed: May or June*

*Location: New England*

**D**uring the 18th century, slaves in New England were allowed to elect their own governors or kings while their owners voted in colonial elections. Slaves held a day-long festival known as Negro Election Day, or in the case of an elected king, a coronation festival. The title of the elected office depended on whether the colony was self-governing or closely tied to Britain.

## Historical Background

Some historians contend that slaves in the New England colonies had relatively more freedom than bondspeople in the South. Slave owners allowed various holidays for recreation, and one was election or coronation day in May or June, when masters and slaves alike gathered in the towns to vote. Slaves could not vote for the colony's governor, but in separate outdoor activities sanctioned by slaveholders, slaves annually elected a Negro (the term used at the time) as their governor or king. The person elected often either belonged to a wealthy master or came from a family of chiefs or kings in Africa. For example, in Connecticut, the grandson of an African prince was elected governor, and his son, said to be physically well built and a witty speaker, was elected after him.

The elected person was a leader in the local slave community and served as a judge, mediator, and liaison with slaveowners. He was also an intermediary with ancestors, an important role in many African religions. It is not clear how much power the governor had, but he could mete out punishment—sometimes flogging or even execution—and in general attempted to control morals and manners among slaves.

## Creation of the Observance

Negro Election Day festivities began as early as the 1740s and continued in New England for almost a century. The day-long ceremonies varied somewhat among different com-



munities, but they were generally a blend of African and colonial practices. Slaves were able to maintain some of their African traditions, take part in political activities of their own, and also enjoy socializing, recreation, and colorful processions.

### Observance

Before festivities began on election day, slaves held meetings to listen to candidates' speeches. Over several weeks they debated each other to determine who among them should be chosen governor or king. Once the election took place, the winner paraded through town on a horse borrowed from his master, with aides on each side also riding on borrowed horses. The parade included the entire slave community (or at least all who were able), dressed in their best festive attire. Some played fifes, fiddles, drums, and horns. After the parade, people gathered for a feast, then competed in athletic contests, dancing, gambling, and drinking.

For many whites, the election festivities were "amusing" and reinforced their stereotypical view that slaves were mere children imitating their masters. But, for slaves, the elections were opportunities to exert some control over public expression and to demonstrate their solidarity as a community. These events also paved the way for political engagement of emancipated African Americans in later years.

As African Americans took more control over election days and coronation festivals—as they did with other early festivals, such as **Pinkster**—white authorities began to curtail their observance by passing local laws against black gatherings. In addition, the abolition of slavery contributed to the festivals' demise, after which observances such as **Emancipation Day** and **Juneteenth** held more importance.

### Contacts and Web Sites

"Connecticut's 'Black Governors'"

History and Genealogy Unit

Connecticut State Library

231 Capitol Ave.

Hartford, CT 06106

860-757-6500

<http://www.cslib.org/gov/blackgov.htm>

Seacoast New Hampshire

Black History

P.O. Box 4458

Portsmouth, NH 03802

603-427-2020

<http://www.seacoastnh.com/blackhistory/blacks2.html>

### **Further Reading**

Lawrence, Lee. "Chronicling Black Lives in Colonial New England." *Christian Science Monitor*, October 29, 1997. <http://csmonitor.com/cgi-bin/durableRedirect.pl?durable/1997/10/29/feat/feat.1.html>.

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———. *Black Yankees: The Development of an Afro-American Sub-Culture in Eighteenth-Century New England*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.

White, Shane. "'It Was a Proud Day': African American Festivals and Parades in the North, 1741-1834." *Journal of American History*, June 1994.



# Nicodemus Emancipation and Homecoming Celebration

*Date Observed: Last weekend of July*

*Location: Nicodemus, Kansas*

The combined Emancipation and Homecoming Celebration in Nicodemus, Kansas, takes place the last weekend of July to commemorate the only remaining all-black western town established after the Civil War. The event also marks the August 1, 1834, anniversary of the emancipation of slaves in the West Indies, which created hope for American blacks in bondage (*see also West Indies Emancipation Day*).

## Historical Background

After the Civil War and the Reconstruction period in the United States, newly freed blacks in the South faced harassment by southern politicians and a reign of violence by groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, who opposed black civil rights and economic justice. Fearing for their safety and lives, many African Americans began to move north and west during the late 1870s. Tens of thousands migrated to Kansas, where several African-American towns were established, but only one has survived to this day—Nicodemus. Located along the Solomon River, Nicodemus was settled by about 300 former slaves from Kentucky and Tennessee.

A white land developer, W. R. Hill, and a black minister, William H. Smith, planned the town of Nicodemus, naming it for a slave who, according to legend, was able to buy his freedom. Hill and Smith urged southern black families to relocate to this “promised land” in Kansas, where people could homestead and own property. However, when African Americans arrived in Nicodemus during the winter, the cold weather prevented people from building homes, so they, like other pioneers to the West, were forced to find shelter in dugouts, literally holes dug into mounds of earth.

In the spring, families planted crops, but there was little to harvest because of the harsh growing conditions and stormy weather that often blew seeds and plants away. Some became so discouraged that they returned to the Southeast.

## **“Exodusters”**

**T**he Exoduster Movement of 1879, or the “Colored Exodus,” as it is sometimes called, was prompted by the oppressive conditions for African Americans in the South after Reconstruction. Many blacks who hoped to own land could not find southerners willing to sell or lease them farmland. So they sought land in the West, available under the Homestead Act of 1862. All a person had to do was pick a 160-acre plot on federally owned land, pay a registration fee, live on the plot, cultivate part of it, and at the end of five years the land belonged to the homesteader.

One enterprising pioneer was Benjamin “Pap” Singleton (1809-1892), who became known as the Father of the Exodus and the Moses of the Colored Exodus. A former slave born in Nashville, Tennessee, Singleton began looking for land in Kansas in the early 1870s. In 1877 he helped form the Edgefield Real Estate and Homestead Association that encouraged blacks to move from Tennessee to Kansas to set up black colonies.

It was no simple matter for African Americans to migrate and take up farming in Kansas. The exodusters needed at least \$1,000—a huge sum for former slaves—to pay for transportation, a team of mules, plows, lumber, and other necessities. Yet, between 1877 and 1879, more than 20,000 African Americans made the journey. Between 1870 and 1880, the black population in Kansas increased from 17,108 to 43,107.

Not all of the migrants came from Tennessee. Others from areas along the lower Mississippi River also headed for Kansas in what has been called a spontaneous mass migration. White southerners were so upset by the loss of their workforce that they tried to prevent riverboats from carrying blacks north. Yet, African Americans pushed on, determined to reach the promised land.

In Kansas, many blacks remained poor and endured great hardships, but the majority believed they were better off than they were living under the repressive conditions in the South. They at least owned their land, had the right to vote and run for political office, and the opportunity to educate their children.

## Nicodemus Emancipation and Homecoming Celebration

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*Festivalgoers at the 1998 celebration assemble in Township Park to await the National Park Service ceremony that will officially dedicate the town as Nicodemus National Historic Site. The U.S. Congress had designated it as such in 1996.*

Yet, Nicodemus did begin to develop as a bona fide town, and by the 1880s, a bank, several stores, three churches, two hotels, a newspaper, and a school had been established. Townspeople hoped for continued growth and tried to convince the Union Pacific Railroad to extend track to Nicodemus. But town leaders and the railroad could not reach an agreement about financing, thus leaving Nicodemus without rail service. As a result, some businesses began to leave and the town began to decline, although a reported 600 residents were living in this farming community during the first decade of the 1900s.

Some Nicodemus farmers who stayed to work their land prospered, but farm prices fell during the Great Depression and a three-year drought in the 1930s. The Kansas dust bowl of 1935 further devastated the town, whose population dropped to 76.

In 1996 Nicodemus was designated a national historic site, which includes five original buildings: the First Baptist Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the township hall, the St. Francis Hotel, and the school. As of the early 21st century, about two dozen people lived in Nicodemus.

## **Creation of the Festival**

Since 1878 settlers in Nicodemus have held an Emancipation Day celebration on August 1, the day in 1834 when Britain ended slavery in all its Caribbean colonies. The West Indies Emancipation Celebration of August 1 was highly symbolic for U.S. slaves, who saw hope for their own freedom. Now held on the last weekend in July, the Nicodemus Emancipation and Homecoming draws former residents and descendants from many parts of the United States.

## **Observance**

The original Emancipation celebration has become a Homecoming with about 600 people attending to reunite with family and friends. They share stories about the past and visit with the director of the Nicodemus Historical Society, Angela Bates-Tompkins, who once lived and worked in Washington, D.C., but returned to Nicodemus to make her home and boost the historical significance of the town. In addition, participants enjoy a variety of activities, such as a parade, wagon rides and tours, horse rides for children, a **Buffalo Soldiers** exhibition, a fashion show, food and craft vendors, dances, church services, and gospel music.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

Nicodemus Historical Society  
R.R. #2, Box 139  
Nicodemus, KS 67625  
785-421-3311

Nicodemus National Historic Site  
304 Washington Ave.  
Nicodemus, KS 67625-3015  
785-839-4233; fax: 785-839-4325  
<http://www.nps.gov/nico/>

## **Further Reading**

Attoun, Marti. "The Spirit of Nicodemus." *American Profile*, January 26-February 1, 2003. [http://www.americanprofile.com/issues/20030126/20030126\\_2765.asp](http://www.americanprofile.com/issues/20030126/20030126_2765.asp).

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## Nicodemus Emancipation and Homecoming Celebration

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# Odunde Festival

***Date Observed: Second Sunday in June***

***Location: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania***

**T**he Odunde Festival brings hundreds of followers of Yoruba cultural and religious traditions to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on the second Sunday in June each year. *Odunde* (oh-doon-day) means “Happy New Year” in the Yoruba language of west Africa, and celebrates the coming of another year for African Americans and people of African descent worldwide who observe the Yoruba faith.

## **Historical Background**

Traditional religious practices celebrated at the festival stem from the Yoruba people of Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, and Benin. In accordance with the belief system, Olodumare (oh-low-DOO-may-ray), the supreme being, holds all power in the universe, gives life, and is directly involved in earthly affairs through hundreds of intermediaries known as orishas (aw-REE-SHAWS). Devotees venerate the orishas with rituals either individually or in ceremonies conducted by priests or priestesses.

## **Creation of the Festival**

Lois Fernandez visited Africa in the 1970s and observed festivals for various orishas in Nigerian towns and villages. Upon her return to the United States, Fernandez hoped to duplicate such a festival in Philadelphia, her hometown. She was particularly impressed and moved by ceremonies honoring Oshun (aw-SHOON), an orisha associated with rivers. She had seen Oshun festivals at riverbanks in Nigerian as well as U.S. cities.

Fernandez and a group of family and friends were determined to make the festival happen near the Schuylkill River, but there were bureaucratic hurdles and doubters. However, Fernandez and her supporters had a mission: to convince the community that they could stage a cultural event that would bring African Americans together for a rewarding and long-lasting celebration. The group accomplished its goal when the first

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*The Odunde procession on the South Street Bridge returns to the festival site after participants make offerings to Oshun. In the center are drummers Baba Crowder and John Wilkie from the Kulu Mele African Dance Ensemble. To the right (in a dark-colored dress) is priest and percussionist Nana Korantemaa Ayeboafa.*

festival, then known as the Oshun Festival, took place in 1975 by the Schuylkill River. Later, the name was changed to the Odunde Festival.

Over the years, there has been organized opposition to the festival as neighborhoods have struggled with gentrification—affluent or middle-class people buying and upgrading urban property, often displacing lower-income people. Opponents have presented petitions to city officials in attempts to get the festival moved to a location other than South Street in central Philadelphia. But Odunde supporters have prevailed, defending their right to keep the festival where it is.

## **Observance**

The Odunde Festival brings together devotees of Ifa (a god who knows each person's destiny), Santería (Yoruba-based traditions from Cuba), Candomblé (African-based religious traditions in Brazil), and other followers of traditional African cultural and religious systems (*see also* **Honoring Santería Orishas, Ifa Festival and Yoruba National Convention, and Olokun Festival**).

Overseen by a Yoruba priest or priestess, the Odunde ceremonies begin with a procession led by Egungun—dancers who wear masks representing ancestral spirits. Sacred batáa drummers chant and drum to the orishas, and followers dance and sing as they proceed toward the Schuylkill River where offerings of fruit and flowers are made to Oshun.

After the procession returns to the starting point on South Street, huge crowds gather along 10 city blocks. Vendors from many African nations, the Caribbean, and Brazil sell food, crafts, and other merchandise. Performers on several stages and at street corners entertain participants.

Writer Junious Ricardo Stanton offered this description of his festival experience in *Chicken Bones: A Journal*: “Being at Odunde is like a mystical baptism. The festival there immerses you in a vibratory sea of blackness. You get dipped into a positive spirit of being African and come up revived, energized, and feeling good.”

To celebrate the festival’s 20th anniversary in 1995, the Philadelphia Folklore Project presented an exhibit on the festival, titled “ODUNDE: Preserving Cultural Traditions.” Through photographs, paintings, memorabilia, and narratives, the exhibit was designed to highlight the festival’s importance to the city. In 2005 the exhibit was updated to mark Odunde’s 30th anniversary. More than 300,000 people attended that year.

### Contacts and Web Sites

Odunde  
P.O. Box 21748  
Philadelphia, PA 19146  
215-732-8508  
<http://www.odundeinc.org/Index.htm>

“ODUNDE Exhibition”  
Philadelphia Folklore Project  
735 S. 50th St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19143  
215-726-1106  
<http://www.folkloreproject.org/programs/exhibits/odunde/index.cfm>

### Further Reading

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# Olokun Festival

***Date Observed: Last weekend in February***

***Location: Oyotunji African Village,  
South Carolina***

**T**he Olokun Festival in the Oyotunji African Village near Sheldon, South Carolina, honors an orisha (spirit or deity) known as Olokun (or Olocun) on the last weekend in February. In the Yoruba religion that originated in west Africa, *Olokun* means “owner of the oceans.” Honoring Olokun is just one of nine festivals for an orisha held each year in the Oyotunji African Village (*see also Ifa Festival and Yoruba National Convention*).

## Historical Background

Orisha myths and rituals are basic to the Yoruba religion, which began in Nigeria centuries ago. The orishas represent the forces of nature, and serve as patrons or “guardian angels” for those who worship them. Their characteristics and *patakis* (stories) are similar to those of ancient Greek and Roman gods and goddesses. However, unlike the inaccessible Greek and Roman deities, the orishas live among their followers in all natural and manufactured objects. Specific colors, numbers, natural elements, icons, drum rhythms, and dance steps are associated with each orisha.

Olokun may be represented as a male or female, or both. Some icons picture this orisha as a mermaid; others as a deep sea king rather like the Greek god Neptune. There are two sides of Olokun: one characterizes the dangerous elements of the ocean that can capsize ships, flood land, and drown people. The other personifies the wealth and mysteries at the bottom of the sea.

For followers, Olokun signifies limitless wisdom—more than can ever be learned or understood. The orisha also has power over dreams, psychic abilities, meditation, mental health, and wealth.

## **Creation of the Festival**

The Olokun Festival began in 1970 when the Oyotunji African Village was founded as a kingdom patterned after those in west Africa. The Olokun Festival was established to celebrate the Yoruba orisha of the deep sea and protector of the African soul.

## **Observance**

During the festival, devotees visit a shrine that contains Olokun's colors of deep blue and white, and the orisha's number, 7. Batáa drummers perform special rhythms for Olokun, and dancers may offer prayers (*see also Honoring Santería Orishas*).

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

Kingdom of Oyotunji African Village  
Highway 17, P.O. Box 51  
Sheldon, SC 29941  
843-846-8900  
[http://www.oyotunjivillage.net/oyo2\\_007.htm](http://www.oyotunjivillage.net/oyo2_007.htm)

Lukumi Church of the Orishas  
1756 E. 172nd St.  
Bronx, NY 10472  
718-597-9600  
<http://www.lukumichurch.org/olocun.html>

## **Further Reading**

- Edward, Gary, and John Mason. *Black Gods: Orisa Studies in the New World*. Brooklyn, NY: Yoruba Theological Archministry, 1998.
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# Pan African Bookfest and Cultural Conference

*Date Observed: 10 days in April or May*

*Location: Fort Lauderdale, Florida*

**T**he Pan African Bookfest and Cultural Conference is a 10-day spring event held in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Sponsored by the Broward County Library, the festival provides an opportunity to take part in literary events grounded in African-American and Caribbean cultural ideals and traditions.

## Historical Background

According to scholars Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates Jr., Pan-Africanism “in its most straightforward version . . . is the political project calling for the unification of all Africans into a single African state to which those in the diaspora can return. In its vaguer, more cultural forms Pan-Africanism has pursued literary and artistic projects that bring together people in Africa and her diaspora.”

In 1900 the Pan-African Congress was held in London. There delegates began formulating the idea of creating a unity campaign to champion the rights of African peoples everywhere throughout the globe.

Additional conferences followed in the years spanning 1919-1945 under the leadership of writer and activist W. E. B. Du Bois. The last conference in 1945 was held in Manchester, England, and brought together 90 conferees from Africa, the United States, and the Caribbean. All agreed that their peoples’ destinies must no longer be in the economic or political control of others. A sense of militancy arose at this meeting, boosting morale for the emerging struggles for independence on the African continent.

In 1958 the first meeting of the leaders of all independent African states convened at the All-African People’s Conference. At that meeting, specific recognition was given to the role that African Americans and West Indian Americans had played, to date, in the

achievement of the Pan-African Movement. (See also **Haile Selassie's Birthday**; **Marcus Garvey's Birthday**; **Pan African Festival of Georgia**; and **Pan African Film & Arts Festival**).

## **Creation of the Festival**

In 1986 the first Broward County African American Caribbean Cultural Arts Conference was held, leading to formal incorporation of a nonprofit organization two years later. The annual conference began to expand its horizons. Seeking to draw in more segments of the community, its range expanded from being more than a literary event to include visual, performing and other expressions of the arts as well. In 1989 organizers added the Pan African Bookfest that included visual art, music, dance, and drama as well as literary activities.

In 2002 the African American Research Library and Cultural Center of the East Broward County Florida Library opened. Since then, the Broward County Library, the ninth largest library system in the United States, has been the main site of the Bookfest.

## **Observance**

The 10 days over which the Pan African Bookfest and Cultural Conference is held—usually in April or May—offer something for everyone. Among the many highlights are the panel presentations that include authors (both known and emerging); representatives from all media markets such as film, magazines, newspapers, radio, and television; and local, national, and international government leaders and officials. Popular draws include book signings, sales and author readings, receptions, and talks and discussions with noted scholars. Writing and cultural workshops are sometimes held, as are mini-film festivals. A “Poet in Residence” and “Visiting Scholar” are selected annually and take part in several events.

By far, the most anticipated day of the entire event falls on the final Saturday. “Bookfest Day” is held at nearby Samuel Delevoe Park and is open to the entire community. Offerings include plenty of ethnic food and drink, drumming, and ceremonial rites that recall African roots and heritage. Multiple activities are planned on this day for children, ranging from their own author meet-and-greets to book-making workshops to storytelling and oral history events to a **Junkanoo** Parade. Bookfest Day presents an opportunity for arts and crafts developed over the centuries to be shared with new generations, perhaps kindling new interest to carry on old traditions.



## Contacts and Web Sites

Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau  
100 E. Broward Blvd., Ste. 200  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301  
800-227-8669; fax: 954-765-4466  
<http://www.sunny.org>

Pan African Bookfest and Cultural Conference  
African American Research Library & Cultural Center  
East Broward County Florida Library  
2650 Sistrunk Blvd.  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33311  
954-625-2800 (AARLCC)  
954-357-7348 (Bookfest Hotline)  
<http://www.broward.org/library/aarlcc.htm>  
<http://www.broward.org/library/pabf.htm>

## Further Reading

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# Pan African Festival of Georgia

*Date Observed: Last week in April*

*Location: Macon, Georgia*

The annual Pan African Festival of Georgia celebrates influences of the African diaspora. Sponsored by the Tubman African American Museum in Macon, its purpose is to promote understanding between people worldwide through a week of events.

## Historical Background

Father Richard Keil of Macon founded the Tubman Museum in the 1980s. Keil had been involved with the civil rights movement years before, and he wanted to build a cultural center that would foster understanding and race relations in the South by celebrating African-American accomplishments.

With a coalition of others sharing the same goal, Keil found space in an abandoned downtown building, which was refurbished and opened in 1985 as The Harriet Tubman Center for Spiritual and Cultural Awareness. Its name was changed, however, because many people thought the center focused on Harriet Tubman and her accomplishments (*see also Harriet Tubman Day*). Although dedicated to Tubman's spirit, the center became The Tubman African American Museum to reflect the fact that it is dedicated to African-American art, culture, and history.

## Creation of the Festival

In 1997, with the sponsorship of the Tubman Museum, Mrs. Chi Ezekwueche, a local artist and community activist, founded the Pan African Festival of Georgia as a one-day event. She, and other Macon leaders, designed a festival that would draw a diverse audience into events highlighting African and African-American culture.

## Observance

The Pan African Festival now is a week-long event. The 10th annual festival was held in 2006, which was also the 25th anniversary of the Tubman Museum.

Activities include an Oral Traditions Day, with storytellers focusing on African and southern U.S. folktales. A Taste of Soul provides food prepared by celebrity chefs. Poetry and spoken word performances are presented, as well as Pan-African films, a lecture series, and musical entertainment. A Pan African Festival parade features music and masquerade. The festival concludes with a Day in the Park in downtown Macon, where vendors offer food and crafts, and musicians perform jazz, rhythm and blues, reggae, and gospel.

## Contacts and Web Sites

"Pan African Festival of Georgia"

New Georgia Encyclopedia, a project of the Georgia Humanities Council

Main Library

University of Georgia

Athens, GA 30602

<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-760>

Tubman African American Museum

P.O. Box 6671

Macon, GA 31208

478-743-8544; fax: 478-743-9063

<http://www.tubmanmuseum.com/programs/panafrican/>



# Pan African Film & Arts Festival

*Date Observed: February*  
*Location: Los Angeles, California*

The Pan African Film & Arts Festival (PAFF) is designed to promote cultural and racial tolerance and dialogue through film and other art forms. Held in Los Angeles, California, each February, the festival presents works by people of the African diaspora from the Americas to Europe to the Caribbean.

## Historical Background

Film festivals occur every month of the year in the United States, and often these events showcase films that seldom, if ever, appear in mainstream movie theaters. Black film festivals are no exception, and they have been occurring since the 1980s, usually presenting work created, produced, directed, and acted by people of African descent (*see also African American Women in Cinema Film Festival; African Film Festival; American Black Film Festival; Denver Pan African Film Festival; and Hollywood Black Film Festival*).

The driving force behind the Pan African Film & Arts Festival in Los Angeles is Ayuko Babu. He is founder and executive director of PAFF and got involved because of his political interests and cultural activities. He has called himself “a product of the ‘60s” — a member of the Black Panther Party, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Pan African Movement, and the Black Student Alliance in Los Angeles that helped establish black studies programs.

Some of Babu’s cultural activities included a trip accompanying Stevie Wonder to Nigeria for the 1977 Black Festival of Art and Culture. He also worked with African governments to bring African films to the United States as a way to inform U.S. blacks about international issues. A major effort was rallying the black community to urge the U.S. government not to lift sanctions on South Africa, thus helping to rid that country of apartheid.

## Creation of the Festival

The first Pan African Film & Arts Festival was held in February 1992, when public funding became available for cultural activities. In 1995 the Magic Johnson Theaters opened at the Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza, and the festival moved to that location.

## Observance

The Pan African Film & Arts Festival is scheduled in February as an **African-American History Month** event. It is the official black history celebration in Los Angeles, and it is also considered one of the most important cultural festivals in the city. The festival focuses on the creativity of people of African heritage and presents more than 100 films from Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean, Europe, and Canada. The films include documentaries, features, and shorts.

During the festival, there is an Artist Market with a fine art show along with exhibits of crafts and wearable art. Poets, storytellers, and musicians also appear. Workshops and panel discussions for beginning filmmakers are held, and a studentfest and childrensfest offer opportunities for young people from Los Angeles schools to view age-appropriate black films. A highlight of the festival is the Night of Tribute when individuals are honored for their lifetime achievements. In 2006 actor Louis Gossett Jr. received the top honor, the PAFF Lifetime Achievement award.

## Contact and Web Site

PAFF Headquarters  
3775 Santa Rosalia Dr.  
Los Angeles, CA 90008

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*Ayuko Babu (right), founder of the Pan African Film & Arts Festival, and South Africa Consul-General Jeanette Ndhlovu (left) at the 2006 festival's opening night gala.*

323-295-1706; fax: 323-295-1952  
<http://www.paff.org/html/index.php>

### **Further Reading**

Rampell, Ed. "Ayuko Babu" (interview). *Los Angeles City Beat*, February 10, 2006.  
<http://www.lacitybeat.com/article.php?id=1654&IssueNum=88>.



# Paul Robeson's Birthday

*Date Observed: April 9*

*Locations: Communities nationwide*

**P**aul Robeson, scholar, singer, actor, civil rights activist, and athlete, is remembered on his birthday, April 9, in various locations around the world, particularly since his death in 1976.

## Historical Background

Born in 1898, Paul Robeson was the son of William Robeson, an escaped slave who became a Presbyterian minister, and Maria Bustill Robeson, a school teacher. Robeson grew up in Princeton, New Jersey, and received a scholarship to attend Rutgers College (now Rutgers University) where he graduated as valedictorian. While at Rutgers, he also participated in four sports—football, basketball, baseball, and track—and earned 12 varsity letters.

Robeson went on to Columbia University, where he met and married Eslanda (Essie) Cardozo Goode, who eventually became a scientist and journalist. The couple had one child, Paul Robeson Jr.

After earning his law degree in 1923, Robeson joined a New York City law firm, but was discouraged by the racial discrimination he experienced. He quit the legal profession, and with his wife's encouragement, launched a stage career as an actor and singer. Among his many accomplishments were performances of Shakespeare's *Othello* in London, sold-out concerts in Europe and at Carnegie Hall, starring roles in musicals and films, and hundreds of recordings.

Throughout his acting and singing career Robeson also developed controversial political views. During a 1930s concert tour in the Soviet Union, he was influenced by socialist ideas. In the Soviet Union and other parts of Europe, Robeson and his family were able to live without the racism they experienced in the United States.

He frequently spoke out against racism, protested segregation practices in the United States, and refused to criticize the Soviet Union during the anti-Communist period of the



*In 2004 the U.S. Postal Service issued this commemorative stamp in honor of Paul Robeson.*

late 1940s and the early 1950s. As a result, his political views brought condemnation from many sources, not the least of which was the U.S. government. He was labeled a Communist, and his passport was revoked for eight years, preventing any concert tours abroad. In the United States, theaters, concert halls, and other venues refused to allow him a stage.

In spite of continual harassment and a great loss of income, he continued his efforts for civil rights and the labor and peace movements. He worked diligently to improve the lives of common people everywhere.

During the 1970s, the U.S. public once again began to recognize Paul Robeson's talents and achievements. But not until after his death in 1976 were efforts made to accurately portray his life.

### **Creation of the Observance**

No single celebration of Paul Robeson's birthday on April 9 marks the first obser-

vance. But there were many memorials held after his death in 1976. Since the late 1970s, Robeson has been commemorated in cities and towns around the world with proclamations and resolutions that declare April 9 Paul Robeson Day.

### **Observance**

Although Robeson's birthday commemorations have been observed to this day, special centennial celebrations took place on April 9, 1998. There were more than 400 observances of Robeson's birthday in the United States, Canada, and other countries. Museums, libraries, and schools featured Robeson exhibits. Film festivals and musical presentations paid tribute to Robeson's work. In school classrooms, students observed Paul Robeson's Birthday by learning about his life. Choral readings, speeches, and newspaper and magazine articles honored him on that day, as did documentaries and concerts.



Each year the King County government in Washington state conducts a Paul Robeson Scholar-Athlete Award program, and Rutgers University, Robeson's alma mater, offers a scholarship in his name.

Paul Robeson has also been remembered with musical tributes, induction into the Rutgers University Football Hall of Fame, dedication of buildings and statues, peace movement and labor union commemorations, a U.S. postage stamp, and multi-media exhibits of his life.

### Contacts and Web Sites

King County Courthouse  
516 Third Ave.  
Seattle, WA 98104  
206-296-0100 or 800-325-6165  
<http://www.metrokc.gov/exec/robeson/about.htm>

Paul Robeson Cultural Center  
Rutgers University  
600 Bartholomew Rd.  
Piscataway, NJ 08854  
732-445-3545; fax: 732-445-3151  
<http://prcc.rutgers.edu/index.html>

### Further Reading

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Foner, Philip S. *Paul Robeson Speaks: Writings, Speeches, and Interviews, a Centennial Celebration 1918-1974*. Secacus, NJ: Lyle Stuart/Citadel Press, 1982.  
Gerlach, Larry R. "Robeson, Paul." In *African American Lives*, edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

### Writing by Paul Robeson

*Here I Stand*. 1958. Reprint. Boston: Beacon Press, 1998.

### Basic Beliefs

Paul Robeson summed up some of his basic beliefs in his book *Here I Stand*:

"I learned that the essential character of a nation is determined not by the upper classes, but by the common people, and that the common people of all nations are truly brothers in the great family of mankind. . . . This belief in the oneness of humankind, about which I have often spoken in concerts and elsewhere, has existed within me side by side with my deep attachment to the cause of my own race."



## Penn Center Heritage Days

***Date Observed: Second weekend in November***

***Location: St. Helena Island, South Carolina***

**P**enn Center on St. Helena Island, South Carolina, has sponsored the annual Penn Center Heritage Days since the 1980s. The celebration on the second weekend in November calls attention to the history and culture of the Gullah, also known as Geechee, people. The terms describe not only the people, but also the language that has been kept intact since slavery.

### **Historical Background**

St. Helena Island is one of the Sea Islands along the coast of South Carolina and Georgia. Slaves were brought to the area from west African nations such as Angola, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Senegal. The enslaved people established creole, a blend of English and African languages that became known as Gullah.

The slaves and, later, freed Africans preserved much of their culture, primarily because they were cut off from the mainland and were able to maintain a close community, passing on their beliefs, folktales, crafts, language, and foods over the generations. Gullah people on St. Helena Island are direct descendents of the first west Africans brought to the area as slaves.

Penn Center on St. Helena Island is the site of one of the nation's first schools for emancipated blacks. Established in 1862, before the Emancipation Proclamation became effective, Penn School was part of an experiment of a Pennsylvania abolitionist group that wanted to educate freed African Americans (*see also* **Emancipation Day**).

The school began in one room that soon became too crowded. In 1864 a building was constructed on a section of a 50-acre plot that eventually became a campus with 19 buildings, including a cottage where Martin Luther King Jr. stayed during meetings of civil rights groups (*see also* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**). The campus was designated a national historic landmark in 1974.

## Creation of the Festival

An annual heritage festival was held at Penn Center from the early 1900s until 1948, when the independent school closed and the state took over its administration. In 1981 Emory Campbell, former executive director of Penn Center, and other graduates of the school, revived the celebration. The group hoped to stimulate interest in the history and culture of the Sea Islands and to counteract the negative impact of renovation activities, as well as the derision that many Gullah faced because of their language. Younger generations have tended to view Gullah as quaint speech or a backward dialect.

The first heritage event drew about 200 people for a day of festivities. Since its inception, Heritage Days has grown to more than 10,000 people participating in a three-day celebration.

The festival was postponed in 1999 and 2000, because of a South Carolina tourism boycott by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The NAACP protested the Confederate flag flying over the statehouse. Although the flag came down, the organization continued its boycott because a Confederate flag was installed at a soldiers memorial on statehouse land. In 2001, however, Penn Center restored the festival.

## Observance

An opening ceremony at Penn Center Heritage Days includes the presentation of “Flags of the Gullah People.” These national flags represent African, South American, and Caribbean countries from which people were captured and enslaved.

During the three-day celebration, there are demonstrations of basketmaking, knitting, and net-making—the last representing the fishery occupations of earlier generations. Musical performances feature blues and gospel singers.

Educational seminars encourage Gullah landowners, who still own much of the property on St. Helena Island, to retain land that has been in their families for generations. As is true in other locations on the Sea Islands, investors have been purchasing land to build expensive homes and resorts.

One of the main events during the 2005 celebration was the presentation of *De Nyew Testament*, a Gullah translation of the New Testament, which was on sale at the festival. The translation was a 26-year joint project of the American Bible Society, the Summer Institute of Linguistics, Wycliffe Bible Translators, the United Bible Societies, and Penn Center.

*See also Georgia Sea Island Festival and Native Islander Gullah Celebration.*

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce  
Visitors Information  
P.O. Box 754  
Beaufort, SC 29901  
843-986-1102; fax: 843-379-8027  
<http://www.bcbcc.org/visitors.php>

Penn School National Historic Landmark District  
P.O. Box 126  
St. Helena Island, SC 29920  
843-838-2432; fax: 843-838-8545  
<http://www.penncenter.com>

## **Further Reading**

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- . "Heritage Days Celebration Begins." *Beaufort Gazette*, November 12, 2004. [http://www.beaufortgazette.com/local\\_news/story/4174245p-3947804c.html](http://www.beaufortgazette.com/local_news/story/4174245p-3947804c.html).
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# Pinkster

*Date Observed: May or June*

*Location: New York*

**P**inkster was a spring celebration that came to America with Dutch immigrants in the 1600s. They settled in parts of what are now the states of New York and New Jersey and called their adopted home New Netherland. Dutch slave owners allowed enslaved Africans to take part in the holiday festivities. By the 1800s, the Dutch no longer dominated the celebration, and Pinkster became primarily an African-American holiday. In 1811, the town council of Albany, New York, passed a law banning the festival.

## Historical Background

During the 17th century, Dutch immigrants celebrated renewal of life in the spring, a festival that corresponded with the Christian holy day Whitsunday, or Pentecost. The Pinkster festival name stems from *Pinksteren*, Dutch for Pentecost, a holiday that takes place seven weeks after Easter and commemorates the coming of the Holy Spirit to Jesus's followers after his death and resurrection. It was also a time for visiting family and friends. Dutch owners allowed their slaves to join the festivities, giving them a brief respite from hard, tedious labor.

Although slavery is commonly associated with the South, there were more than 5,000 slaves in the North in 1700. By 1790, there were more than 32,700 slaves in just two states: New York and New Jersey. Slaves labored on New England farms that were far apart, and often their family members were sold to farmers long distances away.

## Creation of the Festival

Between 1790 and 1810 when Pinkster celebrations were at their peak in Albany, New York, the three-to-four-day holiday combined Dutch and African slave cultures. But as the Dutch began to focus more on American holidays such as Independence Day, Pinkster increasingly took on an African flavor and became known as an African-American

holiday. Enslaved people who gathered were able to experience independence for a short time; reunite with family and friends; make a little money by selling crafts, berries, herbs, sassafras bark, and beverages; and maintain African traditions. Through speeches, storytelling, and song, slaves also mimicked and poked fun at whites in subtle ways.

## **Observance**

Weeks before the Albany Pinkster festivities, preparations for the event began on Pinkster Hill, which is now the site of the New York State Capitol. People built brush shelters, much like those in Africa, or they set up tents. At the top of the hill, arbors formed an arena for King Charles, a well-known slave from Angola (*see also Negro Election Days and Coronation Festivals*).

When King Charles arrived, he led a procession through town and up the hill where he was welcomed in a royal ceremony. From his heightened position, King Charles could look down upon the town below, a symbolic representation of the importance of African kings and leaders as well as an ironic display of a reverse of power. The king directed the holiday activities, which included long drum and dance sessions.

An authentic recreation of Pinkster takes place for one day in May each year at Philipsburg Manor, which was once a Colonial-era milling and trading complex. At the Manor in Sleepy Hollow, New York, there is music, dance, food, and sports activities plus African folktale presentations and demonstrations of traditional African instruments.

A Pinkster carnival is also held annually at the Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum in Brooklyn, New York. The one-day event in June includes African-inspired music and dance and sports competitions.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

Philipsburg Manor  
Route 9  
Sleepy Hollow, NY 10591  
914-631-3992; fax: 914-631-7740  
<http://www.hudsonvalley.org/pinkster/index.html>

Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum  
5816 Clarendon Rd.  
Brooklyn, NY 11203  
718-629-5400; fax: 718-629-3125  
<http://www.wyckoffassociation.org/>

### Further Reading

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White, Shane. "Pinkster: Afro-Dutch Syncretization in New York City and the Hudson Valley." *Journal of American Folklore*, January-March 1989.

Williams-Myers, Albert James. *Long Hammering: Essays on the Forging of an African-American Presence in the Hudson River Valley to the Early Twentieth Century*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1994.







# Rondo Days Celebration

*Date Observed: Third weekend in July*

*Location: St. Paul, Minnesota*

**T**he Rondo Days Celebration in St. Paul, Minnesota, is an annual African-American sponsored multicultural event on the third weekend in July. It seeks to promote a sense of community, stability, and neighborhood values.

## Historical Background

Rondo Avenue in St. Paul was created in the 1850s. The area encompassing it quickly became a melting pot for immigrants from Italy, Sweden, and Russia, as well as from other nations. However, by the 1930s and 1940s, more and more incoming residents were transplanted African Americans from the South who came to view this area as their own geographic haven. Described as vibrant and vital, the predominantly black Rondo community was in many ways almost an island refuge, the center of St. Paul's largest black residential neighborhoods.

In the early 1960s, Interstate Highway 94 was built through the area. The freeway disrupted the cultural, economic and social balance of St. Paul when it essentially erased Rondo. Thousands of African Americans were displaced from not only their physical residences but also from their close-knit community, their sense of belonging and place. A large chunk of history was destroyed along with the destruction of this legendary neighborhood. The lives of people were affected in numerous ways as they were thrust into a discriminatory housing market in a racially segregated city.

## Creation of the Festival

In 1982, a small group of St. Paul residents met to discuss ways in which they might try to resurrect the values of the razed Rondo neighborhood and expand its spirit throughout the greater St. Paul community. The following year, Rondo Avenue, Inc., a non-profit association, was created and the first celebration was held that very year.

Rondo Avenue's mission is to provide a forum and foundation for promoting and developing good family ties and entrepreneurship throughout minority communities within Minnesota's Twin Cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis. It attends to the young and old, the impoverished, and, especially, the under-served citizen. In addition to the annual Rondo Days Celebration, the organization offers a full spectrum of programs to the community, including an Art Fair with the African American Cultural Center Black Arts Festival, Miss Black Minnesota Pageant, Jazz Outside in Martin Luther King Park, and many others.

## **Observance**

Planning for the Rondo Days Celebration begins early; weekly community meetings are held each May through July. The first festival in 1983 drew about 25,000 people, and that number has much more than quadrupled in the succeeding years. As the largest African-American sponsored festival in Minnesota, it is, however, a multicultural event that celebrates all people, art, music and foods.

Thursday evening begins with a Senior Social to honor the community's elderly population. Friday night's schedule includes a Gala Opening for adults only, complete with music and food. Saturday kicks off with the annual parade, typically with hundreds of entrants. The parade route ends at the festival grounds, host to the Car Show and Gospel/Jazz Fest—a misnomer, actually, since music as diverse as Asian and Mexican can be heard until the weekend draws to a close. There are also other types of live entertainment, merchants and vendors of all sorts, dance and drill team competitions and exhibitions, and the other kinds of fun that participants would expect to find at a "neighborhood" festival.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

Minnesota Historical Society  
345 W. Kellogg Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55102  
651-296-6126  
<http://www.mnhs.org>

Rondo Avenue, Inc.  
1360 University Ave., #140  
St. Paul, MN 55140  
651-646-6597  
<http://www.rondodays.org>

### **Further Reading**

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Fairbanks, Evelyn. *The Days of Rondo*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1990.



# Rosa Parks Day

***Date Observed: December 1***

***Location: Communities nationwide***

**R**osa Parks Day on December 1 has been observed statewide in Michigan and Ohio and in various communities across the United States. It is a day to commemorate December 1, 1955, when Rosa Parks, an African-American civil rights activist, refused an order to give up her seat on a segregated bus to a white passenger, sparking a bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama.

## **Historical Background**

Rosa Parks was born in 1913 to James McCauley, a carpenter, and Leona McCauley, a teacher. At the time Rosa was born, the family, which eventually included a younger brother, Sylvester, lived in Tuskegee, Alabama. They moved to Pine Level, Alabama, to live on a farm with her mother's parents so that Leona McCauley could go back to teaching school in Spring Hill, about eight miles away. James McCauley went north to work, and seldom communicated with his family.

Young Rosa was taught to read at home. Her formal education began when she was six years old in a one-room elementary school, all that was available for blacks in Pine Level. When she was 11 years old, her mother enrolled her in the Montgomery (Alabama) Industrial School for Girls, founded by northern white women who believed black girls should be educated. She completed the 8th grade before the school closed; the aging founders and teachers were unable to continue their work. Rosa received two years of high school education at a laboratory school at Alabama State Teachers' College for Negroes. She dropped out at the beginning of the 11th grade to care for her ill grandmother.

Her grandmother died within a month, and Rosa returned to Montgomery, where she got a job in a shirt factory and went back to school for a short time. She met Raymond Parks when she was in her late teenage years, and the two married in 1932. Both were active members of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement

of Colored People (NAACP). Rosa Parks was secretary of the NAACP chapter from 1943 to 1956 and was involved in voter-registration drives.

In her autobiography, Rosa Parks describes the numerous cases of verbal and physical harassment and discrimination against blacks during the years following World War II. She was especially incensed that when black veterans, her brother Sylvester among them, came back to the South they were not allowed to vote. Her brother left and moved to Detroit, Michigan.

But lack of enfranchisement was not the only problem. Attacks on African Americans increased. She recalled in her autobiography: "I remember 1949 as a very bad year. Things happened that most people never heard about, because they never were reported in the newspapers. At times I felt overwhelmed by all the violence and hatred, but there was nothing to do but keep going."

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*Rosa Parks in 1984.*

## The Bus Boycott

On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks had just left her job and was distracted thinking about her efforts to set up a NAACP workshop. When she boarded a bus, she did not realize the driver was the same person who had evicted her from a bus years earlier. "Most of the time if I saw him on the bus I didn't get on it," she wrote.

She sat down on one of the middle seats of the bus, and when numerous white passengers got on at one of the stops, the driver ordered her to get up and let a white man have her seat. She refused to move, and reported, "People always say that I didn't give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn't true. I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. . . .No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in." She had had enough of the denigrating treatment and the daily indignities imposed by white society.

Rosa Parks was forcefully removed from the bus and arrested. She was released on bail. That was the beginning of a series of actions to challenge segregation on public trans-

portation. As part of that effort, African-American leaders, including Martin Luther King Jr., organized a boycott of city buses that lasted for more than a year (*see also **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday***). Parks lost her job because of the boycott, as did many other blacks who supported the cause.

Meantime, lawsuits against segregation were filed, and in 1956 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that segregation on public transportation was unconstitutional in Montgomery and elsewhere in the South. After that decision, Rosa and Raymond Parks received death threats and could not find jobs, so they, and Rosa's mother, moved to Detroit, Michigan.

## **Later Life and Honors**

In 1965 Rosa Parks went to work for U.S. Representative John Conyers Jr. in his Detroit office, where she was a staff member for 20 years. Rosa Parks continued her activism as well. After her husband died in 1977, she and a friend established the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self-Development, focusing on human rights. She received numerous honors and awards for her efforts toward social justice. In 1999, President Bill Clinton awarded her the Congressional Gold Medal of Honor, the highest civilian award in the United States.

After her death on October 24, 2005, at the age of 92, Rosa Parks's body was transported to the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol Building for a public ceremony. She was the first woman whose body laid in honor in the rotunda. Thousands attended her funeral in Detroit, Michigan, and paid tribute to her.

On December 1, 2005, President George W. Bush signed legislation directing that a statue of Rosa Parks be created and placed in the National Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol Building.

## **Creation of the Observance**

Not long after Rosa Parks's death, the states of Michigan and Ohio marked December 1, 2005, as Rosa Parks Day, and began attempts to make the day an annual observance. In New York City representatives of numerous activist groups declared December 1, 2005, as a Rosa Parks Anniversary Nationwide Day of Absence Against Poverty, Racism and War. The Day was supported by more than 1,000 local and national civil rights and anti-war organizations, such as chapters of the NAACP, the Troops Out Now Coalition, Teamsters National Black Caucus, and many others.

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*On December 1, 2005, citizens commemorated the anniversary of the day Rosa Parks refused to leave her bus seat by holding a protest against war, racism, and poverty on Wall Street in New York City. The Sankofa Dance and Drum Ensemble performed for the occasion.*

## Observance

Observing Rosa Parks Day takes many forms. Across the United States, transit agencies honored the civil rights champion by reserving a front seat in Parks's name on public buses. The American Public Transportation Association and more than 50 transit agencies around the nation took part. Interior bus cards also focused on Parks and her contributions.

Those organizing around the Rosa Parks Nationwide Day of Absence held marches to protest racism and war and to demand action to alleviate poverty. Activists called for students, educators, civic organizations, labor unions, clergy, professionals, and others to take a day off from school, work, and shopping and to participate in teach-ins on civil rights and anti-war movements. They also held peace vigils.

Schools and libraries observed the day with a variety of activities, such as reenactments of Rosa Parks's refusal to leave her seat on the bus, showings of the film *The Rosa Parks Story* (2002), and readings from her autobiography.

On December 1, 2005, the Rosa & Raymond Parks Institute in Detroit began a 381-day commemoration with various educational programs and activities to recognize the 50th anniversary of Rosa Parks's arrest and the duration of the Montgomery bus boycott.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

American Public Transportation Association  
1666 K St., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20006  
202-496-4816; fax: 202-496-4321  
<http://www.apta.com>

Rosa Parks Day Memorial Committee  
39 W. 14th St., #206  
New York, NY 10011  
212-633-6646  
<http://www.RosaParksDay.org>

Rosa & Raymond Parks Institute of Self-Development  
65 Cadillac Sq., Ste. 2200  
Detroit, MI 48226  
313-965-0606  
<http://www.rosaparks.org>

## **Further Reading**

Brinkley, Douglas G. *Rosa Parks*. New York: Viking Penguin, 2000.  
Hill, Ruth Edmonds. "Rosa Parks." In *Black Heroes*, edited by Jessie Carney Smith. Foreword by Nikki Giovanni. Canton, MI: Visible Ink Press, 2001.  
Hine, Darlene Clark. "Parks, Rosa." In *African American Lives*, edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

## **Writing by Rosa Parks**

With Jim Haskins. *Rosa Parks: My Story*. New York: Puffin Books, 1992.





# Satchmo SummerFest

*Date Observed: Four days in early August*

*Location: New Orleans, Louisiana*

**S**atchmo SummerFest is a four-day extravaganza of food, fun, and, of course, music in New Orleans, Louisiana. The festival commemorates the birth date of native son and jazz icon Louis “Satchmo” Armstrong.

## Historical Background

Louis Armstrong was born in 1901 into an impoverished family in an area known as “The Battlefield” in New Orleans, Louisiana. He earned the nickname “satchel mouth,” later abbreviated to “Satchmo,” because of his big-mouthed grin. For having fired a gun into the air one New Year’s Eve, he was confined to the Colored Waif’s Home for Boys — a serendipitous occurrence, because it was there that he received training in singing, percussions, the bugle, and coronet. Upon his release in his early teens, he worked various menial jobs during the day and frequented music venues at night, playing coronet when the opportunity presented itself. By 1919, Armstrong was employed as a horn player in the Kid Ory Band, and his professional career began.

To detail Armstrong’s individual accomplishments would be daunting. His legacy includes a body of work that consists of numerous recordings — of which countless are considered to be classics — television and film credits, autobiographies, and magazine articles. Armstrong popularized “hot solos” and ushered in both the eras of the sounds of big band and swing. Satchmo’s special style inspired youths to believe that a trumpet could be considered cool. It was said his vocalizations prompted other singers to try to catch colds in order to imitate his special sound. Armstrong was one of the first to sing “scat,” improvising somewhat nonsensical musical sounds in harmony with melodies that other singers such as Ella Fitzgerald went on to make famous. With all of his contributions to jazz, there are many who wonder whether the genre would be anything even remotely close to what it is today had it not been for Louis Armstrong.

Jazz is a musical style created in America, but its roots come from Americans of African heritage. The music has a basis in a host of predecessors: spirituals, field shouts, sorrow

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

*Louis Armstrong*

songs, blues, and ragtime. It originated in African-American communities near the turn of the 20th century. Initially, it was slow to catch on, in part, because even the term “jazz” had associations implying loose morals.

However, by the early decades of the 20th century, the syncopated rhythms and harmonic tempos prevailed, and jazz became a widespread form of popular music throughout the United States and Europe. Since then, jazz styles and forms have continued to evolve throughout the years. Among its various metamorphoses have been New Orleans/Dixieland jazz, swing, bop/bebop, progressive/cool jazz, neo-bop/hard-bop, third stream, mainstream modern, Latin-jazz, jazz-rock, avant-garde/free jazz and more. While the popularity of jazz has waxed and waned over the decades, jazz is still considered to be uniquely American music, and Louis Armstrong was (and in many senses remains) America’s representative—or “Ambassador Satchmo,” as he was called—to the world for this musical art form.

## Creation of the Festival

French Quarters Festivals, Inc., is a nonprofit organization that has been hosting the Satchmo SummerFest since its inception in 2001. The first event was meant to be just a one-time occurrence, in honor of Louis Armstrong's 100th birthday. Surprised at its success, the organizers decided to build upon the first year's agenda and schedule additional activities. Before long, it became an annual festival, bringing together many facets of Armstrong's life: the music he made famous, the food he loved to eat and advertised (going as far as closing much of his personal correspondence with "Red Beans & Ricely Yours"), his commitment to children, and his devotion to his city, its unique culture, and people.

## Observance

A vast majority of Satchmo SummerFest events are held at the Louisiana State Museum's Old U.S. Mint. SummerFest is family oriented, with many events geared specifically for the younger set. There are multiple concerts with performers from all around the world, including entertainers who once shared the stage with Satchmo. In addition, seminars are held to ensure that the festival is a balance of education and entertainment.

Food is another major focus. On the menu at "Red Beans & Rice Alley" are such favorites as smoked pork chops on a stick, stuffed peppers with crawfish dressing, red beans ice cream, and Creole cream cheesecake. Local restaurants may feature "Satchmo Specials" named after his recordings. For example, *Sweet Georgia Brown* inspired a chef to offer a shortcake with fresh peaches, raspberries, and whipped crème.

There is also a "Satchmo Club Crawl/Strut" in which several music clubs, eateries, and businesses across the city participate. This ticketed event usually benefits a local music-oriented charity. Since no New Orleans event would be complete without it, the Satchmo SummerFest, after its annual Jazz Mass, has a traditional "second-line parade," replete with umbrellas and sashes, for any and all to join in on and *les bon temps rouler* ("let the good times roll") in a jazzy, New Orleans style.

## Contacts and Web Sites

French Quarter Festivals, Inc.

400 N. Peter, Ste. #205

New Orleans, LA 70130

504-522-5730 or 800-673-5725; fax: 504-522-5711

<http://www.fqfi.org> or <http://www.satchmosummerfest.com>

New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau  
2020 St. Charles Ave.  
New Orleans, LA 70130  
800-672-6124  
<http://www.neworleanscvb.com>

Louis Armstrong Archives  
Queens College  
65-30 Kissena Blvd.  
Flushing, NY 11367-1597  
<http://www.satchmo.net>

Louis Armstrong House  
34-56 107th St.  
Corona, NY 11368  
718-997-3670; fax: 718-997-3677  
<http://www.satchmo.net>

## **Further Reading**

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## **Writings by Louis Armstrong**

- Satchmo: My Life in New Orleans*. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1954.
- Swing That Music*. Introduction by Rudy Vallee. New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1936.



# Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival

*Date Observed: First full weekend in June*

*Location: Sedalia, Missouri*

**T**he Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival is an annual musical get-together held in Sedalia, Missouri. Each year, over the first full weekend in June, the event celebrates the life and music of legendary musician and composer, Scott Joplin, whose work is more popular today than it was during his own lifetime.

## Historical Background

Born into the musical family of ex-slave Jiles Joplin and free woman Floren Gives in 1868, Scott Joplin was one of six musically inclined progeny. Lore has it that he taught himself to play the piano in the white-owned homes his mother cleaned.

Joplin's early years were spent in Texarkana, Texas. The rest of his youth, through his teen years, brought him finally to Sedalia, Missouri, where he received his first piano instruction from German-born Julian Weiss, whom historians believe planted the seeds for Joplin's career as a composer. Joplin ended up being technically competent on piano, banjo, coronet, and violin, but his talent, ambition, and pride always lay in the realm of musical composition.

Joplin began a professional musical career in the early 1890s, traveling with minstrel shows and playing first coronet with a band called the Queen City Cornet Band. With his brothers, he formed a vocal group known as the Texas Medley Quartette in the mid-1890s. He also took jobs as a pianist in various cities, playing in cafes and saloons.

In 1899 his composition *The Maple Leaf Rag* caught on with the public and led to fame for Joplin. This piano rag, thought by some to be his greatest piece, was named after one of the two Sedalia black gentlemen's clubs at which he performed. His lawyer negotiated a royalty deal on each sale of the piece, guaranteeing him a living — although not a luxurious one — for the remainder of his life. In its first year, only 400 copies sold, but by 1909, the number jumped to a half-million and that rate stayed steady for another two decades.

In all, Joplin wrote about five dozen musical compositions, of which 40 or so were piano rags. But in addition to this impressive body of work, he also wrote marches, a ballet, and two operas. One of the operas was lost because its copyright application was never properly recorded. The other, *Treemonisha*, was a passion that consumed Joplin's life. He only saw it performed once before he died in 1917 at the age of 49. Joplin's death was attributed to mental illness and dementia, but a contributing cause was syphilis.

During his short career, he never received the acclaim he truly was due, as later critics would determine. In 1976 the Pulitzer Committee recognized Joplin for his contributions to American music. The 1973 movie *The Sting* brought his score of "The Entertainer" to instant popularity and regenerated interest in the ragtime genre. In the minds of many, the name Scott Joplin epitomizes ragtime.

Ragtime is a popular musical style of African-American origin that developed towards the end of the 1800s and remained popular through about 1920. It was characterized by a strongly syncopated, or what some called a "ragged," beat—hence the origin of the term "ragtime." The music is also remembered today as a precursor of yet another uniquely American musical style: jazz.

## **Creation of the Festival**

The first Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival was organized in 1974 by a group of Sedalia ragtime enthusiasts for fellow devotees to gather around their love of the genre. The festival became an annual event in 1980. In 1983 the organizers established the Scott Joplin International Ragtime Foundation. Since then, the festival has grown, a store has been established, and a future goal is to build a museum.

## **Observance**

About 6,000 people gather every year in Sedalia for what many—despite the size—consider a "folksy" sort of gathering. Sedalia's pride in its not-quite-native-son is evident by the 50-foot vibrant mural of Joplin sitting at his piano prominently painted on a downtown building.

A host of both free and ticketed activities are scheduled during the annual Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival. One consistent event is the annual parade, headed by a horse-drawn surrey and followed by a fleet of vintage automobiles. Parade participants include contestants clothed in period costumes, as well as various government officials. Each year, the route's end is the same: The Maple Leaf Club, the same venue from which Joplin himself entertained nearly a century ago.

### *Treemonisha*

*Treemonisha* is one of two operas written by Scott Joplin, which he self-published in 1911. The tale, thought to be a tribute to his mother, is set in a rural, black community in Arkansas. Joplin was a strong believer in the freeing power of education for blacks, a belief he passed along from his mother.

The story line tells how *Treemonisha*, the only educated person in the community, breaks free from the bondage of ignorance and superstition. The opera conveys Joplin's perspective of the challenges that African Americans faced during the early 1900s and his belief that they could hasten their goal of racial equality by seeking out educational opportunities.

At the time of *Treemonisha's* creation, an editor at *American Musician and Art* ran a lengthy review of the score from Joplin's opera in the magazine's June edition, declaring it to be the most American opera ever composed, far more so than Horatio Parker's *Mona*, which had just won a \$10,000 Metropolitan Opera "American Opera" prize. Such high praise did little to aid Joplin in getting his work financed and staged.

Biases against black composers probably played some part in the difficulties Joplin faced in having his dreams realized. In fact, he saw *Treemonisha* performed just once, informally without costumes or orchestra, before he passed away. However, racial inequities were not the only or even main factors working against Joplin in this endeavor. In many respects, where *Treemonisha* was concerned, Joplin just may have been too far ahead of his time.

*Treemonisha* was not a ragtime opera, although it did include a few ragtime pieces; rather, it was a serious opera that paid homage to a wide variety of African-American musical styles, including the blues. For some— even African Americans— music of the sort commonly found in saloons and brothels did not fit in with their vision of operatic undertakings.

In 1974 *Treemonisha* was finally recognized for the astounding piece of work that it was. Not only was it revived and performed in its entirety, but *Treemonisha* also made it to Broadway. Joplin's ambition to be recognized as a serious composer was finally realized more than a half-century after his death.

A “theme rag” (one of Joplin’s pieces) is selected each year, around which the festival is planned. Activities run the gamut. There are concerts given by both amateur and professional performers, dance lessons, dinner shows, other meal events, symposia and more. Many of the festivalgoers are repeat attendees and have built up a close-knit camaraderie that often extends beyond their shared admiration of Joplin’s music. The festival is considered by many ragtime aficionados to be the premiere event of its kind.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

“Edward A. Berlin’s Website of Ragtime and Scholarship,” author of *King of Ragtime:*

*Scott Joplin and His Era* (see under Further Reading)

<http://www.edwardaberlin.com/index.htm>

Scott Joplin International Ragtime Foundation

321 S. Ohio

Sedalia, MO 65301

660-826-2271 or 866-218-6258

<http://www.scottjoplin.org>

Sedalia Convention and Visitors Bureau

600 E. Third

Sedalia, MO 65301

800-827-5295

<http://www.visitsedaliamo.com>

## **Further Reading**

Berlin, Edward A. *King of Ragtime: Scott Joplin and His Era*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Curtis, Susan. *Dancing to a Black Man’s Tune: A Life of Scott Joplin*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004.

Joplin, Scott. *Treemonisha Vocal Score*. Mineola, NY: Dovers Publications, 2001.

White, H. Loring. *Ragging It: Getting Ragtime into History (and Some History into Ragtime)*. Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, Inc., 2005.





# Slaves' Christmas

*Date Observed: Several days on and around December 25*

*Locations: Slave states*

**B**efore the Civil War, the Christmas season was one time that slaves could take a break from hard labor. Although some slave owners allowed only a day of rest, others permitted celebrations that began on Christmas Eve and continued over a period of several days to more than a week.

## Historical Background

From colonial times to emancipation, slaves in North America had little to celebrate. However, in spite of the horrors of slavery, the Christmas festivities were some of the most lively events for enslaved people (*see also Junkanoo*). Former slave Booker T. Washington (1856-1915), who became an educator and founder of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, considered the holiday a favorite among slaves. On the other hand, escaped slave and famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) believed slave owners used the Christmas holidays to prevent slave rebellions by encouraging them to feast and drink to excess (*see also Frederick Douglass Day*).

Some holiday experiences can be found in the slave narratives collected by the Federal Writers Project of the Works Progress Association established during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Memories and oral stories from the last living generation of African Americans born into slavery were collected, transcribed, and published. Other historical Christmas accounts are found in books written by escaped slaves such as Harriet Jacobs, who wrote under an assumed name "Linda Brent" to hide her identity.

Christmas was a time when many slaves attempted to escape because slaveholders were busy celebrating and paid little attention to what was going on in the slave quarters. In some cases, slave owners took their slaves with them to other plantations during the holidays, which also presented opportunities to run away. William and Ellen Craft, who wrote *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom* (1860), describe their daring escape from a Southern plantation and how they reached Pennsylvania, a free state, on Christmas Day in 1848.

## **Creation of the Observance**

Slaves have observed Christmas since colonial times, although the celebrations varied depending on where slaves were located. Some colonists ignored Christmas or condemned celebrations of the holiday as a pagan event. For other colonists, particularly in the South, Christmas on the plantation was a festive event that lasted from several days to weeks.

On some plantations, the Christmas holiday for slaves lasted as long as the Yule log burned in the main fireplace of the planter's home. Slaves cut the log from a large tree and sometimes soaked it in a swamp so that it would burn slowly. When the log burned and broke into two parts, the holiday was officially over.

## **Observance**

The Christmas season on some plantations began early in December and frequently included a harvest event known as **corn shucking**. The event involved the labor of many slaves who husked corn all night long. After the work was done, slaves danced to the music of fiddles and hand-made instruments.

Although corn husking ended with festivities, it was not comparable to having several days or more than a week off from hard labor for the Christmas holidays. During that time, some slaves received passes that allowed them to visit relatives or friends on nearby plantations. Others spent the time quilting or making items such as corn brooms and baskets.

On Christmas morning, it was the custom on many plantations for slaves to gather outside the manor house to receive gifts. Southern planters usually gave their slaves a jug of whiskey, new clothes, and extra food for feasts. Foods included meats such as chicken and ham, which were seldom part of their regular rations, and ingredients to bake cakes and pies. Along with feasting and drinking, Christmas celebrations in slave quarters included dancing, singing, and general merry-making. However, when the holiday was over, slaves went back to the drudgery of sunup-to-sundown labor, and often, the brutality of slave owners and overseers.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

"African American Experience," an online exhibit  
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation  
P.O. Box 1776

Williamsburg, VA 23187-1776

757-229-1000

[http://www.history.org/Almanack/life/Af\\_Amer/aalife.cfm](http://www.history.org/Almanack/life/Af_Amer/aalife.cfm)

"Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938"

Library of Congress

101 Independence Ave., S.E.

Washington, DC 20540

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html>

## Further Reading

Craft, William, and Ellen Craft. *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom; or, The Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery*. London: William Tweedie, 1860. Electronic Text Center. University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, 1999. <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CraThou.html>.

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Washington, Booker T. *Up from Slavery: An Autobiography*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1901. Documenting the American South. University Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1997. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/washington/washing.html>.



# Sugar Grove Underground Railroad Convention

*Date Observed: Third weekend in June*  
*Location: Sugar Grove, Pennsylvania*

The two-day Sugar Grove Underground Railroad Convention in Sugar Grove, Pennsylvania, commemorates the Sugar Grove Anti-Slavery Convention of June 1854, which the famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass called “the crowning convention of them all.” The event also celebrates **Juneteenth** on June 19, the day in 1865 when, two-and-a-half years after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, slaves in Texas learned they were free (*see also Emancipation Day and Frederick Douglass Day*).

## Historical Background

From the 1830s to the time of the Civil War, anti-slavery conventions were common throughout the northern states. Women from several states formed anti-slavery societies and held the first Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women in 1837. Other conventions included men and women, with both black and white abolitionists in attendance.

One anti-slavery convention was held in 1854 in Sugar Grove, Pennsylvania, on the border between Pennsylvania and New York, near Lake Erie. Settled in 1797 by an abolitionist family, Sugar Grove was a place where many abolitionists lived, and it became a safe haven for fugitive slaves on their way to Canada via the Underground Railroad. Prominent abolitionists Frederick Douglass, Reverend Jermain Loguen, and Lewis Clark addressed the Sugar Grove Convention at an outdoor meeting with more than 500 people in attendance. Before speaking, Douglass had tea in the home of Cynthia Catlin Miller, who was active in the Sugar Grove Fugitive Aid Society, sewing clothes for escaping slaves.

## Creation of the Observance

The first reenactment of the Sugar Grove Convention took place in 2004, under the leadership of creator Gregory Wilson, director of Underground Railroad programs for the

### Frederick Douglass at Sugar Grove

**F**rederick Douglass described the Sugar Grove event in his *Frederick Douglass' Paper* published June 23, 1854:

The crowning Convention was held Saturday and Sunday, in a beautiful grove in Sugar Grove, Warren County, Pennsylvania, about three miles from Busti. The responsibility of getting up this meeting rested upon the Storum family at Busti—an enterprising family of farmers, well to do on the world and when I tell you that these industrious and well to do farmers are of the color of you and me, you will . . . draw from it the right hopes for our whole people.

I observed that this family (it is a large one) had so deported itself, that white people among whom they moved, appeared to regard and treat them precisely as respectable people ought to be treated. . . .

But a word of the Convention; it was, as I have said, the crowning one of all. . . . The meeting was strictly a religious Anti-Slavery meeting, and left a most favorable impression for the cause.

Warren County Historical Society. After reading Douglass's account of the first anti-slavery convention in Sugar Grove, Wilson was inspired to recreate it. He and current residents of Sugar Grove were proud of their anti-slavery heritage and wanted to share their stories and activities of their past.

### Observance

The annual Sugar Grove event features presentations by historians performing as Frederick Douglass, Reverend Jermain Loguen, and other well-known figures from the abolitionist movement. Many Sugar Grove residents in this town of 3,000 appear in period costumes and help set the stage for reenactment of the abolitionists' speeches.

Offspring of the town's early abolitionists take part, among them a descendant of Cynthia Catlin Miller, who had tea with Douglass at her home in Sugar Grove during the 1854 convention. Activities also include guided tours and history workshops for students and educators.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

Sugar Grove Underground Railroad Convention  
206 E. Mill St.  
P.O. Box 544  
Sugar Grove, PA 16350  
814-489-3062

Warren County Historical Society  
210 Fourth Ave.  
P.O. Box 427  
Warren, PA 16365  
Phone and fax: 814-723-1795  
<http://ws2.kinzua.net/warrenhistory/>

## **Further Reading**

- Bordewich, Fergus M. *Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America*. New York: HarperCollins/Amistad Press, 2005.
- Buckmaster, Henrietta. *Let My People Go: The Story of the Underground Railroad and the Growth of the Abolition Movement*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992.
- Burgan, Michael. *Escaping to Freedom: The Underground Railroad*. New York: Facts on File, 2006. (young adult)
- Douglass, Frederick. Letter to W. J. Watkins, Esq. Appearing in the *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, Rochester, New York, June 23, 1854.
- Parker, John P. *His Promised Land: The Autobiography of John P. Parker, Former Slave and Conductor on the Underground Railroad*. Edited by Stuart Seely Sprague. New York: W. W. Norton, 1996.



# Tuskegee Airmen Convention

*Date Observed: A week in August*

*Location: Varies*

**T**he renowned World War II Tuskegee airmen, who inspired revolutionary reform in the U.S. armed forces, have reunited at an annual convention since 1972. During the convention, Tuskegee airmen are honored for their service and heroism in spite of many social barriers and the racially segregated military at the time.

## **Historical Background**

Before the U.S. involvement in World War II, many U.S. military officials were under the false and prejudicial assumption that African Americans were not physically or psychologically suited for combat, particularly flight training with the U.S. Army Air Corps (which later became the U.S. Air Force). But in 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt launched what was called the “Tuskegee Experiment.” The military expected the experiment to fail and that the so-called “colored” were not capable of operating complex combat aircraft. However, men in the program proved them wrong.

In 1880 the Alabama State Legislature authorized the founding of Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama (it became Tuskegee University in 1985). On July 4, 1881, Booker T. Washington—the first teacher and principal of Tuskegee—opened the school, which grew into a major center for African-American education. There, for the first time in the history of the U.S. Army Air Corps, African-American men were trained as pilots, meteorologists, intelligence and engineering officers, flight surgeons, mechanics, control tower operators, and many other positions that support an air force squadron.

A full squadron completed training by 1942, but it remained at Tuskegee until 1943, under the leadership of Captain Benjamin O. Davis Jr., who became the first African-American general of the U.S. Air Force. The squadron received additional training to help it prepare for combat. Under Davis’s command, African-American fighter pilots fought in aerial battles over north Africa, Sicily, and Europe, flying in 15,553 sorties and 1,578 missions. From June 1944 to April 1945, the airmen flew 200 bomber escort mis-



*Benjamin O. Davis Jr. (third from left) and other Tuskegee pilots in March 1942.*

sions, over most of central and southern Europe, without losing a single bomber to the enemy. To white American bomber crews, they were reverently known as “Black Redtail Angels” because of the bright red paint on the tail assemblies of their aircraft. German pilots both feared and respected the Tuskegee Airmen, calling them the “Schwartzte Vogelmenschen,” or “Black Birdmen.”

In 1948 President Harry S. Truman issued an executive order that integrated the military. In 2005 the U.S. Congress passed a resolution honoring the Tuskegee airmen for their bravery in World War II and their role in creating an integrated U.S. Air Force. In 2006 Congress voted unanimously to present the airmen with the Congressional Gold Medal. Monuments and memorials in several states — including Colorado, Georgia, and Iowa — have been dedicated in honor of the airmen.



### Creation of the Convention

After several well-attended reunions of retired Tuskegee airmen during the post-World War II years, the Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. (TAI) was founded in Detroit, Michigan. The organization held its first convention in 1972. Since that time, the convention has helped to call attention to the airmen's heroic missions and to provide an opportunity to share their experiences with youth.

TAI is a non-military and non-profit organization, which has 46 chapters nationwide. Through its conventions and activities during the year, the TAI has conducted local and national programs that have introduced young people to the world of aviation and science. TAI also has provided awards to "deserving cadets" in the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps.

### Observance

Convention events include meetings, training sessions, special youth programs, and an awards banquet. The Lonely Eagles Ceremony is a moving annual tribute to airmen who have died during the year. A bell tolls for each deceased airman as his name is read.

In 2006, fewer than 200 of the original 13,000 airmen were still alive, and many were unable to travel. Thus the organization decided to join with the members of the International Black Aerospace Council for their conference. The two groups support similar youth programs.

### Contacts and Web Sites

"Legends of Tuskegee," an online exhibit by the National Park Service  
<http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/tuskegee/index.htm>

Tuskegee Airmen, Incorporated  
P.O. Box 9166  
Arlington, VA 22219  
<http://tuskegeearmen.org/>

Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site  
1212 W. Montgomery Rd.  
Tuskegee, AL 36088  
334-727-3200; fax: 334-727-1448  
<http://www.nps.gov/tuin/>

## **Further Reading**

- Coleman, Stan. "Sharing the Legacy: Reservists Connect with the Past at Tuskegee Airmen Gathering." *Citizen Airman*, October 2004.
- Francis, Charles E. *The Tuskegee Airmen: The Men Who Changed a Nation*. Edited by Adolph Caso. Wellesley, MA: Branden Books, 1997.
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# Umoja Karamu

*Date Celebrated: Fourth Sunday in November*

*Locations: African-American Communities*

**U**moja Karamu (oo-MOH-jah kah-RAH-moo) is a celebration of unity within the African-American family, community, and nation. Umoja Karamu is a Swahili term meaning “unity feast.” Many African Americans celebrate this day as an alternative to the national Thanksgiving Day holiday. The unity feast may also be observed during **Kwanzaa** celebrations in late December.

## Historical Background

The concept of African and African-American unity is centuries old. But during the 1960s and 1970s, it was a major focus of black nationalists. During the 1980s and 1990s, Afrocentric scholars such as Ishakamusa Barashango, lecturer, author, and founder of Philadelphia’s Temple of the Black Messiah, drew further attention to the theme. Barashango, who died in 2004, argued that African Americans and black people of the diaspora should reject such European-American holidays as Thanksgiving and concentrate instead on understanding Africa’s culture and values that are the distinctive heritage of black people.

## Creation of the Holiday

In 1971 Brother Edward Simms Jr. of the Temple of the Black Messiah in Philadelphia developed Umoja Karamu to celebrate the African-American family and home. According to Barashango, Simms defined the purpose of Umoja Karamu as “an effort to inject new meaning and solidarity into the Black Family through ceremony and symbol.” The date for the holiday, the fourth Sunday of November, was established by the Temple of the Black Messiah in Washington, D.C. African Americans in other cities, including Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Chicago, soon followed the example.

## **Observance**

The feast itself is centered on five symbolic colors: black, white, red, green, and gold/orange, which represent five historical periods in African-American history. Black represents African-American family strength before slavery; white symbolizes the effects of slavery on black families; red stands for liberation from slavery; green signifies the struggle for civil rights and equality; and gold or orange signals the African-American family's hope for the future.

Each symbolic color also corresponds with certain foods, such as:

Black — black-eyed peas, black olives, black beans

White — rice, potatoes, yucca

Red — cranberry juice, red peppers, tomatoes

Green — greens, celery, lettuce

Gold/Orange — cornbread, cheese, squash

The meal begins with a prayer and libation — that is, pouring a drink to honor ancestors, an African tradition. As foods are passed and shared, an appointed person reads historical narratives appropriate for each represented period in the African-American family.

Many African-American churches hold services before individual families celebrate Umoja Karamu. The feast and ceremony are also part of multicultural programs on university campuses. Many black student unions sponsor such events in November or as part of annual Kwanzaa celebrations.

## **Contact**

Temple of the Black Messiah  
1856 N. 21st St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19121  
215-684-3476

## **Further Reading**

- Anyike, James C. *African American Holidays: A Historical Research and Resource Guide to Cultural Celebrations*. Chicago: Popular Truth, 1991.
- Barashango, Ishakamusa. *African People and European Holidays: A Mental Genocide, Book 1*. Washington, DC: IVth Dynasty Publishing Company, 1979.
- Eklof, Barbara. *For Every Season: The Complete Guide to African American Celebrations, Traditional to Contemporary*. New York: HarperCollins, 1997.



# Watch Night

*Date Observed: December 31*

*Location: African-American Communities*

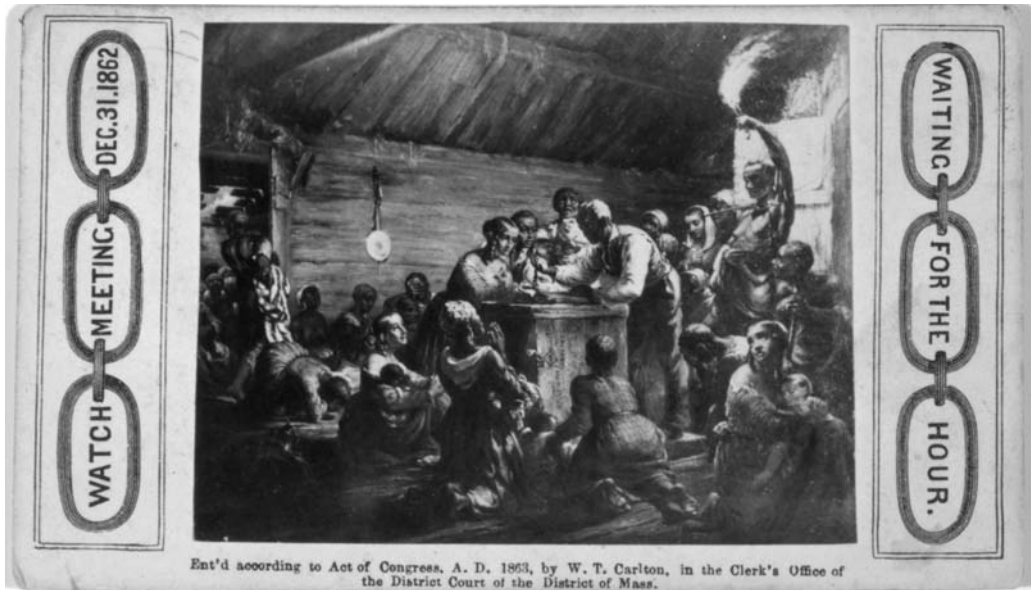
**I**n many African-American communities across the United States, the last day of the year is observed as Watch Night, also known as Freedom's Eve. Church services commemorate the night before President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation became effective January 1, 1863, freeing slaves in Confederate-controlled areas. Slaves in other places did not gain their freedom until 1865 with the ratification of the 13th amendment (*see also* **Emancipation Day and National Freedom Day**).

## Historical Background

On September 22, 1862, in the midst of the Civil War, President Lincoln issued a preliminary proclamation to free slaves in Confederate states and parts of states that had joined the Confederates. Lincoln declared that he would sign the proclamation making it official on January 1, 1863, if the Confederates did not rejoin the Union. The South continued the fight, and free blacks and slaves alike waited anxiously for the proclamation to become effective.

When December 31, 1862, arrived, slaves on some plantations met in praise houses, or if they were not allowed to congregate, they gathered secretly in cabins or in the woods to pray for freedom. In the North, African Americans and prominent abolitionists—white and black—gathered in churches to pray, sing, and wait hopefully for news from Washington, D.C.

According to one legend, in Boston, Massachusetts, where abolitionists had congregated at the Tremont Temple Baptist Church, a man came running down the aisle five minutes before midnight, crying out that the news was on the wire and emancipation was coming.



*This 1863 illustration depicts a watch meeting of December 31, 1862. The man at the table holds a watch as the group awaits news of the Emancipation Proclamation.*

## **Creation of the Observance**

After the original December 31 Watch Night or Freedom's Eve in 1862, annual commemorations took place, but they were sometimes dangerous events until slavery was fully abolished in 1865. Watch Night remains an important observance each year in countless black churches, although in recent decades some pastors have had to review the significance of the event for congregations unfamiliar with its historical background.

## **Observance**

Before Watch Night services in African-American churches begin, there may be a feast that includes soul food—black-eyed peas, turnip greens, chicken, and other traditional dishes. African drummers and dancers might perform.

In many African-American churches, services on December 31 run from 9 or 10 P.M. to midnight or a little after, and feature prayer, singing, testimonies, and a sermon. A pastor or member of the congregation may recall the original Freedom's Eve. Just before midnight the lights in a church may be dimmed or turned off for prayer. As the new year comes in, the Emancipation Proclamation may be read. In places where ties to Africa are recognized,

the service may include greeting the spirit, an ancient ritual in which a watchman keeps track of the movements of the moon for the exact time when midnight arrives.

Because Watch Night occurs during the seven-day **Kwanzaa** celebration, some services recognize the sixth principle of Kwanzaa, *kuumba*. Both Watch Night and Kwanzaa celebrate freedom and looking to the future.

### A Tragic New Year's Eve Ritual

**B**efore New Year's Eve became a celebratory event, slave families dreaded the occasion. On the next day slave owners would balance their accounts. Some owners would sell their slaves in order to pay debts, and that could mean breaking up families. Thus New Year's Eve would be a heart-wrenching time, because there was always the possibility that family members would never see each other again.

Harriet Jacobs, who wrote *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl Written by Herself*, published for the author in 1861, described a mother's anguish on New Year's Eve:

She sits on her cold cabin floor, watching the children who may all be torn from her the next morning; and often does she wish that she and they might die before the day dawns. She may be an ignorant creature, degraded by the system that has brutalized her from childhood; but she has a mother's instincts, and is capable of feeling a mother's agonies.

On one of these sale days, I saw a mother lead seven children to the auction-block. She knew that *some* of them would be taken from her; but they took *all*. The children were sold to a slave-trader, and their mother was bought by a man in her own town. Before night her children were all far away. She begged the trader to tell her where he intended to take them; this he refused to do. How *could* he, when he knew he would sell them, one by one, wherever he could command the highest price? I met that mother in the street, and her wild, haggard face lives to-day in my mind. She wrung her hands in anguish, and exclaimed, "Gone! All gone! Why *don't* God kill me?" I had no words wherewith to comfort her. Instances of this kind are of daily, yea, of hourly occurrence.

Another type of ritual on Watch Night takes place in Bolden, Georgia, an African-American community near Eulonia. There, members of the Mt. Calvary Baptist Church, known as the McIntosh County Shouters, take part in the ring shout, a tradition that can be traced back to slavery and west African culture. The ring shout is a religious ceremony with holy dancing and shouts of praise to the Lord.

Many historians believed that the ring shout had died out completely in the United States, but the McIntosh County Shouters brought the tradition to light when they performed at the **Georgia Sea Island Festival** in 1980. The group includes African-American elders who have passed on the tradition from their enslaved forebears and are committed to preserving the practice.

Since its first public appearance in 1980, the group has been featured at many other venues around the United States, including the Lincoln Center in New York City and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. The Shouters also have appeared in documentaries, and their songs have been recorded on CDs.

For their stage performances, the McIntosh County Shouters recreate the ring shout as close to their traditional practice as possible. The group begins the dance with shuffling movements in a counterclockwise circle, never lifting or crossing their feet—foot-crossing is considered unholy. The *New Georgia Encyclopedia* describes the performance this way:

A “songster” will “set” or begin a song, slowly at first, then accelerating to an appropriate tempo. These lines will be answered by a group of singers called “basers” in call-and-response pattern. The stick-man, sitting next to the leader, will beat a simple rhythm with a broom or other wood stick, and the basers will add rhythm with hand clapping and foot patting. The songs are special shout songs, at one time called “running spirituals.” For the most part they form a separate repertoire from spirituals, jubilees, and later gospel songs. Ranging from light-spirited to apocalyptic, at times they carry coded references to slavery. Sometimes participants pantomime the meaning of the verses being sung—for example, extending their arms in the “eagle wing” gesture to evoke friends urging a slave, Daniel, to fly from the master’s whip.<sup>1</sup>

## Contacts and Web Sites

“African-American Odyssey: The Quest for Full Citizenship”  
National Digital Library

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<sup>1</sup> Reprinted with permission from The New Georgia Encyclopedia, <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org>, a project of the Georgia Humanities Council.



Library of Congress  
101 Independence Ave, SE  
Washington, DC 20540  
202-707-5000  
<http://rs6.loc.gov/ammem/aahtml/exhibit/aopart4.html>

McIntosh County Shouters home page  
<http://hometown.aol.com/Shoutforfreedom/>

“McIntosh County Shouters”  
New Georgia Encyclopedia, a project of the Georgia Humanities Council  
Main Library  
University of Georgia  
Athens, GA 30602  
<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-520>

## Further Reading

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# Watts Summer Festival

***Date Observed: Second weekend in August***  
***Location: Watts neighborhood, Los Angeles, California***

**T**he Watts Summer Festival is held each year during the month of August over a three-day period, Friday through Sunday. It is held partly to commemorate 34 residents of Watts (an African-American neighborhood in Los Angeles, California) who died during the August 1965 revolt or riot. The festival also serves as a vehicle to bring positive focus on the community.

## **Historical Background**

Between August 11 and 17, 1965, the relatively unknown community of Watts in Los Angeles, California, made a major impression on the rest of the United States. The Watts uprising resulted from racial tensions that had been brewing in the Los Angeles metropolitan area for decades.

Ironically, Los Angeles is the only major city in the United States founded by settlers largely of African descent. According to the 1900 census, 2,100 African Americans resided in the city in that year, and within a decade, the number would grow to 15,000. During the early part of the 20th century, many African Americans owned homes in the city. But housing bans which at first were intended for Asians, Mexicans, and Jews eventually were applied against blacks who were relegated to South Los Angeles communities such as Watts. These areas notoriously were on the bottom rung for delivery of civic services. Not only was housing substandard, but medical care was spotty, schools under par, and employment opportunities few and far between.

All of this laid the groundwork for what erupted in August of 1965. On the evening of August 11, a white California Highway Patrol Officer, Lee Minkus, pulled over Marquette Frye, a young black man, for erratic driving. A crowd gathered as Frye and his brother, Ronald, were questioned. Their mother Rena arrived, after which accounts vary; however, there is no dispute that at some point a struggle ensued and the three

Frye family members were taken into custody. Subsequently, a bottle was thrown at a police vehicle.

Later on that evening, into the late night and early morning hours of the next day, sporadic incidents of violence began to occur. Concerned community leaders called a meeting in Athens Park at midday on the 12th, hoping to quell the growing fury. Instead, television cameras broadcast an angry black youth proclaiming his intent to “burn” the neighborhood—helping to incite others who shared his rage and fueling the defensiveness of those who feared the worse. The 13th brought thousands of African-American residents to the streets; by that evening, thousands of National Guardsmen were deployed and the first deaths had occurred.

Over the course of the next few days, Americans watched in disbelief as buildings burned and businesses were looted. The tally of devastation by the time curfew was lifted on August 17 was stunning: 34 Watts residents dead, 1,100 people injured, 4,000 arrests, 600 buildings damaged or destroyed across a 100-block area, and an estimated \$200 million in damages.

### Creation of the Festival

A number of Watts community activists came together after the incendiary events of that August 1965 summer. They were intent on changing the city's, the nation's, and even the world's impression of their corner of the globe. The activists believed that the television cameras that had been focused upon their neighborhood for such a few, short days had captured limited, biased, uninformed, and prejudicial impressions of their community. Therefore, these Watts residents were anxious to find a way to convey a more realistic, positive, and human view of their lives. And so the idea for the Watts Summer Festival was born.

The first festival was held in 1966 as a fairly free-form event. Booths were set up on the streets, and there were no charges to vendors who exhibited. All energies were devoted to making the festival an upbeat event, one where the community could begin to feel a sense of pride and belonging.

As time has passed, the festival has grown, and it has become more organized and structured—to the dismay of some and the delight of others. The festival attracts many people, year after year, and it also continues to receive the support of famous African Americans, from top musicians to prominent movie stars.

In 1972, Wattstax, a concert offshoot of the festival's entertainment events, was held at L.A.'s Memorial Coliseum, the first time an African-American organization ever sold

out that venue, and an accompanying album *Wattstax, the Living World* was recorded. The following year, a spin-off *Wattstax* film was produced; a special restoration version was released with much fanfare in June 2003.

## **Observance**

Over the second weekend in August, festivalgoers look forward to such activities and displays as art and business exhibits, a carnival, a children's village, a sports village, a senior citizens' pavilion, various concerts and performing arts shows, food and beverage concession stands, a custom car/bike/van show, a fashion show, and a film festival.

"Spirit of Watts Tours" also are given during the festival to make certain that the neighborhood's history is not forgotten, as well as to ensure that misconceptions about the area's past are dispelled and positive views about its development are represented.

A variety of social service needs are also tended to during the festival, with representatives from numerous civic and other groups on hand to offer assistance and information.

Lastly, the festival's community forum provides a place for debate and exchange of ideas about issues that affect African Americans at the local, state, national, and international levels.

## **Contacts and Web Sites**

Watts Summer Festival  
10950 S. Central Ave.  
Watts, CA 90059  
323-789-7304; fax: 323-789-5652  
<http://www.wattsfestival.org>

Watts Renaissance Planning Committee  
10950 S. Central Ave.  
Los Angeles, CA 90059  
310-221-0080; fax: 310-221-0514  
<http://www.wattsrenaissance.org>

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# W. C. Handy Music Festival

***Date Observed: Last week in July***

***Location: Florence, Alabama***

**T**he W. C. Handy Music Festival, sponsored by the Music Preservation Society, is held in the Shoals area of Florence, Alabama. The week-long event honors the man known as the “Father of the Blues.”

## Historical Background

Born in a log cabin on November 16, 1873, in Florence, Alabama, William Christopher Handy was the son of Charles Bernard Handy and Elizabeth Brewer Handy, former slaves. William’s father and grandfather were African Methodist Episcopal (AME) ministers.

While growing up, Handy often heard spirituals at the AME church and the chants of black field or dock workers along the Tennessee River, which added to his innate interest in music. He noted in his autobiography that, at the young age of 10,

I could catalogue almost any sound that came to my ears, using the tonic *sol-fa* system. I knew the whistle of each of the river boats on the Tennessee. . . . I could tell what the birds in the orchards and woodlands were singing. . . .

Whenever I heard the song of a bird and the answering call of its mate, I could visualize the notes in the scale. Robins carried a warm alto theme. Bobolinks sang contrapuntal melodies. Mocking birds trilled cadenzas. Altogether, as I fancied, they belonged to a great outdoor choir.

Handy saved money that he earned at various jobs to buy a guitar. But when he brought the guitar home, his father was incensed, claiming the instrument was used to play secular music, which he considered part of the devil’s work. Reverend Handy ordered his son to take the guitar back to the store, and then provided organ lessons for him.

The organ music did not appeal to young Handy, and the lessons did not last long. But as a teenager, Handy heard a trumpeter who visited Florence, and he decided to buy a

1918

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5

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Sheet music cover for W. C. Handy's "The Saint Louis Blues," published in 1918.

coronet and learn to play it. Under the guidance of a Fisk University professor, he mastered the fundamentals of music and began performing with a local band. He also sang first tenor with a quartet.

Handy left Alabama in 1892 and traveled with various bands for several years. He married Elizabeth Price in 1898, and from 1900 to 1902, he taught music at a college in Huntsville, Alabama. He left teaching to establish his own jazz band, which was common for professional musicians of the time.

Once, while performing in Mississippi, a local blues band played during a break, and Handy saw that the audience loved the music, which had what has been called a “raw, primitive” sound, reflecting the hardship of blacks in America. He also realized that the blues could be commercially successful, and he began to compose his own renditions.

By this time—about 1905—Handy had made his home in Memphis, Tennessee, where he met Harry Pace, a lyricist. The two collaborated in writing songs, eventually forming the Pace and Handy Music Company-Publishers. In 1909 Handy was asked to write a campaign song for a mayoral candidate, Edward Crump. The song, titled “Mr. Crump,” was later published with new lyrics as “Memphis Blues.” Thus Handy introduced the blues style to national—and then worldwide—audiences. Other compositions followed, such as “Beale Street Blues,” “Yellow Dog Blues,” “Mississippi Blues,” and the world-renowned “St. Louis Blues,” which jazz vocalist Bessie Smith recorded in the mid-1920s, helping to popularize the tune (*see also* **Bessie Smith Strut**).

In 1918 the Pace and Handy Music Company moved to New York, but the company disbanded in 1920. Pace established a record company, and the Handy family maintained the publishing firm. During the 1920s, Handy continued to compose music and lead his band. He also supported numerous other black musicians and wrote *Blues: An Anthology*, published in 1926. Several other books by Handy about African-American music and composers were issued in the 1930s. In 1941 his autobiography *Father of the Blues* was published.

Handy was honored in many ways during his lifetime as well as after his death in 1958. In Florence, Alabama, Handy’s home and museum memorialize him, and across the United States his name graces schools, streets, parks, and other public places. A statue of Handy stands in Wilson Park in downtown Florence.

## **Creation of the Festival**

In 1982 the Music Preservation Society of the Alabama Shoals—a quad-city area that includes Florence, Muscle Shoals, Sheffield, and Tuscumbia—staged its first W. C.



Handy Music Festival to celebrate the life of the Florence native. Since then, an increasing number of musicians attract thousands of visitors to the Shoals area for the festival. An estimated 150,000 people come from across the United States and other countries.

## Observance

During the festival more than 200 events take place throughout the Shoals area. The festival celebrates blues, jazz, soul, rhythm and blues, gospel, and contemporary music with concerts, jam sessions, music education programs and panels, exhibits with musical themes, and live music at restaurants and parks. Legendary entertainers have included Eddie Floyd, Ellis Marsalis, Jimmy Smith, Ramsey Lewis, Dizzy Gillespie, Bobby Blue Bland, Diane Schuur, Billy Taylor, Dianne Reeves, and Charlie Byrd. In addition, Songwriters in the Round highlights contemporary songwriters who perform their own songs. Along with musical events, there are such activities as a street strut, golf tournament, a fishing tournament, and a "walk-and-run" foot race.

## Contacts and Web Sites

Florence/Lauderdale (County) Tourism  
One Hightower Place  
Florence, AL 35630  
256-740-4141 or 888-356-8687; fax: 256-740-4142  
<http://www.flo-tour.org/>

W. C. Handy Music Festival  
217 E. Tuscaloosa St.  
Florence, AL 35630  
256-766-7642  
<http://www.wchandymusicfestival.org/>

W. C. Handy Home, Museum, and Library  
620 W. College St.  
Florence, AL 35630  
256-760-6434

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*Father of the Blues: An Autobiography*. 1941. Reprint edited by Arna Wendell Bon-temps. Foreword by Abbe Niles. London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1957.



# West Indies Emancipation Day

*Date Observed: August 1*

*Location: West Indies and U.S. cities*

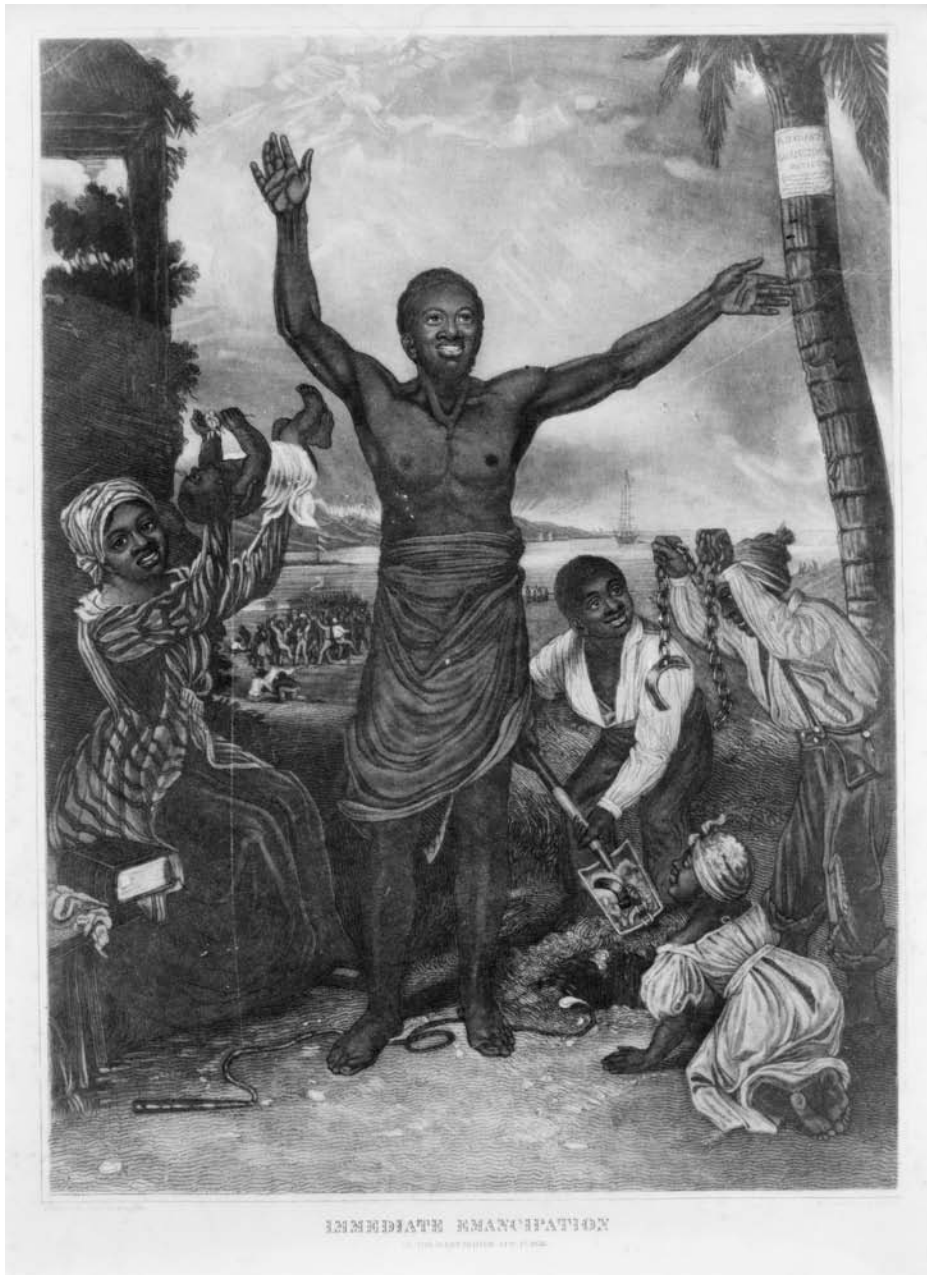
Slavery was abolished on Great Britain's island possessions in the West Indies on August 1, 1834, but slaves were not totally free until four years later, August 1, 1838. The day has been celebrated in the West Indies, South America, and some U.S. and Canadian communities. Emancipation Day is a public holiday in the former British colonies of Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana.

## Historical Background

Like thousands of slaves in the North American colonies and states, most slaves in the British territories of the West Indies came from west African countries such as Nigeria. After decades of antislavery efforts in Great Britain, the nation banned the slave trade in 1807. But slaveholders within the British Empire still kept people in bondage. Public pressure to abolish slavery continued with more than 200 branches of the British Anti-Slavery Society active by 1824. At the same time, proslavery planters in the British Caribbean and their supporters in Parliament fought to maintain the status quo. As was true in America, the controversy sometimes led to violence and slave rebellions.

In 1833, the British Slavery Abolition Act, which became effective August 1, 1834, abolished slavery throughout England and all British possessions. West Indian island governments were allowed to determine whether or not emancipation would occur immediately or gradually. Only Antigua and Bermuda released their slaves in 1834.

Other British West Indian colonies in the Caribbean followed the provisions of the Abolition Act. The law granted complete freedom to children under six years of age, but any slave older than six was required to serve an apprenticeship. The Act declared slaves were "entitled to be registered as apprenticed labourers and to acquire thereby all rights and privileges of freedom." Their so-called entitlement included working without pay for 45 hours each week for their former owners. In addition, ex-slaves were supposed to learn how to function in a free society.



*This engraving by S. H. Gimber was based on a painting by Alexander Rippingille. The engraving of celebrating West Indians was created sometime between 1838 and 1862.*

As apprentices, agricultural workers had to labor for a period of six years; domestics and other non-field workers had to apprentice for four years. Their compensation was no different from slave provisions: food, clothing, housing, and medical treatment. Former owners, on the other hand, were compensated for their loss of “property.” The British government paid West Indian planters a total of 20 million pounds.

At first, when slaves in the British West Indies learned about their free status, they celebrated on August 1, 1834, by dancing in the streets, attending religious services, and expressing their happiness in many ways. But joy soon turned to anger and resentment when the new “apprentices” were forced the next day to go back to work for their former owners. People who had hoped for and anticipated freedom gathered in protests on the islands and in Guyana. Militia and special guards put down the protests and rebellions, and many “apprentices” were jailed and flogged in public squares. Some were hanged. Others ran away and found safety in maroon communities—settlements of escaped slaves in remote forest or mountainous areas.

During the next few years, island governments individually granted complete emancipation. All apprenticed laborers throughout the British West Indies were legally free by August 1, 1838. On that day, ex-slaves in the West Indies, as well as free African Americans and American abolitionists—black and white—celebrated. Americans marked the day with speeches and prayers expressing hope that West Indian emancipation would lead to freedom for slaves everywhere.

### Creation of the Observance

A few American celebrations of West Indian Emancipation Day took place on August 1, 1834, when abolitionists and free blacks believed that slaves on the Caribbean islands were actually freed. For several years afterward, occasional anniversary commemorations took place, but the number of commemorations increased after August 1, 1838.

Some free West Indians left the Caribbean for the United States, settling in New Bedford, Massachusetts, known for its anti-slavery movement and stop on the Underground Railroad. West Indians who settled there made Emancipation Day an annual event, beginning about 1838 or 1839.

Free blacks and abolitionists in other U.S. and Canadian cities also initiated Emancipation Day celebrations. Providence, Rhode Island, for example, first commemorated the abolition of West Indian slavery in 1849, and after 1863, the annual Emancipation Day on August 1 recognized the freedom of some U.S. slaves (*see also Emancipation Day*). In Nicodemus, Kansas, an annual Emancipation Day on the last

### **What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?**

**I**n 1852, the Rochester (New York) Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society invited Frederick Douglass to deliver a speech about the Fourth of July. Douglass agreed, and appeared before the group on the 5th of July. He began what is now considered one of his most famous and eloquent speeches by recounting the colonists' fight to be free of British rule. Then he launched into the reasons why asking a slave to celebrate Independence was hypocritical. Speaking as an escaped slave and for enslaved African Americans, he asked his audience:

What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? and am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us?

Would to God, both for your sakes and ours, that an affirmative answer could be truthfully returned to these questions! Then would my task be light, and my burden easy and delightful. . . .

But, such is not the state of the case. I say it with a sad sense of the disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought life and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth [of] July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn. . . .

weekend in July originally celebrated the freeing of slaves in the West Indies. It is now also a homecoming celebration for descendants of African Americans who settled the town (*see also* **Nicodemus Emancipation and Homecoming Celebration**).

### Observance

From the 1840s to the end of the Civil War, the First of August Emancipation Day, sometimes called Freedom Day, was celebrated in North America from the East to the West coasts, in Canadian provinces, and, of course, in the West Indies. Celebrations took place in churches, government buildings, or outdoors in plazas, public squares, or wooded picnic areas. These anniversary celebrations provided public forums for African Americans, black and white abolitionists, and others to demonstrate their belief in human liberty.

At first in America, celebrations were small, but by the 1840s they had grown and spread to a variety of locations. The Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society reported that the 1844 festivities in Boston and other cities included processions, speeches, singing, and “elegant collations” (feasts). In its report, the Society noted that the First of August anniversary “was fast taking the place of the Fourth of July in the hearts of the true lovers of Liberty.”

Indeed, for African Americans of the 1800s, July 4th had little meaning, as former slave, abolitionist leader, and orator Frederick Douglass pointed out in his 1852 speech “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” (see also **Frederick Douglass Day**). That holiday celebrated the nation’s independence, but ignored the fact that thousands of black people did not have freedom and were still enslaved. The August 1st Emancipation Day, on the other hand, was an opportunity to bring African Americans together for a celebration they could call their own and to enjoy a sense of community. In addition, it was a way to seek public support for abolition and the larger cause of universal human rights.

After the 13th Amendment to the Constitution abolished slavery in the United States in 1865, First of August commemorations were overshadowed by Emancipation Day, **Juneteenth**, and similar observances celebrating the end of slavery in the United States. However, in some U.S. locations, August 1st Emancipation Day observances continued or were restored.

There was an annual festival in Albion, Michigan, for example, into the early decades of the 20th century. In a 1927 celebration, more than 3,000 blacks from across the state gathered. They watched a parade, listened to speeches, enjoyed a barbecue lunch, attended a boxing match, and in the evening danced at an Emancipation Day Ball.

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# Women's Day Celebrations

*Date Observed: Varies*

*Location: Churches nationwide*

**W**omen's Day celebrations are dedicated to honoring the women in a church's congregation, raising funds for women's church missions, and recognizing the contributions of women in all areas of life. Women's Day originated within the National Baptist Convention, but is now observed by churches of many different denominations throughout the United States.

## Historical Background

In the late 1800s, women lived with many restrictions and lacked opportunities that were available to men. Women were often discouraged from getting an advanced education or pursuing serious studies, and they were not yet allowed to vote. It was commonly believed that women were incapable of making important contributions to society. Social norms dictated that women should limit their activities to raising children and performing household chores. It was considered inappropriate for a woman to participate in many activities, including intellectual pursuits or any sort of leadership position. Women were limited in the kind of jobs they could hold, and they often had only two options: domestic servant or elementary school teacher. During this time, opportunities for African-American women were even more constrained, and most who held jobs worked as servants.

As a young girl growing up in Virginia during the late 19th century, Nannie Helen Burroughs wanted to change things for women. After graduating from high school, Burroughs attempted to become a teacher, but no school would hire an African-American woman. After many endeavors to find a job other than domestic service, Burroughs took a position as corresponding secretary of the Women's Convention Auxiliary to the National Baptist Convention from 1900 to 1909. She became a tireless advocate for women and devoted her life to issues surrounding women's education and personal development.

## **Creation of the Observance**

In 1906 Burroughs proposed the creation of Women's Day to the Baptist Convention leadership as a way of remedying the exclusion of women from participating in most church activities.

At that time, the main goal of the Women's Convention Auxiliary was to raise money for foreign missionary work. Burroughs envisioned the national Women's Day as a focused fundraising project in support of that goal. In order to raise awareness among women and get them interested in participating in Women's Day, Burroughs wanted to create a program of prayer, worship, music, and inspirational speeches. These program materials were to be distributed to local churches for the purpose of energizing women in the congregation. Burroughs believed that women were an untapped resource within the church, and that they could be just as successful as men in the areas of public speaking, motivation, fundraising, and informed leadership. After some discussion, the National Baptist Convention approved Burroughs's plan and she proceeded to organize materials for Women's Day.

On the last Sunday in July 1907, the first Women's Day observance was held in Nashville, Tennessee. Women's Day quickly grew in popularity, and many churches began observing the day using the materials created by Burroughs. These Women's Day events marked the first time that women had been allowed to speak in Baptist churches, and many took advantage of the opportunity. Early Women's Day events included groups of women who went from church to church, speaking to the congregation at each location and soliciting donations to support foreign missionary work. Significant funds were raised in support of the various missionary programs sponsored by the national Baptist church.

The focus of Women's Day has evolved since the first observances took place in the early 1900s. The day has become important as a time to honor women in the congregation and acknowledge the many contributions made by women in all areas of life. African-American churches still use the day to raise money for charitable causes, but many have expanded the focus of Women's Day to include social and educational programs of interest to women.

## **Observances**

Churches observe Women's Day in many different ways. Some churches bring in visiting speakers or preachers, usually women, to deliver a special sermon on that day. Others provide an afternoon luncheon or tea honoring the women of the congregation,

or a special mother-daughter event is held. Still other churches plan elaborate daylong programs in honor of Women's Day, sometimes held at a local restaurant or banquet facility instead of at the church itself. These programs provide women with an opportunity to get away from their normal routines for a day of relaxation, fun, and spiritual renewal. Women's Day observances such as these usually include guest speakers, workshops and seminars, health education, and sometimes even fashion shows.

The date, location, and schedule for Women's Day celebrations are determined by individual churches. Although Women's Day was originally observed in late July, churches now designate different days throughout the year as Women's Day. Activities related to Women's Day continue to be successful fundraisers. Many church leaders also credit the day with expanding the opportunities available for women in leadership positions within the church.

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# Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Arts and Humanities

*Date Observed: Last week in January*

*Location: Eatonville, Florida*

**A**nthropologist, folklorist, and writer Zora Neale Hurston is honored in a festival of the arts and humanities in Eatonville, Florida, which Hurston claimed as her birthplace. The annual festival is organized by the Association to Preserve Eatonville and is held during the last week in January.

## Historical Background

Throughout her lifetime, Zora Neale Hurston called Eatonville, Florida, her hometown—the place where she was born—and she gave the year of her birth as 1901. Yet records show she was born in Alabama in 1891. When she was one or two years old, however, her family moved to Eatonville, one of the nation's first all-black incorporated towns. Eatonville had a strong influence on her writing and life choices.

When Hurston was 13 years old, her mother died, and her father, a preacher, carpenter, and farmer in Eatonville, sent her to Jacksonville to attend a boarding school, the Florida Baptist Academy, where two of her siblings also were enrolled. Hurston did well in her studies, but did not respond with deference to authority figures—in fact, she was called “sassy.”

After less than five months at the Academy, Hurston learned that her father had remarried, which distressed her and the other children. She had never been close to her father, whose many marital infidelities disturbed her, and his remarriage to a much younger woman upset her even further. She also learned that her father had not paid for her stay at the boarding school.

In order to complete her freshman year, Hurston did domestic work at the school. When the school term ended, she expected her father to come for her, but he did not, and a



*Zora Neale Hurston, at the New York Times Book Fair in November 1937.*

school administrator paid her way home—which turned out to be a disaster. She had a brutal fight with her stepmother, and Hurston again left home, forced out by her father.

Hurston spent the next few years staying with various family members and working as a domestic. About 1915, she got a job as a maid for one of the stars in a traveling theater company, and she stayed with the troupe for 18 months. When she left the group in Baltimore, Maryland, she found menial jobs and hoped to go back to school.

In 1917, after much frustration trying to save money for tuition, Hurston enrolled in a free public night school. Even though she was actually 26 years old, she looked like a teenager and gave her age as 16 and birth date as 1901, a myth she continued to perpetuate for the rest of her life.

Because she did well academically, Hurston gained confidence to enroll in a black preparatory school, Morgan Academy, connected with Morgan College (now Morgan State University). The dean of Morgan helped her find a job with the family of a trustee in order to pay her tuition.

After graduating from Morgan, Hurston became a part-time student at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Again, she worked at menial jobs to support herself. At Howard, she began her writing career, publishing her first short story (set in Eatonville) in the university's literary magazine *Stylus*.

### Hurston on Eatonville

**I**n Zora Neale Hurston's autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942), she wrote about Eatonville as her birthplace:

Like the dead-seeming, cold rocks, I have memories within that came out of the material that went to make me. Time and place have had their say.

So you will have to know something about the time and place where I came from, in order that you may interpret the incidents and directions of my life.

I was born in a Negro town. I do not mean by that the black back-side of an average town. Eatonville, Florida, is, and was at the time of my birth, a pure Negro town — charter, mayor, council, town marshal and all. It was not the first Negro community in America, but it was the first to be incorporated, the first attempt at organized self-government on the part of Negroes in America. . . .

On August 18, 1886, the Negro town, called Eatonville, after Captain Eaton, received its charter of incorporation from the state capital at Tallahassee, and made history by becoming the first of its kind in America, and perhaps in the world. So, in a raw, bustling frontier, the experiment of self-government for Negroes was tried. White Maitland and Negro Eatonville have lived side by side for fifty-five years without a single instance of enmity. The spirit of the founders has reached beyond the grave.

Over the next few years, Hurston found publishing outlets for more of her short stories, also based on Eatonville. After winning an award in 1925 for a story titled "Spunk," she moved to New York and became associated with the Harlem Renaissance, a literary and artistic movement. Hurston also was granted a scholarship to Barnard, where she combined studies in anthropology with her writing. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1928, becoming the first African American to graduate from Barnard.

From the time of her years at Barnard through the 1930s, Hurston conducted fieldwork in African-American folklore in the South and the Caribbean, collecting songs, sermons, legends, children's games, and staying in labor camps, all of which contributed to some of her best writing. She was the first African American to publish black folklore, and much of her published work includes tales in dialect and descriptions of everyday black culture. She also wrote novels, plays, anthropological studies, poetry, and magazine articles.

To view this image, please refer to the print version of this book.

During the 1940s, Hurston's literary output was irregular, and not necessarily well received, although her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942), sold well. Yet her income from writing was not enough to cover expenses, so she again became a domestic to support herself.

Controversy surrounded Hurston during the 1950s when she opposed, or failed to support, civil rights efforts. She also was involved in ultraconservative political issues and wrote for magazines that espoused conservative views. She argued that black people should not feel sorry for themselves but should be strong individuals and work steadfastly to reach their goals.

In 1959 she suffered a severe stroke, and in 1960 died in a Fort Pierce, Florida, welfare home. Not until years after her death did Hurston's work come to the forefront once more. In 1975, Alice Walker, who later became well known

*Cover of a 2006 edition of Zora Neale Hurston's classic novel, originally published in 1937.*



for her literary work, wrote an article describing her visit to a cemetery where she placed a marker near what was thought to be Hurston's grave. Walker's article helped rekindle interest in Hurston, as did the 1977 publication of Robert D. Hemenway's *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography*. Since then, Hurston's work has caught the attention of many new readers, writers, storytellers, filmmakers — and festivalgoers.

### Creation of the Festival

The idea for the Zora Neale Hurston Festival was sparked in 1989 when Orange County officials in central Florida wanted to expand a main road that ran through Eatonville, 10 miles north of Orlando. In response, residents formed the Association to Preserve the Eatonville Community and organized a festival to raise funds to stop the road project and maintain the town. The first festival was held in 1990. Today the Association's goals include celebrating Hurston, Eatonville, and the larger cultural contributions of African Americans.

### Observance

The week-long festival, also known as ZORA!, takes place at a variety of venues. There is a "HATitude" luncheon with a style show to celebrate Hurston's fondness for hats. A concert choir performance and ecumenical Christian service at a church in Eatonville; a bus tour of Hurston's favorite places in Eatonville, Maitland, and the surrounding area; a smorgasbord of international foods; art exhibits; cultural programs; and public forums with notable guest speakers are all part of the celebration.

### Contacts and Web Sites

ZORA! Festival  
227 E. Kennedy Blvd.  
Eatonville, FL 32751  
407-599-9930 or 407-599-9963; fax: 407-599-5100  
<http://www.zoranealehurstonfestival.com/>

"The Zora Neale Hurston Plays at the Library of Congress"  
<http://rs6.loc.gov/ammem/znhhtml/znhhome.html>

### Further Reading

Boyd, Valerie. *Wrapped in Rainbows: The Life of Zora Neale Hurston*. New York: Scribner, 2003.

- Deck, Alice A. "Zora Neale Hurston." In *Black Heroes*, edited by Jessie Carney Smith. Foreword by Nikki Giovanni. Canton, MI: Visible Ink Press, 2001.
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- Kaplan, Carla, ed. *Zora Neale Hurston: A Life in Letters*. New York: Doubleday, 2002.
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### **Writings by Zora Neale Hurston**

- Dust Tracks on a Road*. 1942. Reprinted with a foreword by Maya Angelou. New York: HarperPerennial, 2006.
- Go Gator and Muddy the Water: Writings by Zora Neale Hurston from the Federal Writers' Project*. Edited and with a biographical essay by Pamela Bordelon. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990.
- Moses, Man of the Mountain*. 1938. Reprinted with a foreword by Deborah E. McDowell. New York: HarperPerennial, 1991.
- Tell My Horse*. 1938. Reprinted with a foreword by Ishmael Reed. New York: HarperPerennial, 1990.
- Their Eyes Were Watching God*. 1939. Reprinted with a foreword by Mary Helen Washington. New York: HarperPerennial, 1990.

# Appendices





## Appendix 1: Chronology

This appendix lists significant events in the history of the African-American holidays, festivals, and celebrations covered in this volume. It includes dates of the first observance of events as well as significant dates relating to the people and historical events that are memorialized during the holiday or festival. Although historical events are included, this chronology is not intended to serve as a comprehensive list of events in African-American history.

### 1624

Dutch immigrants bring enslaved Africans to New York. *See* **Pinkster**

### 1711

October 17 — Poet Jupiter Hammon is born a slave on Long Island, New York. *See* **Black Poetry Day**

### 1760

February 14 — Richard Allen, founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, is born a slave in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. *See* **Founder's Day/Richard Allen's Birthday**

December 25 — Jupiter Hammon composes poem considered to be the first published by an African American. *See* **Black Poetry Day**

### 1767

September 29 — Kunta Kinte, enslaved Gambian and ancestor of writer Alex Haley, arrives in Annapolis, Maryland. *See* **Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival**

### 1770

March 5 — Crispus Attucks is the first American to die during the Boston Massacre, an event precipitating the Revolutionary War. *See* **Crispus Attucks Day**

### 1771

March 5 — Boston Massacre and Crispus Attucks's death are commemorated in Boston, and each year thereafter. *See* **Crispus Attucks Day**

### 1775

First American abolitionist society is founded by Quakers in Pennsylvania. *See* **Emancipation Day**

April 19—The Revolutionary War between the American colonies and Great Britain begins with the Battle of Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts. *See* **Crispus Attucks Day**

**1777**

July 12—Vermont is the first state to outlaw slavery. *See* **Emancipation Day**

**1782**

Peter Spencer, founder of the African Union Methodist Church, is born in Kent County, Maryland. *See* **African Methodist August Quarterly**

**1787**

April 12—The Free African Society is organized by Absalom Jones and Richard Allen in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. *See* **Emancipation Day; Founder's Day/Richard Allen's Birthday**

November—Richard Allen and other black members of St. George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, are forced to leave a church service; Allen later founds the first black-controlled church in America. *See* **Founder's Day/Richard Allen's Birthday**

**1792**

May 8—U.S. Congress passes law prohibiting people of color from serving in the military. *See* **Battle of Olustee Reenactment**

**1794**

July 29—Church founded by Richard Allen is dedicated as Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. *See* **Founder's Day/Richard Allen's Birthday**

**1799**

Celia Mann, a freed slave and midwife, is born in Charleston, South Carolina. *See* **Jubilee Festival of Heritage**

March 29—New York state legislation gives freedom to children of slaves born after July 1799. *See* **African American Day Parade**

**1803**

One of the first documented revival meetings is held on Shoulderbone Creek in Hancock County, Georgia. *See* **Church Revivals**

A group of Igbos from west Africa is brought to St. Simons Island, from Savannah, Georgia. Rather than become slaves, they drown themselves in Dunbar Creek, later known as Ebo Landing. *See* **Georgia Sea Island Festival**

May 18—The first Haitian flag is flown by revolutionaries fighting for independence from France. *See* **Haitian Flag Day**

**1808**

January 1 — The United States legally prohibits the slave trade. *See* **Emancipation Day**

**1811**

Town council of Albany, New York, passes law banning Pinkster, a primarily African-American festival. *See* **Pinkster**

**1813**

Peter Spencer and others found the African Union Methodist Church in Wilmington, Delaware. *See* **African Methodist August Quarterly**

**1814**

August 28 — African Union Methodist Church holds its first annual conference, called the August Quarterly. *See* **African Methodist August Quarterly**

**1818**

February — Frederick Douglass is born into slavery near Easton, Maryland. *See* **Frederick Douglass Day**

**1820**

Harriet Tubman is born in Dorchester County, Maryland. *See* **Harriet Tubman Day**

**1821**

African Grove Theater, the first African-American theater company, is formed in New York City. *See* **National Black Theatre Festival**

**1827**

July 4 — State of New York abolishes slavery. *See* **African American Day Parade**

**1831**

March 26 — Richard Allen dies in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. *See* **Founder's Day/Richard Allen's Birthday**

**1833**

The American Anti-Slavery Society is established by black and white abolitionists in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. *See* **Emancipation Day**

**1834**

August 1 — Slavery is abolished throughout the British Empire, including its Caribbean territories; emancipation becomes effective on August 1, 1838. *See* **West Indies Emancipation Day**

## 1838

September — Frederick Douglass escapes slavery in Maryland, makes his way north to freedom, and settles in New Bedford, Massachusetts. *See* **Frederick Douglass Day**

## 1843

July 25 — Peter Spencer dies in Wilmington, Delaware. *See* **African Methodist August Quarterly**

## 1844

Celia Mann moves into a one-room house (later known as the Mann-Simons Cottage) in Columbia, Georgia; the First Calvary Baptist Church meets in the basement. *See* **Jubilee Festival of Heritage**

## 1848

December 25 — William and Ellen Craft, after escaping from a Georgia plantation, reach freedom in Pennsylvania. *See* **Slaves' Christmas**

## 1849

Harriet Tubman escapes slavery in Maryland and travels alone to freedom in Pennsylvania. *See* **Harriet Tubman Day**

## 1850

September 18 — As part of the Compromise of 1850, U.S. Congress revises the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793, mandating that escaped slaves be returned to their former states or territories. *See* **Emancipation Day; Jerry Rescue Day**

## 1851

October 1 — William Jerry Henry, a fugitive slave captured and arrested in Syracuse, New York, is freed from jail by abolitionists. *See* **Jerry Rescue Day**

## 1852

July 5 — Frederick Douglass delivers speech "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" at the Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society in Rochester, New York. *See* **West Indies Emancipation Day**

## 1854

June — Anti-slavery convention is held in Sugar Grove, Pennsylvania, an event later described in *Frederick Douglass' Paper* on June 23, 1854. *See* **Sugar Grove Underground Railroad Convention**

June — Cowboy Nate "Nat" Love, also known as "Deadwood Dick," is born a slave in Tennessee. *See* **Black Cowboy Parade**



### 1857

New Orleans holds its first Mardi Gras parade. *See* **Mardi Gras in African-American Traditions**

March 6—Supreme Court rules in *Dred Scott v. Sanford* that blacks cannot become citizens and that Congress cannot limit the spread of slavery in U.S. territories. *See* **Emancipation Day**

### 1858

March 5—Black abolitionists in Boston designate the anniversary of the Boston Massacre as Crispus Attucks Day. *See* **Crispus Attucks Day**

### 1860

William and Ellen Craft's *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom* is published. *See* **Slaves' Christmas**

### 1861

Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl Written by Herself* is published. *See* **Watch Night**

January 29—Kansas is admitted to the Union as a free state after violent confrontations between pro-slavery and anti-slavery forces. *See* **Emancipation Day**

April 12—U.S. Civil War begins with attack on Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina. *See* **Battle of Olustee Reenactment; Emancipation Day**

### 1862

Penn Center, one of the first schools for emancipated slaves, is established on St. Helena Island in South Carolina. *See* **Penn Center Heritage Days**

April 16—President Abraham Lincoln signs the Compensated Emancipation Act, freeing enslaved persons in the District of Columbia. *See* **Emancipation Day in Washington, D.C.**

May 20—President Lincoln signs the Homestead Act of 1862, prompting thousands of blacks to move to Kansas in hopes of owning land. *See* **Emancipation Day in Hutchinson, Kansas; Nicodemus Emancipation and Homecoming Celebration**

July 17—U.S. Congress passes the Second Confiscation Act, freeing slaves who are able to cross Union lines, as long as they were owned by supporters of the Confederacy. *See* **Battle of Olustee Reenactment**

July 17—U.S. Congress repeals 1792 law prohibiting people of color from serving in the military. *See* **Battle of Olustee Reenactment**

September 22—President Lincoln issues preliminary emancipation proclamation to free slaves in Confederate states. *See* **Emancipation Day; Watch Night**

December 31—African Americans and white abolitionists await the announcement of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. *See* **Watch Night**

## 1863

January 1 — The Emancipation Proclamation, freeing slaves in Confederate states, takes effect. *See* **Emancipation Day; Juneteenth**

July — Frederick Douglass meets with President Lincoln at the White House to protest discrimination against black troops. *See* **Frederick Douglass Day**

## 1864

George Washington Carver, inventor and botanist, is born in Diamond, Missouri. *See* **George Washington Carver Day**

February 20 — U.S. Civil War Battle of Olustee is fought in Florida. *See* **Battle of Olustee Reenactment**

## 1865

February 1 — President Lincoln signs the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, abolishing slavery. *See* **Emancipation Day; National Freedom Day**

April 9 — General Robert E. Lee surrenders his Confederate troops in Richmond, Virginia, bringing an end to the U.S. Civil War. *See* **Battle of Olustee Reenactment**

June 19 — Slaves in Texas learn they have been freed by the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863. *See* **Emancipation Day; Juneteenth**

## 1866

April 19 — First Emancipation Day celebration is held in Washington, D.C., commemorating the Compensated Emancipation Act of 1862. *See* **Emancipation Day in Washington, D.C.**

June 19 — First commemoration of Juneteenth is held in Texas. *See* **Juneteenth**

July 28 — U.S. Congress creates six Army regiments of African-American soldiers. *See* **Buffalo Soldiers Commemorations**

## 1868

Composer Scott Joplin is born in Texas. *See* **Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival**

February 23 — W. E. B. Du Bois, writer and activist, is born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**

## 1870

February 3 — U.S. Congress ratifies 15th Amendment, granting black men the right to vote. *See* **Bridge Crossing Jubilee**

July 9 — Emanuel Stance is the first African American in the post-Civil War period to receive a Congressional Medal of Honor. *See* **Buffalo Soldiers Commemorations**

December 5 — William "Bill" Pickett, cowboy and rodeo performer, is born in Travis County, Texas. *See* **Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo**

### 1873

November 16—W. C. Handy, known as the father of the blues, is born in Florence, Alabama. *See* **W. C. Handy Music Festival**

### 1878

August 1—Settlers in Nicodemus, Kansas, hold first celebration of the 1834 emancipation of slaves throughout the British Empire. *See* **Nicodemus Emancipation and Homecoming Celebration; West Indies Emancipation Day**

### 1880

Meeting of Baptist pastors in Montgomery, Alabama, takes place, initiating the National Baptist Convention, USA, Annual Session. *See* **National Baptist Convention, USA, Annual Session**

### 1881

July 4—Tuskegee Institute opens with Booker T. Washington as its principal. *See* **Tuskegee Air-men Convention**

### 1885

First professional black baseball team is formed in New York City. *See* **Jackie Robinson Day**

### 1887

August 17—Marcus Garvey, founder of the Universal Negro International Association, is born in St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica. *See* **Haile Selassie's Birthday; Marcus Garvey's Birthday**

### 1889

April 15—A. Philip Randolph, civil rights activist and founder of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, is born in Crescent City, Florida. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**

August—The first Emancipation Day celebration in Hutchinson, Kansas, is held. *See* **Emancipation Day in Hutchinson, Kansas**

### 1891

January 7—Writer Zora Neale Hurston is born in Eatonville, Florida. *See* **Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Arts and Humanities**

### 1892

August 23—Haile Selassie, ruler of Ethiopia, is born in Ejarsagoro, Harar, Ethiopia. *See* **Haile Selassie's Birthday**

### 1894

April 15—Singer Bessie Smith is born in Chattanooga, Tennessee. *See* **Bessie Smith Strut**

## 1895

February 20—Frederick Douglass dies at Cedar Hill, his home in Washington, D.C. *See* **Frederick Douglass Day**

## 1896

Booker T. Washington invites George Washington Carver to join the faculty of Tuskegee Institute. *See* **George Washington Carver Day**

May 18—U.S. Supreme Court upholds a Louisiana statute in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which allows segregation as long as facilities for blacks are not inferior to those of whites. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**

November 20—Sallie Martin, known as the mother of gospel music, is born in Pittfield, Georgia. *See* **Chicago Gospel Music Festival**

## 1898

April 9—Paul Robeson, singer, actor, and activist, is born in Princeton, New Jersey. *See* **Paul Robeson's Birthday**

## 1899

July 1—Thomas Andrew Dorsey, known as the father of gospel music, is born in Villa Rica, Georgia. *See* **Chicago Gospel Music Festival**

## 1900

July 23—First Pan-African Congress is held in London, England. *See* **Pan African Bookfest and Cultural Conference**

## 1901

First African-American parade during Mardi Gras in New Orleans is organized by the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club (Krewe of Zulu). *See* **Mardi Gras in African-American Traditions**

August 4—Louis Armstrong, musician and singer, is born in New Orleans, Louisiana. *See* **Satchmo SummerFest**

## 1904

Sigma Pi Phi, thought to be the oldest African-American fraternity, is founded in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. *See* **Greek Organizations' Conventions**

## 1905

May 6—Robert S. Abbott produces the first issue of the *Chicago Defender*, which becomes one of the most important African-American newspapers in the country. *See* **Bud Billiken Parade and Picnic**

## 1907

July 28—First Women's Day observance is held in Nashville, Tennessee. *See* **Women's Day Celebrations**

## 1908

Alpha Kappa Alpha, the first African-American sorority, is formed at Howard University in Washington, D.C. *See* **Greek Organizations' Conventions**

November 29—Adam Clayton Powell Jr., Harlem's first black congressman, is born in New Haven, Connecticut. *See* **African American Day Parade**

## 1909

February 12—The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is founded. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**

## 1912

One of the earliest African-American resorts is founded on the island of Idlewild, north of Grand Rapids, Michigan. *See* **Idlewild Jazz Festival**

## 1913

February 4—Rosa Parks, often referred to as the mother of the civil rights movement, is born in Tuskegee, Alabama. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday; Rosa Parks Day**

March 10—Harriet Tubman dies in Auburn, New York, at the Harriet Tubman Home for Aged and Indigent Colored People. *See* **Harriet Tubman Day**

## 1915

Carter Goodwin Woodson and others organize the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in Chicago. *See* **African-American History Month**

March 13—*The Birth of a Nation*, a film that portrays post-Civil War anarchy in a black-ruled South, is released. *See* **Hollywood Black Film Festival**

## 1916

January—First issue of the *Journal of Negro History* is published by Carter Goodwin Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. *See* **African-American History Month**

## 1917

April 1—Scott Joplin dies in New York City. *See* **Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival**

## 1919

January 31—Baseball player Jackie Robinson is born in Cairo, Georgia. *See* **Jackie Robinson Day**

## 1920

First professional black baseball league is founded by Andrew Foster. *See* **Jackie Robinson Day**  
August 29—Musician Charlie Parker is born in Kansas City, Kansas. *See* **Charlie Parker Jazz Festival**

## 1921

Nate “Nat” Love dies. *See* **Black Cowboy Parade**  
August 11—Alex Haley, author of *Roots*, is born in Ithaca, New York. *See* **Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival**

## 1923

The *Chicago Defender* is first newspaper in the country to include a special page for children. It is named for the fictional character, Bud Billiken. *See* **Bud Billiken Parade and Picnic**  
February 17—Bessie Smith’s first record, “Downhearted Blues,” is released, selling over 750,000 records in its first month. *See* **Bessie Smith Strut**  
June 21—Marcus Garvey is convicted of mail fraud. *See* **Marcus Garvey’s Birthday**

## 1924

November 27—First Turkey Day Classic is held in Montgomery, Alabama, when Alabama State College plays Tuskegee. *See* **Football Classics**

## 1925

May 19—Malcolm X is born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska. *See* **Malcolm X’s Birthday**

## 1926

Second week in February—First Negro History Week, created by Carter Goodwin Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, is observed. *See* **African-American/Black History Month**

## 1927

April 27—Coretta Scott, wife of Martin Luther King Jr., is born in Heiberger, Alabama. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.’s Birthday**  
December—Marcus Garvey is deported to Jamaica. *See* **Marcus Garvey’s Birthday**

## 1929

January 15—Martin Luther King Jr., civil rights leader, is born in Atlanta, Georgia. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.’s Birthday**  
August 11—First Bud Billiken Parade and Picnic for children is held in Chicago, Illinois. *See* **Bud Billiken Parade and Picnic**

**1930**

November 2—Haile Selassie I is named ruler of Ethiopia. *See* **Haile Selassie's Birthday**

**1932**

Sallie Martin and Thomas A. Dorsey found the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses. *See* **Chicago Gospel Music Festival**

**1933**

Orange Blossom Classic begins as a football contest between Florida A&M and Howard University. *See* **Football Classics**

**1936**

January 6—Haile Selassie is named *Time* magazine's Man of the Year for 1935. *See* **Haile Selassie's Birthday**

**1937**

Katherine Dunham establishes Negro Dance Group in Chicago. *See* **DanceAfrica**

September 26—Bessie Smith dies in Clarksdale, Mississippi. *See* **Bessie Smith Strut**

**1940**

Sallie Martin and Kenneth Morris start a gospel publishing company in Chicago. Martin and Morris, Inc., goes on to become the most prominent publisher of gospel music in the country. *See* **Chicago Gospel Music Festival**

June 10—Marcus Garvey dies in London, England. *See* **Marcus Garvey's Birthday**

**1941**

The 99th Fighter Squadron, known as the "Tuskegee Experiment," is formed at Alabama's Tuskegee Institute. *See* **Tuskegee Airmen Convention**

W. C. Handy's autobiography, *Father of the Blues*, is published. *See* **W. C. Handy Music Festival**

**1942**

Zora Neale Hurston's autobiography, *Dirt Tracks on a Road*, is published. *See* **Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Arts and Humanities**

February 1—First National Freedom Day celebration takes place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. *See* **National Freedom Day**

**1943**

January 5—George Washington Carver dies in Tuskegee, Alabama. *See* **George Washington Carver Day**

## 1946

Pearl Primus founds a dance company in New York City. *See* **DanceAfrica**

January 12—Malcolm Little is arrested for burglary in Boston. *See* **Malcolm X's Birthday**

## 1947

April 15—Jackie Robinson plays in his first major league baseball game. *See* **Jackie Robinson Day**

## 1948

June 30—President Harry S. Truman signs legislation designating February 1 as National Freedom Day. *See* **Emancipation Day; National Freedom Day**

July 26—President Truman issues executive order integrating the military. *See* **Tuskegee Airmen Convention**

## 1949

April 25—State of New Jersey designates Crispus Attucks Day as a day of observance. *See* **Crispus Attucks Day**

## 1952

August 7—Malcolm Little is paroled from prison. *See* **Malcolm X's Birthday**

## 1954

May 17—U.S. Supreme Court declares “separate but equal” educational facilities to be unconstitutional in the decision of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (Kansas). *See* **African-American History Month; Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**

June—Malcolm X becomes minister of New York Temple No. 7 in Harlem. *See* **Malcolm X's Birthday**

October 31—Martin Luther King Jr. becomes pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**

## 1955

March 12—Charlie Parker dies in New York City. *See* **Charlie Parker Jazz Festival**

December 1—Rosa Parks is arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, when she refuses to give up her bus seat to a white man. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday; Rosa Parks Day**

December 5—Black residents of Montgomery, Alabama, led by Martin Luther King Jr., begin a 381-day boycott of city buses. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday; Rosa Parks Day**

## 1956

November 13—U.S. Supreme Court upholds ruling that segregation on city bus lines is unconstitutional. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday; Rosa Parks Day**



December 21—Montgomery bus boycott ends. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday; Rosa Parks Day**

### 1957

Malcolm X becomes the national representative for the Nation of Islam. *See* **Malcolm X's Birthday**

### 1958

Alvin Ailey starts a dance company in New York City. *See* **DanceAfrica**

The Negro American League plays its last games. *See* **Jackie Robinson Day**

March 28—W. C. Handy dies in New York City. *See* **W. C. Handy Music Festival**

### 1960

January 28—Zora Neale Hurston dies in Fort Pierce, Florida. *See* **Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Arts and Humanities**

July 17—The George Washington Carver National Monument near Diamond, Missouri, is dedicated. *See* **George Washington Carver Day**

### 1961

The Ebony Museum (later renamed DuSable Museum of African American History) is founded by Margaret and Charles Burroughs and other artists in Chicago, Illinois. *See* **DuSable Museum Arts & Crafts Festival**

The Historic Columbia Foundation is established in Columbia, South Carolina. *See* **Jubilee Festival of Heritage**

### 1962

July 23—Jackie Robinson is first African American elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame. *See* **Jackie Robinson Day**

September 22—A centennial celebration of the preliminary emancipation proclamation is held at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. *See* **Emancipation Day**

October 22—First NAACP performing arts awards ceremony and fundraiser (later named NAACP Image Awards) is held at the Coconut Grove nightclub in Hollywood, California. *See* **NAACP Image Awards**

### 1963

April 16—After being jailed for participating in a sit-in, Martin Luther King Jr. appeals to fellow pastors in his "Letter from Birmingham City Jail." *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**

August 27—W. E. B. Du Bois dies in Accra, Ghana. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**

August 28—Martin Luther King Jr. delivers his "I Have a Dream" speech during the March on Washington, which draws over 250,000. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**

## 1964

Malcolm X resigns from the Nation of Islam and founds the Organization of Afro-American Unity and the Muslim Mosque, Inc. *See* **Malcolm X's Birthday**

January 23—The 24th Amendment to the Constitution, ending the poll tax, is ratified by 38 states. *See* **Bridge Crossing Jubilee**

April 3—Malcolm X delivers "The Ballot or the Bullet" speech in Cleveland, Ohio. *See* **Malcolm X's Birthday**

Late April—Malcolm X makes the Hajj, the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. *See* **Malcolm X's Birthday**

July 2—U.S. Congress passes the Civil Rights Act of 1964, outlawing discrimination based on a person's color, race, religion, sex, or national origin. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**

December 10—Martin Luther King Jr. receives the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**

## 1965

February 14—Malcolm X is assassinated by three Nation of Islam members at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem. *See* **Malcolm X's Birthday**

March 7—Civil rights leaders and others are attacked by police while conducting a peaceful voting rights march at Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. *See* **Bridge Crossing Jubilee; Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**

March 15—President Lyndon B. Johnson asks Congress to pass a voting rights bill. *See* **Bridge Crossing Jubilee**

March 21—Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights activists lead a five-day voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. *See* **Bridge Crossing Jubilee**

August 6—President Johnson signs into law the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which outlaws discriminatory voting practices, such as literacy tests. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**

## 1966

Maulana Karenga, professor of black studies at California State University at Long Beach, creates Kwanzaa. *See* **Kwanzaa**

August 12-14—First Watts Summer Festival is held in Los Angeles, California. *See* **Watts Summer Festival**

## 1967

Chuck Davis forms dance company in New York. *See* **DanceAfrica**

## 1968

April 4—Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**

April 8—Representative John Conyers of Michigan introduces a bill to create a federal holiday honoring Martin Luther King Jr. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**

## 1969

Abe Snyder and others organize the first African American Day Parade in Harlem. *See* **African American Day Parade**

## 1970

First Ifa Festival and Yoruba National Convention is held at Oyotunji African Village near Sheldon, South Carolina. *See* **Ifa Festival and Yoruba National Convention**

Indiana Black Expo is founded in Indianapolis. *See* **Indiana Black Expo's Summer Celebration**

First Olokun Festival is held in Oyotunji African Village near Sheldon, South Carolina. *See* **Olokun Festival**

October 17—Stanley Ransom, library director in New York, promotes first national observance of Black Poetry Day. *See* **Black Poetry Day**

## 1971

May 19—First Malcolm X birthday observance is held at the new Malcolm X Cultural Education Center in Washington, D.C. *See* **Malcolm X's Birthday**

June 19-20—First Indiana Black Expo Summer Celebration is held in Indianapolis. *See* **Indiana Black Expo's Summer Celebration**

July 6—Louis Armstrong dies in Queens, New York. *See* **Satchmo SummerFest**

August 21—Prisoner and activist George L. Jackson, known as one of the Soledad Brothers, is killed by prison guards during an apparent escape attempt. *See* **Black August Benefit Concert**

November 28—First African-American unity celebration of Umoja Karamu is held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. *See* **Umoja Karamu**

December 9—William "Bill" Pickett is first black man inducted into the Rodeo Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City. *See* **Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo**

## 1972

Tuskegee Airmen, Inc., holds its first convention in Detroit, Michigan, where the group is founded. *See* **Tuskegee Airmen Convention**

Ohio State University establishes a Black Studies Department. *See* **African-American Heritage Festival**

October 24—Jackie Robinson dies in Stamford, Connecticut. *See* **Jackie Robinson Day**

## 1973

December 23—The movie *The Sting* opens in Chicago, sparking the popularity of Scott Joplin's score, "The Entertainer." *See* **Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival**

## 1974

The DuSable Museum holds its first arts and crafts festival in Chicago. *See* **DuSable Museum Arts & Crafts Festival**

First Harlem Day celebration is held in the Harlem district of New York City. *See* **Harlem Week**

First Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival is held in Sedalia, Missouri. *See* **Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival**

December 2—The campus of Penn Center, on St. Helena Island, South Carolina, is designated a national historical landmark. *See* **Penn Center Heritage Days**

## 1975

First Oshun Festival (later renamed the Odunde Festival) is held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. *See* **Odunde Festival**

August 27—Haile Selassie dies in Ethiopia. *See* **Haile Selassie's Birthday**

October—First Black Cowboy Parade is held in Oakland, California. *See* **Black Cowboy Parade**

## 1976

Alex Haley's book, *Roots*, is published and becomes a bestseller. *See* **Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival**

January 23—Paul Robeson dies in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. *See* **Paul Robeson's Birthday**

February 10—Gerald R. Ford is the first president of the U.S. to issue a proclamation calling for the observance of Black History Month. *See* **African-American History Month**

February 20—Robert Hayden is appointed Poet Laureate by the Librarian of Congress and serves until 1978. *See* **Black Poetry Day**

May 4—The Pulitzer committee honors Scott Joplin with a Special Award in Music. *See* **Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival**

## 1977

February 20—First reenactment of the Battle of Olustee takes place. *See* **Battle of Olustee Reenactment**

June—First DanceAfrica festival is held in Brooklyn, New York. *See* **DanceAfrica**

August—First Goombay Festival takes place in the Coconut Grove neighborhood of Miami, Florida. *See* **Miami/Bahamas Goombay Festival**

August 21-22—First Georgia Sea Island Festival is held on St. Simons Island. *See* **Georgia Sea Island Festival**

August 28—The city council of Berkeley, California, passes an ordinance designating Malcolm X's birthday as a public holiday. The law becomes effective in 1979. *See* **Malcolm X's Birthday**

## 1978

First Jubilee Festival of Heritage takes place in Columbia, South Carolina. *See* **Jubilee Festival of Heritage**

Kenny Gamble and Ed Wright create Black Music Month. *See* **Black Music Month**

September 8—First Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival is held in Greenville. *See* **Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival**

## 1979

May—A block party is held by students at Ohio State University; it continues each year and is later organized as the African-American Heritage Festival. *See* **African-American Heritage Festival**

May 16—A. Philip Randolph dies in New York City. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**

June 7—President Jimmy Carter declares the first Black Music Month. *See* **Black Music Month**

June 7—Texas legislature passes act making Juneteenth an official state holiday. *See* **Juneteenth**

## 1981

Walter King, African-American initiate into the Yoruban religious society of Ifa, is crowned a king in Ife, Nigeria. *See* **Ifa Festival and Yoruba National Convention**

February 14-16—First Festival Sundiata is held in Seattle, Washington. *See* **Festival Sundiata**

June 14, 21, 28 and August 4, 11—First Bessie Smith Strut takes place as part of the Five Nights in Chattanooga (later Riverbend Festival) in downtown Chattanooga, Tennessee. *See* **Bessie Smith Strut**

November—Penn Center Heritage Days festival is revived, after a hiatus of over 30 years. *See* **Penn Center Heritage Days**

## 1982

First Goombay! celebration is held in Asheville, North Carolina. *See* **Goombay!**

Mary Carter Smith of Baltimore, Maryland, and Linda Goss of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, found the National Association of Black Storytellers. *See* **National Black Storytelling Festival and Conference**

August—First African World Festival in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, takes place. *See* **African World Festival in Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

August—First W. C. Handy Music Festival takes place in Florence, Alabama. *See* **W. C. Handy Music Festival**

September 10—First African Street Festival is held in Nashville, Tennessee. *See* **African Street Festival**

## 1983

First National Black Storytelling Festival takes place in Baltimore, Maryland. *See* **National Black Storytelling Festival and Conference**

Scott Joplin Ragtime Foundation is established. *See* **Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival**

July 1-3—First Rondo Days Celebration is held in St. Paul, Minnesota. *See* **Rondo Days Celebration**

August 26-28—First African World Festival in Detroit, Michigan, takes place. *See* **African World Festival in Detroit, Michigan**

November 2—U.S. Congress passes legislation to establish a federal holiday to honor Martin Luther King Jr. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**

## **1984**

First Chicago Gospel Music Festival is held in Grant Park. *See* **Chicago Gospel Music Festival**

September—First Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo is held in Denver, Colorado. *See* **Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo**

Late September to early October—First annual MOJA Festival is held in Charleston, South Carolina. *See* **MOJA Arts Festival**

## **1985**

First Fillmore Jazz Festival is held in San Francisco, California. *See* **Fillmore Jazz Festival**

May—Gwendolyn Brooks is appointed Poet Laureate by the Librarian of Congress and serves until 1986. *See* **Black Poetry Day**

## **1986**

Dorothy I. Height, civil rights activist, organizes the first Black Family Reunion Celebration in Washington, D.C. *See* **National Black Family Reunion Celebration**

## **1987**

First Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival is held in Crownsville, Maryland. *See* **Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival**

July 26—First Ga-Dangme Homowo Festival of Thanksgiving (later renamed Ghanafest) is held in Chicago. *See* **Ghanafest**

August 21-22—First Denver Black Arts Festival is held. *See* **Denver Black Arts Festival**

## **1988**

June 13-14, 20-21—First DanceAfrica festival in Washington, D.C., takes place. *See* **DanceAfrica**

June 18—Sallie Martin dies in Chicago. *See* **Chicago Gospel Music Festival**

July—First National Black Arts Festival is held in Atlanta, Georgia. *See* **National Black Arts Festival**

## **1989**

First Kuumba Festival is held in Knoxville, Tennessee. *See* **Kuumba Festival**

January—First Pan African Bookfest is held in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. *See* **Pan African Bookfest and Cultural Conference**

July—First National Black Theatre Festival is held in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. *See* **National Black Theatre Festival**

August—First Harambee Festival is held at Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina. *See* **Harambee Festival**

December 15—The film *Glory*, which portrays the U.S. Civil War's first all-black volunteer company, is released. *See* **Battle of Olustee Reenactment**

### 1990

First Homowo Festival is held in Portland, Oregon. *See* **Homowo Festival**

January 26-27—First Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Arts and Humanities is held in Eatonville, Florida. *See* **Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Arts and Humanities**

March 13—U.S. Congress passes law designating March 10 as a day to honor Harriet Tubman. *See* **Harriet Tubman Day**

### 1991

The Elegba Folklore Society begins the annual Down Home Family Reunion in Richmond, Virginia. *See* **Down Home Family Reunion**

May 25—First Black Pride Festival is held in Washington, D.C., to raise money for AIDS patients. *See* **Black Pride Festival**

September 28 - October 5—First DanceAfrica festival in Chicago takes place. *See* **DanceAfrica**

### 1992

The Malcolm X Grassroots Movement is formed in Brooklyn, New York. *See* **Black August Benefit Concert**

January 3—Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust*, the first feature-length film by an African-American woman to receive a wide theatrical release, opens in Chicago. *See* **African American Women in Cinema Film Festival**

February—First Pan African Film & Arts Festival is held in Los Angeles, California. *See* **Pan African Film & Arts Festival**

February 10—Alex Haley dies in Seattle, Washington. *See* **Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival**

July 24—U.S. Congress passes bill designating July 28 as Buffalo Soldiers Day. *See* **Buffalo Soldiers Commemorations**

September 12-13—First African/Caribbean International Festival of Life is held in Chicago. *See* **African/Caribbean International Festival of Life**

### 1993

May 18—Rita Dove is appointed Poet Laureate by the Librarian of Congress and serves until 1995. *See* **Black Poetry Day**

June 6—First DC Caribbean Carnival is held in Washington, D.C. *See* **DC Caribbean Carnival**

July through August—First African Film Festival is held in New York City. *See* **African Film Festival**

August 29—First Charlie Parker Jazz Festival is held in New York City. Avenue B is renamed “Charlie Parker Place.” *See* **Charlie Parker Jazz Festival**

## **1995**

September—First Maafa Commemoration is held in New York City. *See* **Maafa Commemoration**

October 16—Hundreds of thousands of African-American men gather at the National Mall in Washington, D.C., for the Million Man March. *See* **Millions More March**

## **1996**

February—First Native Islander Gullah Celebration is held on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. *See* **Native Islander Gullah Celebration**

March—First Bridge Crossing Jubilee reenactment in Selma, Alabama, is organized by the National Voting Rights Museum and Institute. *See* **Bridge Crossing Jubilee**

October 20—President Bill Clinton signs law directing U.S. Mint to create a coin honoring Crispus Attucks. *See* **Crispus Attucks Day**

November 12—The town of Nicodemus, Kansas, is designated a national historic site. *See* **Nicodemus Emancipation and Homecoming Celebration**

## **1997**

Acapulco Black Film Festival (later renamed the American Black Film Festival) is established by Jeff Friday and others. *See* **American Black Film Festival**

May—First Pan African Festival of Georgia takes place in Macon. *See* **Pan African Festival of Georgia**

## **1998**

First African American Women in Cinema Film Festival is held in New York City. *See* **African American Women in Cinema Film Festival**

August—The Malcolm X Grassroots Movement holds its first concert in New York City. *See* **Black August Benefit Concert**

August 12—U.S. Congress designates February 1 as National Freedom Day. *See* **National Freedom Day**

## **1999**

Fillmore Jazz Preservation District is dedicated in San Francisco, California. *See* **Fillmore Jazz Festival**

First Kwanzaa stamp is issued by the U.S. Postal Service. *See* **Kwanzaa**

Tuskegee University holds first George Washington Carver Convocation, celebrating his life and legacy. *See* **George Washington Carver Day**



February 19-21 — First Hollywood Black Film Festival is held. *See* **Hollywood Black Film Festival**

March 27 — Charlie Parker is honored during a three-day tribute in his hometown of Kansas City, including the dedication of a memorial statue. *See* **Charlie Parker Jazz Festival**

June 15 — Rosa Parks is awarded the Congressional Gold Medal of Honor. *See* **Rosa Parks Day**

### 2000

St. Simons African-American Heritage Coalition is formed in attempt to stem loss of black-owned historic property on the island. *See* **Georgia Sea Island Festival**

April 27-30 — First Denver Pan African Film Festival is held. *See* **Denver Pan African Film Festival**

October 16 — Million Families March is held in Washington, D.C., commemorating the fifth anniversary of the Million Man March. *See* **Millions More March**

### 2001

August 2-5 — First Satchmo SummerFest is held in New Orleans, Louisiana. *See* **Satchmo SummerFest**

October 1 — A reenactment of the Jerry Rescue takes place in Syracuse, New York, on its 150th anniversary. *See* **Jerry Rescue Day**

### 2002

Ebo Landing on St. Simons Island, Georgia, is consecrated as holy ground. *See* **Georgia Sea Island Festival**

Acapulco Black Film Festival is renamed the American Black Film Festival and moves to the Miami/South Beach area of Florida. *See* **American Black Film Festival**

August — Georgia Sea Island Festival is revived after a hiatus of several years. *See* **Georgia Sea Island Festival**

August 10-11 — First Idlewild Jazz Festival is held in Idlewild, Michigan. *See* **Idlewild Jazz Festival**

### 2003

August — AFRAM Festival in Seaford, Delaware, resumes after a four-year hiatus (festival began in the 1990s). *See* **AFRAM Festival**

### 2004

First reenactment of the 1854 Sugar Grove Convention takes place in Sugar Grove, Pennsylvania. *See* **Sugar Grove Underground Railroad Convention**

April 15 — Major League Baseball designates this day as Jackie Robinson Day. *See* **Jackie Robinson Day**

## 2005

February 10—Walter King, founder of the Oyotunji African Village near Sheldon, South Carolina, dies. *See* **Ifa Festival and Yoruba National Convention**

March 2—Rachel Robinson accepts Congressional Gold Medal on behalf of her deceased husband, Jackie Robinson. *See* **Jackie Robinson Day**

April 14-17—First observance of Emancipation Day in Washington, D.C., as an official public holiday. *See* **Emancipation Day in Washington, D.C.**

May 10—U.S. Congress passes resolution honoring Tuskegee airmen for bravery during World War II. *See* **Tuskegee Airmen Convention**

May 19—Audubon Ballroom in Harlem is reopened as the Malcolm X and Dr. Betty Shabazz Memorial and Education Center. *See* **Malcolm X's Birthday**

October 14—The Millions More March is held in Washington, D.C., on the 10th anniversary of the Million Man March. *See* **Millions More March**

October 24—Rosa Parks dies in Detroit, Michigan. *See* **Rosa Parks Day**

## 2006

January 6—Pilgrim Baptist Church in Chicago, considered the birthplace of gospel music, is severely damaged in a fire. *See* **Chicago Gospel Music Festival**

January 30—Coretta Scott King dies in Baja California, Mexico. *See* **Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday**

February 28—New Orleans celebrates the 150th anniversary of Mardi Gras observances in the city. *See* **Mardi Gras in African-American Traditions**

March 28—U.S. Congress votes to present Tuskegee airmen with Congressional Gold Medal of Honor. *See* **Tuskegee Airmen Convention**



## Appendix 2: Calendar of Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations

This appendix lists each currently observed event in calendar order, followed by the event's location. Events that do not include a location are those that are widely observed around the U.S. Within each month, events that annually occur on the same fixed date are listed first. These are followed by events that occur throughout the month or events that take place during the month on varying dates each year.

### January

#### ***Fixed Dates***

*Jan 1* — Emancipation Day

*Jan 5* — George Washington Carver Day, Tuskegee, AL

#### ***Non-Fixed Dates***

*3rd Mon* — Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday

*Last week* — Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Arts and Humanities, Eatonville, FL

### February

#### ***Fixed Dates***

*Feb 1* — National Freedom Day

*Feb 14* — Frederick Douglass Day, Washington, DC; New Bedford, MA

*Feb 20* — Buffalo Soldiers Day, MD

#### ***Non-Fixed Dates***

*Month-long* — African-American History Month

*Month-long* — Native Islander Gullah Celebration, Hilton Head Island, SC

*Sun closest to or on Feb 14* — Founder's Day/Richard Allen's Birthday

*Mid-Feb* — Battle of Olustee Reenactment, Olustee, FL

*3rd weekend* — Festival Sundiata, Seattle, WA

*Last Sat* — Harambee Festival, Columbia, SC

*Last weekend* — Olokun Festival, Sheldon, SC

*Date varies* — NAACP Image Awards, Los Angeles, CA

*Date varies* — Pan African Film & Arts Festival, Los Angeles, CA

## **March**

### ***Fixed Dates***

*Mar 5* — Crispus Attucks Day, Boston, MA; NJ

*Mar 10* — Harriet Tubman Day

### ***Non-Fixed Dates***

*1st weekend* — Bridge Crossing Jubilee, Selma, AL

## **April**

### ***Fixed Dates***

*Apr 15, on or around* — Jackie Robinson Day

*Apr 16* — Emancipation Day in Washington, DC

### ***Non-Fixed Dates***

*Last week* — Denver Pan African Film Festival, Denver, CO

*Last week* — Pan African Festival of Georgia, Macon, GA

*10 days in Apr or May* — Pan African Bookfest and Cultural Conference, Fort Lauderdale, FL

*Apr through May* — African Film Festival, New York, NY

## **May**

### ***Fixed Dates***

*May 18* — Haitian Flag Day

*May 20* — Emancipation Day, Tallahassee, FL

*May 29* — Emancipation Day, Upson County, GA

### ***Non-Fixed Dates***

*1st week* — African-American Heritage Festival, Columbus, OH

*Last weekend* — Black Pride Festival, Washington, DC

*Last weekend* — DanceAfrica, Brooklyn, NY

*10 days in May or Apr* — Pan African Bookfest and Cultural Conference, Fort Lauderdale, FL

*Apr through May* — African Film Festival, New York, NY

*Date varies* — Pinkster, Sleepy Hollow, NY

## **June**

### ***Fixed Dates***

*June 19* — Juneteenth

### ***Non-Fixed Dates***

*Month-long* — Black Music Month

*1st weekend* — Chicago Gospel Music Festival, Chicago, IL

*1st weekend* — Miami/Bahamas Goombay Festival, Miami, FL

## Appendix 2: Calendar of Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations

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*1st weekend* — Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival, Sedalia, MO  
*2nd Sun* — Odunde Festival, Philadelphia, PA  
*2nd week* — DanceAfrica, Washington, DC  
*3rd Mon* — Bessie Smith Strut, Chattanooga, TN  
*3rd weekend* — Georgia Sea Island Festival, St. Simons Island, GA  
*3rd weekend* — Sugar Grove Underground Railroad Convention, Sugar Grove, PA  
*Last full weekend* — DC Caribbean Carnival, Washington, DC  
*Date varies* — Hollywood Black Film Festival, Hollywood, CA  
*Date varies* — Kuumba Festival, Knoxville, TN  
*Date varies* — Pinkster, Brooklyn, NY

### July

#### **Fixed Dates**

*July 4, five days including* — African/Caribbean International Festival of Life, Chicago, IL  
*July 4, weekend nearest* — Fillmore Jazz Festival, San Francisco, CA  
*July 5* — Emancipation Day, Rochester, NY  
*July 23* — Haile Selassie's Birthday  
*July 28* — Buffalo Soldiers Day

#### **Non-Fixed Dates**

*1st weekend* — Ifa Festival and Yoruba National Convention, Sheldon, SC  
*Mid-July* — Denver Black Arts Festival, Denver, CO  
*Mid-July* — Indiana Black Expo's Summer Celebration, Indianapolis, IN  
*2nd weekend* — DuSable Museum Arts & Crafts Festival, Chicago, IL  
*3rd weekend* — Rondo Days Celebration, St. Paul, MN  
*3rd weekend, 10 days beginning* — National Black Arts Festival, Atlanta, GA  
*Last Sat* — Ghanafest, Chicago, IL  
*Last week* — W. C. Handy Music Festival, Florence, AL  
*Last week in odd-numbered years* — National Black Theatre Festival, Winston-Salem, NC  
*Last weekend* — Nicodemus Emancipation and Homecoming Celebration, Nicodemus, KS  
*Date varies* — American Black Film Festival, Miami/South Beach, FL

### August

#### **Fixed Dates**

*Aug 1* — West Indies Emancipation Day  
*Aug 17* — Marcus Garvey's Birthday

#### **Non-Fixed Dates**

*Month-long* — Harlem Week, New York, NY  
*Early Aug* — Emancipation Day in Hutchinson, KS  
*Early Aug* — Satchmo SummerFest, New Orleans, LA  
*1st weekend* — African World Festival in Milwaukee, WI

*2nd Sat*—Bud Billiken Parade and Picnic, Chicago, IL  
*2nd weekend*—AFRAM Festival, Seaford, DE  
*2nd weekend*—Watts Summer Festival, Los Angeles, CA  
*Mid-Aug weekend*—Idlewild Jazz Festival, Idlewild, MI  
*3rd weekend*—African World Festival in Detroit, MI  
*3rd weekend*—Down Home Family Reunion, Richmond, VA  
*Last weekend*—African Methodist August Quarterly, Wilmington, DE  
*Last weekend*—Charlie Parker Jazz Festival, New York, NY  
*Last weekend*—Goombay!, Asheville, NC  
*Last weekend*—Jubilee Festival of Heritage, Columbia, SC  
*Date varies*—Black August Benefit Concert, New York, NY  
*Date varies*—Homowo Festival, Portland, OR  
*Date varies*—National Black Family Reunion Celebration, Rockford, IL

## **September**

### ***Fixed Dates***

*Sep 17*—Frederick Douglass Day, New Bedford, MA  
*Sep 22*—Emancipation Day, Gallia County, OH

### ***Non-Fixed Dates***

*1st Mon*—J'Ouvert Celebration and West Indian-American Day Carnival, Brooklyn, NY  
*1st week*—National Baptist Convention, USA, Annual Session  
*2nd weekend*—National Black Family Reunion Celebration, Washington, DC  
*3rd Sat*—Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival, Greenville, MS  
*3rd Sun*—African American Day Parade, New York, NY  
*3rd week*—Maafa Commemoration, Brooklyn, NY  
*3rd weekend*—African Street Festival, Nashville, TN  
*Late Sep*—Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival, Crownsville, MD  
*Late Sep to early Oct*—MOJA Arts Festival, Charleston, SC

## **October**

### ***Fixed Dates***

*Oct 1*—Jerry Rescue Day, Syracuse, NY

### ***Non-Fixed Dates***

*1st Sat*—Black Cowboy Parade, Oakland, CA  
*Late Oct*—African American Women in Cinema Film Festival, New York, NY  
*Late Oct*—DanceAfrica, Chicago, IL

## **November**

### ***Fixed Dates***

*Nov 1*—Emancipation Day, MD

## Appendix 2: Calendar of Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations

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### ***Non-Fixed Dates***

*Mid-Nov*—National Black Storytelling Festival and Conference

*2nd weekend*—Penn Center Heritage Days, St. Helena Island, SC

*4th Sun*—Umoja Karamu

*Nov through Feb*—Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo

### **December**

#### ***Fixed Dates***

*Dec 1*—Rosa Parks Day

*Dec 26 to Jan 1*—Kwanzaa

*Dec 31*—Watch Night







## Appendix 3: Geographical List of Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations

This appendix lists currently observed events by the state(s) in which they take place, as discussed in this volume. Under each state, events that are official state holidays or observances are listed first, followed by events observed in cities within the state.

### Alabama

*Florence*—W. C. Handy Music Festival, last week in July

*Selma*—Bridge Crossing Jubilee, four days in Mar, including 1st weekend

*Tuskegee*—George Washington Carver Day, Jan 5

### Alaska

*Official state observance*—Juneteenth, June 19

### Arkansas

*Official state observance*—Juneteenth, June 19

### California

*Official state observance*—Juneteenth, June 19

*Berkeley*—Malcolm X's Birthday, May 19

*Hollywood*—Hollywood Black Film Festival, one week in June

*Los Angeles*—Kwanzaa, Dec 26 – Jan 1

*Los Angeles*—NAACP Image Awards, Feb

*Los Angeles*—Pan African Film & Arts Festival, Feb

*Los Angeles*—Watts Summer Festival, 2nd weekend in Aug

*Oakland*—Black Cowboy Parade, 1st Sat in Oct

*Oakland*—Malcolm X's Birthday, May 19

*Sacramento*—Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday, 3rd Mon in Jan

*San Francisco*—Fillmore Jazz Festival, weekend nearest July 4

### Colorado

*Denver*—Denver Black Arts Festival, five days in July

*Denver*—Denver Pan African Film Festival, last week in Apr

## **Connecticut**

*Official state observance* — Juneteenth, June 19

## **Delaware**

*Official state observance* — Juneteenth, June 19

*Seaford* — AFRAM Festival, 2nd weekend in Aug

*Wilmington* — African Methodist August Quarterly, last weekend in Aug

## **District of Columbia**

*Official district holiday* — Emancipation Day in Washington, D.C., Apr 16

Black Music Month, June

Black Pride Festival, Memorial Day weekend in May

Church Homecomings, late Sep

DanceAfrica, 2nd week in June

DC Caribbean Carnival, last full weekend in June

Frederick Douglass Day, Feb 14

Juneteenth, June 19

Malcolm X's Birthday, May 19

Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday, 3rd Mon in Jan

National Black Family Reunion Celebration, 2nd weekend in Sep

## **Florida**

*Official state observance* — Juneteenth, June 19

*Buena Vista* — Black Music Month, June

*Delray Beach* — Haitian Flag Day, May 18

*Eatonville* — Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Arts and Humanities, last week in Jan

*Fort Lauderdale* — Haitian Flag Day, May 18

*Fort Lauderdale* — Pan African Bookfest and Cultural Conference, 10 days in Apr or May

*Fort Myers* — Haitian Flag Day, May 18

*Miami* — American Black Film Festival, five days in July

*Miami* — Haitian Flag Day, May 18

*Miami* — Miami/Bahamas Goombay Festival, 1st weekend in June

*Olustee* — Battle of Olustee Reenactment, mid-Feb

*St. Petersburg* — Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday, 3rd Mon in Jan

*Tallahassee* — Emancipation Day, May 20

*Tampa* — Haitian Flag Day, May 18

## **Georgia**

*Atlanta* — Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday, 3rd Mon in Jan

*Atlanta* — National Black Arts Festival, 10 days beginning 3rd weekend in July

*Bolden* — Watch Night, Dec 31

## Appendix 3: Geographical List of Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations

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*Macon*—Pan African Festival of Georgia, last week in Apr  
*St. Simons Island*—Georgia Sea Island Festival, 3rd weekend in June  
*Savannah*—Founder's Day/Richard Allen's Birthday, Sun closest to or on Feb 14  
*Upton County*—Emancipation Day, May 29

### Idaho

*Official state observance*—Juneteenth, June 19

### Illinois

*Official state observance*—Juneteenth, June 19  
*Chicago*—African/Caribbean International Festival of Life, five days including July 4  
*Chicago*—Bud Billiken Parade and Picnic, 2nd Sat in Aug  
*Chicago*—Chicago Gospel Music Festival, 1st weekend in June  
*Chicago*—DanceAfrica, late Oct  
*Chicago*—DuSable Museum Arts & Crafts Festival, 2nd weekend in July  
*Chicago*—Ghanafest, last Sat in July  
*Chicago*—Kwanzaa, Dec 26 to Jan 1  
*Rockford*—National Black Family Reunion Celebration, Aug

### Indiana

*Bloomington*—Juneteenth, June 19  
*Indianapolis*—Indiana Black Expo's Summer Celebration, mid-July  
*Roberts Settlement*—Church Homecomings, July 4

### Iowa

*Official state observance*—Juneteenth, June 19

### Kansas

*Hutchinson*—Emancipation Day in Hutchinson, Kansas, early Aug  
*Kansas City*—Juneteenth, June 19  
*Nicodemus*—Nicodemus Emancipation and Homecoming Celebration, last weekend in July  
*Topeka*—Juneteenth, June 19  
*Wichita*—Juneteenth, June 19

### Kentucky

*Official state observance*—Juneteenth, June 19

### Louisiana

*Official state observance*—Juneteenth, June 19

*New Orleans*—Mardi Gras in African-American Traditions, two weeks before the beginning of Lent

*New Orleans*—Satchmo SummerFest, four days in early Aug

## **Maryland**

*Official state observance*—Buffalo Soldiers Day, Feb 20

*Official state observance*—Emancipation Day, Nov 1

*Crownsville*—Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival, late Sep

*Dorchester County*—Harriet Tubman Day, Mar 10

*Rockville*—Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday, 3rd Mon in Jan

## **Massachusetts**

*Boston*—Crispus Attucks Day, Mar 5

*Boston*—Haitian Flag Day, May 18

*New Bedford*—Frederick Douglass Day, Feb 14; Sep 17

## **Michigan**

*Official state observance*—Juneteenth, June 19

*Detroit*—African World Festival, 3rd weekend in Aug

*Detroit*—Black Music Month, June

*Detroit*—Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday, 3rd Mon in Jan

*Detroit*—Rosa Parks Day, Dec 1

*Idlewild*—Idlewild Jazz Festival, weekend in mid-Aug

## **Minnesota**

*St. Paul*—Rondo Days Celebration, 3rd weekend in July

## **Mississippi**

*Greenville*—Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival, 3rd Sat in Sep

*Natchez*—Juneteenth, June 19

## **Missouri**

*Official state observance*—Juneteenth, June 19

*Sedalia*—Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival, 1st full weekend in June

## **New Jersey**

*Official state observance*—Crispus Attucks Day, Mar 5

*Official state observance*—Juneteenth, June 19

## **New Mexico**

*Official state observance*—Juneteenth, June 19

## Appendix 3: Geographical List of Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations

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### **New York**

*Official state observance* — Juneteenth, June 19  
*Albany* — Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday, 3rd Mon in Jan  
*Auburn* — Harriet Tubman Day, Mar 10  
*Brooklyn* — DanceAfrica, Memorial Day weekend in May  
*Brooklyn* — J'Ouvert Celebration and West Indian-American Day Carnival, 1st Mon in Sep  
*Brooklyn* — Maafa Commemoration, 3rd week in Sep  
*Brooklyn* — Pinkster, June  
*New York* — African American Day Parade, 3rd Sun in Sep  
*New York* — African American Women in Cinema Film Festival, three days in late Oct  
*New York* — African Film Festival, Apr through May  
*New York* — Black August Benefit Concert, Aug  
*New York* — Black Music Month, June  
*New York* — Charlie Parker Jazz Festival, weekend in late Aug  
*New York* — Haitian Flag Day, May 18  
*New York* — Harlem Week, Aug  
*New York* — Kwanzaa, Dec 26 to Jan 1  
*New York* — Malcolm X's Birthday, May 19  
*New York* — Marcus Garvey's Birthday, Aug 17  
*New York* — Rosa Parks Day, Dec 1  
*Rochester* — Emancipation Day, July 5  
*Sleepy Hollow* — Pinkster, May  
*Syracuse* — Jerry Rescue Day, Oct 1

### **North Carolina**

*Asheville* — Goombay!, last weekend in Aug  
*Raleigh* — Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday, 3rd Mon in Jan  
*Winston-Salem* — National Black Theatre Festival, last week in July during odd-numbered years

### **Ohio**

*Cincinnati* — National Black Family Reunion Celebration  
*Columbus* — African-American Heritage Festival, 1st week in May  
*Gallia County* — Emancipation Day, Sep 22

### **Oklahoma**

*Official state observance* — Juneteenth, June 19

### **Oregon**

*Portland* — Homowo Festival, one day in Aug

## **Pennsylvania**

*Philadelphia*— Founder's Day/Richard Allen's Birthday, Sun closest to or on Feb 14

*Philadelphia*— National Freedom Day, Feb 1

*Philadelphia*— Odunde Festival, 2nd Sun in June

*Philadelphia*— Umoja Karamu, 4th Sun in Nov

*Sugar Grove*— Sugar Grove Underground Railroad Convention, 3rd weekend in June

## **South Carolina**

*Charleston*— MOJA Arts Festival, late Sep to early Oct

*Columbia*— Harambee Festival, last Sat in Feb

*Columbia*— Jubilee Festival of Heritage, last weekend in Aug

*Hilton Head Island*— Native Islander Gullah Celebration, Feb

*St. Helena Island*— Penn Center Heritage Days, 2nd weekend in Nov

*Sheldon*— Ifa Festival and Yoruba National Convention, 1st weekend in July

*Sheldon*— Olokun Festival, last weekend in Feb

## **Tennessee**

*Chattanooga*— Bessie Smith Strut, 3rd Mon in June

*Knoxville*— Kuumba Festival, four days in early June

*Nashville*— African Street Festival, 3rd weekend in Sep

*Nashville*— Black Music Month, June

## **Texas**

*Official state observance*—Juneteenth, June 19

*Austin*— Juneteenth, June 19

*Denton*— Juneteenth, June 19

*Galveston*— Juneteenth, June 19

## **Virginia**

*Richmond*— Down Home Family Reunion, 3rd weekend in Aug

*Richmond*— Kwanzaa, Dec 26 to Jan 1

## **Washington**

*Seattle*— Festival Sundiata, 3rd weekend in Feb

## **Wisconsin**

*Milwaukee*— African World Festival, 1st weekend in Aug

*Milwaukee*— Marcus Garvey's Birthday, Aug 17

## **Wyoming**

*Official state observance*— Juneteenth, June 19

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# **Organizations — Contact Information and Web Sites**





## Organizations — Contact Information and Web Sites

This section includes all web sites, including available contact information, listed in the entries in alphabetical order by the name of the sponsoring organization.

AFRAM Festival  
P.O. Box 687  
Seaford, DE 19973  
302-628-1908

African-American Appalachian Arts, Inc.  
Emporium Bldg.  
100 S. Gay St., Ste. 106  
Knoxville, TN 37920  
<http://www.discoveret.org/aaaa>

African American Cultural Alliance  
P.O. Box 22173  
Nashville, TN 37202  
615-251-0007  
<http://www.africanamericanculturalalliance.com/>

African American Cultural Center  
Official Kwanzaa Web Site  
3018 W. 48th St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90043-1335  
323-299-6124; fax: 323-299-0261  
<http://www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org/index.shtml>

African American Day Parade Office  
1969 Madison Ave.  
New York, NY 10035-1549  
212-348-3080

African American Research Library &  
Cultural Center  
Pan African Bookfest and Cultural Conference  
East Broward County Florida Library  
2650 Sistrunk Blvd.  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33311  
954-625-2800 (AARLCC)  
954-357-7348 (Bookfest Hotline)  
<http://www.broward.org/library/aarlcc.htm>  
<http://www.broward.org/library/pabf.htm>

African American Student Services  
Ohio State Multicultural Center  
Ohio Union  
1739 N. High St.  
Columbus, OH 43210  
614-688-8449  
<http://www.osuheritagefestival.com/>

African American Women in Cinema  
Organization, Inc.  
545 Eighth Ave., Ste. 401  
New York, NY 10018  
212-769-7949; fax: 212-871-2074  
<http://www.aawic.org>

African/Caribbean International Festival of  
Life  
c/o Martin's Inter-Culture, Ltd.

1325 S. Wabash Ave., Ste. 307  
Chicago, IL 60605  
312-427-0266; fax: 312-427-0268  
<http://www.festivaloflife.com>

African Film Festival, Inc.  
154 W. 18th St., Ste. 2A  
New York, NY 10011  
212-352-1720; fax: 212-807-9752  
<http://www.africanfilmny.org>

African Heritage Cultural Arts Center  
6161 N.W. 22nd Ave.  
Miami, FL 33142  
305-638-6771

African Methodist Episcopal Church  
500 8th Ave. S.  
Nashville, TN 37203  
615-254-0911; fax: 615-254-0912  
<http://www.ame-church.com/>

African Studies Center  
UCLA International Institute  
"The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro  
Improvement Association Papers Project"  
10244 Bunche Hall  
P.O. Box 951310  
Los Angeles, CA 90095  
310-825-3686; fax: 310-206-2250  
[http://www.international.ucla.edu/africa/  
mgpp](http://www.international.ucla.edu/africa/mgpp)

African World Festival  
Henry Maier Festival Park  
2821 N. 4th St.  
Milwaukee, WI 53212  
414-372-4567; fax: 414-372-6054  
<http://www.africanworldfestival.com>

Akan Cultural Symbols Project Online  
George F. Kojo Arthur, Associate Professor  
School of Education  
120 Jenkins Hall  
Marshall University

Huntington, WV 25755  
[http://www.marshall.edu/akanart/akanknow  
.html](http://www.marshall.edu/akanart/akanknow.html)

Alpha Kappa Alpha  
5656 S. Stony Island Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60637  
773-684-1282  
<http://www.aka1908.com/>

Alpha Phi Alpha  
2313 St. Paul St.  
Baltimore, MD 21218  
410-554-0040  
<http://www.alphaphialpha.net/>

American Black Film Festival  
c/o Film Life  
P.O. Box 688  
New York, NY 10012  
<http://www.abff.com>

American Museum of Natural History  
Central Park W. at 79th St.  
New York, NY 10024  
212-769-5000  
<http://www.amnh.org>

American Public Transportation Association  
1666 K St., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20006  
202-496-4816; fax: 202-496-4321  
<http://www.apta.com>

Annual Emancipation Celebration Day, Inc.  
P.O. Box 511  
Gallipolis, OH 45631  
<http://www.emancipation-day.com>

Asbury United Methodist Church  
926 11th St., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20001  
202-628-0009; fax: 202-783-0519  
<http://www.asburyumcdc.org>

## Organizations — Contact Information and Web Sites

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Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau  
151 Haywood St.  
Asheville, NC 28802  
828-258-6103  
<http://www.exploreasheville.com>

Association for the Study of African-American  
Life and History  
C. B. Powell Bldg.  
525 Bryant St., Ste. C142  
Washington, DC 20059  
202-865-0053; fax: 202-265-7920  
<http://www.asalh.org/>

Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau  
233 Peachtree St., N.E., Ste. 100  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
404-521-6600; fax: 404-577-3293  
<http://www.atlantaheritage.com>

Atlanta Football Classic  
<http://www.atlantafootballclassic.com/>

Avery Research Center for African-American  
History and Culture  
66 George St.  
Charleston, SC 29424  
843-953-7609; fax: 843-953-7607  
<http://www.cofc.edu/avery/>

"Official Visitors Guide for African-American  
History and Culture"  
<http://www.charlestonblackheritage.com/>

Battle of Olustee Home Page, sponsored by  
the Florida Park Service, the Olustee  
Battlefield Citizen Support Organization,  
and the University of Florida  
<http://extlab7.entnem.ufl.edu/olustee/>

Bayou Classic  
<http://www.statefarmbayouclassic.com/>

Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce  
Visitors Information  
P.O. Box 754

Beaufort, SC 29901  
843-986-1102; fax: 843-379-8027  
<http://www.bcbcc.org/visitors.php>

Benedict College  
Harambee Festival  
1600 Harden St.  
Columbia, SC 29204  
803-253-5174; fax: 803-253-5178  
[http://www.benedict.edu/events/afr\\_hist\\_mth/bc-afr\\_hist\\_mth-events.html](http://www.benedict.edu/events/afr_hist_mth/bc-afr_hist_mth-events.html)

Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo  
Administrative Office  
4943 Billings St.  
P.O. Box 39163  
Denver, CO 80239  
303-373-1246; fax: 303-373-2747  
<http://www.billpickettrodeo.com/web/pages/main.htm>

Black American West Museum and Heritage  
Center  
3091 California St.  
Denver, CO 80205  
303-292-2566  
<http://www.blackamericanwest.org>

Black Hollywood Education & Research Center  
1875 Century Park E., Ste. 6th Fl.  
Los Angeles, CA 95067  
310-284-3170; hotline: 323-957-4747;  
fax: 310-284-3169  
<http://www.bherc.org>

Black Revolutionary War Patriots Foundation  
1612 K St., N.W., Ste. 1104  
Washington, DC 20006  
202-452-1776; fax: 202-728-0770

Brooklyn Academy of Music  
DanceAfrica in Brooklyn  
Peter Jay Sharp Bldg.  
30 Lafayette Ave.  
Brooklyn, NY 11217

- 718-636-4100  
<http://www.bam.org>
- Brooklyn Tourism and Visitors Center  
Brooklyn Borough Hall  
209 Joralemon St.  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
718-802-3846  
<http://www.brooklyn-tourism.org>
- Buffalo Soldier Educational and Historical  
Committee  
P.O. Box 3372  
Fort Leavenworth, KS 33027
- Buffalo Soldier Monument  
Fort Leavenworth, KS 33027  
<http://garrison.leavenworth.army.mil/sites/about/buffalo.asp>
- Buffalo Soldiers  
Web site of author Frank N. Schubert  
<http://www.captainbuffalo.com/>
- Buffalo Soldiers National Museum  
1834 Southmore  
Houston, TX 77004  
713-942-8920; fax: 713-942-8912  
<http://www.buffalosoldiermuseum.com/>
- California African American Museum  
600 State Dr.  
Exposition Park  
Los Angeles, CA 90037  
213-744-7432  
<http://www.caamuseum.org/>
- Center for Contemporary Black History  
Malcolm X Project  
760 Schermerhorn Extension – MC 5512  
Columbia University  
1200 Amsterdam Ave.  
New York, NY 10027  
212-854-7080; fax: 212-854-7060
- <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ccbh/mxp/index.html>
- Central Florida Black Pride  
3350 W. Hillsborough Ave.  
Tampa, FL 33614-5876
- Charles H. Wright Museum of African  
American History  
315 E. Warren  
Detroit, MI 48201  
313-494-5800  
<http://www.maah-detroit.org/>
- Charleston Area Convention and Visitors  
Bureau  
423 King St.  
Charleston, SC 29403  
843-853-8000  
<http://www.charlestoncvb.com/>
- Chattanooga African-American Museum  
4200 E. Martin Luther King Dr.  
Chattanooga, TN 37403  
423-266-8658; fax: 423-267-1076  
<http://www.caamhistory.com>
- Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce  
811 Broad St.  
Chattanooga, TN 37402  
423-756-2121; fax: 423-267-7242  
<http://www.chattanooga-chamber.com>
- Chattanooga Area Convention & Visitors  
Bureau  
2 Broad St.  
Chattanooga, TN 37402  
423-756-8687 or 800-322-3344  
<http://www.chattanoogafun.com>
- Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau  
2301 S. Lake Shore Dr.  
Chicago, IL 60616  
312-567-8500; fax: 312-567-8533  
<http://www.choosechicago.com>



## Organizations — Contact Information and Web Sites

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### *Chicago Defender*

200 S. Michigan Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60604  
312-225-2400; fax: 312-225-9231  
<http://www.chicagodefender.com/>

Chicago Defender Charities, Inc.  
700 E. Oakwood Blvd., 5th Fl.  
Chicago, IL 60616  
773-536-3710; fax: 773-536-3718  
<http://www.budbillikenparade.com>

Chicago Historical Society  
Encyclopedia of Chicago  
Clark St. at North Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60614-6071  
312-642-4600; fax: 312-266-2077  
<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org>

Chicago Mayor's Office of Special Events  
121 N. LaSalle St., Rm. 703  
Chicago, IL 60602  
312-744-3315; fax: 312-744-8523  
<http://egov.cityofchicago.org/city/webportal/portalEntityHomeAction.do?entityName=Special+Events&entityNameEnumValue=38>

Chicora Foundation, Inc.  
P.O. Box 8664  
861 Arbutus Dr.  
Columbia, SC 29202  
803-787-6910  
<http://www.sciway.net/hist/chicora/mitchelville-6.html>

Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye  
P.O. Box 22627  
Hialeah, FL 33002  
<http://www.church-of-the-lukumi.org/>

Church of the Seven African Powers  
P.O. Box 453336  
Miami, FL 33245

City of Charleston  
MOJA Arts Festival  
Office of Cultural Affairs  
133 Church St.  
Charleston, SC 29401  
843-724-7305; fax: 843-720-3967  
<http://www.mojafestival.com>

City of Hutchinson  
125 E. Ave. B  
Hutchinson, KS 67501  
620-694-2611; fax: 620-694-2673  
<http://www.hutchgov.com/>

City of Miami, Florida  
Haitian Bicentennial Committee  
<http://www.miamigov.com/haiti2004/index.htm>

City of Seaford  
414 High St.  
P.O. Box 1100  
Seaford, DE 19973  
302-629-9173; fax: 302-629-9307  
<http://www.seafordde.com>

City Park Foundation  
830 Fifth Ave.  
New York, NY 10021  
212-360-2756  
<http://www.cityparkfoundation.org>

Civil Rights Movement Veterans  
<http://www.crmvet.org/>

CMG Worldwide  
10500 Crosspoint Blvd.  
Indianapolis, IN 46256  
317-570-5000; fax: 317-570-5500  
Official Site of Charlie Yardbird Parker  
<http://www.cmgtww.com/music/parker/home.html>

Official Web Site of Jackie Robinson  
<http://www.jackierobinson.com>

Official Web Site of Malcolm X  
<http://www.cmgww.com/historic/malcolm/home.php>

Coastal Discovery Museum  
100 William Hilton Pkwy.  
P.O. Box 23497  
Hilton Head Island, SC 29926  
843-689-6767  
<http://www.coastaldiscovery.org>

Colonial Williamsburg Foundation  
"African American Experience"  
P.O. Box 1776  
Williamsburg, VA 23187-1776  
757-229-1000  
[http://www.history.org/Almanack/life/Af\\_Amer/aalife.cfm](http://www.history.org/Almanack/life/Af_Amer/aalife.cfm)

Columbia College Chicago  
Office of Community Arts Partnerships  
312-342-8850  
<http://www.colum.edu/ocap/>

Company B, 54th Massachusetts Volunteer  
Infantry Regiment  
P.O. Box 15773  
Washington, DC 20003-0773  
<http://www.54thmass.org>

Company I, 54th Massachusetts Volunteer  
Infantry  
P.O. Box 12454  
Charleston, SC 29422-2454  
<http://www.awod.com/gallery/probono/cwchas/54ma.html>

Connecticut State Library  
"Connecticut's 'Black Governors'"  
History and Genealogy Unit  
231 Capitol Ave.  
Hartford, CT 06106  
860-757-6500  
<http://www.cslib.org/gov/blackgov.htm>

Cultural Heritage Initiatives for Community  
Outreach  
"Harlem, 1900-1940, An African-American  
Community, An Exhibition Portfolio from  
The Schomburg Center for Research in  
Black Culture"

School of Information  
University of Michigan  
1085 S. University Ave., 304 West Hall  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1107  
734-763-2285; fax: 734-764-2475  
<http://www.si.umich.edu/chico/Harlem>

Cultural Tourism DC  
African American Heritage Trail  
1250 H St., N.W., Ste. 1000  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-661-7581; fax: 202-661-7599  
<http://www.culturaltourismdc.org/info-url3948/info-url.htm>

DanceAfrica Chicago  
312-344-7070  
<http://www.danceafricachicago.com>

Dance Place  
DanceAfrica in Washington, DC  
3225 8th St., N.E.  
Washington, DC 20017  
202-269-1600; fax: 202-269-4103  
<http://www.danceplace.org/>

Daughters of the Diaspora  
"A Filmography of Black Women Independent  
Film and Video Makers," based on John  
Williams's "Re-Creating Their Media  
Image: Two Generations of Black Women  
Filmmakers." *Black Scholar*, Spring 1995.  
<http://geechee.tv/DaughtersDiaspora.html>

DC Black Pride  
Black Lesbian and Gay Pride Day, Inc.  
P.O. Box 77071  
Washington, DC 20013

## Organizations — Contact Information and Web Sites

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202-737-5767 or 866-94BLGPD  
<http://www.dcblackpride.org>

DC Caribbean Carnival, Inc.  
4809-A Georgia Ave., N.W., Ste. 112  
Washington, DC 20011  
202-726-2204; fax: 202-726-8221  
<http://www.dccaribbeancarnival.com>

Delta Sigma Theta  
1707 New Hampshire Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20009  
202-986-2400  
<http://www.deltasigmatheta.org/>

Denton Juneteenth Celebration Committee  
1300 Wilson St.  
Denton, TX 76205  
940-349-8575  
<http://www.dentonjuneteenth.org>

Denver Black Arts Festival  
2721 Welton St.  
P.O. Box 300577  
Denver, CO 80203  
303-860-0040; fax: 303-377-4631  
<http://www.denbaf.org/index.html>

Denver Film Society  
1725 Blake St.  
Denver, CO 80202  
303-595-3456  
<http://www.denverfilm.org>

District of Columbia Emancipation Day  
Foundation  
4101 South Dakota Ave., N.E.  
Washington, DC 20017  
202-529-4833  
<http://www.dcemancipation.org/>

District of Columbia Mayor's Office  
"Emancipation Day"  
John A. Wilson Bldg.

1350 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20004  
202-727-1000  
[http://dc.gov/mayor/emancipationDay/  
index.shtm](http://dc.gov/mayor/emancipationDay/index.shtm)

Dorchester County Tourism Department  
2 Rose Hill Place  
Cambridge, MD 21613  
410-228-1000 or 800-522-TOUR (8687)  
<http://www.tourdorchester.org>

Downtown Disney Pleasure Island  
1590 Buena Vista Dr.  
P.O. Box 10000  
Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830  
407-828-3025

Dunbar-Jupiter Hammon Public Library  
3095 Blount St.  
Fort Myers, FL 33916  
239-334-3602; fax 239-334-7940  
[http://www.lee-county.com/library/library/  
branches/db.htm](http://www.lee-county.com/library/library/branches/db.htm)

DuSable Museum of African American History  
740 E. 56th Place  
Chicago, IL 60637  
773-947-0600  
<http://www.dusablemuseum.org>

Eastside Arts Alliance  
Malcolm X Jazz Festival  
P.O. Box 17008  
Oakland, CA 94601  
<http://www.eastsideartsalliance.com>

"Edward A. Berlin's Website of Ragtime and  
Scholarship"  
<http://www.edwardaberlin.com/index.htm>

Eleda.org  
<http://ilarioba.tripod.com/>

Elegba Folklore Society

101 E. Broad St.

Richmond, VA 23219

804-644-3900; fax: 804-644-3919

<http://www.elegbafolkloresociety.org>

Eubie Blake National Jazz Institute and

Cultural Center

847 N. Howard St.

Baltimore, MD 21201

410-225-3130; fax: 410-225-3139

<http://www.eubieblake.org>

Fillmore Merchants Association

<http://www.fillmorestreetsf.com/>

Florence/Lauderdale (County) Tourism

One Hightower Place

Florence, AL 35630

256-740-4141 or 888-356-8687;

fax: 256-740-4142

<http://www.flo-tour.org/>

Fort Worth Cowtown Coliseum

121 E. Exchange Ave.

Fort Worth, TX 76106

888-COWTOWN (269-8696) or 817-625-1025;

fax: 817-625-1148

<http://www.cowtowncoliseum.com>

Frederick Douglass National Historic Site

1411 W St., S.E.

Washington, DC 20020-4813

202-426-5961

<http://www.nps.gov/frdo/>

French Quarter Festivals, Inc.

400 N. Peter, Ste. #205

New Orleans, LA 70130

504-522-5730 or 800-673-5725;

fax: 504-522-5711

<http://www.fqfi.org> or <http://www.satchmosummerfest.com>

Friends of Historic Idlewild

Idlewild Museum

P.O. Box 221

Idlewild, MI 49642

<http://www.historicidlewild.com/>

Friends of the Riverbend Festival

180 Hamm Rd.

Chattanooga, TN 37404

423-756-2211; fax: 423-756-2719

<http://www.riverbendfestival.com>

George Washington Carver Museum &  
Foundation

Tuskegee University

Tuskegee, AL 36088

334-727-3200

<http://www.nps.gov/tuin/pphtml/facilities.html>

George Washington Carver National  
Monument

5646 Carver Rd.

Diamond, MO 64840

417-325-4151

<http://www.nps.gov/gwca/>

Ghana National Council of Metropolitan  
Chicago

4433 N. Ravenswood Ave.

Chicago, IL 60640

773-561-5498; fax: 773-271-0335

<http://www.ghananationalcouncil.org>

Government of the Bahamas

Ministry of Youth Sports and Culture

E. Hill St., 7th Fl., Post Office Bldg.

P.O. Box N-4891

Nassau, N.P. The Bahamas

242-322-6250/3; fax: 242-322-6546

<http://www.bahamas.gov.bs>

Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention &  
Visitors Bureau

100 E. Broward Blvd., Ste. 200

Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301

800-227-8669; fax: 954-765-4466

<http://www.sunny.org>

## Organizations — Contact Information and Web Sites

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Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce  
200A W. 136th St.  
New York, NY 10030-7200  
212-862-7200; fax: 212-862-8745  
<http://www.harlemdiscover.com>

Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau  
701 Bricknell Ave., Ste. 2700  
Miami, FL 33131  
800-933-8448 or 305-539-3000  
<http://www.gmcvb.com>

Greater Milwaukee Convention and Visitors Bureau  
648 N. Plankinton Ave., Ste. 425  
Milwaukee, WI 53203-2917  
800-231-0903 or 414-273-3950;  
fax: 414-273-5596  
<http://www.milwaukee.org/>

Haitian-American Carnival Association, Inc.  
P.O. Box 863  
Wall St. Station  
New York, NY 10268  
718-434-9250  
<http://www.haitianparade.com>

Haitian Americans United  
10 Fairway St., Ste. 218  
P.O. Box 260440  
Mattapan, MA 02126  
617-298-2976  
[http://www.hauinc.org/html/programs/  
indexFlag.asp](http://www.hauinc.org/html/programs/indexFlag.asp)

Harmony Gold Preview House  
7655 Sunset Blvd.  
Hollywood, CA 90302  
310-712-3998; fax: 928-447-2127

Harriet Tubman Historical Society  
P.O. Box 832127  
Stone Mountain, GA 30083  
<http://www.harriettubman.com/index.html>

Harriet Tubman Home  
180 South St.  
Auburn, NY 13201  
315-252-2081  
<http://www.nyhistory.com/harriettubman/>

Harriet Tubman Organization  
424 Race St.  
P.O. Box 1164  
Cambridge, MD 21613  
410-228-0401  
<http://www.intercom.net/npo/tubman/>

Hartmann Studios  
100 W. Ohio Ave.  
Richmond, CA 94804  
800-731-0003 or 510-970-3217  
<http://www.fillmorestreetjazzfest.com>

Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce and Visitor & Convention Bureau  
1 Chamber Dr.  
P.O. Box 5647  
Hilton Head Island, SC 29938  
843-785-3673 or 800-523-3373

Historic Columbia Foundation  
1601 Richland St.  
Columbia, SC 29201  
803-252-7742; fax: 803-929-7695  
<http://www.historiccolumbia.org>

Historical Museum of Southern Florida  
“At the Crossroads: Afro-Cuban Orisha Arts in Miami”  
101 W. Flagler St.  
Miami, FL 33130  
305-375-1492  
[http://www.historical-museum.org/exhibits/  
orisha/orisha\\_start.htm](http://www.historical-museum.org/exhibits/orisha/orisha_start.htm)

Historical Society of Delaware  
“Delaware History Explorer Online  
Encyclopedia - Peter Spencer”

505 Market St.  
Wilmington, DE 19801  
302-655-7161; fax: 302-655-7844  
[http://www.hsd.org/DHE/DHE\\_who\\_Spencer.htm](http://www.hsd.org/DHE/DHE_who_Spencer.htm)

The HistoryMakers  
1900 S. Michigan Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60616  
312-674-1900; fax: 312-674-1915  
<http://thehistorymakers.com/>

Hollywood Black Film Festival, Inc.  
4201 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 600  
Los Angeles, CA 90010  
323-526-5742; fax: 310-943-2326  
<http://www.hbff.org>

Homowo African Arts & Cultures  
4839 N.E. Martin Luther King Blvd., Ste. 209  
Portland, OR 97211  
503-288-3025; fax: 503-331-6688  
<http://www.homowo.org/festival.html>

Hutchinson Emancipation Day Committee,  
Inc.  
P.O. Box 701  
Hutchinson, KS 67504-0701  
620-663-6673 or 620-669-3931  
<http://www.shopkansas.net/eday/misc.html>

Hutchinson/Reno County Chamber of  
Commerce  
P.O. Box 519  
117 N. Walnut  
Hutchinson, KS 67504  
620-662-3391  
<http://www.hutchchamber.com/community/index.htm>

Idlewild African-American Chamber of  
Commerce  
P.O. Box 435  
Idlewild, MI 49642

800-745-2611  
<http://www.iaacc.com/>

Idlewild Foundation  
1150 Griswold, Ste. 2100  
Detroit, MI 48226  
<http://www.idlewildjazzfest.com/main.html>

Idlewild Historic & Cultural Center  
5583 Broadway Ave.  
Idlewild, MI 49642  
231-745-7541

Ile Orunmila Temple I.F.A., Inc.  
166 N.W. 48th St.  
Miami, FL 33127-2418  
<http://www.ifainc.org/temple/temple.html>

In The Life Atlanta, Inc.  
P.O. Box 7206  
Atlanta, GA 30357  
404-872-6410; fax: 404-506-9730  
<http://www.inthelifeatl.com/>

Independence Hall Visitor Center  
143 S. Third St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
215-965-2305; fax: 215-597-1548  
<http://www.nps.gov/inde/>

Indiana Black Expo, Inc.  
3145 N. Meridian St.  
Indianapolis, IN 46208  
317-925-2702  
<http://www.indianablackexpo.com/>

Indiana University-Purdue University at  
Indianapolis  
Frederick Douglass Papers Project  
Dept. of History  
425 University Blvd.  
CA406  
Indianapolis, IN 46202  
317-274-5834; fax: 317-278-7800  
<http://www.iupui.edu/~douglass/index.htm>

## Organizations — Contact Information and Web Sites

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- International Association of African American Music  
P.O. Box 382  
Gladwyne, PA 19035  
610-664-8292; fax: 610-664-5940  
<http://www.iaaam.com/home.html>
- International Museum of the Horse  
"The Buffalo Soldiers on the Western Frontier"  
Kentucky Horse Park  
4089 Iron Works Pkwy.  
Lexington, KY 40511  
859-233-4303 or 800-678-8813;  
fax: 859-254-0253  
<http://www.imh.org/imh/buf/buftoc.html>
- Iowa State University  
George Washington Carver Papers  
403 Parks Library  
Ames, IA 50011  
515-294-6672  
<http://www.lib.iastate.edu/arch/rgrp/21-7-2.html>
- Jackie Robinson Foundation  
3 W. 35th St., 11th Fl.  
New York, NY 10001-2204  
212-290-8600; fax: 212-290-8081
- Jackie Robinson Foundation  
550 S. Hope St., Ste. 2300  
Los Angeles, CA 90071  
213-330-7726; fax: 213-330-7526  
<http://www.jackierobinson.org>
- Jefferson Street United Merchants Partnership, Inc.  
1215 9th Ave. N., Ste. 201  
Nashville, TN 37208  
615-726-5867; fax: 615-726-2078  
<http://www.jumptojefferson.com>
- John G. Riley Center/Museum of African American History and Culture  
419 E. Jefferson St.  
Tallahassee, FL 32301  
850-681-7881; fax: 850-681-7000  
<http://www.rileymuseum.org>
- J'Ouvert City International, Inc.  
13 Atlantic Common Blvd.  
Brooklyn, NY 11217  
Juneteenth.com  
P.O. Box 871750  
New Orleans, LA 70187  
504-245-7800  
<http://www.juneteenth.com/>
- Kappa Alpha Psi  
2322-24 N. Broad St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19132  
215-228-7184  
<http://www.kappaalphapsi1911.com/>
- King County Courthouse  
516 Third Ave.  
Seattle, WA 98104  
206-296-0100 or 800-325-6165  
<http://www.metrokc.gov/exec/roberson/about.htm>
- Kingdom of Oyotunji African Village  
Highway 17, P.O. Box 51  
Sheldon, SC 29941  
843-846-8900  
[http://www.oyotunjivillage.net/oyo2\\_007.htm](http://www.oyotunjivillage.net/oyo2_007.htm)
- Knoxville Tourism & Sports Corporation  
One Vision Plaza  
301 S. Gay St.  
Knoxville, TN 37902  
800-727-8045
- Kunta Kinte-Alex Haley Foundation, Inc.  
31 Old Solomons Island Rd., Ste. 102  
Annapolis, MD 21401

410-841-6920; fax: 410-841-6505  
<http://www.kintehaley.org>

Kunta Kinte Celebrations, Inc.  
P.O. Box 314  
Arnold, MD 21012  
410-349-0338; fax: 410-439-0069  
<http://www.kuntakinte.org>

Kuumba Festival  
P.O. Box 6774  
Knoxville, TN 37914  
865-546-9705  
<http://www.kuumbafesttn.com>

Kwanzaa Heritage Foundation  
Leimert Park Village  
Los Angeles, CA 90008  
213-955-5239

Landmark Society of Western New York  
133 S. Fitzhugh St.  
Rochester, NY 14608  
585-546-7029; fax: 585-546-4788  
<http://www.landmarksociety.org>

Library of Congress  
101 Independence Ave, S.E.  
Washington, DC 20540  
202-707-5000

"The African-American Mosaic: A Library of  
Congress Resource Guide for the Study of  
Black History & Culture"  
[http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african/  
intro.html](http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african/intro.html)

"African-American Odyssey: The Quest for  
Full Citizenship"  
[http://rs6.loc.gov/ammem/aohtml/  
exhibit/aoart4.html](http://rs6.loc.gov/ammem/aohtml/exhibit/aoart4.html)

"Baseball and Jackie Robinson"  
[http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/  
collections/robinson/index.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/robinson/index.html)

"Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the  
Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938"  
[http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/  
snhome.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html)

"Frederick Douglass Papers"  
[http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/doughtml/  
doughome.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/doughtml/doughome.html)

"National Freedom Day: A Local Legacy"  
[http://www.americaslibrary.gov/  
cgi-bin/page.cgi/es/pa/free\\_1](http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/es/pa/free_1)

"The Zora Neale Hurston Plays at the Library  
of Congress"  
[http://rs6.loc.gov/ammem/znhtml/  
znhome.html](http://rs6.loc.gov/ammem/znhtml/znhome.html)

Louis Armstrong Archives  
Queens College  
65-30 Kissena Blvd.  
Flushing, NY 11367-1597  
<http://www.satchmo.net>

Louis Armstrong House  
34-56 107th St.  
Corona, NY 11368  
718-997-3670; fax: 718-997-3677  
<http://www.satchmo.net>

Louisiana State University Libraries  
"Martin Luther King Jr. and Black History  
Month"  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
225-578-5652; fax: 225-578-6825  
<http://www.lib.lsu.edu/hum/mlk/index.html>

Lukumi Church of the Orishas  
1756 E. 172nd St.  
Bronx, NY 10472  
718-597-9600  
<http://www.lukumichurch.org/olocun.html>

Madame C. J. Walker Building  
617 Indiana Ave.  
Indianapolis, IN 46202



## Organizations — Contact Information and Web Sites

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317-236-2099; fax: 317-236-2097

[http://www.walkertheatre.com/walker\\_building.htm](http://www.walkertheatre.com/walker_building.htm)

Major League Baseball  
Jackie Robinson Information Archives  
c/o MLB Advanced Media, L.P.  
75 Ninth Ave., 5th Fl.  
New York, NY 10011  
<http://mlb.mlb.com/NASApp/mlb/mlb/events/jrd/index.jsp>

Malcolm X and Dr. Betty Shabazz Memorial  
and Education Center  
3940 Broadway  
New York, NY 10032-1543

Malcolm X College  
1900 W. Van Buren  
Chicago, IL 60612  
312-850-7000  
<http://malcolmx.ccc.edu>

Malcolm X Cultural Education Center  
2100 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., S.E.  
Washington, DC 20020  
202-678-8352  
[http://www.brothermalcolm.net/archived\\_sites/2092351029\\_page2.htm](http://www.brothermalcolm.net/archived_sites/2092351029_page2.htm)

Malcolm X Grassroots Movement  
718-254-8800  
<http://www.blackaugust.com>

Mann-Simons Cottage  
1403 Richland St.  
Columbia, SC 29201  
803-252-7742  
[http://www.historiccolumbia.org/history/mann\\_simons.html](http://www.historiccolumbia.org/history/mann_simons.html)

Marcus Garvey Cultural Center for Black  
Cultural Education  
University of Northern Colorado  
928 20th St.

Greeley, CO 80634  
970-351-1159; fax: 970-351-2337  
<http://www.unco.edu/garvey/index.asp>

Mardi Gras Indians  
<http://www.mardigrasindians.com/>

Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent  
Social Change  
449 Auburn Ave., N.E.  
Atlanta, GA 30312  
404-526-8900  
<http://www.thekingcenter.org>

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service  
Corporation for National and Community  
Service  
1201 New York Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20525  
202-606-5000; TTY: 202-606-3472  
<http://www.mlkday.org/>

Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site  
450 Auburn Ave., N.E.  
Atlanta, GA 30312  
404-331-5190; fax: 404-730-3112  
<http://www.nps.gov/malu/index.htm>

Martin Luther King Jr. Research and  
Education Institute  
Martin Luther King Jr. Papers Project  
Cypress Hall D-Wing  
Stanford University  
Stanford, CA 94305-4146  
<http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/>

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning  
Commission  
8787 Georgia Ave.  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
301-563-3400 or 301-495-4600  
<http://www.mc-mncppc.org/>

McIntosh County Shouters  
<http://hometown.aol.com/Shoutforfreedom/>

- Miami/Bahamas Goombay Festival  
P.O. Box 330052  
Miami, FL 33133  
800-891-7811; fax: 954-442-0427  
<http://www.goombayfestivalcoconutgrove.com/>
- Million Man March 1995, Inc.  
7351 S. Stony Island Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60649  
773-324-6000  
<http://www.millionsmoremovement.com>
- Minnesota Historical Society  
345 W. Kellogg Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55102  
651-296-6126  
<http://www.mnhs.org>
- Mississippi Action for Community  
Education, Inc.  
119 Theobald St.  
Greenville, MS 38701  
888-812-5837 or 662-335-3523;  
fax: 662-334-2939  
<http://www.deltablues.org/MACE/home.htm>
- MLK365  
650 Howe Ave., Ste. 1014  
Sacramento, CA 95825  
916-479-1918  
<http://www.mlksacramento.org>
- Moffitt Library  
"African Cinema/Theatrical Movies about  
Africa"  
University of California  
Berkeley, CA 94720-6000  
510-642-8197  
[http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/African\\_film.html](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/African_film.html)
- Montgomery County Historical Society  
"Abstracts to the Maryland Slave Narratives  
of the Federal Writers' Project 1936-1938"
- 111 W. Montgomery Ave.  
Rockville, MD 20850  
[http://www.montgomeryhistory.org/MD\\_SlaveNarr.htm](http://www.montgomeryhistory.org/MD_SlaveNarr.htm)
- Mormon Temple  
Down Home Martin Luther King Potluck  
Celebration  
4780 Lincoln Blvd.  
Oakland, CA 94602  
510-654-2592
- Mother AUMP Church  
812 N. Franklin St.  
Wilmington, DE 19806  
302-658-3838
- Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church and Richard  
Allen Museum  
419 Richard Allen Ave.  
Philadelphia, PA 19147  
215-925-0616  
<http://www.motherbethel.org>
- Motown Maurice Productions  
Tampa Haitian Flag Day Festival  
P.O. Box 272507  
Tampa, FL 33688  
813-951-0794  
<http://www.tampahaitianflagday.com>
- NAACP Image Awards  
4929 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 310  
Los Angeles, CA 90010  
323-938-5268  
<http://www.naacpimageawards.net>
- National Archives and Records Administration  
"Treasures of Congress"  
8601 Adelphi Rd.  
College Park, MD 20740  
866-272-6272  
[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/treasures\\_of\\_congress/site.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/treasures_of_congress/site.html)

## Organizations — Contact Information and Web Sites

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- National Association of Black Storytellers, Inc.  
P.O. Box 67722  
Baltimore, MD 21215  
410-947-1117  
<http://www.nabsinc.org/home.asp>
- National Association of Buffalo Soldiers  
Motorcycle Clubs  
<http://www.buffalosoldiersnational.com/>
- National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.  
1700 Baptist World Center Dr.  
Nashville, TN 37207  
866-531-3054  
<http://www.nationalbaptist.com>
- National Black Arts Festival  
659 Auburn Ave., N.E., Ste. 254  
Atlanta, GA 30312  
404-730-7315; fax: 404-7300-7104  
<http://www.nbaf.org>
- National Black Theatre Festival  
610 Coliseum Dr., Ste. 1  
Winston-Salem, NC 27106  
336-723-2266  
<http://www.nbtf.org>
- National Civil Rights Museum  
450 Mulberry St.  
Memphis, TN 38103  
901-521-9699; fax: 901-521-9740  
<http://www.civilrightsmuseum.org/>
- National Council of Negro Women, Inc.  
633 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20004  
202-737-0120  
<http://www.ncnw.org/blackfamily.htm>
- National Cowboy and Western Heritage  
Museum  
1700 N.E. 63rd St.  
Oklahoma City, OK 73111  
405-478-2250  
<http://www.nationalcowboymuseum.org>
- National Cowboys of Color Museum and  
Hall of Fame  
3400 Mount Vernon Ave.  
Ft. Worth, TX 76103  
817-922-9999
- National Great Blacks in Wax Museum  
1601-03 E. North Ave.  
Baltimore, MD 21213  
410-563-3404; fax: 410-563-7806  
<http://www.ngbiwm.com> or <http://www.greatblacksinwax.org>
- National Juneteenth Christian Leadership  
Council  
201 N. George Lee Ave.  
P.O. Box 269  
Belzoni, MS 39038  
662-247-1471; fax: 662-247-1384
- National Juneteenth Observance Foundation  
1100 15th St., N.W., Ste. #300  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-331-8864; fax: 202-331-8876  
<http://www.juneteenth.us/>
- National Park Service  
“African American History Month 2006”  
<http://www.cr.nps.gov/NR/feature/afam/>  
“Celebrating African American History &  
Culture: Our Shared History”  
[http://www.cr.nps.gov/aahistory/  
bhm-sites.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/aahistory/bhm-sites.htm)  
“Legends of Tuskegee”  
[http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/  
tuskegee/index.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/tuskegee/index.htm)
- See also* Frederick Douglass National Historic  
Site; George Washington Carver Museum  
& Foundation; George Washington Carver  
National Monument; Martin Luther King  
Jr. National Historic Site; Nicodemus  
National Historic Site; Tuskegee Institute  
National Historic Site

National Voting Rights Museum & Institute  
1012 Water Ave.  
P.O. Box 1366  
Selma, AL 36702  
334-418-0800  
<http://www.nvrmi.org/>

Native Islanders Business and Community  
Affairs Association  
21 Cardinal Rd.  
Hilton Head Island, NC 29926  
843-689-9314  
Hotline: 877-650-0676 or 843-682-3742  
<http://www.gullahcelebration.com>

Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center  
Indiana University  
275 N. Jordan Ave., Ste. A226  
Bloomington, IN 47405  
812-855-9271; fax: 812-855-9148  
<http://www.indiana.edu/~nmbcc>

Negro Leagues Baseball Museum  
1616 E. 18th St.  
Kansas City, MO 64102  
816-221-1960 or 888-221-6526;  
fax: 816-221-8424  
<http://www.nlbm.com>

New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau  
2020 St. Charles Ave.  
New Orleans, LA 70130  
800-672-6124  
<http://www.neworleanscvb.com/>

New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corp.  
"Mardi Gras Traditions"  
<http://www.neworleansonline.com/neworleans/mardigras/mgtraditions.html>

New York State Library  
"The Emancipation Proclamation"  
Cultural Education Center  
Empire State Plaza  
Albany, NY 12230

518-474-5355 (reference desk)  
<http://unix2.nysed.gov/library/features/ep/>

Nicodemus Historical Society  
R.R. #2, Box 139  
Nicodemus, KS 67625  
785-421-3311

Nicodemus National Historic Site  
304 Washington Ave.  
Nicodemus, KS 67625-3015  
785-839-4233; fax: 785-839-4325  
<http://www.nps.gov/nico/>

North Carolina Arts Council  
North Carolina African American Culture Tour  
MSC #4632  
Dept. of Cultural Resources  
Raleigh, NC 27699-4632  
919-807-6500; fax: 919-807-6532  
<http://www.ncculturetour.org>

Oakland Black Cowboy Association  
<http://www.blackcowboyassociation.org>

Oakland Convention and Visitors Bureau  
463 11th St.  
Oakland, CA 94607  
510-655-7309 (parade information)  
510-839-9000; fax: 510-839-5924  
<http://www.oaklandcvb.com>

Odunde, Inc.  
P.O. Box 21748  
Philadelphia, PA 19146  
215-732-8508  
<http://www.odundeinc.org/Index.htm>

Olustee Battlefield Citizens Support  
Organization  
P.O. Box 382  
Glen St. Mary, FL 32040  
<http://extlab7.entnem.ufl.edu/olustee/cso.htm>

## Organizations — Contact Information and Web Sites

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Olustee Battlefield Historic State Park  
P.O. Box 40  
Olustee, FL 32072  
386-758-0400; fax: 386-397-4262  
<http://www.floridastateparks.org/olustee/default.cfm>

Omega Psi Phi  
3951 Snapfinger Pkwy.  
Decatur, GA 30035  
404-284-5533  
<http://www.oppf.org>

Onondaga Historical Association Museum  
& Research Center  
321 Montgomery St.  
Syracuse, NY 13202  
315-428-1864; fax: 315-471-2133  
<http://www.cnyhistory.org/>

Our Film Works, Inc.  
Sisters in Cinema  
<http://www.sistersincinema.com;>  
<http://www.sistersincinema.com/info/festivals.html>

PAFF Headquarters  
3775 Santa Rosalia Dr.  
Los Angeles, CA 90008  
323-295-1706; fax: 323-295-1952  
<http://www.paff.org/html/index.php>

Pan African Arts Society/Denver Pan  
African Film Festival/Café Nuba  
909 Park Ave. W.  
Denver, CO 80205  
303-298-8188; fax: 303-298-8804  
<http://www.panafricanarts.org>

Paul Robeson Cultural Center  
Rutgers University  
600 Bartholomew Rd.  
Piscataway, NJ 08854  
732-445-3545; fax: 732-445-3151  
<http://prcc.rutgers.edu/index.html>

Penn School National Historic Landmark  
District  
P.O. Box 126  
St. Helena Island, SC 29920  
843-838-2432; fax: 843-838-8545  
<http://www.penncenter.com>

Phi Beta Sigma  
145 Kennedy St., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20011  
<http://www.pbs1914.org/>

Philadelphia Black Gay Pride, Inc.  
c/o COLOURS, Inc.  
1201 Chestnut St., 15th Fl.  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
215-496-0330; fax: 215-496-0354  
<http://www.phillyblackpride.org>

Philadelphia Folklore Project  
“ODUNDE Exhibition”  
735 S. 50th St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19143  
215-726-1106  
<http://www.folkloreproject.org/programs/exhibits/odunde/index.cfm>

Philipsburg Manor  
Route 9  
Sleepy Hollow, NY 10591  
914-631-3992; fax: 914-631-7740  
<http://www.hudsonvalley.org/pinkster/index.html>

Public Broadcasting Service  
“Free to Dance,” an online companion to  
2001 documentary  
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/freetodance/ind.html>

“The Slave Experience: Freedom and  
Emancipation,” part of online exhibit  
“Slavery and the Making of America”  
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/slavery/experience/freedom/history.html>

Real Cowboy Association  
#4 Eva Circle  
Longview, TX 75602  
903-753-3165; fax: 903-753-0265  
<http://www.realcowboyassociation.com>

Rhode Island Black Storytellers  
P.O. Box 25323  
Providence, RI 02905  
401-273-4013, ext. 2  
<http://burrowsweb.com/ribs/>

Richmond Metropolitan Convention &  
Visitors Bureau  
401 N. 3rd St.  
Richmond, VA 23219  
800-370-9004  
<http://www.visit.richmond.com/>

Rockville (Maryland) Human Rights  
Commission  
City Hall  
111 Maryland Ave.  
Rockville, MD 20850  
240-314-8316

Rondo Avenue, Inc.  
1360 University Ave., #140  
St. Paul, MN 55140  
651-646-6597  
<http://www.rondodays.org>

Rosa & Raymond Parks Institute of  
Self-Development  
65 Cadillac Sq., Ste. 2200  
Detroit, MI 48226  
313-965-0606  
<http://www.rosaparks.org>

Rosa Parks Day Memorial Committee  
39 W. 14th St., #206  
New York, NY 10011  
212-633-6646  
<http://www.RosaParksDay.org>

St. Paul's Community Maafa Resource Center  
859 Hendrix St.  
Brooklyn, NY 11207  
718-257-2884; fax: 718-257-1965  
<http://www.themaafa.com>

St. Petersburg/Clearwater Area Convention  
and Visitors Bureau  
13805 58th St. N., Ste. 2-200  
Clearwater, FL 33760  
877-352-3224 or 727-464-7200  
<http://floridasbeach.com>

St. Simons African American Heritage  
Coalition  
P.O. Box 20145  
5800 Frederica Rd.  
St. Simons Island, GA 31522  
<http://www.ssafricanamerheritage.org/>

Schomburg Center for Research in Black  
Culture  
New York Public Library  
515 Malcolm X Blvd.  
New York, NY 10037  
212-491-2200  
<http://www.nypl.org/research/sc/sc.html>  
"Malcolm X: A Search for Truth"  
<http://www.nypl.org/research/sc/malcolmX>

Scott Joplin International Ragtime Foundation  
321 S. Ohio  
Sedalia, MO 65301  
660-826-2271 or 866-218-6258  
<http://www.scottjoplin.org>

Seacoast New Hampshire  
Black History  
P.O. Box 4458  
Portsmouth, NH 03802  
603-427-2020  
<http://www.seacoastnh.com/blackhistory/blacks2.html>

## Organizations — Contact Information and Web Sites

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Sedalia Convention and Visitors Bureau  
600 E. Third  
Sedalia, MO 65301  
800-827-5295  
<http://www.visitsedaliamo.com>

Sigma Gamma Rho  
1000 Southhill Dr., Ste. 200  
Cary, NC 27513  
888-SGR-1922  
919-678-9720  
<http://www.sgrho1922.org/>

Sigma Pi Phi  
<http://www.sigma-pi-phi.net/>

Southern Heritage Classic  
<http://www.southernheritageclassic.com>

Stardusters Crime Prevention, Inc.  
Stardusters Juneteenth  
917 S.E. 12  
Topeka, KS 66607  
785-233-5834

Sugar Grove Underground Railroad  
Convention  
206 E. Mill St.  
P.O. Box 544  
Sugar Grove, PA 16350  
814-489-3062

Sundiata African American Cultural  
Association  
P.O. Box 24723  
Seattle, WA 98124  
206-329-8086  
<http://www.festivalsundiata.org/>

Temple of the Black Messiah  
1856 N. 21st St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19121  
215-684-3476

Texas State Historical Association  
*Handbook of Texas Online*  
1 University Station D0901  
Austin, TX 78712-0332  
512-471-1525; fax: 512-471-1551  
<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/>

Texas State Library & Archives Commission  
"Juneteenth"  
1201 Brazos  
P.O. Box 12927  
Austin, TX 78711-2927  
512-463-5455  
[http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/ref/abouttx/  
juneteenth.html](http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/ref/abouttx/juneteenth.html)

Thomaston-Upson Chamber of Commerce  
213 E. Gordon St.  
P.O. Box 827  
Thomaston, GA 30286  
706-647-9686; fax: 706-647-1703  
<http://www.thomastonchamber.com>

Tubman African American Museum  
P.O. Box 6671  
Macon, GA 31208  
478-743-8544; fax: 478-743-9063  
[http://www.tubmanmuseum.com/programs/  
panafrican/](http://www.tubmanmuseum.com/programs/panafrican/)

Tuskegee Airmen, Incorporated  
P.O. Box 9166  
Arlington, VA 22219  
<http://tuskegeeairmen.org/>

Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site  
1212 W. Montgomery Rd.  
Tuskegee, AL 36088  
334-727-3200; fax: 334-727-1448  
<http://www.nps.gov/tuin/>

U.S. Census Bureau  
"Profile America"  
4700 Silver Hill Rd.  
Washington, DC 20233-0001

301-763-3030; fax: 301-457-3670  
[http://www.census.gov/pubinfo/www/broadcast/radio/special\\_radio\\_features.html](http://www.census.gov/pubinfo/www/broadcast/radio/special_radio_features.html)

U.S. Department of Education  
"Black History Month Resources"  
Federal Resources for Educational Excellence  
400 Maryland Ave., S.W., Rm. 7E113  
Washington, DC 20202  
<http://www.ed.gov/free/bhm.html>

Universal Negro Improvement Association  
and African Communities League  
Thomas W. Harvey Memorial Division #121  
1609-11 Cecil B. Moore Ave.  
Philadelphia, PA 19121  
215-236-0782  
<http://www.unia-acl.org/>

University of Georgia  
*New Georgia Encyclopedia*  
Main Library  
Athens, GA 30602  
<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org>

Warren County Historical Society  
210 Fourth Ave.  
P.O. Box 427  
Warren, PA 16365  
Phone and fax: 814-723-1795  
<http://ws2.kinzua.net/warrenhistory/>

Washington, DC Convention and Tourism  
Corporation  
901 7th St., N.W., 4th Fl.  
Washington, DC 20001-3719  
202-789-7000; fax: 202-789-7037  
<http://www.washington.org>

Watts Renaissance Planning Committee  
10950 S. Central Ave.  
Los Angeles, CA 90059  
310-221-0080; fax: 310-221-0514  
<http://www.wattsrenaissance.org>

Watts Summer Festival  
10950 S. Central Ave.  
Watts, CA 90059  
323-789-7304; fax: 323-789-5652  
<http://www.wattsfestival.org>

W. C. Handy Home, Museum, and Library  
620 W. College St.  
Florence, AL 35630  
256-760-6434

W. C. Handy Music Festival  
217 E. Tuscaloosa St.  
Florence, AL 35630  
256-766-7642  
<http://www.wchandymusicfestival.org/>

West Indian-American Day Carnival  
Association  
323 Rogers Ave.  
Brooklyn, NY 11225  
718-467-1797  
<http://www.wiadca.org>

Windy City Pride  
c/o TaskForce Prevention and Community  
Services  
1130 S. Wabash, Ste. 404  
Chicago, IL 60605  
312-986-0661

Wisconsin Black Historical Society Museum  
2620 W. Center St.  
Milwaukee, WI 53206  
414-372-7677  
<http://www.wbhs.org>

Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum  
5816 Clarendon Rd.  
Brooklyn, NY 11203  
718-629-5400; fax: 718-629-3125  
<http://www.wyckoffassociation.org/>

YMI Cultural Center  
Administrative Office  
39 S. Market St.



## Organizations — Contact Information and Web Sites

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Asheville, NC 28801  
828-252-4614; fax: 828-257-4539  
<http://www.ymicc.org>

Zeta Phi Beta  
<http://www.zphib1920.org/>

ZORA! Festival  
227 E. Kennedy Blvd.  
Eatonville, FL 32751  
407-599-9930 or 407-599-9963;  
fax: 407-599-5100  
<http://www.zoranealehurstonfestival.com/>

Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club, Inc.  
732 N. Broad St.  
New Orleans, LA 70119  
504-827-1661  
[http://www.experienceneworleans.com/zulu/  
main.html](http://www.experienceneworleans.com/zulu/main.html)



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# Index







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