

Our Story Forever

By Star Spencer
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Black History month is a time of self-recognition; it is a time of remembering; it is a time of honoring. We look in the past to find those who gave birth to us and to our freedom and in turn we eventually find ourselves. Thousands of names, faces, and events tell the story of black people all over the world. Yet we want to celebrate these epic events in the shortest month of the year.

Travel back in time to Ancient Africa where prominent black kings ruled over their cities of gold and their nations of fortitude. Each had its own language, its own laws and great pride in its traditions. When the first slaves arrived in Jamestown in 1619, a

brand new volume in that long history began, one that has affected our lives to this very day, this very hour; this very minute. Can you possibly glorify those truths of our existence in just one month?

Try to remember in 1849 when Harriet Tubman escaped to the North from her Maryland plantation to later guide over 300 slaves to freedom through the infamous Underground Railroad. What about Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Dubois? Remember Emmet Till from Chicago, who was murdered for whistling at a white woman? Did you forget the 54th Regiment of Massachusetts who were the first blacks to fight in battle for the US armed forces? How can anyone honor and see in retrospect these feats of courage and genius in a matter of

twenty-nine days?

In the early fifties Rosa Parks was named the Mother of the Civil Rights Movement and after her came many sons and daughters. They were those who fought in the struggle so that we few blacks at UNC might one day be able to attend this university; their blood is on our fingertips. Think back to Stokely Carmichael, Medgar Evers, Angela Davis, the Black Panthers, the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, and many nameless faces who died in captivity for you, for us. Their bones lay in the ground beneath your feet.

Now we read the works of historic black writers, we snap our fingers to the music of black original talent and the world capitalizes off the creations of black inventors. To condense their sto-

ries, their hopes, their dreams, their tears, and their centuries of sacrifice into a month is like writing a biography of 29 pages. And didn't it take Alex Haley fourteen years to write a book on the history of his family alone?

Black History Month should be Black History Year, Black History Decade, and Black History Forever. Every day should be a reminder of those generations who did what you are afraid to do. Those recycled dreams are your dreams; those recycled tears are your tears. The other eleven months should not be a time where we must wait in ignorance until our time arrives; our time is now, as it has been for centuries and should be forever. We must celebrate and remember like the timeless people of greatness that we are—all year 'round.

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A Celebration of Values and Traditions

By Titia Shelton
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Many of us can't answer this simple question, "Who invented the stoplight?"

Black History Month is a necessary celebration to teach and remind us of African-American unsung heroes. It is an affirmation of our culture, a celebration of values and traditions, and a time for us to reexamine who we are through cultural festivals, plays, movies, roundtables and other activities. This is the time when African-Americans experience an overwhelming sense of self-pride and love because the accomplishments of our people are finally being acknowledged and celebrated.

There are some who say, "Why do we still need a Black History Month celebration?"

They say we have come such a long way, that there are more rights and more freedoms for African-Americans than ever before, and we are now "included in the American Dream." These same people get frustrated and say that we want equality, yet we are still isolating ourselves by engaging in separatist activities and forums. Black History Month, they claim is the biggest separation of them all.

African Americans developed these forums because for many years we were never allowed to participate in white events and be included in white media. Black History Month wouldn't be needed if we were truly a part of the American dream. Black History Month is a mandatory celebration until African-Americans are truly incorporated into history and acquire the piece of American

apple pie to which we're entitled.

In 1996 the majority of textbooks still only discuss African-Americans in one chapter — that same tired chapter about slavery. Everyone knows that blacks didn't just appear on the face of the earth when slavery began. Where is our history before slavery? Where are the stories about the great Egyptian kings and queens, and stories of the great scientists who invented the air conditioning unit, refrigerator and blood bank? Until African-Americans are incorporated into every chapter of the history books from the beginning of civilization to the present day, we need to celebrate Black History Month.

Some say make it Multicultural Month or Minorities Month so that others can be included, but everyone benefits from knowing the truth:

that America would not be the "great place" that it is now without the backbreaking labor, ingenious inventions, and intellectual and moral contributions of the Black race. If we didn't have Black History Month, other races might think our only contributions and achievements were taking care of the masters' children, frying up some finger-lickin' chicken, plowing the fields, and let us not forget rapping, dancing, and playing basketball. Not only do other people need Black History Month to learn about the contributions of African-Americans, but our own sisters and brothers need this month as a reminder of our heritage.

When we start getting lazy and give up in school we need this month as a reminder of Mary McLeod Bethune, who fought

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