

# Black History Month

## African American history opens classroom doors to past and present

Fedorina Bynum  
STAFF REPORTER

Every year Americans set aside the month of February to recognize prominent African American leaders who have impacted not only blacks, but society as a whole.

The journey of infiltrating the minds of people in society begins in the classroom. The notion of a dedicated time for black history instruction dates from 1926, when educator Carter Godwin Woodson created Negro History Week in a bid to promote a better understanding of the contributions of blacks. In 1976, Congress changed this tribute from a week into a full month.

The curriculum in each school system is set by its board of trustees and other leaders, including financial

contributors. Each school system varies by demographics and curriculum. Even though many ethnic groups are represented in our diverse society, the one that is historically most prominent is African American.

African American history is not only gospel hymns, marches, arrests and deaths, but it is also filled with milestones that should be brought into the forefront in educating the next generation of lawyers, journalists and doctors. As all Americans know, our school systems comprise children from many racial and ethnic groups. The students who make up the majority would probably never be exposed to black history if it weren't a part of school curriculums.

Minority students need to be taught black history in

order to identify with who they are and where they come from, said Dr. Edwin Bell, WSSU professor of education.

"If our society solely bases the identity of Black America on music videos, then we are not presenting the most constructive view of people of color," he said. "The concept that makes our culture unique is that we are part of a community and have been given responsibility."

As important as black history is to society, at some point it appears that the ball has been dropped in the classroom. The focus should be more on contributions than anything else, Bell said. It is not about making the black race superior to any other race, but honoring those who have shaped our world, regardless of race, color or creed.



Courtesy of MLK Memorial Foundation

Lessons in African American history are important for all races and ethnic groups.

Even though physical integration has taken place in public and private schools, there is still a need for mental integration to take place. As Frederick Douglass said in 1857: "If

there is no struggle there is not progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation ... want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without

thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters ... Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did and it never will."

## Harriet Tubman: the woman behind the Underground Railroad

Erin C. Perkins  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Harriet Tubman is an instrumental black female leader best known for her brave escapades as an Underground Railroad conductor. During a 10-year span she made 19 trips into the South and escorted more than 300 slaves to freedom. And, as she once proudly pointed out to Frederick Douglass, in all of her journeys she "never lost a single passenger."

In 1849, in fear that she, along with the other slaves on the plantation, was to be sold, Tubman resolved to run away. She set out one night on foot. With some assistance from a friendly white woman, Tubman was on her way. She found other slaves seeking freedom and escorted them to the North. Tubman continued to return to the South again and again.

By 1890, Tubman had done 19 "rescue" trips. She was heroically named "Moses" for her courageous journeys and fearless efforts that helped deliver handfuls of slaves to freedom.

Tubman was friends with the leading abolitionists of the day, and she took part in antislavery meetings. During the Civil War she worked for the Union as a cook, a nurse, and even as a spy. After the war she settled in Auburn, N.Y. She died in 1913.



HARRIET TUBMAN

## Washington a forerunner of Civil Rights Movement

Sharrod Patterson  
PHOTO EDITOR

Booker Taliaferro Washington, better known as Booker T. Washington, was born April 5, 1856, as a slave to a slave-owner father and a slave mother in Franklin County, Va.

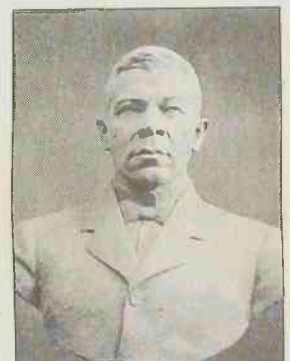
Washington is better known for his heroics as one of the forefathers of the civil rights movement. Washington learned to read and write while working as a slave. At the age of 16, he began his studies at what is now Hampton University. After training to be a teacher at Hampton, he went on to become the first leader of Tuskegee Institute in 1881.

Active in politics, Washington was routinely consulted by Republican congressmen and presidents about the appointments of African Americans to political positions. He worked with many white politicians. He argued that the best way for blacks to eventually gain equal rights was to demonstrate patience, continue working in industry, and demonstrating their usefulness. He said that

this was key to improving conditions for African Americans in the United States, and that they could not expect too much, having only just been granted their freedom.

When his autobiography, *Up From Slavery*, was published in 1901, it became a bestseller and had a major influence on the African American community. In 1901 Washington was the first African-American ever invited to the White House as the guest of President Theodore Roosevelt.

Washington fell ill in Tuskegee, Ala., due to a lifetime of hard work and died soon after in a hospital, on Nov. 14, 1915. He is buried on the campus of Tuskegee University near the University Chapel.



BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

## Web site gives strong reminder of what Martin Luther King Jr. fought against

Eric Goodwin  
MCT WIRE SERVICE

Separate but equal. To many teens growing up in the 21st century, it is a term learned from a history book. But for some of their parents and grandparents, it was the law of the land.

As the United States prepares to commemorate Black History Month in February, the Web site

Remember Segregation (<http://www.remembersegregation.org>) looks back on the life and times of Martin Luther King Jr. The site reminds us how his message of unity bridged the divide of racial segregation and continues to resonate.

The first images upon loading the Remember Segregation site are jarring. You are presented with two

choices — there is one link marked for white visitors and another one marked for "colored" visitors. Selecting either one will direct you to warning pages. While both convey similar messages, the tone and the implied messages of the two texts are remarkably different.

The warning page for white visitors welcomes them to the site and

reminds "Negroes" who "mistakenly" clicked the link to obey the signage to stay on their side of the site. The warning page for colored visitors, however, deeply apologizes for any white visitors who selected the link, and implores people of color "for your protection and for the sake of decency" to stay on their side of site, stating that if

they move in the "white area" their safety cannot be guaranteed.

The subtle but distinct differences in the language of the warning pages serve as a reminder of the situation that faced King and other members of the civil rights movement.

Once inside, you'll find an interactive timeline of a few major events of the modern

civil rights movement, and a photo gallery that, like the faux warning pages, illustrates the mood of the era.

Although government-enforced segregation is a thing of the past, we are still striving to attain the kind of racial harmony outlined by King. Remember Segregation reminds us how far we've come, and that the journey is worth the battle.

## Twenty-eight days of remembrance: WSSU celebrates Black History Month

Tracey Bowen  
STAFF REPORTER

From beginning to end, this month is filled with events commemorating an immense heritage of great distinction.

As Black History Month, February is a celebrated time across the U.S. Many great leaders, freedom fighters and activists of the past are remembered and honored during this time for their hard work and dedication to the black community.

As a Historically Black College/University, WSSU stands to help continue the legacy, not only during Black History Month but also throughout the year. There are many activities to get involved in during Black History Month at WSSU. Most are free and open to the public.

**Monday, Feb. 5.** Teachers and staff of Forest Park Elementary School seek volunteers to participate in an African-American read-in of literary works by African-American authors. Books will be provided, but participants may bring personal favorites. Each will be assigned a 30-

minute block of time. African-American attire is welcomed at this event.

**Thursday, Feb. 8.** Rev. Dr. Carolyn Ann Knight will present a lecture at 9:45 a.m. She is the founder and president of "Can Do!" Ministries, a progressive, preventive youth advocacy ministry. The lecture will take place in Dillard Auditorium at the Anderson Conference Center.

**Tuesday, Feb. 13.** Black History Trivia, 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. WSSU students compete in teams of four to answer questions on black history. The competition will take place at Kennedy Dining Hall in the Thompson Student Service Center.

**Thursday, Feb. 15.** There will be a Black Male Symposium Community Panel Discussion at the Thompson Student Service Center in room 207. The event begins at noon and ends at 2 p.m.

**Thursday, Feb. 15.** Rev. Dr. Floyd

H. Flake, former U.S. Representative, will present the keynote address at 6 p.m. for a forum on "Economic Development in the Black Community." The forum takes place in Dillard Auditorium, Anderson Conference Center from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.

**Friday, Feb. 16.** On the lighter side of things, you can catch a panel discussion featuring comedians Tyler Craig and Leon Roger on the use of the N-word. The discussion is from 11 a.m. to noon. Then, after a quick break, head for the C.E. Gaines Center from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. for a comedy show featuring Tyler Craig and Leon Roger.

**Sunday, Feb. 18.** There will be a showing at 7 p.m. of the documentary movie, "Untold Story of Emmet Till." The movie will be playing in the Thompson Student Service Center in room 207.

**Monday, Feb. 19.** Chill out with the NGroove Café at Author Night. WSSU alumna and contemporary romance author AlTonya Washington will be sharing some

of her work. The event takes place in Java City Café, near the Atkinson Science Building, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

**Thursday, Feb. 22.** The Campus Activity Board Black History Month Speaker Jeff Johnson will deliver a keynote address. Johnson is a BET talk-show host, correspondent, and voice for the hip-hop generation. Check him out in the Thompson Student Service Center from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

**Friday, Feb. 23.** Rapping up the month's festivities, the 2nd Annual Non-Pan Hellenic Council (NPHC) Step Show will take place in the C.E. Gaines Center from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. There is so much history to celebrate, but not enough time to do it all. WSSU has a lot of black history to share with its students. Everyone is invited to make the time to take part in as many black history events as possible this month and continue to share in the legacy of black history.