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President **George W. Bush** presents the **Presidential Medal of Freedom** to baseball legend **Frank Robinson** in the East Room Wednesday, Nov. 9, 2005. Winning the **Most Valuable Player** awards in the National and American Leagues, he achieved the American League **Triple Crown** in 1966. Mr. Robinson became baseball's first African-American manager. (Source: White House News & Policies / Wikimedia Commons)

## IN MEMORIAM: Baseball Trailblazer, Civil Rights Icon Frank Robinson Dead at 83

By Stacy M. Brown, NNPA Newswire Correspondent  
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Frank Robinson, a trailblazing figure who was Major League Baseball's first African American manager and one of its greatest players during a career that spanned 21 seasons, died Thursday after a prolonged illness, according to pro baseball's premiere website, MLB.com.

Robinson was 83.

The Hall of Famer hit 586 home runs and appeared in 14 All-Star games over the course of his illustrious career, starting with the Cincinnati Reds and the Baltimore Orioles.

Robinson is the only player to win MVP honors in both the National and American league – in 1961 with the Reds and five years later with the Orioles. When he earned those honors in 1966 with the Orioles, Robinson won the Triple Crown when he hit 49 home runs, drove in 122 runs and had a .316 batting average.

Despite the so-called Steroid-era of the late 1990s and 2000s where statistics were greatly inflated, Robinson's 1966 campaign remains widely viewed as one of the greatest in the history of the sport.

Even as a star in a sport that was still struggling with integration years after Jackie Robinson (no relation) broke the color line, Robinson often spoke out for civil rights even publicly aligning himself with leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

In 1975, Robinson made history before nearly 57,000 fans at Cleveland's Municipal Stadium when he began managing the Indians making him baseball's first ever Black manager.

MLB.com noted that, just as Jackie Robinson's breaking of baseball's color barrier in 1947 had opened doors for Frank Robinson, Hank Aaron and Willie Mays and many others to play in the Major Leagues, it was Frank Robinson who paved the way for every minority manager who has followed.

"He changed the game, no doubt about it," Orioles great Jim Palmer said in a statement about Robinson's death.

"Very sad day here in Baltimore with the passing of Frank Robinson, the greatest Oriole of all time in my estimation and a true baseball legend who dedicated his life to the game," said Jason La Canfora, who hosts a podcast in Charm City.

"He overcame the segregation of the 1950s to spend seven decades in the game as a player, coach, and executive," La Canfora said.

Robinson is survived by his wife of nearly 60 years, Barbara Ann Cole.

East Room Wednesday, Nov. 9, 2005. Winning the Most Valuable Player awards in the National and American Leagues, he achieved the American League Triple Crown in 1966. Mr. Robinson became baseball's first African-American manager. (Source: White House News & Policies / Wikimedia Commons)

The citation reads:

"Frank Robinson played the game of baseball with total integrity and steadfast determination. He won Most Valuable Player awards in both the National and American Leagues. He achieved the American League Triple Crown in 1966. His teams won five League titles and two World Series championships. In 1975, Frank Robinson broke the color barrier as baseball's first African-American manager, and he later won Manager of the Year awards in both the National and American Leagues. The United States honors Frank Robinson for his extraordinary achievements as a baseball player and manager and for setting a lasting example of character in athletics."

## Catholic school cancels class over protest of lesbian guest

(AP) - A Catholic school in North Carolina invited a black lesbian alumna to speak at a Black History Month event, but canceled the event and classes due to threats of protest.

The Herald-Sun reports Immaculata Catholic School canceled classes Feb. 8 after officials learned "a number of groups" planned to protest the talk by Durham councilwoman Vernetta Alston. Alston said Thursday that the school's move sends the message that black voices can be canceled. Father Christopher VanHaight told parents the cancellation prioritized student safety. He hasn't specified what upset the groups. Alston is one of six openly LGBTQ candidates elected to office in North Carolina in 2017. Councilwoman Jillian Johnson, who was also scheduled to speak at the school, says she was told the Black History Month program is now canceled.

## Racist history of blackface began in the 1830s

By Jesse J. Holland

WASHINGTON (AP) - A racist photo from a 1984 yearbook threatens to end Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam's political career. The photo shows two people: one in blackface and one wearing a Ku Klux Klan hood and robe. The image generated intense pressure for Northam to resign and offered the latest example of a prominent white person facing harsh criticism for wearing blackface. Here's a look at the practice and its history:

### BLACKFACE ORIGINS

Blackface minstrelsy is considered by some to be the first uniquely American form of entertainment.

White men would darken their faces to create caricatures of black people, including large mouths, lips and eyes, woolly hair and coal-black skin. The performances would stereotype black men and women as ignorant, hypersexual, superstitious, lazy people who were prone to thievery and cowardice.

The practice took hold in New York City in the 1830s and became immensely popular among post-Civil War whites. In fact, the Jim Crow laws that enforced racial segregation in the South took their name from a character played by blackface performer Thomas Dartmouth Rice. He said his act "Jump, Jim Crow" (or "Jumping Jim Crow") was inspired by a slave he saw.

### CONTROVERSIAL FROM THE START

Blackface performances were condemned as offensive from the beginning.

In 1848, after watching a blackface act, abolitionist Fredrick Douglass called the performers "the filthy scum of white society" in The North Star newspaper.

Blackface performers, he said, "have stolen from us a complexion denied to them by nature ... to make money and pander to the corrupt taste of their white fellow-citizens."

Civil rights organizations have publicly condemned blackface for decades, saying it dehumanizes blacks by introducing and reinforcing racial stereotypes.

A letter to the editor in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette from 1946 called a blackface performance "grotesque" and said it attacked "by ridicule and cheap buffoonery the self-respect of every American Negro." The letter was written by a state lawmaker, the Inter-Racial Action Council, the Inter-Denominational Ministers Alliance and the publisher of The Pittsburgh Courier.

### NORTHAM ISN'T THE FIRST

Other white politicians and celebrities have faced criticism for blackface performances.

Comedian Billy Crystal was criticized in 2012 for impersonating Sammy Davis Jr. in blackface during his opening montage at the Oscars, a repeat of his oft-performed skit from "Saturday Night Live" from the 1980s.

Missouri Gov. Mel Carnahan had to apologize in 2000 for a picture of him and his brothers singing in a blackface quartet in 1960 that came up during his run for U.S. Senate in 1999. He died in a plane crash the next year, but won the Senate seat anyway.

Actor Ted Danson was accused of being racist and tasteless for performing a skit in blackface, using the N-word and joking about his sex life with then-girlfriend Whoopi Goldberg, who is black, at Goldberg's Friars Club roast in 1993.

Dozens of other whites, including college fraternities and sororities, public officials and law enforcement officers, have also been criticized for blackface incidents.

Florida Secretary of State Mike Ertel resigned last month after a newspaper obtained photos of him in blackface and wearing earrings, a New Orleans Saints bandanna and fake breasts under a purple T-shirt that said "Katrina Victim." The photos were taken two months after the deadly storm ravaged the Gulf Coast in 2005, killing more than a thousand people.

### AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN BLACKFACE

Early black actors, singers and vaudevillians were forced to don blackface as well if they wished to perform for more lucrative white audiences.

For example, William Henry "Master Juba" Lane is considered the single most influential performer in 19th century dance and is credited with inventing tap. It was only after his fame reached international proportions that he was allowed to tour with an all-white minstrel troupe and to perform without blackface.

One of the more disastrous critiques of blackface was from black actor Ben Vereen at President Ronald Reagan's inauguration. Vereen's intent was a tribute to legendary black vaudevillian Bert Williams, who was forced to wear blackface to stay employed.

Vereen first danced and sang "Waiting for the Robert E. Lee" before a cheering (Continued On Page 2)

## Cindy McCain apology shows challenge for mixed-race families

By Jonathan J. Cooper

PHOENIX (AP) - Cindy McCain has apologized after she claimed she stopped a case of human trafficking at the Phoenix airport when she reported a toddler with a woman of a different ethnicity and "something didn't click." Police said they investigated but there was no evidence of a crime.

The incident draws attention to the suspicion that parents, relatives, nannies and others face when they travel with children who don't look like them. That it was McCain, who adopted a daughter from Bangladesh and is recognized globally as an advocate for ending human trafficking, illustrates the challenge of being vigilant without triggering concerns about racial bias.

"There's a huge danger in trusting your gut when it comes to race and all kinds of identity dimensions," said Andrew Grant-Thomas, who co-founded an organization called Embrace Race along with his wife. "We make these split-second judgments. And often those split-second judgments ... are driven by bias."

It reminded Grant-Thomas, who is African American, of the intimidating stares he would get while babysitting his godson, who appears white.

When someone's suspected of a crime while simply living their life, "there's a cost," and the person has probably endured suspicion and questions many times before, Grant-Thomas said.

McCain has not said if other factors besides ethnicity led her to suspect wrongdoing.

"I came in from a trip I'd been on," McCain said on Phoenix radio station KTAR. "I spotted - it looked odd - it was a woman of a different ethnicity than the child, this little toddler she had. Something didn't click with me. I tell people 'trust your gut.' I went over to the police and I told them what I thought, and they went over and questioned her, and by God she was trafficking that kid."

She went on to say the woman "was waiting for the guy who bought the child to get off an airplane." Phoenix Police Sgt. Armando Carbajal confirmed McCain requested a welfare check on a child at the airport on Jan. 30, but said "officers determined there was no evidence of criminal conduct or child endangerment."