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Celebrating Black History Month

The Origins of Black History Month



In 1920, the Universal Negro Improvement Association sponsored the First International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World, it convened in New York for a month-long event and, included 20,000 delegates, from 25 nations.

On August 31st, the Declaration of the Rights of the Negro People of the World was adopted. Paragraph 39 of the document established “That the colors, Red, Black and Green, be the colors of the Negro race”. Each color has a symbolic meaning: red, the shared blood of the people as well as the blood shed while fighting for liberation; black, the people; and green, growth and the lush vegetation of Africa. Over the years, the flag has been known by several names, including the Black Liberation Flag, Pan-African Flag, Universal African Flag, and Afro-American Unity Flag. To this day, the flag and its colors remain symbols of pride and culture.



In 1926, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, an American historian, author, journalist, and founder of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, announced that the second week of February would be “Negro History Week”. He instituted this week-long celebration to raise awareness of African Americans’ contributions to history since important achievements were frequently left out of history books and overlooked. This week was chosen because it coincided with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln (February 12) and Frederick Douglass (actual birthday unknown, but he opted to celebrate February 14).

In February 1969, black educators and the “Black United Students” at Kent State first proposed Black History Month, and the entire month was celebrated for the first time in 1970. Six years later, during America’s Bicentennial, President Gerald Ford recognized Black History Month and urged Americans to “seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history”. Now, Black History Month is celebrated annually in February in the United States and Canada, while in Ireland, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom it is observed in October.

MIA Receives \$39.5 million in COVID-19 Relief from second CARES Act Grant

Miami International Airport was awarded \$39.5 million in COVID-19 relief funding from the federal government, in the second round of airport grants from the Federal Aviation Administration. The second grant follows \$207 million in funding that MIA received last April from the federal government’s Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Airport Grant Program – the largest grant for any airport in Florida.

MIA has used the first grant to support its ongoing facilitation of essential travel and trade during the pandemic, and to maintain its role as Miami-Dade County’s leading economic engine. Since it received the CARES Act grant, MIA has grown from its lowest point of serving 4,000 daily passengers last April to an average of nearly 60,000 passengers per day within the last 30 days. During the 17-day winter holiday peak season from December 21 to January 6, MIA served more than 1.1 million passengers. On January 3, MIA welcomed nearly 90,000 travelers, making it the busiest travel day the airport has seen since the pandemic began. [Click here to read the full story provided by MDAD’s Communications and Digital Marketing Division.](#)

Black History Month, a.k.a. National African American History Month had its origins in 1915 when historian and author Dr. Carter G. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. The organization initiated the first Negro History Week in February 1926.

Kent State University (KSU), Kent, Ohio is located along the Cuyahoga River in Northeast Ohio on the western edge of Portage County. KSU’s Black United Student (BUS) organization most notable achievement was the creation of Black History Month in February 1969. The first celebration of Black History Month took place at Kent State one year later, from January 2 to February 28, 1970. We join the nation to observe and celebrate the contributions that African Americans have made to American history in their struggles for freedom and equality.

This is also Carnival season! Had it not been for the COVID-19 Pandemic, many cities across the world would be buzzing with live Carnival parties. We trace the origins of Carnival and the impact and influence of African culture on modern-day Carnivals.

We take this opportunity to salute the countries celebrating their national day and independence anniversaries this month.

As always, please be safe!

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Celebrating African and Afrodescendant Culture

In 1976, African Heads of State, meeting in Port Louis, Mauritius, adopted the [Cultural Charter for Africa](#). Their aim was to harmonize and enrich cultural policies and programs to facilitate and encourage socio-economic development, unity, and peace on the African continent. To address challenges created by rapid global changes, the Charter was revised in 2005.

On January 24, 2006, the amended [Charter for African Cultural Renaissance](#) was adopted by the African Union during their Summit in Khartoum, Sudan. Ratification of the Charter again emphasized the importance of cultural diversity on the African continent, and its role in enriching nations and their people, as well as fostering the development of Pan-Africanism. In December 2009, the U.N. General Assembly proclaimed 2011 the [International Year for People of African Descent](#). One of the primary aims was to promote greater knowledge of and respect for the diverse cultures and heritage of people of African descent.

In 2013, the General Assembly proclaimed the [International Decade for People of African Descent](#) and announced its theme: “People of African Descent: Recognition, Justice and Development”. The decade began on January 1, 2015 and will end on December 31, 2024. It further expands the aims of the International Year by highlighting the important contributions made by people of African descent, while at the same time proposing concrete measures to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and intolerance.

In 2019, UNESCO established the [World Day for African and Afrodescendant Culture](#) to be celebrated each year on January 24, the anniversary of the signing of the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance. The World Day celebrates and promotes the vibrant cultures of Africa and the African Diasporas, and their crucial role in promoting peace and facilitating continued development of both the African continent and the world.



The Origins and History of Carnival - The World's Oldest Party!

It is time for Carnival season. Had it not been for the COVID-19 Pandemic, many cities across the world would be buzzing with live Carnival parties. While many organizers have cancelled their parades and celebrations for 2021, some, [such as Mardi Gras New Orleans, are finding new and creative ways to party this year.](#)

According to [Carnivaland](#), the word carnival came about from the Latin words *carnis* (meat) and *levare* (“to leave off”), because immediately after the carnival came Lent – 40 days of sacrifice. Carnivals ended on Shrove Tuesday (also known as Mardi Gras in Latin, or Fat Tuesday in some countries) the day before Lent officially begins, which is known as Ash Wednesday.

In the Middle Ages carnival was not just a few days but lasted almost the entire period between Christmas and the beginning of Lent. It was viewed as an outlet for the people to be free from their daily worries. In 743 AD the synod of Leptines located near Binche in Belgium wrote about the excesses seen in the month of February. Books from around 800 AD contain much information about how people would cross dress, or dress up as animals, and how doing this was a sin. In Spain, San Isidoro de Sevilla complained in his writings in the seventh century about people cross dressing and heading into the streets disguised in many cases as the opposite gender or as animals.

Carnival continued to evolve and became a manifestation of European folk culture. Some of the best-known carnival traditions, including carnival parades and masquerade balls, were first recorded in medieval Italy. The Carnival of Venice was the most famous carnival celebration and was interestingly abolished by Napoleon in 1797 and was only restored relatively recently in 1979. Carnival traditions spread across the world by the conquistadors and colonists. France brought these traditions to New France, better known as “Nouvelle France”, which represented the French colonies of Continental North America. Spain and Portugal, for their part, spread them throughout the Americas.

It was the Africans who contributed the most to many modern carnival traditions. Africans were brought to the Americas, originally as free men and then later as slaves. Many African traditions were fused with the European celebrations. They contributed the bright colors that are seen in many carnival costumes as well as the lively sounds and music that are key features of carnival in the Americas. Feathers and other natural objects were used to create costumes and masks because of beliefs that they brought spiritual strengths to the wearer. Therefore, today many costumes still feature feathers.

Today Carnival is truly a global phenomenon that is celebrated in over 50 countries. Carnival has evolved beyond pre-Lenten celebrations, and every country and city has their own unique spin on carnival traditions and celebrations. [Click here to view 20 of the World's Best Carnivals!](#)

ABOUT US

The core mission of MDAD's Protocol and International Affairs Division is -

To facilitate the movement of official guests, delegations, dignitaries and VIPs through MIA and support the airport's international programs and initiatives.

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For comments, suggestions, event announcements or to opt-out, please send us an email.



DIPLOMATIC & CONSULAR RELATIONS

Black History Month: Notable United States Diplomats and Foreign Service Officers



Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett, 1833 – 1908: When President Ulysses S. Grant appointed him to be Minister Resident and Consul General to Haiti in 1869, he became the first presidentially appointed [United States African American Diplomat](#).

He remained in the post until 1877. He also served as the Consul General for Haiti in New York for 10 years and as official secretary to Frederick Douglas.



Ralph Bunche, 1904 – 1971: He was [a world-renowned diplomat](#) for the United Nations, and was the first African American to win the Nobel Peace Prize, when he was awarded the 1950 Prize for negotiating the 1949 Armistice Agreements between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.



Clifton R. Wharton Sr., 1899 - 1990: His stellar career included several firsts: [First African American to join the Foreign Service](#) (1925), first appointed as chief of a diplomatic mission to a European country (Romania, 1958), and first African American career Foreign Service Officer

to become an Ambassador when President Kennedy appointed him Ambassador to Norway in 1961.



Edward R. Dudley, 1911 – 2005: Since 1893 when the title of ambassador was first officially used in U.S. diplomatic history, Edward R. Dudley was [the first African American to hold this rank](#). In 1948,

President Truman sent Dudley to Liberia as U.S. Envoy and Minister. Once the Mission in Monrovia was elevated to a full U.S. Embassy in 1949, Dudley became the first African American Ambassador in U.S. history. He also became the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in Monrovia - as the highest-ranking diplomat.



Patricia Roberts Harris, 1924 – 1985: She became the [first African American woman to hold the rank of Ambassador](#) when President

Lyndon Johnson appointed her U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg. After leaving the diplomatic corps, Ambassador Harris served as the first African American dean of a U.S. Law School (Howard University). President Carter selected her as Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and she became the first female African American cabinet secretary. In 1980, President Carter named her the first secretary of the newly reorganized Department of Health and Human Services.

Countries celebrating Independence and National Days in February

Feb. 4, 1948 - Sri Lanka: British Ceylon gained independence from Great Britain on February 4, 1948. When it became a republic on May 22, 1972, it was renamed the Republic of Sri Lanka.

Feb. 7, 1974 - Grenada: After becoming a self-governing state in association with the United Kingdom in 1967, Grenada became an independent nation on February 7, 1974.

Feb. 11, 660 BCE - Japan: National Foundation Day celebrates the founding of Japan by legendary Emperor Jimmu on 11 February 660 B.C.

Feb. 11, 1929 - Holy See (Vatican City): On this date, the Holy See signed three treaties with Italy that acknowledged its full sovereignty and established its territorial extent. Currently, its National Day is celebrated on March 13, the election day of Pope Francis.

Feb. 15, 1804 - Serbia: Although Serbia gained independence from the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro on 5 June 2006, its National Day, known as Statehood Day is celebrated on 15 February. It marks two historical events, the beginning of the First Serbian Uprising in 1804 and the adoption of the First Serbian Constitution in 1835.

Feb. 16, 1918 - Lithuania: On February 16, 1918 Lithuania gained independence from Soviet Russia and Germany; a day known as Restoration of the State Day. Lithuanians celebrate a second national day: March 11, Restoration of Independence Day, marking the day in 1990 when Lithuania declared independence from the Soviet Union.

Feb. 17, 2008 - Kosovo: On this date, the Kosovo Assembly unanimously voted to declare independence from Serbia.

Feb. 18, 1965 - The Gambia: The smallest country within mainland Africa and a British Crown colony and protectorate, gained independence from Great Britain on February 18, 1965. It remained a constitutional monarchy within the Commonwealth until it became a republic on April 24, 1970.

Feb. 22, 1979 - St. Lucia: After being contested between the French and British throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, St. Lucia became a British Crown colony in 1814. On February 22, 1979, it gained full independence, choosing to remain within the Commonwealth as a parliamentary democracy.

Feb. 24, 1918 - Estonia: Estonia celebrates two independence days: Independence Day on February 24; the day they declared independence in 1918, and Restoration of Independence Day, on 20 August; the day they declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

Feb. 25, 1963 - Kuwait: Under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salim Al-Sabah, Kuwait gained independence from Britain on June 19, 1961. Starting in 1963, National Day celebrations were moved to February 25 to avoid the prevailing summer heat. The date was chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the Sheikh's coronation in 1950.

Feb. 27, 1844 - Dominican Republic: On this date, Dominicans seized the fortress of Puerta del Conde, forcing the Haitian army out of Santo Domingo. Since this day marked a turning point in the nation's history, it is celebrated annually as its Independence Day.