

# Timeline of Black History Events

## 16th to 19th Century

The Transatlantic Slave Trade transported between 10 million and 12 million enslaved Africans across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas. The largest number of enslaved people were taken to the Americas during the 18th century.



## 1777

Not yet part of the newly formed United States, Vermont became the first colony to abolish slavery in its constitution.

## 1817

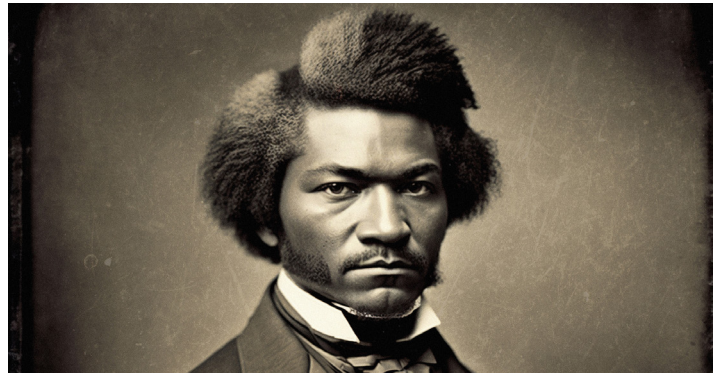
The American Colonization Society was established. Its mission was to transport freeborn Blacks and those freed from slavery to Africa. The society would go on to establish a colony in Africa in 1822 that would become the Republic of Liberia 25 years later.

## 1831

Nat Turner led the largest slave rebellion before the Civil War in Southampton County, Virginia. Rebellious enslaved people killed more than 50 individuals.

## 1847

Abolitionist Frederick Douglass founded *The North Star*, an anti-slavery newspaper based in Rochester, New York. The paper eventually gained over 4,000 readers across the U.S., Europe and the West Indies.



## 1849

Harriet Tubman escaped to Philadelphia and helped approximately 300 enslaved people via the Underground Railroad. The network of secret routes and safe houses aided enslaved people to freedom.



## 1857

Dred Scott, an enslaved man, sued for freedom for himself and his wife, Harriet Robinson Scott. The case, *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, became a nearly decade-long fight through several courts before reaching the Supreme Court. The Court ruled 7-2 against Scott, saying that no Black person could claim citizenship in the U.S. The decision helped stoke the fire for the Civil War in 1861.

## 1865

On June 19, 1865, Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas, announcing the end of slavery, two and a half years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. This day came to be known as "Juneteenth" by the newly freed people in Texas.

## 1868

The 14th Amendment was ratified, allowing Black people to be considered as U.S. citizens.

## 1870

The 15th Amendment was ratified, guaranteeing that the right to vote couldn't be denied because of race, color or previous condition of servitude.

Hiram Rhodes Revels became the first Black and Native American member of Congress, representing Mississippi as a Republican.

## 1888

The True Reformers Bank, the first officially chartered Black-owned bank, was founded by Reverend William Washington Browne, a former enslaved person and soldier. It opened a year later.

## 1889

Journalist and activist Ida B. Wells became co-owner of the Memphis Free Speech and Headlight newspaper. It was founded in 1888 by the Reverend Taylor Nightingale and launched an anti-lynching campaign.

## 1896

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that segregation doesn't violate the 14th Amendment's equal-protection clause if the conditions provided are "separate but equal."

## 1900

William H. Carney was the first Black soldier awarded with the Medal of Honor for his courageous work protecting the regimental colors during the Battle of Fort Wagner in 1863.

## 1909

A group of Black and white activists, including W.E.B. Du Bois and Ida B. Wells, founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).



## 1921

The Tulsa Race Massacre, also known as the Black Wall Street Massacre, took place as mobs of white people attacked the economically thriving Black neighborhood in the Greenwood District of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Hundreds of people were killed and thousands were left homeless, leaving a devastating mark on Black wealth in the U.S.



## 1926

Black History Month originated in the United States in 1926. Historian Carter G. Woodson and other prominent Black Americans designated the second week of February as "Negro History Week" to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. The aim was to raise awareness about Black contributions to history that had been overlooked or minimized. It expanded in 1976 to a month-long celebration and renamed Black History Month.

## 1939

Singer Billie Holiday gave her first performance of the biting anti-lynching song "Strange Fruit" at Café Society, New York's first integrated nightclub. The song was one of Holiday's most gripping performances in history.

## 1950

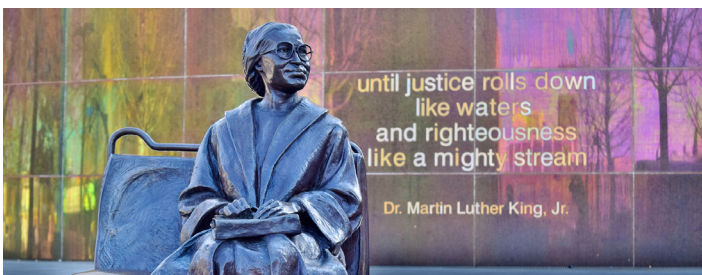
Ralph J. Bunche became the first Black person to win the Nobel Peace Prize for his work with the U.N. in the 1940s to mediate the Arab-Israeli conflict in Palestine.

## 1954

In *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation in public schools violated the 14th Amendment.

## 1955

Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama. Her actions inspired the leaders of the local Black community to organize the Montgomery Bus Boycott, led by a young Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



## 1961

Freedom Rides began in Washington, D.C., as activists rode buses throughout the South to protest segregation on buses.

## 1963

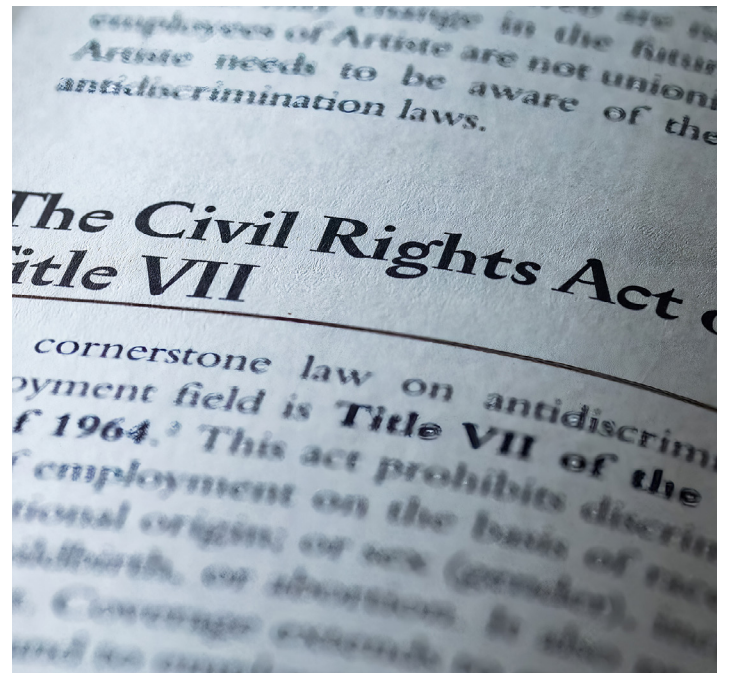
More than 200,000 people marched on Washington, D.C., to advocate for the civil and economic rights of Black Americans. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his historic "I Have a Dream" speech.

## 1964

President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, giving the government more power to protect citizens against race, religion, sex or national-origin discrimination.

## 1965

Malcolm X, a civil rights activist and former minister in the Nation of Islam, was assassinated in New York City.



Thurgood Marshall became the first Black U.S. Supreme Court justice. Some of his notable stances include opposing the death penalty and supporting the right to abortion.

## 1968

Dr. King was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.

Democrat Shirley Chisholm became the first Black woman elected to the U.S. Congress, representing New York's 12th district. She went on to become the Secretary of the House Democratic Caucus.

## 1969

President Richard Nixon authorized the Office of Minority Business Enterprise – later renamed the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) – to support the expansion of minority-owned businesses.

## 1970

The Black Business Association was founded to support the entrepreneurship and development of Black-owned businesses.

## 1971

Hair care company Johnson Products (founded by the husband-and-wife team of George and Joan Johnson) became the first Black-owned company to be listed on the American Stock Exchange.

## 1972

Democrat Shirley Chisholm became the first Black candidate from a major party to run for president.

## 1983

President Ronald Reagan signed the King Holiday Bill into law, designating the third Monday in January a federal holiday in observance of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



## 1984

Civil rights activist Rev. Jesse Jackson became the second Black person to make a bid for the presidency, running as a Democrat.

## 1987

Dr. Clifton R. Wharton Jr. of TIAA-CREF became the first Black chairman and CEO of the Fortune 500.

## 1990

Democrat Lawrence Douglas Wilder of Virginia became the first Black person to be elected governor.

## 1991

Black Entertainment Television (BET), founded by Robert L. Johnson, became the first Black-controlled company to be listed on the New York Stock Exchange.

President George H.W. Bush signed the Civil Rights Act of 1991, strengthening employment discrimination laws. It provided the legal right to trial by jury on claims of discrimination and the possibility of emotional distress damages, as well as limiting the monetary amount a jury could award.

## 1993

Dr. Joycelyn Elders became the first Black Surgeon General, known for her views on progressive issues such as drug legalization and distributing contraception in schools.

## 1995

The Million Man March was a political demonstration held in Washington, D.C., consisting primarily of Black men. The march aimed to promote unity and address various issues affecting the Black population, including racism and economic disparities. Estimates of the number of marchers ranged from 400,000 to nearly 1.1 million, ranking it among the largest gatherings of its kind in American history.

## 2001

After selling BET to Viacom for \$3 billion, Robert L. Johnson became the first Black billionaire.

Republican four-star General Colin Powell became the first Black Secretary of State under President George W. Bush.

## 2003

Talk show host Oprah Winfrey became the first Black woman billionaire on Forbes' "World's Richest People" list. Winfrey grew up in rural poverty and worked her way up as a news anchor to eventually host her syndicated talk show.

## 2005

Condoleezza Rice was the first Black woman to serve as Secretary of State.

## 2009

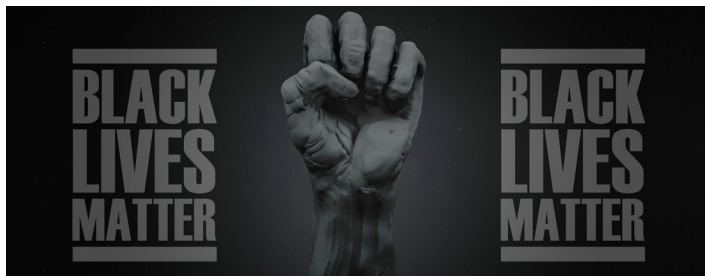
Barack Obama was inaugurated as the first Black President of the U.S.

## 2010

Poet and author Maya Angelou was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom for being one of the most prolific writers and activists of her time.

## 2013

Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi created Black Lives Matter, a Black-centered activism movement calling for racial justice.



## 2014

NYPD officer Daniel Pantaleo placed Eric Garner in an illegal chokehold, killing him. Garner was unarmed. His last words, "I can't breathe," become a Black Lives Matter rallying cry. Pantaleo was ultimately removed from the NYPD, but federal prosecutors decided in 2019 not to bring charges against him.

## 2017

Lt. Gen. Stayce D. Harris, the highest-ranking Black female pilot in the U.S. armed forces, was inducted into the Women in Aviation International's Pioneer Hall of Fame.

## 2019

Congresswoman Maxine Waters, a Democrat from California, founded the Subcommittee on Diversity and Inclusion as part of the House Committee on Financial Services.

Evanston, Illinois, became the first city in the United States to enact a government-funded reparations program to address the historical injustices faced by Black residents.

## 2020

George Floyd, a Black man, died in May 2020 after being handcuffed and pinned to the ground by Minneapolis police officers. The killing of Floyd and other unarmed Black people triggered nationwide protests against systemic racial injustice in America.



## 2021

President Joe Biden signed legislation establishing Juneteenth, or June 19th, as a federal holiday commemorating the end of slavery.

California Senator Kamala Harris became the first Black and South Asian woman to be sworn in as Vice President of the U.S.

## 2022

Acclaimed poet, author and civil rights activist Maya Angelou became the first Black woman to appear on an official U.S. coin. The United States Mint began circulating the new U.S. quarter featuring the late Angelou on Jan. 10.



Wes Moore made history as the first Black Governor of Maryland.

Karine Jean-Pierre became the first Black, openly LGBTQ+ person and immigrant to serve as White House press secretary.

Mike Grier became the first Black General Manager in National Hockey League history.

## 2023

Hakeem Jeffries became the first Black lawmaker to be nominated for Speaker of the House.

Anthony G. Brown was sworn in as Maryland's first Black attorney general.

Claudine Gay was selected as the first Black president of Harvard University. Gay has faced calls to resign after her testimony before Congress on antisemitism and allegations of plagiarism.

In a historic decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ended race-conscious admission programs at colleges and universities nationwide. Although the ruling was limited to college admissions, it challenges companies' efforts to operate workplace fairness initiatives.

## Employee Discussion Questions

- What lessons can we learn from the achievements and struggles of the Black community throughout history and how can we apply them to create positive change in our workplace?
- What steps can be taken to support research partnerships between our organization and HBCUs to drive innovation and knowledge exchange in our industry?
- How have perspectives from Black leaders influenced your approach to problem-solving, teamwork or innovation?
- Do you have any suggestions on how the organization can better cultivate an inclusive environment that fosters the growth and advancement of Black employees into leadership positions?
- How can we continue these discussions and actions beyond Black History Month to ensure ongoing progress and support for the Black community in our workplace?