

February Facts of the Day 2015



DEFENSE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE
DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT AND STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

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Day	Fact	Source
1	<p>When he founded the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) in 1915, Carter G. Woodson labored under the belief that historical truth would crush falsehoods and usher in a new era of equality, opportunity, and racial democracy, and this has been its charge for a century. In honor of this milestone, ASALH has selected “A Century of Black Life, History, and Culture” as the 2015 National Black History theme.</p>	<p>http://asalh.org/docs/asalh_executivesummary_2015theme_web.pdf</p>
2	<p>To commemorate and celebrate the contributions to our nation made by people of African descent, American historian Carter G. Woodson established Black History Week in 1926. Woodson chose the second week of February for this celebration to coincide with the birthdays of abolitionist/editor Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. In 1976, as part of the nation's bicentennial, the week was expanded into Black History Month.</p>	<p>http://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2014/cb14-ff03.html</p>
3	<p>When the U.S. entered World War I in 1917, the 369th Infantry—also known as the “Harlem Hellfighters”—was among the first regiments to arrive in France, and it became one of the most highly decorated. An all-Black regiment under the command of mostly White officers including its commander, Colonel William Hayward, the 369th spent 191 days in combat, longer than any other American unit in the war. Hayward described his unit saying, “My men never retire, they go forward or they die.”</p>	<p>http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/369th-infantry/</p>

4	<p>Although Adolf Hitler intended the 1936 Berlin Games to be a showcase for the Nazi ideology of Aryan racial supremacy, it was a Black man who left the biggest imprint on that year's Games. In one of the greatest performances in Olympic history, American track star Jesse Owens earned gold in the 100 meters, long jump, 200 meters, and 4×100 meter relay, a feat that would not be matched until American Carl Lewis did the same at the 1984 Los Angeles Games.</p>	<p>http://www.history.com/news/10-things-you-may-not-know-about-jesse-owens</p>
5	<p>In 1964, when the Civil Rights Act was passed, only 3.9 percent of Black Americans aged 25 and over had completed at least four years of college. In 2012, this figure was 21.2 percent. The number of Black Americans aged 25 and over who had at least a bachelor's degree was 365,000 in 1964. In 2012, this number was 5.1 million.</p>	<p>http://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2014/cb14-ff17.html</p>
6	<p>Zora Neale Hurston, the daughter of two former slaves, was born in Alabama in 1891. She spent her early adulthood studying at various universities and collecting folklore from the South, the Caribbean, and Latin America. She published her findings in <i>Mules and Men</i>. Hurston lived in Harlem in the 1920s and was a fixture of the Harlem Renaissance, befriending many of its famous writers. In 1937, she published her masterwork of fiction, <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i>.</p>	<p>http://www.biography.com/people/zora-neale-hurston-9347659#early-life</p>
7	<p>In February 1944, the Navy commissioned its first African-American officers. This long-hoped-for action represented a major step forward in the status of African Americans in the Navy and in American society. The twelve commissioned officers, and a warrant officer who received his rank at the same time, came to be known as the "Golden Thirteen."</p>	<p>http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/prs-tpic/af-amer/afa-g-13.htm</p>

8	<p>Spanning the 1920s to the mid-1930s, the Harlem Renaissance was a literary, artistic, and intellectual movement that kindled a new Black cultural identity. Chiefly literary, the Harlem Renaissance included the visual arts but excluded jazz, despite its parallel emergence as a Black art form.</p>	<p>http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/harlem-renaissance</p>
9	<p>Born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1924, Shirley Chisholm is best known for becoming the first Black congresswoman (1968), representing New York State in the U.S. House of Representatives for seven terms. She went on to run for the 1972 Democratic nomination for the presidency—becoming the first major-party African-American candidate and the first female to do so.</p>	<p>http://www.biography.com/people/shirley-chisholm-9247015</p>
10	<p>Doris “Dorie” Miller was enlisted in the Navy in 1939 as a mess attendant and worked his way up to cook. While serving aboard USS West Virginia, he became the ship’s heavyweight boxing champion. Miller distinguished himself by courageous conduct and devotion to duty during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor when he carried injured Sailors to safety then manned a machine gun until he ran out of ammunition and was ordered to abandon ship. He was awarded the Navy Cross.</p>	<p>http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq57-4.htm</p>
11	<p>On April 7, 1940, the U.S. Post Office Department issued a stamp honoring Booker T. Washington (1856–1915) as part of its Famous Americans Series. Born a slave in Hale's Ford, Virginia, he served as a role model for other struggling African-Americans. In 1888, Washington founded Alabama's Tuskegee Normal Industrial School (renamed Tuskegee Institute in 1937). Washington’s stamp was the first U.S. stamp to honor an African American.</p>	<p>http://postalmuseum.si.edu/collections/object-spotlight/btw-stamp.html</p>

12	<p>Before 1940, African Americans were barred from flying for the U.S. military. Civil rights organizations and the Black press exerted pressure that resulted in the formation of an all-Black pursuit squadron based in Tuskegee, Alabama, in 1941. They became known as the Tuskegee Airmen. The first Civilian Pilot Training Program students completed their instruction in May 1940. The Tuskegee program was then expanded and became the center for African-American aviation during World War II.</p>	<p>http://www.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/tuskegee/airoverview.htm</p>
13	<p>On July 2, 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law. This landmark law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race in public accommodations, in publicly owned or operated facilities, in employment and union membership, and in the registration of voters.</p>	<p>http://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2014/cb14-ff17.html</p>
14	<p>In 1942, the Commandant of the Marine Corps issued formal instructions to recruit qualified African-American men. The men who enlisted in response completed recruit training at Montford Point in North Carolina. Between 1942 and 1949, approximately 20,000 African-American men completed recruit training and became known as the "Montford Point Marines." Their efforts proved their courage and paved the way for integrated armed forces. By 1949, training was desegregated.</p>	<p>http://www.marines.com/history-heritage/timeline?articleId=TIMELINE_MONTFORD_MARINES#1940</p>
15	<p>In 1947, Jackie Robinson became the first African American player in Major League Baseball. Brooklyn Dodgers general manager Branch Rickey chose Robinson because of his excellent athletic record and strength of character. The first player to "cross the color line" would have to withstand intense public scrutiny and avoid confrontation even when met with insults and hostility. Robinson was a well-rounded athlete, had served in the Army, and was active in the Civil Rights Movement.</p>	<p>http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/apr15.html</p>

16	<p>Presidents' Day is celebrated on the third Monday in February. Originally established in 1885 to recognize George Washington, it was observed on February 22—Washington's birthday. It became popularly known as Presidents' Day after it was moved as part of 1971's Uniform Monday Holiday Act, an attempt to create more three-day weekends for the nation's workers. Presidents' Day is now popularly viewed as a day to celebrate all U.S. presidents past and present.</p>	<p>http://www.history.com/topics/holidays/presidents-day</p>
17	<p>The Tuskegee Airmen included pilots, navigators, bombardiers, maintenance and support staff, instructors, and all the personnel who kept the planes in the air. They overcame segregation and prejudice to become one of the most highly respected fighter groups of World War II. They proved conclusively that African Americans could fly and maintain sophisticated combat aircraft. Their achievements, together with those who supported them, paved the way for full integration of the U.S. military.</p>	<p>http://www.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/tuskegee/airoverview.htm</p>
18	<p>In 1959, a young African-American songwriter named Berry Gordy founded Motown Records Corporation. Motown was the first African-American-owned record label to reach widespread national acclaim. It broke down racial prejudice by becoming the most successful independent record company in history and the most successful African-American-owned business in America. The distinctive, upbeat and uplifting music brought together pop and soul, White and Black, old and young.</p>	<p>http://www.motownmuseum.org/story/motown/</p>
19	<p>In 1964, the total estimated Black population in the United States was 20,671,914, which was 10.8 percent of the total U.S. population. In 2013, the Black population had grown to 41,623,897, or 13.2 percent of the U.S. population.</p>	<p>http://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2014/cb14-ff17.html</p>

20	<p>In 1952, five cases concerning segregation in public schools were heard by the U.S. Supreme Court: <i>Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (KS)</i>, <i>Briggs v. Elliot</i>, <i>Davis v. Board of Education of Prince Edward County (VA)</i>, <i>Boiling v. Sharpe</i>, and <i>Gebhart v. Ethel</i>. The Court consolidated them under the name of <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i>. While the facts of each case are different, the main issue in each was the constitutionality of state-sponsored segregation in public schools.</p>	<p>http://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/get-involved/federal-court-activities/brown-board-education-re-enactment/history.aspx</p>
21	<p>In June 1967, Air Force Major Robert Henry Lawrence Jr. successfully completed the Air Force Flight Test Pilot Training School at Edwards Air Force Base, California. That same month, he was selected by NASA as an astronaut in the Air Force's Manned Orbiting Laboratory Program, thus becoming the first African-American astronaut. He died in a crash while working as an instructor pilot at Edwards AFB on December 8, 1967. He never got to go into space.</p>	<p>http://www.hill.af.mil/library/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=5878</p>
22	<p>Langston Hughes was one of the most important writers and thinkers of the Harlem Renaissance, the African-American artistic movement in the 1920s that celebrated Black life and culture. He was influenced by his life in New York City's Harlem, a primarily African-American neighborhood. Through his poetry, novels, plays, essays, and children's books, he promoted equality, condemned racism and injustice, and celebrated African-American culture, humor, and spirituality.</p>	<p>http://www.americaslibrary.gov/aa/hughes/aa_hughes_subj.html</p>

23	<p>Sgt. Henry Johnson of the all-Black 369th Infantry unit, known as the “Harlem Hellfighters,” served under French command in World War I due to segregation in the U.S. military. He and a fellow Hellfighter were on sentry duty when more than 20 German soldiers attacked. Johnson thwarted the attack, saved his companion, and protected his unit, despite being severely wounded. He was the first American ever awarded the Croix de Guerre Avec Palme—the French military’s highest award for valor.</p>	<p>http://www.merkley.senate.gov/news/press-releases/wyden-merkley-send-letter-to-secretary-panetta-seeking-medal-of-honor-for-henry-lincoln-johnson</p>
24	<p>Guion S. Bluford became the first African American to travel in space in 1983, as a mission specialist aboard the space shuttle Challenger. He later participated in three other missions. He began his career as a pilot in the U.S. Air Force—where he flew 144 missions during the Vietnam War—before becoming a NASA astronaut in 1979.</p>	<p>http://www.biography.com/people/guion-s-bluford-213031#early-life</p>
25	<p>The Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) was founded by Dr. Carter G. Woodson in 1915 in response to the lack of information on the accomplishments of African Americans. The ASALH’s mission is to promote, research, preserve, interpret, and disseminate information about Black life, history, and culture to the global community.</p>	<p>http://asalh.org/aboutasalhmain.html</p>
26	<p>On July 1, 2014, Vice Admiral Michelle Howard became the first woman to be pinned with a fourth star in the Navy’s 236-year history. She became the vice chief of naval operations, the second-highest ranking officer in the Navy. Howard graduated the Naval Academy in 1982 and became the first Black woman to command a ship—the amphibious dock landing ship Rushmore—in 1999.</p>	<p>http://www.navytimes.com/article/20140630/NEWS/306300039/Howard-receive-history-making-4th-star-Tuesday</p>

27	Thurgood Marshall was the first African-American member of the U.S. Supreme Court. He served on the court from 1967 until he retired in 1991. Earlier in his career, Marshall worked as a lawyer for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and helped win the 1954 landmark desegregation case, <i>Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas</i> .	http://www.americaslibrary.gov/aa/marshallthrgd/aa_marshallthrgd_subj.html
28	In 1992, Dr. Mae Jemison became the first African American woman to go into space aboard the space shuttle Endeavor. During her 8-day mission she worked with U.S. and Japanese researchers and was a co-investigator on a bone cell experiment.	http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/black-history-facts