# Black History Month 2023 Actual Factuals

## February 1 - **Zhengjiani the Lord Guardian of Prosperity**

Since the 7th century, Africans have maintained a consistent commercial relationship with China. During the Tang Dynasty, Arab traders brought enslaved Africans from east Africa to China. They comprised one of the many commodities in the Arabs' maritime trade with China. During this era, the first Chinese cultural perception of African people developed. These people were known as Kunlun. They were described as lower class, ignorant, scary, and dangerous. Although there were far more enslaved Chinese, some wealthy Chinese preferred the exotic Kunlun slaves.

While the Kunlun slaves were dehumanized, the Chinese view of free Africans was different. Many of these Africans were treated with respect and honor. For example, east African merchant Zhengjiani arrived in China in 1071 and was treated with the utmost respect and honor. Zhengjiani and his party were honored as the first African foreign merchants to be received by Chinese Emperor Shenzong. The emperor gave a Chinese title to Zhengjiani; he became known as Lord Guardian of Prosperity.

In 1081, Zhengjiani returned to China. Boats were arranged to aid his travel through the waterways from south China to the Song emperor. The emperor gave lavished gifts, including a large amount of white gold in recognition of his journey. It is unclear whether Zhengjiani was at this point an appointed ambassador or a wealthy merchant. It is clear that his travels to China and his acceptance into the Song courts were an important diplomatic development between Africa and China.

His acceptance was built on a foundation of profitable trade. By the 11th century large quantities of highly valued African products: ivory used for palanquins and belt buckles, powdered rhinoceros horn used as an aphrodisiac, and frankincense were imported from the east African countries.

That period in history saw a rise in the organization of the East African coastal city states. These states became wealthy and highly organized and their traders were beginning to seek business across the ocean.

## February 2 - **Hercules Posey**

Hercules Posey arrived at Mount Vernon as an enslaved teenager in 1767. He apprenticed there under the enslaved cooks Doll and Nathan, who managed the kitchen for many decades. He mastered his craft and soon became one of the estate's cooks, and was later the chef for

President George Washington in Philadelphia, PA. He was a very accomplished chef and cooked for the Washingtons' friends, family, members of Congress, and foreign dignitaries. Many of the people who ate at the president's house celebrated Hercules' food.

Posey was unique among his peers in that he was famous in his own time and was acknowledged by white society. He had a larger than life persona, and, as head chef, a position of power in the household, as well as some quasi-freedoms like the ability to leave the house on his own when he was not working.

Hercules was permitted to sell kitchen leftovers, such as bones, feathers, ash and fat, and keep the earnings. He used this money to purchase fashionable attire that wasn't usually available to enslaved people. It was recounted by Washington's step-grandson that Hercules was known for taking evening strolls on the promenade through the streets of Philadelphia in his finest clothing, greeting friends with a formal and respectful bow.

In Pennsylvania, enslaved people were considered free if they lived in the state more than six months. So Washington would make sure he returned them to Mount Vernon before the six months were up, in order to restart the clock.

The work for all who were enslaved was grueling. The work of the cook was extremely taxing. Working in extreme conditions under the scrutinizing eye of a master and/or mistress, the enslaved cook had to perform at a high level at all times. There was no room for error, enslaved cooks had to comport themselves in a manner suiting their master and manage a staff while meeting the high standards, and they worked even during those few times (Sundays, Easter, Christmas and New Years) that other enslaved people did not.

The importance of Philadelphia and its rich opportunities for free African Americans and for cooks in particular was becoming clear to Washington by the end of his time there. So, after spending the summer of 1796 at Mt Vernon, he returned to Philadelphia leaving Hercules behind believing he was planning to escape, thus cutting off his access to the city and its strong abolitionist network. But as George Washington Park Custis wrote, Posey was an extraordinary man, and on February 22, 1797, he walked away from Mount Vernon only to be seen once more, four years later in New York City.

President Washington made several unsuccessful attempts to find him and capture Hercules, but he was never found. Washington believed that Hercules escaped to Philadelphia, and had used the connections he had formed in the Quaker and free Black communities to hide in the city. The details of what happened after Posey's self-emancipation remains elusive. He worked as a cook and caterer until his death on May 15, 1812.

Here is Hercules' hoecake recipe (try a batch for Saturday morning):

1/2 teaspoon active dry yeast
2 1/2 cups white cornmeal, divided

3 to 4 cups lukewarm water
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 large egg, lightly beaten
Melted butter for drizzling and serving
Honey for serving
Directions
Mix the yeast and 1 1/4 cups of the cornmeal in a large bowl. Add 1 cup of the lukewarm water, stirring to combine thoroughly. Mix in 1/2 cup more of the water, if needed, to give the mixture the consistency of pancake batter. Cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 8 hours, or overnight.

Preheat the oven to 200°F.

When ready to finish the hoecakes, begin by adding 1/2 to 1 cup of the remaining water to the batter. Stir in the salt and the egg, blending thoroughly.

Gradually add the remaining 1 1/4 cups of cornmeal, alternating with enough additional lukewarm water to make a mixture that is the consistency of waffle batter. Cover with a towel, and set aside at room temperature for 15 to 20 minutes.

Heat a griddle on medium-high heat, and lightly grease it with lard or vegetable shortening. Preparing 1 hoecake at a time, drop a scant 1/4 cup of the batter onto the griddle and cook on one side for about 5 minutes, or until lightly browned. With a spatula, turn the hoecake over and continue cooking another 4 to 5 minutes, until browned.

Place the hoecake on a platter, and set it in the oven to keep warm while making the rest of the batch. Drizzle each batch with melted butter.

Serve the hoecakes warm, drizzled with melted butter and honey.

## February 3 - **Celia & Pedro**

Azucar is the Afro-Cuban singer who reigned for decades as the ‘Queen of Salsa Music,’ Celia Cruz was born on October 21, 1925, at 47 Serrano Street in the Santos Suárez neighborhood of Havana, Cuba. Her father, Simón Cruz, was a railway stoker, and her mother, Catalina Alfonso Ramos, a housewife who took care of an extended family. Celia was one of the eldest among fourteen children living in the house, including cousins and her three siblings. After high school she attended the Normal School for Teachers in Havana, intending to become a literature teacher. After winning a talent show, however, in which she interpreted the tango piece Nostalgia in a bolero tempo, Cruz stopped studies to pursue a singing career. Her musical breakthrough came in 1950 when she replaced lead singer Myrta Silva of the popular orchestra La Sonora Matancera. She was the ensemble’s first Black front person since its founding about 25 years earlier.

Pedro Knight Caraballo was born September 30, 1921. Knight, a trained and powerfully expressive musician, played the trumpet with the Havana-based conjunto band, La Sonora Matancera. When he joined it at the age of 23, Havana was becoming one of the world's most musically exhilarating nightspots. La Sonora was an Afro-Cuban band, operating under a racist system which kept many black musicians out of the clubs catering to American tourists. However, by the 1950s their sophisticated arrangements and live radio performances were part of the golden age of Cuban music, and they appeared alongside American singers such as Nat King Cole and Sarah Vaughan.

In 1950, the band's leader, Rogelio Martínez, invited Celia Cruz, who had gained popularity for her radio performances and for breaking the color barrier to join La Sonora Matancera. Over the course of seven years, she and Knight gradually became good friends, though she resisted his romantic advances. In July 1960, a year and a half after Fidel Castro came to power, La Sonora Matancera went to Mexico City to accept a two-year touring contract, but Martínez announced during a radio interview that he had no intention of returning to Cuba, a stance in which the rest of the band joined him. After 18 months, the band accepted a long-term contract at the Hollywood Palladium in Los Angeles. By then, Cruz fell in love with Knight, and the couple moved to New York, where they married on July 14, 1962, shortly after Knight abandoned his own music to become Cruz's manager, and the couple were inseparable. Commenting on their relationship, Cruz said, "Pedro is my 50%. I am the one that sings, but he takes care of everything else."

The couple always showed unconditional love on stage and in private life. Pedro said that Celia, always worried about him, which led to their 41 years of happy marriage, in which many say that only the children were missing that they could not have, even though they had been trying for several years. For her part, Cruz commented in some interviews that one of the secrets of their long relationship was “Constant communication; Pedro and I always talk about our things,” she said.

By the mid-1990s, Cruz was now a international star, and incorporated Knight into her performances, clasping him to her and referring to him as Mi cabecita de algodon (my little cottonhead) because of his halo of snow-white hair, and white mutton-chops.

On July 16, 2003, Cruz died at her home in Fort Lee, New Jersey, at the age of 77. Knight died about four years after his beloved wife on February 3, 2007.  Both are buried next to each other in Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx, NY.

In addition to the adoration of a wide fan base, Celia Cruz's achievements have been recognized with many honors and awards, including twenty-three gold albums, three Grammy Awards, four Latin Grammy Awards, and the President's National Medal of Arts. On February 15, 2016, she was honored at the Grammys with a posthumous Lifetime Achievement Award.

## February 4 - **Lights Camera Action**

D.W. Griffith's The Birth of a Nation launched the Hollywood film industry in 1915. Simultaneously, Griffith's viciously racist film began the struggle for African Americans to establish an equitable and authentic voice and presence in American film. African American audiences were ignored by the major motion picture studios in the first two decades of the 20th century. Nonetheless, demand for films aimed at black theaters in both the South and larger northern cities prompted the formation of several 'black' motion picture production companies. The Lincoln Motion Picture Company in Omaha, Nebraska is considered the first all-black movie production unit in the country. Its entire output was aimed directly at African American viewers. Founded in 1916 by brothers Noble (a black actor) and George (a postal employee) Johnson and soon relocated to Los Angeles.

Lincoln Films built a reputation for making films that showcased Black talent in the full sphere of cinema. Noble Johnson was president of the company, the secretary was actor Clarence A. Brooks. Dr. James T. Smith was treasurer, and Dudley A. Brooks was assistant secretary. Incorporated in January 1917, Lincoln Motion Picture Company was given approval to issue 25,000 shares of common stock on April 30, 1917.

The first Lincoln production was a drama called The Realization of a Negro's Ambition (1916). The second was titled, A Trooper of Troop K, (1917), which dealt with a massacre of Black troops in the Army's 10th Cavalry during the American operation against Mexican bandits and revolutionaries in 1916. Although the Johnson brothers wanted the films to play to wider audiences, they were mostly booked in special locations at churches and schools and the few colored only theaters. By 1920, the Lincoln company had completed five films, including A Man's Duty (1919).

Noble Johnson relinquished his position with the company when he became a contract actor at Universal Pictures and Smith assumed the company presidency. Lincoln productions accepted an offer for financial backing by a white investor, P. H. Updike, in Los Angeles. George Johnson supervised the marketing and promotion of their film By Right of Birth, in October 1921 where Booker T. Washington had a cameo role.

The Lincoln Motion Picture Company began its existence with great expectations. White audiences were needed and simply were not interested at the time. Without a wider audience, the Lincoln Motion Picture Company was doomed for failure. The Lincoln Motion Picture Company lasted until 1921.

## February 5 - **A California State Park**

Born into slavery in Kentucky in 1842, Allen Allensworth gained his freedom in the Civil War when the Forty-fourth Illinois Volunteer Infantry camped in Louisville, Kentucky. Young Allensworth dressed in an old uniform, plastered mud over his face and marched up the main street with the Union soldiers. After escaping he served as a civilian nursing aide with the Forty-fourth Illinois. He later served a two year enlistment in the U.S. Navy and was Captain's steward and clerk on the civil war gunboat U.S.S. Tawah when it was destroyed in an engagement with Confederate batteries at Johnsonville, Tennessee.

After being honorably discharged from the Navy, Allensworth operated two restaurants with his brother William, taught in Freedmen's Bureau schools, was ordained as a minister, and served as Kentucky's only black delegate to the Republican National conventions of 1880 and 1884. After a two-year campaign in which he garnered the support of Congressmen John R. Lynch of Mississippi and Senator Joseph E. Brown of Georgia, President Grover Cleveland signed his appointment as Chaplain of the 24th Infantry Regiment.

On April 7, 1906, after twenty years of service, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel making him the first black officer to receive this rank.

On June 30, 1908, Allensworth and Denison University graduate Professor William Alexander Payne established the California Colony and Home Promoting Association. Allensworth and Payne were the chief officers, along with miner John W. Palmer; minister William H. Peck; and real estate agent Harry A. Mitchell. The Association purchased 20 acres of land from the Pacific Farming Company with the goal of establishing a town for Black soldiers. The land was situated at the Santa Fe rail line stop, titled "Solita."

By 1914, the town had established a schoolhouse, thereby becoming California's first African American school district. It also had a courthouse, a Baptist church, a hotel, and a Tulare County library. However, a series of unfortunate events occurred in 1914. The Santa Fe rail system moved its railroad stop from Allenstown to Alpaugh. In September 1914, Colonel Allensworth died in Monrovia, California, where he was struck by a motorcycle while crossing the street. The town experienced severe drought and decreased crop yields and finally many residents left the area following the start of World War I.

The town of Allensworth was scheduled for demolition in 1966 when arsenic was found in the water supply. The town was memorialized as a state park in 1974, and hosts seasonal events to preserve its history.

Osborne

## February 6 - **May 13th**

On May 13, 1985, the Philadelphia Police Department dropped a C-4 bomb on the home of the MOVE organization, killing eleven people — including five children — and wiping out 61 homes in two city blocks.

MOVE is a political and religious organization founded by John Africa Sr. in 1972. The name is not an acronym, but an emphasis of their living philosophy: 'Each individual life is dependent on every other life, and all life has a purpose, so all living beings, things that move, are equally important, whether they are human beings, dogs, birds, fish, trees, ants, weeds, rivers, wind or rain.'

City officials sent police to serve arrest warrants, with orders to carry out by extreme force. Nearby local West Philadelphia residents were told to evacuate but could return to their homes the following day. Nearly five hundred officers in SWAT gear, backed by heavy artillery and an anti-tank machine gun, surrounded the block. A shot fired from inside the MOVE residence was met by over 10,000 rounds in 90 minutes, all shot into one home.

Fire trucks pumped gallons of water through the basement and tear gas was thrown into the windows of the home. SWAT teams tried to blast holes in the walls of adjoining houses to gain entry. MOVE members hid in the basement of the home, holding children in the air to avoid drowning in rising waters. The all-day standoff led to the city dropping a C-4 bomb on the rooftop of the home. The bunker did not fall, but the roof of the home was engulfed in flames. Subsequently, sixty-five neighborhood homes were destroyed and over two hundred residents lost their homes.

A 1986 commission report called the decision to bomb an occupied row house unconscionable. MOVE survivors were awarded a $1.5 million judgment in a 1996 lawsuit.

The remains of Katricia (14) and Zanetta Dotson (13):

It was believed the remains of Katricia and Zanetta were buried in December 1985. But the city of 'Brotherly Love' officials kept the remains of these two sisters, and some had been sent to the University of Pennsylvania Museum, an archaeology museum for further evaluation.

The museum utilized the remains over the course of time on multiple occasions, including exhibiting for various individuals and groups for fundraising activities and being used as props.

The remains were kept at the Penn Museum for almost 36 years.

When the Philadelphia medical examiner's office launched an investigation in 2021 into the MOVE victims' remains, the office found and positively identified the remains of the sisters in cold storage. Their remains had never actually been cremated.

Osborne

## February 7 - **We Ran South?!**

The flight of runaway slaves to Mexico is a chapter of history that is often overlooked and ignored. The Southbound Underground Railroad, as some scholars call it, has been largely unspoken about. No one who escaped slavery by going to Mexico wrote a firsthand account of the experience, as others did about escaping north. No one running south was recruited by abolitionist organizations. Though the journeys of enslaved people to Mexico are just as important, the scale of the southern migration was small, numbering between 3,000 and 10,000 people, compared with an estimated 30,000 to 100,000 who fled north. While the northbound underground railroad depended on a network of people who sheltered and aided fugitive slaves, the southern route was more informal.

After independence from Spain, in 1821 Mexico passed anti slavery laws, and Mexicans at all levels of society were serious about enforcing them. These laws were well known by enslaved people on the U.S. side of the border close to Mexico. Enslaved sailors and stowaways from New Orleans, Louisiana and Galveston, Texas, jumped ship once docked in Mexican ports. Slaves drove wagons of cotton to market in Brownsville, Texas, and then slipped across the muddy river to Matamoros, Mexico. But the main mode of transportation was on horseback traversing the vast, feral stretches of South Texas down to the border.

Felix Haywood of San Antonio, a former slave interviewed in 1937 for the Federal Writers Project, didn't himself try to escape south, but he heard stories about those who did. Haywood was 92 at the time he was born into slavery and as a young man tended cattle and sheep for ranchers around San Antonio.  ‘There wasn’t no reason to run up North,’ he said. ‘All we had to do was walk, but walk South, and we’d be free as soon as we crossed the Rio Grande. In Mexico you could be free. They didn’t care what color you was—black, white, yellow or blue.’

The flight from points east and north Texas cotton plantations to the border was slightly more perilous. Runaway slaves had to survive the Nueces Strip (a 160-mile expanse between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande). A treacherous landscape that is dry and parched, with few trees, hot, and a plethora of snakes and scorpions.

Many Mexicans were sympathetic to fugitive slaves from Texas and the United States. Mexicans would often put up a fight against vigilantes and bounty hunters from Texas looking for escaped slaves who had crossed over the river to free Mexican soil.

Mexican authorities at times would help the now-free men and women in Mexico from being taken and returned back to the United States. Moreover, Mexican laborers working in Texas befriended slaves and acted as guides to help them escape south. This happened so often that enslavers came to distrust any Mexican and under Texas law, Mexicans and enslaved persons were not allowed to be found together or to collaborate or even speak to each other.

## February 8 - **Race and Education on the Mississippi River**

Born in Virginia in 1789 as a slave John Berry Meachum, became an influential abolitionist. Once he turned 21, Meachum's skills as a carpenter gave him the funds necessary to purchase his freedom. However, this was not something all enslaved people could do because buying your freedom required the permission of a slave owner.

Once free, Meachum wanted to free his family members, but a viciously cruel slaveholder sold his wife before he could buy her freedom. John followed his wife, Mary Meachum, to St. Louis, Missouri, where he negotiated and eventually bought her freedom. The pair became abolitionists. Having won their freedom, they wanted to help the movement in any way they could.

John Berry Meachum valued education, and he was also a religious man so he founded the First African Baptist Church in 1827, where Black abolitionists taught up to 300 students, providing a religious and secular education to free and enslaved Black St. Louisans, never charging those who couldn't afford the fee. Many White Missouri residents grew angry at these former slaves, educating themselves, and feared losing socio political power. Therefore, in 1847, Missouri banned education for Black people. State legislatures based their law on the Code Noir. They also banned free Black people from moving to Missouri.

In response to Missouri's discriminatory laws, Meachum purchased and equipped a steamboat with a library, desks, and chairs and opened the Floating Freedom School on the Mississippi River beyond the reach of Missouri officials. By anchoring in the middle of the Mississippi River, the school was under the authority of the federal government.

Meachum left a lasting impact on St. Louis. His school educated hundreds of free and enslaved Blacks including James Milton Turner who after the Civil War would found Lincoln Institute, the first school of higher education for blacks in Missouri.

Resistance, bravery, and ingenuity always win!

## February 9 - **From A Jail to College**

Few enslaved people left documents, letters and/or papers that historians can use to tell their stories. Though Mary Lumpkin, who died in 1905 at the age of 73, was literate, she did not leave journals or personal papers. However, a handful of letters that Mary wrote to the administrators of the school now known as Virginia Union University survive today. These letters and the court testimony she gave on behalf of a friend are the only records in her own voice.

Not much is known about Mary Lumpkin's early life; she was born in 1832. She was described as 'fair faced' and 'nearly white,' child of an enslaved woman and her enslaver.

Robert Lumpkin purchased Mary in the late 1830. By the time she was 13, Mary Lumpkin had already given birth to the first of Robert's children and she would go on to have four more. Robert was 27 years older than Mary.

Robert Lumpkin purchased three lots on Wall Street in Shockoe Bottom on November 27, 1844, for $6,000. It became known as Lumpkin's Jail, and it was one of the cruelest prisons in the South. Some called it the 'Devil's Half Acre.'

Not only the largest slave trader in Richmond at the time, Lumpkin became known for cruelty, publicly beating or torturing those who tried to escape. The whipping room inside the jail allowed slaves to be fastened by their wrists and ankles to iron rings while lying on the floor, and flogged.

Lumpkin's Jail complex had four separate buildings: his residence, a guest house, a kitchen/bar, and the slave pen. The two-story brick slave pen was approximately forty feet long. The bottom floor was the main jail area, and typically temporarily held men, women and children who were fit to be sold to plantation owners or other slave traders. The jail had barred windows, high fences, and chained gates.

As Mary Lumpkin continued to have children, she requested that Robert could treat her however he wanted as long as their children remained free. It seems that Robert agreed, even sending their two daughters, who were reportedly passing a white to a finishing school in Massachusetts upon Mary's urging.

When Robert Lumpkin died in 1866, Mary and her children were living in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where they moved shortly after the Civil War broke out.

Robert left the jail to Mary in his will, but she wanted nothing to do with it. So when she heard that an abolitionist minister named Nathaniel Colver was searching for a place to establish a seminary for formerly enslaved people, she leased him the land.

On the land where enslaved people had once been tortured, Black students began receiving an education at the Richmond Theological School for Freedmen.

After several years, the school needed room to expand, and it moved to a different area of the city. Mary Lumpkin sold the property in 1873, and the jail was demolished in 1876. After living out the rest of her life as a free woman, Mary died in 1905 and was buried in New Richmond, Ohio.

Eventually, the Richmond Theological School for Freedmen became Virginia Union University, which remains one of the oldest HBCUs in the country to this day.

## February 10 - **Mentor to Darwin**

John Edmonstone was born on a wood plantation in Demerara, in present-day Guyana, South America. Charles Edmonstone, his enslaver, was a Scottish politician who owned the plantation and also owned the Cardross Park estate near Dumbarton in Scotland. Around 1812 the plantation was visited by the naturalist Charles Waterton, who spent considerable time teaching John Edmonstone taxidermy.

In 1817 Edmonstone came to Scotland with his master to become a servant to the Edmonstone family at Cardross Park. Sometime after he arrived in Scotland he was freed and took employment in Glasgow. In 1823 John moved to Edinburgh where he set up shop as a bird-stuffer. From this shop, he taught taxidermy to students attending the University of Edinburgh, including Charles Darwin. Having worked in tropical and humid climates, Edmonstone learned to preserve birds quickly before decomposition set in. Edmonstone also undertook work for the Royal Museum of the University.

Darwin describes Edmonstone in his autobiography as a man with high intellect, with whom he enjoyed having long conversations, including about Edmonstone's homeland and the wildlife there. It is no coincidence that not long after these conversations Darwin set off on his voyage to the Galapagos, where he used the bird taxidermy skills he had learned from Edmonstone. Edmonstone later helped Darwin during the second voyage of HMS Beagle to South America from 1831 to 1836.

Much of Edmonstone's life after 1836 is unknown as is the date of his death.

## February 11 - **The First Medici to Rule Florence as a Hereditary Monarch**

July 22, 1510 Alessandro de' Medici called Il Moro (The Moor) was born to a Black indigenous African servant named Simonetta da Collavechio and Lorenzo II de' Medici.

The Duke of Penne and the first Duke of the Florentine Republic (from 1532), was ruler of Florence from 1530 to his death in 1537. Alessandro is the first Medici to rule Florence as a hereditary monarch, Alessandro was also the last Medici from the senior line of the family to lead the city. His assassination at the hands of distant cousin Lorenzaccio caused the title of Duke to pass to Cosimo I de Medici, from the family's junior branch.

Alessandro spent his early childhood in Rome, where he received a humanist education by Valeriano, under the supervision of Pope Leo X and Cardinal Giulio de' Medici.

Clement VII chose the nineteen-year-old Alessandro to become the first Duke of Florence in 1529. Pope Clement at that time was at odds not only with the Florentines who had driven out the Medici family in 1497, but also with the emperor Charles V.

Duke Alessandro's government an rule drew both praise and criticism. According to most historians the young duke's reign did not begin very well. His common sense and his feeling for justice won his subjects' affection; and he enjoyed some status as the champion of the poor and the helpless. He was also a patron of the arts, commissioning notable works by Giorgio Vasari, Jacopo Pontormo, Benvenuto Cellini, and Antonio da Sangallo the Younger. Conversely, Florence's vocal exile community judged his rule as harsh, depraved, and incompetent. In 1535, the exiles enlisted Cardinal Ippolito to meet with Emperor Charles V to denounce Alessandro's government; however, en route to the meeting, Ippolito died under questionable circumstances. Rumors spread that he was poisoned on Alessandro's orders. After the exiles voiced their complaints to Charles, Florentine diplomat Francesco Guicciardini responded, "his Excellency's virtue, his fame, the opinion of him held throughout the city, of his prudence, of his virtuous habits, are a sufficient reply. Emperor Charles dismissed the complaints, continuing to support Alessandro.

On January 5, the Night of Epiphany, Lorenzino entrapped Duke Alessandro through a promised sexual encounter with a beautiful widow. As Duke Alessandro waited alone and unarmed, Lorenzino and his servant Piero di Giovannabate, ambushed and stabbed Alessandro with a dagger several times while the Duke fought back to the point that he bit off a significant portion of one of Lorenzino's fingers. Eventually, Alessandro succumbed to his wounds and Lorenzino and Scoronconcolo fled from the palace – after locking the door to the chamber to prevent their crime from being discovered too quickly. De Medici's African heritage is rarely if ever mentioned. He wielded great power as the first duke of Florence.  He was the patron of some of the leading artists of the era and is one of the two Medici princes whose remains are buried in the famous tomb by Michelangelo.

## February 12 - **1931 Presidential Candidate in El Salvador**

Prudencia Ayala was a writer, social activist, and campaigner for women's rights in El Salvador. Ayala was the first woman to run for President in El Salvador two decades before fellow Salvadoran women could vote.

Ayala was born on April 28, 1885, to Aurelia Ayala and Vicente Chief in the state of Sonsonate, El Salvador. She came from a working class afro-indigenous family. Prudencia was largely self-taught as her parents could afford to send her to school only until second grade. At the age 10, she moved with her mother to Santa Ana, near the Guatemalan border. The city was a political hub and home to the unionist movement, which sought to integrate Central American countries into one federation, an idea that she came to enthusiastically embrace. As a young and single mother, Ayala started her writing career in journalism and her criticism of the Salvadoran establishment landed her in prison.

Ayala had become a well-known figure in the political debate as a prominent advocate of Central American unionism and a critic of U.S. intervention in the region. She was also a strong promoter of women's rights and greater participation in public affairs. Living in Guatemala, Ayala decided to move from writing to political action: She began planning her presidential candidacy with the support of the Unionist Party.

When launching her bid for the presidency, Ayala developed a 14-point program, emphasizing support for workers rights and political rights for women, the support of unions, honesty and transparency in government, the limitation of the distribution and consumption of liquor, respect of freedom of worship, and the legal recognition of children born out of wedlock. Despite the nation barring women from voting. She ran under the Unionist Party label. Her presidential nomination, however, was rejected by the Salvadoran Supreme Court.

Prudencia Ayala died on July 11, 1936, at the age of 51. After her death, she was ignored and erased from history books for decades until information about her was recently brought to the public's attention by feminist movements in El Salvador. In 2017, Ayala was publicly recognized by a street named in her honor called Avenida Prudencia Ayala in the San Jacinto neighborhood of San Salvador. It is one of only two streets in the Salvadoran capital named after a woman.

## February 13 - **The Kingmaker in India**

Malik Ambar was among the tens of thousands of men, women, and children captured in Africa and sold into bondage in the Middle East and India over nearly nine centuries. Born Chapu in 1548 in Harar Province, Ethiopia, Ambar (as he was later called) was stripped of his family, his name, and removed from his homeland. Young Malik was taken across the Red Sea to southern Arabia (Yemen). He was sold and sent to Baghdad, where he was educated before being sent to India to serve Chengiz Khan, the Regent Minister of the Sultan of Nizam Shahi in Ahmednagar. For twenty years, the Ethiopian, now a Muslim, served Khan, an Ethiopian like himself who converted to Islam but, unlike Ambar Khan was no longer enslaved. Over this period Ambar assumed increasing responsibility in Nizam's court where he observed and learned diplomacy, military strategy, and political organization, crucial training that he carried into his life as a free man.

Upon Khan's death in 1594, Ambar was freed by his wife. He married and briefly served the Sultan of Bijapur and gained the title 'Malik' during that time. But Ambar quit this service after citing insufficient support before entering the Nizam Shahi Army service. Initially working as a mercenary, by 1595, he commanded a cavalry force of 150 men and began organizing a rebel army which quickly grew to 7,000. By 1600 the African, now a full-fledged mercenary general, emerged as the leading figure in the resistance movement against the spread of the Mughal Empire into the Deccan. Defeating in battle the armies of two Mughal emperors, Akbar and Jahangir, Ambar's armies were for a quarter of a century the inspiration for those resisting the attempted Mughal occupation of southern India.

By 1620, Ambar's army numbered 50,000 men; 40,000 Marathas (Hindu warriors) and 10,000 Habshi (fellow Africans). By then he had already installed two young princes to Nizam's throne in succession, each time making himself Regent Minister, and, unlike his former master, functioning as de facto ruler.

Ambar also forged alliances along India's western coast with the African-descended sailors-turned-rulers of Janjira Island. His innovative techniques in guerrilla warfare including the use of British-manufactured artillery, prevented the Mughals from occupying the southern half of India, endlessly frustrating the empire's rulers, who referred to their indomitable foe as the rebel of black fortune.

In approximately 1619, Ambar founded the city of Khadki where he built several palaces, developed an irrigation system, patronized Hindu and Muslim craftsmen and artists (including the great portrait artist Hashim), and married his daughters and sons into the families of Indian nobility and royalty thus integrating Africans into elite South Asian society. When Ambar died in 1627, he was known across the Deccan as one of the region's greatest leaders.

## February 14 - **Black Love (Ellen and William Craft)**

Most runaway slaves fled to freedom in the dead of night, often pursued by barking bloodhounds. A few fugitives, such as Henry 'Box' Brown (who mailed himself north in a wooden crate) devised clever ruses or stowed away on ships and wagons. One of the most ingenious escapes was that of a married couple from Georgia, Ellen and William Craft, who traveled in first-class trains, dined with a steamboat captain and stayed in the best hotels during their escape to Philadelphia and freedom in 1848. Ellen, a quadroon with very fair skin, disguised herself as a young white cotton planter traveling with his slave (William).

It was William who came up with the scheme to hide in plain sight, but ultimately it was Ellen who convincingly masked her race, her gender and her social status during that four-day trip. Despite the luxury accommodations, the journey was fraught with narrow escapes that could have led to their discovery and capture. Courage, quick thinking, luck and "our Heavenly Father," sustained them, the Crafts said in Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom, the book they wrote in 1860 chronicling the escape.

Ellen and William lived in Macon, Georgia, and were owned by different masters. Put up for auction at age 16 to help settle his master's debts, William had become the property of a local bank cashier. A skilled cabinetmaker, William, continued to work at the shop where he had apprenticed, and his new owner collected most of his wages.

As a child, Ellen, the offspring of her first master and one of his biracial slaves, had frequently been mistaken for a member of his white family. Much annoyed by the situation, the plantation mistress sent 11-year-old Ellen to Macon to her daughter as a wedding present in 1837, where she served as a ladies maid.

Ellen and William married, but having experienced such brutal family separations (William had witnessed the sale of his frightened, tearful 14-year-old sister. His parents and brother had met the same fate and were scattered throughout the South.) despaired over having children, fearing they would be torn away from them. “The mere thought,” William later wrote of his wife’s distress, “filled her soul with horror.”

Pondering various escape plans, William hit upon the idea of fair-complexioned Ellen passing herself off as his master, a wealthy young white man because it was not customary for women to travel with male servants. Initially Ellen panicked at the idea but was gradually won over. Because they were favored by their owners the couple had little trouble obtaining passes for a few days leave at Christmastime, giving them some days to be missing without raising the alarm.

Before setting out on December 21, 1848, William cut Ellen’s hair to neck length. She improved on the deception by putting her right arm in a sling, which would prevent hotel clerks and others from expecting her to sign a registry or other papers. Georgia law prohibited teaching slaves to read or write, so neither Ellen nor William could do either. Ellen also asked William to wrap bandages around much of her face, hiding her smooth skin and giving her a reason to limit conversation with strangers. She wore a pair of men’s trousers that she had sewed. She then donned a pair of green spectacles and a top hat.

At the Macon train station, Ellen purchased tickets to Savannah, 200 miles away. As William took a place in the negro car, he spotted the owner of the cabinetmaking shop on the platform. After questioning the ticket seller, the man began peering through the windows of the cars. William turned his face from the window and shrank in his seat, expecting the worst. The man searched the car Ellen was in but never gave the bandaged invalid a second glance. Just as he approached William’s car, the bell clanged and the train lurched off.

Ellen, who had been staring out the window, then turned away and discovered that her seatmate was a dear friend of her master, a recent dinner guest who had known Ellen for years. Her first thought was that he had been sent to retrieve her, but the wave of fear soon passed when he greeted her with ‘It is a very fine morning, sir.’

In Savannah, the fugitives boarded a steamer for Charleston, South Carolina. Over breakfast the next morning, the friendly captain marveled at the young master’s ‘very attentive boy’ and warned him to beware of the cut-throat abolitionists in the North who would encourage William to run away. A slave trader on board offered to buy William and take him to the Deep South, and a military officer scolded Ellen for saying thank you to her slave.

Trying to buy steamer tickets from South Carolina to Philadelphia, Ellen and William hit a snag when the ticket seller objected to signing the names of the young gentleman and his slave even after seeing the injured arm. In an effort to prevent white abolitionists from taking slaves out of the South, slaveholders had to prove that the slaves traveling with them were indeed their property. Sometimes travelers were detained for days trying to prove ownership. The captain

from the last steamer happened to walk by and vouched for Ellen and WIlliam and signed their names.

Baltimore, the last major stop before Pennsylvania, a free state, had a particularly vigilant border patrol. Ellen and William were again detained and asked to report to the authorities for verification of ownership.  “We felt as though we had come into deep waters and were about to be overwhelmed,” William recounted in the book, and returned “to the dark and horrible pit of misery.” Ellen and William silently prayed as the officer stood his ground. Suddenly the jangling of the departure bell shattered the quiet. The officer, clearly agitated, scratched his head. Surveying the sick traveler’s bandages, he said to a clerk, “he is not well, it is a pity to stop him.” Tell the conductor to “let this gentleman and slave pass.”

The Crafts arrived in Philadelphia the next morning on Christmas Day.

Upon their arrival in Philadelphia, Ellen and William were quickly given assistance and lodging by the underground abolitionist network. They received a reading lesson their very first day in the city. Three weeks later, they moved to Boston where William resumed work as a cabinetmaker and Ellen became a seamstress. After two years, in 1850, slave hunters arrived in Boston intent on returning them to Georgia. The Crafts fled again, this time to England, where they eventually had five children. After 20 years they returned to the States and in the 1870s established a school in Georgia for newly freed blacks.

## February 15 - **Bridget Mason**

In the 1856 landmark case Mason v. Smith, Bridget ‘Biddy’ Mason sued her master for her and her family’s freedom, a full year before the infamous Dred Scott v. Sandford decision. In the Dred Scott case, the court ruled that enslaved persons did not become free when brought to free states.

Biddy who was born in Mississippi in 1818 and was given the name Bridget without a surname she was later nicknamed Biddy. She was owned by slaveholders in Georgia and South Carolina before being returned to Mississippi. Robert Marion Smith, her last owner, was a Mississippi Mormon convert. He decided to follow the call of the church and moved his family and enslaved persons to the West.  There he would help establish a Mormon community in what would become Salt Lake City, Utah. At this time Utah was still a part of Mexico.

In 1848, Mason walked approximately 1,700 miles behind a 300-wagon caravan. The caravan eventually arrived in the Holladay-Cottonwood area of the Salt Lake Valley. Along the route, Mason was responsible for setting up and breaking camp; cooking the meals; herding cattle; and serving as a midwife. She also took care of her three young daughters, aged 10, 4, and a newborn.

In 1851, Smith moved his family again ignoring Brigham Young’s warning that slavery was illegal in California, Smith brought Mason and other enslaved people to the new Mormon

community. Along the way, Mason met Charles H. and Elizabeth Flake Rowan, a free black couple. The Rowan's, and others, urged her to legally contest her slave status once in California. In December 1855, afraid that his slaves would be taken from him, Smith decided to move, transporting his slaves to Texas  in order to protect his ownership.

Before Smith could transport his enslaved property from California, the Los Angeles sheriff was alerted to her master's intentions and the sheriff intercepted Smith's wagon train, carrying a writ of habeas corpus in hand. The writ required Bridget, her sister Hannah, and their children to be presented to Los Angeles District Judge Benjamin Hayes where he would consider their enslaved status. Hannah, who had recently given birth, was not present at the proceedings and Bridget had to remain silent during the court proceeding because a California law prevented Blacks and Native Americans from giving testimony against whites.

In Judge Hayes' order freeing Bridget and her family, the court held that Smith intended to remove Bridget and the others for his own use without the free will and consent of all or any of them, whereby their liberty will be greatly jeopardized. Judge Hayes also determined that they were incapable of entering into a binding agreement with Smith due to their enslavement.

Bridget eventually moved to Los Angeles where she worked as a midwife and nurse before purchasing land where, in 1872, she established First African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, the oldest Black Church in the city. Bridget went on to become a well-known philanthropist to the entire community and she was instrumental in founding a traveler's aid center and an elementary school for Black children.

## February 16 - **To Date Still the Richest Man in the World**

"Contemporary accounts of Musa's wealth are so breathless that it's almost impossible to get a sense of just how wealthy and powerful he truly was," Rudolph Butch Ware, associate professor of history at the University of California

Mansa Musa was born in 1280 into a family of rulers. His brother, Mansa Abu-Bakr, ruled the empire until 1312 when he abdicated to go on an expedition. According to 14th Century Syrian historian Shibab al-Umari, Abu-Bakr was obsessed with the Atlantic Ocean and what lay beyond it. He reportedly embarked on an expedition with a fleet of 2,000 ships and thousands of men, women, and slaves. They sailed off, never to return.

Mansa Musa inherited the kingdom he left behind. Under his rule, the kingdom of Mali grew significantly. He annexed 24 cities, including Timbuktu. The kingdom stretched for about 2,000 miles, from the Atlantic Ocean all the way to modern-day Niger, taking in parts of what are now Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, and Ivory Coast.

It wasn't until 1324 that the world would get a glimpse of the king's expansive wealth. A devout Muslim in a majority Muslim community, Musa set off on a journey to Mecca for his Hajj pilgrimage.

The voyage, spanning an estimated 4,000 miles, was traveled by Musa and a caravan that included tens of thousands of soldiers, slaves, and heralds, draped in Persian silk and carrying golden staffs.  The elaborate convoy that accompanied Musa marched alongside camels and horses carrying hundreds of pounds of gold.

The impact the Malian emperor left on the Egyptian people would reverberate for more than a decade. Mansa Musa handed out gold in Cairo during his three-month stay causing the price of gold to plummet in the region, wrecking the economy. On his way back home, Mansa Musa passed through Egypt again, and according to some, tried to help the country's economy by removing some of the gold from circulation by borrowing it back at extortionate interest rates from Egyptian lenders.

After Mansa Musa's Hajj a Catalan Atlas map from 1375 had a drawing of an African king sitting on a golden throne atop Timbuktu, holding a piece of gold in his hand. King Musa returned from Mecca with several Islamic scholars, including direct descendants of the prophet Muhammad and an Andalusian poet and architect by the name of Abu Es Haq es Saheli, who is widely credited with designing the famous Djinguereber mosque.

Mansa Musa died in 1337 at age 57, the empire was inherited by his sons who could not hold the empire together. The smaller states broke off and the empire crumbled.

## February 17 - **156 Black Soldiers of the Third Battalion**

In the spring of 1917, shortly after the United States declared war on Germany, the War Department, taking advantage of the temperate climate and newly opened Houston Ship Channel, ordered two military installations built in Harris County Camp Logan and Ellington Field. The Illinois National Guard was to train at Camp Logan, located on the northwest outskirts of the city. To guard the construction site, on July 27, 1917, the army ordered the Third Battalion of the Black Twenty-fourth United States Infantry to travel by train with seven White officers from the regimental encampment at Columbus, New Mexico, to Houston. From the outset, the Black contingent faced racial discrimination when they received passes to go into the city. A majority of the men had been raised in the South and were familiar with segregation, but as army servicemen, they expected equal treatment. Those individuals responsible for keeping order, especially the police, streetcar conductors, and public officials, viewed the presence of Black soldiers as a threat to racial domination. Many Houstonians thought that if the Black soldiers were shown the same respect as White soldiers, Black residents of the city might come to expect similar treatment.

On August 23, 1917, two Houston police officers assaulted a Black woman after raiding her home. A Black soldier named Alonso Edwards intervened on the woman's behalf and police beat and arrested him. When Corporal Charles Baltimore, one of the twelve Black military policemen with the battalion, inquired about the soldier's arrest, words were exchanged and the

policeman hit Baltimore over the head. The MPs fled. The police fired at Baltimore three times, chased him into an unoccupied house, and took him to police headquarters. In response, 156 soldiers decided to march on the police station and secure his release. If the police could assault a model soldier like Baltimore, they reasoned, none of them was safe from abuse.

The soldiers encountered a mob of armed white men who had heard reports of the march. During the ensuing violence 4 soldiers, 4 policemen, and 12 civilians were killed. Early the next morning, August 24, civil authorities imposed a curfew in Houston. The army hustled the Third Battalion aboard a train to Columbus, New Mexico. There, seven Black mutineers agreed to testify against the others in exchange for clemency. Between November 1, 1917, and March 26, 1918, the army held three separate court martials. The military tribunals indicted 118 enlisted men of I Company for participating in the mutiny and riot and found 110 guilty. It was wartime, and the sentences were harsh. Nineteen mutinous soldiers were hanged and sixty-three received life sentences in federal prison. One was judged incompetent to stand trial. Two White officers faced courts-martial, but they were released. No White civilians were brought to trial.

The condemned soldiers (one sergeant, four corporals, and eight privates) were transferred on December 10. The thirteen men were awakened at 5:00 am on December 11 and taken to the gallows. They were hanged simultaneously, at 7:17 am, one minute before sunrise. The scaffolds were disassembled and every piece returned to Fort Sam Houston. The New York Times, commenting on the clean-up operations, observed the place of execution and place of burial were "indistinguishable." The soldiers were buried in unmarked graves by the Salado Creek and their surnames were written on paper placed in empty soda bottles that were buried with each man.

A second court martial began six days later. Fifteen men of the Lower A Division were tried and five were sentenced to death. On January 2, 1918, General John Wilson Ruckman approved the sentences in a public statement. But a new rule, General Order 167 (December 29, 1917), prohibited the execution of any death sentence until the Judge Advocate General (JAG) could review the sentences.

While waiting for the JAG review to occur, Ruckman approved a third court-martial of forty more soldiers. On March 26, 1918, twenty-three of those forty soldiers were found guilty. Eleven of the twenty-three were sentenced to death and the remaining twelve to life in prison. On May 2, Ruckman approved the sentences.

After the unjust punishments and horrific burials:

- On 14 December 1924, four of the rioters were released on parole, with 34 remaining imprisoned in Fort Leavenworth.

- On 8 March 1927, President Calvin Coolidge reduced the sentences for the last 20 imprisoned rioters, making them eligible for parole within one year

- In 1937 the remains of the 13 executed soldiers were exhumed from their unmarked graves and reburied with military headstones in Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery.

As of February 2022, the Pentagon is reviewing a clemency petition for all those convicted in the riot.

## February 18 - **January 1**

*“Of all days in the year, the slaves dread New Year’s Day the worst of any,” a slave named Lewis Clarke said in an 1842 account.*

*“On New Year’s Day, we went to the auctioneer’s block, to be hired to the highest bidder for one year,” Israel Campbell wrote in a memoir published in 1861 in Philadelphia, in which he describes being hired out three times.*

Some of us learned that the night of December 31, 1862, was 'Watch Night' or 'Freedom's Eve'. The night when enslaved and free Blacks in the US gathered some in secret to await the news of the Emancipation Proclamation.

What many of us don't know is that January 1 was known as 'Hiring Day or 'Heartbreak Day'. On that day, many enslaved Black people anxiously waited to see if they would be rented out to another family or household. This temporary separation of families was an alternative to selling an enslaved person and was all too familiar during the time of chattel slavery. These transactions were conducted privately among families, friends, and business contacts, and slaves were handed over in town squares, on courthouse steps, and sometimes simply on the side of the road.

‘Hiring Day’ was part of the larger economic cycle in which most debts were collected and settled on New Year’s Day. Accounts of the cruelty of Hiring Day come from records left by those who secured their freedom, who described spending the day before January 1 hoping and praying that their hirers would be humane and that their families could stay together.

Harriet Jacobs wrote a detailed account in The Slaves’ New Year’s Day chapter of her 1861 autobiography Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. “Hiring-day at the south takes place on the 1st of January. On the 2nd, the slaves are expected to go to their new masters,” she wrote. She observed slave owners and farmers renting out their human chattel for extra income during the period between the cotton and corn harvests and the next planting season. From Christmas to New Year’s Eve, many families would “wait anxiously” to find out whether they would be rented out and to whom. On New Year’s Day, “At the appointed hour the grounds are thronged with men, women, and children, waiting, like criminals to hear their doom pronounced,” Jacobs wrote.

On one of these fateful days, Jacobs saw “a mother lead seven children to the auction block. She knew that some of them would be taken from her, but they took all.” The slave trader who took the children wouldn’t tell her where he was taking them because it depended on where he could get the “highest price.” Jacobs said she would never forget the mother crying out, “Gone! All gone! Why don’t God kill me?”

The holiday became more associated with freedom than slavery when Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing slaves in Confederate states on New Year’s Day in 1863.

## February 19 - **Makeup**

Makeup dates back to 6000 BCE, starting with the Egyptians. They created it as they believed makeup was next to godliness and that it appealed to the Gods; both men and women of all social classes wore makeup. It was also used to represent their wealth. As makeup was available to everyone in Egypt at the time, it was more so the applicators and storage containers that symbolized a person's wealth rather than the makeup itself. Many poor peasants relied on clay pots and sticks to store and apply their makeup, while the wealthy had access to delicately created boxes and applicators often bejeweled and made of ivory.

The most popular makeup that the Egyptians were known for was kohl, which is similar to black eye shadow but used to line the eyes, usually made from a grey ore called galena. Kohl is still used to this day, although back then it was commonly paired with blue or green eye shadow (Grepond eye paint) but now can be paired with anything. This part of the routine had practical purposes beyond beautifying the wearer. Kohl was used by both sexes and all social classes to protect the eyes from the intense glare of the desert sun.

They also wore red lipstick, which was made by mixing fat and red ochre. The ancient Egyptians also didn’t limit beauty to their faces, often using henna to stain their fingertips and toes.

## February 20 - **Our Founding Fathers**

The United States was founded on the idea that all men are created equal, except if you are of African descent. During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, slaveholding was common among the politicians and those who served as president. Twelve chief executives owned enslaved people during their lifetimes. Of these, eight held enslaved people while in office.

The ‘peculiar institution’ loomed large over the first few decades of American presidential history. Not only did enslaved laborers help build the White House all of the earliest presidents (except for John Adams and his son John Quincy Adams) owned enslaved people. George Washington kept some 300 enslaved people at his Mount Vernon plantation. Thomas Jefferson, despite once calling slavery an ‘assemblage of horrors’ owned at least 175 enslaved people at

one time. James Madison, James Monroe and Andrew Jackson each kept several dozen enslaved people, and Martin Van Buren owned one during his early career.

William Henry Harrison owned several inherited enslaved people before becoming president in 1841, while John Tyler and James K. Polk were both enslavers during their stints in office. Zachary Taylor, who served from 1849-1850, was the last chief executive to keep enslaved people while living in the White House. He owned some 150 enslaved workers on plantations in Kentucky, Mississippi and Louisiana.

Perhaps surprisingly, the last two presidents to own enslaved workers were both men closely associated with Abraham Lincoln, who led the nation during a civil war caused in large part by the divisions sowed by slavery, and later signed the Emancipation Proclamation and championed passage of the 13th Amendment ending slavery. Andrew Johnson, who served as Lincoln's vice president before becoming president in 1865, had owned at least half a dozen enslaved people in his native Tennessee and even lobbied for Lincoln to exclude the state from the Emancipation Proclamation.

The last president to personally own enslaved people was Ulysses S. Grant, who served two terms between 1869 and 1877. The former commanding general of the Union Army had kept a lone Black enslaved man named William Jones in the years before the Civil War, but gave him his freedom in 1859. Grant would later sum up his evolving views on slavery in 1878, when he was quoted as saying that it was 'a stain to the Union' that people had once been 'bought and sold like cattle'.

| | **President** | **Approximate number of slaves held** | **Slaves Held While in office** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1st | George Washington | 600+ | Yes (1789–1797) |
| 3rd | Thomas Jefferson | 600+ | Yes (1801–1809) |
| 4th | James Madison | 100+ | Yes (1809–1817) |
| 5th | James Monroe | 75 | Yes (1817–1825) |
| 7th | Andrew Jackson | 200 | Yes (1829–1837) |
| 8th | Martin Van Buren | 1 | No (1837–1841) |
| 9th | William Henry Harrison | 11 | No (1841) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 10th | John Tyler | 29 | Yes (1841–1845) |
| 11th | James K. Polk | 56 | Yes (1845–1849) |
| 12th | Zachary Taylor | 300 | Yes (1849- 1850) |
| 17th | Andrew Johnson | 9 | No (1865–1869) |
| 18th | Ulysses S. Grant | 1 | No (1869–1877) |

## February 21 - **Claudia Jones**

A revolutionary Black woman, communist, organizer, writer and journalist who dedicated her life toward the liberation of working people across the world. She is known for her analysis on race, gender, class, and imperialism.

Birth name Claudia Cumberbatch, Claudia Jones was born on February 21, 1915 in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. Her family emigrated to the United States and settled in Harlem in 1924. Key moments in her radicalisation was her arrival in Harlem during Jim Crow and the passing of her mother who was an exploited garment worker.

At 18, Jones joined the Young Communist League (YCL) after learning about the involvement of the Communist Party of United States of America (CPUSA) in the Scottsboro Case. She wrote for CPUSA's newspaper, the Daily Worker, and was the editor of the Youth Communist League's Weekly Review.

After becoming a full member of the CPUSA (CPUSA) in 1945, Jones quickly became a leader within the party. As executive secretary for the Women's Commission of the CPUSA, she pushed the party to move beyond its color-blind and gender-blind approach to issues of racism and sexism. In her renowned essay, An End to the Neglect of Problems of the Negro Woman, she examines the super-exploitation or triple oppression of race, gender, and class that Black woman face.

Under the Smith Act, Jones' writing and organizing led to her arrest and eventual deportation to London. In London, she worked with the Communist Party of Great Britain, which was one of the few organizations addressing racial inequality and imperialism.

Jones went on to found the West Indian Gazette (WIG) and the Afro-Asian Caribbean News with Amy Ashwood Garvey. The newspaper had a profound impact on the Caribbean community in London. She also organized the first Notting Hill Carnival.

Jones spent the rest of her life combating racism, sexism, imperialism, and championing socialism and world peace. On December 25, 1964, Claudia Jones died and was buried in Highgate Cemetery next to the grave of Karl Marx.

Claudia Jones' life and work should be commemorated and studied widely. I hope this profile inspires you to learn more about Jones' life, and to read the work she produced. See below for book recommendations. Also attached is a copy of An End to the Neglect of Problems of the Negro Woman.

- Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jone  by Carole Boyce Davies
- Claudia Jones: Beyond Containment  By Carole Boyce Davies

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I would like to end this Black History Month month profile with a quote that is call to action.

"Do your little part. Do whatever you can to help change these conditions. Because we're moving into a critical period of history, not just for poor and oppressed people, Black people, but for humanity itself. So you need to engage. Do whatever little bit you can, but do something" - Marshall "Eddie" Conway

I hope you will be inspired by Claudia Jones and be moved to continue the ongoing struggle for African liberation.

## February 22 - **Violent Voter Suppression**

The Ocoee Massacre, in the town of Ocoee, Florida on November 2-3, 1920, was the largest election-related massacre in the 20th Century. At least fifty African American were murdered in the violence and the entire Black community of Ocoee was forced to flee the town.
Ocoee, Florida, in Orange County, approximately 12 miles northwest of Orlando, had been politically dominated by conservative Democrats since the end of Reconstruction. They prided themselves on keeping Blacks, then mostly Republican, from the polls. In 1920, a number of Black organizations across Florida began conducting voter registration campaigns. Partly because of their efforts, a prosperous Black farmer, Mose Norman, who had been part of the voter registration drive in Orange County, decided to vote in the national election on November 2. When he attempted to do so, twice, he was turned away from the polls.
When Norman was driven away the second time, a white mob, then numbering over 100 men, decided to hunt him down. Concluding he had taken refuge in the home of another local Black resident, Julius “July” Perry, they rushed Perry’s house hoping to capture both men there. Norman escaped and was never found while Perry defended his home, killing two white men, Elmer McDaniels and Leo Borgard, who tried to enter through the back door. The mob called for reinforcements from Orlando and surrounding Orange County. Eventually, they caught and killed Perry and hung his dead body from a telephone post by the highway from Ocoee to Orlando to

intimidate other potential Black voters. Perry's wife, Estelle Perry, and their daughter were wounded during the attack on the Perry home. They were sent to Tampa by local law enforcement officers.
The mob then turned on the Black community of Ocoee. They burned down homes and businesses and demanded that the Black residents leave Ocoee. In the face of this threatened violence, the entire African American population fled the town. Some African Americans speculated that the rioting may have been planned so that some whites could seize the property of the wealthiest Blacks in the town.
The NAACP investigated the massacre, sending Walter White, the organization's executive director. White—who passed as a Caucasian during his visit—reported that some local whites were 'still giddy with victory' when he arrived. He also said that locals reported 56 Blacks killed but he claimed 30 deaths in his official report. In 1921 the NAACP and other civil rights organizations called on the House Election Committee of the U.S. Congress to investigate the massacre and Black voter suppression in Florida, but it failed to act.
On June 21, 2019, a historical marker honoring July Perry and others killed in the massacre was placed in Heritage Square outside the Orange County Regional History Center.

Ocoee: Legacy of the Election Day Massacre - Available from Third World Newsreel

## February 23 - **Polish General and Military Commander**

The product of an illicit affair in Paris between British-born Princess Maria Franciszka Dealire and an unnamed black butler, Wladyslaw Franciszek Jablonowski was born in Gdansk, Poland, on October 25, 1769. Despite the discomfiting circumstance of his birth his surrogate father, Konstanty A. Jablonowski, an army colonel and government administrator gave the boy his surname and guided him on a career path similar to his own.

At the age of 14 Jablonowski was enrolled in the elite French military school, Académie Militaire de Brienne, a branch of the Ecole Militaire de Paris. It was at the school that he first encountered fellow student Napoleon Bonaparte, the future emperor of France, who because of his darker skin, treated Jablonowski with unrelenting contempt. Upon graduating at age 17, Jablonowski was commissioned a lieutenant in the largely foreign-born, German-speaking Royal Allemand Régiment of the French Army.

During the French Revolution (1789 - 1799) he allied himself with forces opposing the old regime and avoided prison or exile. However, in 1794, hoping to free his homeland, he returned to Poland to fight in support of the Kościuszko Uprising against the armies of Prussia and Russia. As a lieutenant colonel, he led Polish detachments in key engagements, most

significantly the battles of Szczekociny, Maciejowice, Warsaw, and Praga. He gained a reputation as a good tactician and effective organizer.

With the failure of the uprising, Jablonowski escaped to Austria where he and other Poles conspired to restore the independence of their homeland. He returned to France and reentered the French army via its subordinate Polish legions. Under Napoleon's command, he led both cavalry and infantry units fighting in Austria and Italy against Russians and Austrians, most notably in the battles of Santa Maria di Falari, Magnano, and Cassano. With the end of hostilities, Jablonowski was briefly put in charge of the Polish Danube Legion comprised of several thousand troops, but his command was terminated when the legion was disbanded.

Jablonowski's loyalty and battlefield achievements went unrewarded by his nemesis, Napoleon. Even a personal appeal to the French emperor for promotion in May 1802 from the French General Joachim Murat (Napoleon's brother-in-law) was ignored. Finally, the intercession of Polish General Jan Henryk Dabrowski the former commander of the Polish legionnaires persuaded Napoleon to promote Jablonowski to brigadier general, but with the condition that he deploys to Saint-Domingue (Haiti). He was tasked with leading Polish and French soldiers in suppressing the independence campaign of formerly enslaved Black Haitians led by Toussaint L'Overture. His one month of unremarkable activity in Haiti ended when he contracted yellow fever and died in the town of Jérémie on September 29, 1802. He was only 33 at the time of his death.

Perhaps like the 400 Poles who switched sides and fought alongside the newly self emancipated Blacks and settled in Haiti after Napoleon's colonial army was routed, Jablonowski, having risked his life numerous times for France, had he lived a bit longer, might also have had second thoughts about his allegiance to a egocentric racist warmonger. In my opinion, his unremarkable military actions for one month was remarkable for those Haitians fighting France.

## February 24 - **Black Women & the Law**

morning, Osborne

Charlotte E. Ray

(January 13, 1850 – January 4, 1911)

Charlotte E. Ray was born in New York City on January 13, 1850 to Pastor Charlotte Augusta and Reverend Charles Bennett Ray. The Ray's were famous abolitionists and helped assist with the Underground Railroad in New York. They valued education, and Pastor Augusta particularly believed in women's rights and supported the suffrage movement. The Ray children were very well educated, and four of the couple's daughters all earned college degrees, an outstanding achievement for the day. At some point all worked as teachers.

In 1869, Charlotte E. Ray graduated from the Institution for Colored Education in Washington DC. It was one of the few academic institutions that educated black women. Following her graduation, Charlotte E. Ray found employment as a professor at Howard University.

On February 27, 1872, after having applied to Howard University's Law Department and completing three years of study, Charlotte E. Ray graduated from the facility law school. Her graduation marked the first time a woman completed a legal studies program at Howard University Law School.

Following her historic graduation from Howard University Law School, Charlotte E. Ray was admitted to the District of Columbia bar association on March 2, 1872. She was subsequently admitted to practice in the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia on April 23, 1872. Charlotte E. Ray appears to have successfully represented one woman petitioning for divorce from her abusive husband, but there is no significant information available if she represented other clients. We know that Charlotte E. Ray attempted to, but was unsuccessful in establishing an independent law practice due to societal prejudice against black people and women. She returned to teaching, specifically in the Brooklyn school system.

Charlotte E. Ray married, but there is not a lot of available information on her spouse.

On January 4, 1911, at age 60, Charlotte E. Ray died due to complications of bronchitis.

Charlotte E. Ray is a trailblazer. Her achievement as the first black woman to graduate from Howard University Law School, and her work as a lawyer, inspired other women to follow in her courageous footsteps. The oppression of sexism and racism prevented her from pursuing work as a lawyer for a significant time, but during her short time practicing, she successfully defended an abused woman who wanted a divorce. Her work as an educator and work in the

advancement of black women is significant and laudable given the unrelenting discrimination she faced. Her legacy stands worthy of recognition in Black History Month, and every month.

In 2006, Northeastern University Phi Alpha Delta Law Fraternity named their newly formed chapter after Charlotte E. Ray, in recognition of her place as the first black female attorney.

## February 25 - **Wall Street (between Pearl and Water Streets)**

This history starts with the arrival of a black man. In June 1613, Juan Rodrigues, a free sailor from Hispaniola who worked for a Dutch fur trading company, was left on Manhattan Island to trade with Native Americans. He was the first non-indigenous permanent resident of Manhattan and remained the only one until 1621 when the Dutch West India Company (WIC) built a settlement and began introducing African labor.

In 1626, 11 Africans from The Congo, Angola, and the island of Sao Tome were transported to the small town. Eighteen years later, the men, who had petitioned the local Dutch authorities to get their freedom, were liberated. Each one received land. Their collective 300 acres stretched from the Bowery Road to 5th Avenue and 39th Street. Their freedom was conditional, they had to deliver one fat hog and 22.5 bushels of corn, wheat, peas, or beans to the WIC every year or be re-enslaved. Their wives were freed too, but none their children.

During the Dutch period, 70 percent of the Africans came from the Caribbean under British rule which started in 1664. Most arrived directly from Africa. Of the close to 4,000 people whose origins are known, 1,271 came from Madagascar, 998 from Congo, 757 from Senegambia, 504 from the Gold Coast (Ghana), 239 from Sierra Leone, and 217 from non-identified areas of the continent.

With the aggressive increase in the slave trade and the expansion of the city, an official slave market opened in 1711 by the East River on Wall Street between Pearl and Water Streets. By 1730, 42 percent of the population owned slaves, a higher percentage than in any other city in the country except Charleston, South Carolina. The enslaved population—which ranged between 15 and 20 percent of the total—literally built the city and was the engine that made its economy run.

The slave market on  Wall Street  closed in 1762 but men, women, and children continued to be bought and sold throughout the city. After the abolition of slavery, which became effective on July 4, 1827, New York's shameful history of discrimination, racism, rigid segregation, and anti-black violence continued. By the 1850s, the city was dominating the illegal international slave trade to the American South, Brazil, and Cuba. New York benefited much from slavery and the slave trade: southern cotton and sugar sailed to Europe from its harbor. Banks, insurance companies among them Aetna, JP Morgan Chase, and New York Life.

Osborne

## February 26 - **Marcus Garvey**

We use the name Marcus Garvey at Osborne every day, but do you know who he was and what he accomplished? Do you know about the man? Some of my colleagues in CAS could not imagine that you would not, but just in case …

Like me, Mr. Garvey is Jamaican-born. He is revered by many Jamaicans. He has the honor of being the first National Hero of Jamaica. As a child, my primary school classmates and I sang songs about him, one of which included this verse:

"Marcus Mosiah Garvey, a fighter for Black man's dignity, throughout every nation. He gave all Black men a dream."

Indeed, Mr. Garvey advocated for Black people all over the world to be economically self-reliant and to claim power. One of my favorite descriptions of Mr. Garvey is: "He was a bulwark for the worldwide organization of people of African descent." That he was. He planted the seeds of Black pride and determination wherever he went. Mr. Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association or UNIA in Jamaica in 1914. UNIA sought to acquire economic power for Black people and to infuse a sense of community and group feeling among Black people. The UNIA's mission was to achieve Black nationalism through the celebration of African history and culture; its main influence was the poor and oppressed Black people. The tenets of Mr. Garvey's message were to achieve freedom for the oppressed, especially people of African descent throughout the country.

Mr. Garvey was born on August 17, 1887, in St. Ann's Bay, the capital of the parish of St. Ann when Jamaica was still a British colony. His father, Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Sr., worked as a mason; his mother, Sarah Jane Richards, worked as a domestic worker. Mr. Garvey and his sister, Indiana, were the only two of the seven siblings to survive until maturity. Mr. Garvey cultivated his love of reading by spending time perusing his father's large library. As a child, he attended a local primary school. At 14, he moved to Kingston and began an apprenticeship with his uncle, Alfred Burrowes, who also had an extensive library, of which young Marcus made good use. Mr. Garvey worked for a brief period in the Government Printing Office and, in 1909, the 22-year-old founded his own newspaper, "The Watchman". It only ran for 3 issues before Mr. Garvey left Jamaica in order to obtain a higher-paying job to finance his burgeoning ideas and projects.

In 1910, Mr. Garvey began traveling throughout Central America, where he had relatives. While in that region, he worked as a timekeeper on a banana plantation; he worked as an editor for a daily newspaper, "La Nacionale;" and he edited a biweekly newspaper, before returning to Jamaica in 1912. After years of working in the Caribbean, Mr. Garvey left Jamaica and moved to London, where he lived from 1912 to 1914. While in London, he attended Birkbeck College and took classes in Law and Philosophy; he also remained employed in the publishing

business. Once he returned to Jamaica in 1914, Mr. Garvey organized the UNIA. It has been suggested that Islamic influence helped Mr. Garvey compose UNIA's motto, "One God, One Aim, One Destiny."

Mr. Garvey was also influenced by Booker T. Washington, who was born into slavery and rose to become a leading African American intellectual of the 19th century. The two had already made their acquaintances when Mr. Garvey moved to New York in 1916. In March of that year, he conducted a lecture tour to raise money to establish a school in Jamaica modeled after Mr. Washington's Tuskegee Institute which provided students with both academic and vocational training. During his tour, Mr. Garvey visited the Tuskegee Institute afterward, he visited with a number of black leaders. While in New York, Mr. Garvey found work as a printer by day. At night, he spoke on street corners, something he had started to do while he lived in London. In May 1916, he held his first public lecture in New York City at St. Mark's Church; thereafter, he visited 38 states during a speaking tour. In May 1917, Mr. Garvey and 13 other individuals formed the first UNIA division outside of Jamaica; he began advancing ideas to promote social, political, and economic freedom for Black people. That same year, Mr. Garvey had a great deal to say about the East St. Louis riot.

Mr. Garvey continued with his desire to improve the conditions of those of African ancestry "at home and abroad" through the UNIA. In August 1918, he began to publish "Negro World," the UNIA newspaper. Mr. Garvey believed in the power of transportation to change the lives of Black people all over the world. At that time, he focused on the shipping industry; he founded the Black Star Line as an embodiment of a dream to link people of color around the globe with the continent of Africa. By September 1919, the company had acquired its first ship, but sadly, its accomplishment drew a lot of negative attention, including an investigation by the New York City Office of the District Attorney. Mr. Garvey was subsequently arrested and indicted for criminal libel for a UNIA newspaper article that he wrote about his experience with the DA's office; the charges were dismissed after Mr. Garvey published a retraction in the newspaper. In October 1919, while in his Harlem office at 56 West 156th Street, Mr. Garvey was shot and wounded by a man rumored to have been sent to assassinate him by a powerful government enemy. The would-be assassin later died by suicide.

By the summer of 1920, the UNIA had amassed four million members. The International Convention of the UNIA was held in August of 1920, and delegates from all over the world attended. Thousands of attendees filled Madison Square Garden to hear Mr. Garvey speak.

The Negro Factories Corporation was another of Mr. Garvey's ideas; his plan was to create the infrastructure to manufacture every marketable commodity in every large U.S. industrial center, as well as Central America, the West Indies, and Africa. His other ideas included developing a grocery store chain, a restaurant, and a publishing house, as well as a number of other businesses.

One of Mr. Garvey's underlining arguments is that all Black people in the world should return to their homeland in Africa, which should be free of white colonial rule. Mr. Garvey had plans for

resettling Black Americans in Liberia, the only country in Africa governed by Africans. Mr. Garvey sought to develop Liberia. The Liberia program was launched in 1920, and it was intended to build colleges, universities, industrial plants, and railroads as part of an industrial base from which to operate. The program was abandoned in the mid-1920s, however, after much opposition from European powers with interests in Liberia.

There were many including prominent black leaders who came to believe that Mr. Garvey's program for black advancement was unsound and that the man himself was a fake. They mocked Mr. Garvey's proposed solutions for the problems of African Americans. Mr. Garvey was investigated again by J. Edgar Hoover, the first Director of the FBI, who referred to Mr. Garvey as a "notorious negro agitator." Mr. Hoover spent several years investigating Mr. Garvey. It is said that Mr. Hoover hired the first Black FBI agent in 1919 in order to infiltrate Mr. Garvey's inner circle and spy on him. In 1925, Mr. Garvey and three other UNIA officials were charged with mail fraud involving the Black Star Line. Mr. Garvey served over two years of his five-year prison sentence, but in 1927, his sentence was commuted by President Coolidge. After that, Mr. Garvey was deported to Jamaica as an “undesirable alien.” UNIA membership in the United States declined after Mr. Garvey’s arrest, but he continued his political activism and the work of UNIA in Jamaica.

In 1928, Garvey traveled to Geneva to present the Petition of the Negro Race, which outlined the worldwide abuse of Africans to the League of Nations. In September 1929, he founded the People's Political Party (PPP), Jamaica's first modern political party, which focused on workers' rights, education, and aid to the poor.

In the period after Mr. Garvey's return to Jamaica from the United States, he was welcomed home as a hero by the poorer classes, but he was viewed with suspicion by the authorities, who feared his popularity and his reputation. In 1930, he was charged, prosecuted, and convicted of seditious libel. Although his conviction was ultimately overturned in the Court of Appeals for procedural reasons, his trial and conviction for sedition was one way by which the authorities tried to abort his controversial political programs intended to uplift the Black race. The legal system in post-emancipation colonial Jamaica was used to abort Mr. Garvey’s political movement.

In April 1931, Mr. Garvey launched the Edelweiss Amusement Company to help artists earn their livelihood from their craft. Several Jamaican entertainers who received initial exposure through the company subsequently became popular and prospered. In 1935, Mr. Garvey left Jamaica for London, where he lived and worked until his death in 1940. During his final years, Mr. Garvey remained active and involved with events in war-torn Ethiopia (then known as Abyssinia) and in the West Indies; he continued to work on the magazine, The Black Man; and in 1938, he set up the School of African Philosophy in Toronto, Canada to train UNIA leaders.

Despite the great strides Mr. Garvey had made for the social and economic advancements of Black people, his legacy is sometimes overshadowed by his connection to White supremacists. In 1937, Theodore Bilbo, the U.S. Senator from Mississippi, introduced a repatriation scheme in

the U.S. Congress as the Greater Liberia Act. In 1939, Mr. Bilbo's bill provided the opportunity for African Americans to move to Africa to escape racial intolerance in the United States. In reality, his goal was to remove all African Americans from the United States. Mr. Garvey praised him because he truly believed that members of the African diaspora would never be treated fairly in a White-controlled country and that the solution was a new African homeland.

Mr. Garvey was married twice. His first wife was Jamaican Pan-African activist Amy Ashwood, who worked with him in the early years of UNIA. They married in 1919 and divorced in 1922. His second wife was a Jamaican journalist and publisher, Amy Jacques. They married in 1922, and they shared two sons, Marcus III, and Julius.

On June 10, 1940, Mr. Garvey died at the age of 52. Due to travel restrictions during World War II, he was buried at Kensal Green Cemetery in London. There were claims that Mr. Garvey was fatally poisoned while traveling on a boat. In 1964, his remains were exhumed, and he was re-interred at a shrine in National Heroes Park in Jamaica.

Thirty-five years later, Winston Rodney first lamented that "no one remembers old Marcus Garvey," in the lead song on Burning Spear's breakout album that simultaneously memorialized Mr. Garvey and renewed interest in his life through music. There are more than 50 noteworthy vocal and instrumental works that were inspired by, or which refer to, Mr. Garvey (including approximately 40 from his native Jamaica.) The music has kept his memory alive. "Poor Marcus," as he was frequently described in songs, left a rich musical legacy that was broad and permanent.

Though he failed to realize all of his objectives, Mr. Garvey's movement still represents a liberation from the psychological bondage of racial inferiority. The world of the 1930s was not ready for Mr. Garvey's progressive ideas. Mr. Garvey's legacy can be summed up in his philosophy: race pride; the need for African unity; self-reliance; the importance for Black people to be organized; and the need for rulers to govern on behalf of the working class.

Love him or hate him, Mr. Garvey is an important part of our history. If nothing else, he taught us racial pride, the need for African unity, self-reliance, and also the need for Black people to be organized. In his own words, "I stand before you this afternoon as a proud black man, honored to be a black man, who would be nothing else in God's creation but a black man." Mr. Garvey made that statement in 1928, more than 90 years ago.

Today, I echo his remarks. Black like me means, I am a proud black woman, honored to be such, and I would be nothing else, but a black woman.

AG

Osborne

## February 27 - Harlem Hellfighters

Last year, the movie “Amsterdam,” starring John David Washington, introduced me to the Harlem Hellfighters. The movie was a fictional crime story about three friends who were involved in a murder. The movie had historical elements, including the Harlem Hellfighters, previously known as the 369th Infantry Regiment of the New York National Guard. The interesting fact that caught my attention was that the Regiment fought with the French army, not the U.S. army.
Initially known as the 15th New York National Guard Regiment, in 1916, the group was reorganized and named the 369th Infantry Regiment just a year before the United States entered World War I (WWI). In April 1917, President Woodrow Wilson announced that all able American men – White and Black — had to take part in the conflict in Europe. Many say that the African-American population saw the war as a chance to prove the patriotism and bravery of African-Americans, as well as advance their civil rights in America.

The men from the 369th Infantry Regiment were primarily New Yorkers, but members were also from New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania, as well as Puerto Rico, Cuba, Guyana, Liberia, Portugal, Canada, and the West Indies. The age of the members ranged from their teens to their mid-40s. They were employed as porters, doormen, elevator operators, teachers, night watchmen, and postal carriers. Their motives for joining included seeking adventure, patriotism, and pride. The Regiment was considered a Black unit; most of the officers were Black, but a few were White. It was believed that White officers were assigned simply to appease the New York governor. In addition to conducting military operations and receiving training, the Regiment had a marching band that was used for parades, recruitment purposes, and fundraisers.

The Harlem Hellfighters were infantry fighters, but even before they entered combat, they faced unjust challenges from other Americans. In October 1917, six months after the United States officially entered WWI, the Regiment trained for combat in Jim Crow-ruled Spartanburg, South Carolina. There, the Regiment members pledged to follow an unusual military request: To respond to racist insults and threats with “fortitude and without retaliation,” but to report any incidents to military authorities.

After the Regiment returned to New York City, but before it departed for Europe in December 1917, they were informed that they had been barred from participating in the farewell parade for New York’s National Guard units. The men were told, “Black is not a color in the Rainbow.” Through their shared racist treatment, the men in the Regiment bonded and developed a fighting spirit that later served them well overseas.

The troop arrived in Brest, France, on the first day of 1918. On the docks, they surprised French soldiers and civilians with a jazz rendition of “La Marseillaise,” the French national anthem; many of the Parisians had never heard jazz before that day. The Regiment members were saluted by every French soldier and sailor present.

In the military at that time, unloading ships and cleaning latrines were typical assignments for Black soldiers. The Harlem Hellfighters were not treated any differently; they unloaded supply ships for their first few months in France. They worked long hours in the port until they became the solution for a political problem. The French and British were demanding American reinforcements for their badly depleted divisions. The French, in particular, needed soldiers to fight in the trenches. Eventually, General Pershing was persuaded to allow the Harlem Hellfighters to fight with the French even though he thought that the Regiment needed more training because of their "lower capacity and lack of education." After three weeks of training with the French troops, the Harlem Hellfighters entered the combat trenches on April 15, 1918. They wore French uniforms. For three months, as the German's spring offensive raged dozens of miles to the northwest of the front line, the Harlem Hellfighters held the front line, where the bloodiest of battles occurred. The American press reported accounts of the Regiment's heroics and within days, the American public read the stories. By July 15, 1918, as Germany launched its final offensive of the war, the Regiment remained at the front line and withstood heavy bombardment. The Hellfighters participated in the French counterattack, and as a result, many members sustained injuries and many paid the ultimate sacrifice. Stories from German soldiers recounted that because they were so frightened by the Black soldiers, they did not try to capture them. The Germans nicknamed the Regiment the "Hellfighters," which later became the "Harlem Hellfighters."

The Harlem Hellfighters spent 191 days on the front line, more than any other American regiment. Their military unit is believed to have spent the most time in combat during World War I.

The Regiment's "Hellfighters Band" was not only used in battle but also relied upon to build morale. By the end of their combat tour, they became one of the most famous military bands throughout Europe. The Hellfighters Band was instrumental in introducing jazz to British, French, and other European audiences. On February 17, 1919, a massive crowd filled Fifth Avenue in New York City for a victory parade honoring the Hellfighters. The band kicked off the procession with a French marching song, and the soldiers marched in a French formation, 16 abreast.

The Hellfighters' wartime valor received mixed reactions as the veterans reentered American society. Army Sgt. Henry Johnson, who served with the Harlem Hellfighters, saved a fellow soldier from capture and prevented a German raid on his French allies. The United States military, however, refused to recognize Sgt. Johnson's extraordinary actions. Sgt. Johnson became a champion for his fellow soldiers, testifying before the New York State legislature in early 1919, in support of a bill to give veterans a preference in government hiring. He soon tired of public speaking because so much was expected of him. After a speech in St. Louis in March 1919, in which he accused White soldiers of racism and cowardice, Mr. Johnson disappeared from the public sphere. He spent part of 1920 in the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and later became ill after having contracted tuberculosis. He died in July 1929, at the age of 39, of an enlarged heart. "America can't change what happened to Henry Johnson," said President Barack Obama in 2015, "but we can do our best to make it right." Ninety-seven years

after Sgt. Johnson battled the Germans while stationed in France, President Obama awarded him a posthumous Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military award.

The U.S. Army recognized the right of the 369th Sustainment Brigade Soldiers to call themselves Hellfighters approximately 100 years after World War I ended. The Army Center of Military History, which approved the official designation on September 21, 2020, also made it clear that Hellfighters is one word and not two.

AG

## February 28 - Empress of Ethiopia and Alexander the Great

Ethiopia is not the country you see today. Ethiopia, Kush, or Nubia was considered much of East Africa. Ethiopia predated Egypt, and Egypt was a state of Ethiopia. There were eight Kandakes (Kandake or Candace meaning 'great woman' and the equivalent of queen or queen mother). These queens or queen mothers reigned as sole rulers. Since the kingdom's hieroglyphs have not been sufficiently deciphered, historians rely primarily on the accounts of the Greek geographer-historian Strabo of Amasia and the Roman historians Pliny the Elder and Cassius Dio to understand the sequence of events that enshrined Kandake Amanirenas in the pantheon of African female heroines.

Kandake Amanirenas was blind in one eye due to losing it in a battle with the Romans. She was known to be a fierce, tactical, and uniting leader.

Alexander The Great reached Ethiopia in 332 BC, on his world conquering rampage. But one of the greatest generals of the ancient world was also the Empress of Ethiopia. The formidable Queen Amanirenas was world famous as a military tactician and field commander. Legend has it that Alexander could not entertain even the possibility of having his world fame and unbroken chain of victories marred by risking a defeat, at last, by a woman. When Alexander attempted to conquer her lands in 332 BC, she arranged her armies strategically to meet him and was present on a war elephant when he approached. Having assessed the strength of her armies, Alexander decided to withdraw from Nubia, heading to Egypt instead. As a result, her land was not conquered.