

Timeline

Black History Month takes place in February to celebrate the history, culture, achievements and resilience of the Black community in the United States. The month of reflection and celebration recognizes the Black community's contributions to U.S. history, despite the racism, violence and other systemic obstacles Black people have faced since the country was founded.

This Meeting in a Box is designed to be a valuable tool that you can share with your staff to enhance your team's cultural competence skills and celebrate the contributions Black Americans have made to the U.S. as well as the entire world.

1831 - Nat Turner leads the largest slave rebellion prior to the Civil War in Southampton County, Virginia. Rebelling slaves kill more than 50 people. Turner survives in hiding for more than two months after the rebellion is stomped out.

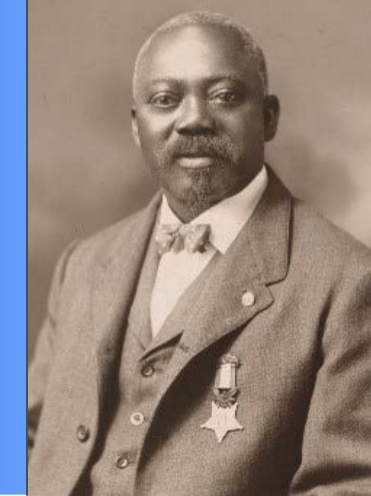
1857 - Dred Scott, an enslaved man, sues for freedom for himself and his wife, Harriet Robinson Scott. For four years, the couple lived in Illinois and Wisconsin territory, where slavery was illegal, and laws said that slaveholders from other states gave up their rights to own enslaved people if they visited for an extended period of time. 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.

1898 - The National Afro American Council is founded in Rochester, NY. It is one of the first nationwide Civil Rights organizations and the first Black organization to welcome women as equal members.



1921 - The Tulsa Race Massacre, also known as the Black Wall Street Massacre, takes place as mobs of white people attack 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.

1900 - William H. Carney becomes the first Black soldier to be awarded the Medal of Honor for his valiant work protecting the regimental colors during the Battle of Fort Wagner in 1863.



1950 - Ralph J. Bunche becomes 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.



1955 - Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat on a bus to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama. Her arrest leads to the Montgomery Bus Boycott, led in part by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

1957 The Little Rock Nine integrates Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas.

1954 - In Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, the U.S. Supreme Court rules that racial segregation in public schools violates the 14th Amendment.



1962 - Astronaut John Glenn becomes the first American to orbit Earth. Behind this achievement are thousands of people – including a group of Black women who were “human computers” calculating the precise math behind the landing: NASA's first African American supervisor Dorothy Vaughan, mathematician Katherine Johnson and aeronautical engineer Mary Jackson.



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

Bahamian-American actor Sidney Poitier becomes the first Black man to win the Academy Award for Best Actor for his role as Homer Smith in Lilies of the Field.

1847 - Abolitionist Frederick Douglass founds The North Star, an anti-slavery newspaper based in Rochester, New York. The paper eventually gains more than 4,000 readers across the U.S., Europe and the West Indies.

1870 - The 15th Amendment is ratified, guaranteeing that the right to vote cannot be denied because of race, color or previous condition of servitude. Hiram Rhodes Revels becomes the first Black and Native American member of Congress, representing Mississippi as a Republican.

1889 - Journalist and activist Ida B. Wells becomes co-owner of the Memphis Free Speech and Headlight newspaper founded in 1888 by the Reverend Taylor Nightingale and launches an anti-lynching campaign.

1909 - A group of Black and white activists, including W.E.B. Du Bois and Ida B. Wells found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

1947 - Jackie Robinson becomes the first Black person to play Major League Baseball.

1961 - Freedom Rides begin in Washington, D.C. Activists ride buses throughout the segregated South to protest segregation on buses.

1965 - Malcolm X, civil rights activist and former minister in the Nation of Islam, is assassinated in New York City.

1800s - 1900s

1800s - 1900s

1900's

1849 - Harriet Tubman escapes to Philadelphia and helps about 300 enslaved people escape to the North for freedom via the Underground Railroad, a network of secret routes and safe houses to aid slaves in their escape.

1868 - The 14th Amendment, which allows Black people to be considered U.S. citizens, is ratified.

1888 - The True Reformers Bank, the first officially chartered Black-owned bank, is founded by Reverend William Washington Browne, a former slave and soldier. It opens a year later. The Capitol Savings Bank in Washington, D.C., opens in 1888, becoming the first Black-owned bank to open.

1896 - The U.S. Supreme Court rules in Plessy v. Ferguson that segregation doesn't violate the 14th Amendment's equal-protection clause as long as conditions provided are "separate but equal."

1938 Singer Ella Fitzgerald releases a playfully sung version of the nursery rhyme "A-Tisket, A-Tasket." It goes on to be her first hit, staying on the pop charts for 19 weeks and selling 1 million copies.

1939 Singer Billie Holiday gives her first performance of the biting anti-lynching song "Strange Fruit" at Café Society, New York's first integrated nightclub. The song goes down in history as one of Holiday's most gripping performances, and Holiday goes down in history as a jazz superstar.

1963 - More than 200,000 people march on Washington, D.C.; Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gives his historic "I Have a Dream" speech.

1967 - 1967 Thurgood Marshall becomes the first Black U.S. Supreme Court justice. Some of his notable stances include opposing the death penalty and supporting the right to abortion.

Timeline (1900s-2022)

Following the Civil Rights Movement, the next three decades saw Black Americans take their place on the stage, screen, playing field and halls of power. Today, more Black Americans are playing a major role in government and society than ever before, but a tremendous amount of work remains to be done.



1968 - Dr. King is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.

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

1972 - Democrat Shirley Chisholm becomes the first Black candidate from a major party to run for president.

1984 - Civil rights activist Rev. Jesse Jackson becomes the second Black person to make a bid for the presidency, running as a Democrat.

1987 - Dr. Clifton R. Wharton, Jr. of TIAA-CREF (now a DiversityInc Top 10 company), becomes the first Black chairman and CEO on the Fortune 500. Roger W. Ferguson Jr., who is also Black, goes on to become the company's CEO in 2008.

1989 - Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw, a legal scholar and activist, coins the term "intersectionality" to describe the specific forms of compounding discrimination people face based on their race, class, sexuality, gender and ability.

1990 - Democrat Lawrence Douglas Wilder of Virginia becomes the first Black person to be elected governor.

Trumpeter, composer, vocalist and actor Louis Armstrong is inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as an early musical influence.

2003 - Talk show host Oprah Winfrey becomes 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.



2009 - Barack Obama becomes the U.S.'s first Black President.
2010 - Poet and author Maya Angelou is awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom for being one of the most prolific writers and activists of her time.

2020 - After the police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and many other unarmed Black people, nationwide protests against systemic racial injustice in America begin. The demonstrations trigger a reckoning, demanding politicians, business leaders and citizens take action against racism and injustice.

2014 - NYPD officer Daniel Pantaleo places 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 is ultimately removed from the NYPD, but federal prosecutors decided in 2019 not to bring charges against him.

2017 - Lt. Gen. Stacey D. Harris, the highest-ranking Black woman pilot in all U.S. armed forces, gets inducted into the Women in Aviation International's Pioneer Hall of Fame.



2021 - California Senator Kamala Harris becomes the first Black and South Asian woman to be sworn in as Vice President of the U.S. A record number of Black people vote in the 2020 election, thanks largely to the lobbying efforts of Black politicians, including politician and voting rights activist Stacey Abrams, who registered 800,000 voters during the COVID-19 pandemic.



2021 - Amanda Gorman, a 22-year-old Black writer and poet, becomes the youngest inaugural poet in U.S. history when she recited "The Hill We Climb" at President Joe Biden's inauguration ceremony.

Terence Blanchard, 59, becomes the first Black composer to perform their work at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City.

2022 - Acclaimed poet, author and civil rights activist Maya Angelou becomes the first Black woman to appear on an official U.S. coin. The United States Mint began to circulate the new U.S. quarter featuring the late Angelou on Jan. 10.

{1900s}

1971 - Hair care company Johnson Products (founded by the husband-and-wife team of George and Joan Johnson) becomes the first Black-owned company to be listed on the American Stock Exchange.

1984 - Civil rights activist Rev. Jesse Jackson becomes the second Black person to make a bid for the presidency, running as a Democrat.

1991 - President George H.W. Bush signs the Civil Rights Act of 1991, strengthening employment discrimination laws.

2012 - George Zimmerman fatally shoots 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, who was walking in a gated neighborhood unarmed. Nationwide protests begin. Zimmerman is acquitted in 2013.

2019 - Congresswoman Maxine Waters, a Democrat from California, founds the Subcommittee on Diversity and Inclusion as part of the House Committee on Financial Services. Erica Miles is chosen to become the subcommittee's director of diversity and inclusion.

2021 - Simone Biles and Naomi Osaka draw attention to mental health awareness by withdrawing from Olympic gymnastics events and the French Open tennis tournament, respectively. Their decision highlighted the disproportionate pressure heaped on Black superstar athletes.

2021 - Tishaura Jones becomes the first Black woman to be elected mayor of St. Louis.

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