

**CULTURAL  
AWARENESS**

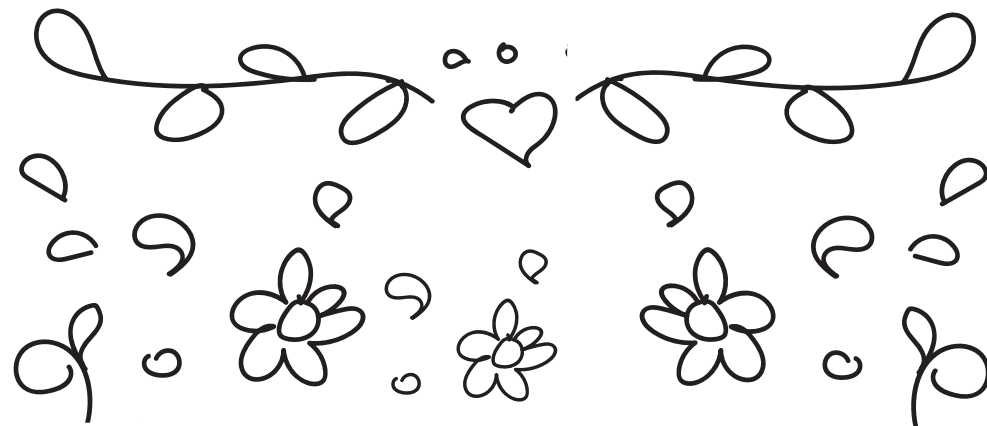
WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

# OBSERVANCE

MARCH

WOMEN WHO HAVE  
MADE GREAT

ACHIEVEMENTS



Each year, the Department of Defense honors the women who have shaped U.S. history and made contributions to pave the way forward.

Women's History Month has taken place each March since 1987 when Congress passed Public Law 100-9, which authorizes the President to proclaim the observation every year. Before this, the event began as "Women's History Week" in 1981.

Nine months before Rosa Parks made her famous stand for civil rights, there was **Claudette Colvin**, a 15-year-old Black girl who challenged segregationist bus policies.

Born in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1939, Colvin was keenly aware of the racism, inequity, and abuse that surrounded her. Inspired by her school's month-long Black history celebration, she decided to resist the oppression in her town.

In 1955, Colvin refused to give up her seat for a White woman after the "Whites only" section was full. When asked why she would not give her seat up for the woman, she replied, *"because it is my constitutional right."*

The bus driver alerted the police, who forced her off and jailed her. She was the first person arrested for challenging Montgomery's bus segregation laws. After being mistreated by the officers, she was charged with disobeying segregation laws, resisting arrest, and assaulting an officer, which stayed on her record into adulthood.

Despite breaking this segregation barrier, she did not go on to lead the Civil Rights Movement as Rosa Parks did, instead moving to New York City where she started a family. However, she did still testify in court to challenge segregation for Montgomery buses.

In 2021, Colvin, then 82 years old, finally had her record expunged of the criminal charges.



# SITTING DOWN TO STAND UP

BECAUSE IT IS MY  
CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT.



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