

## Celebrating Local Black History

In March of 1953, a few years after the United Nations General Assembly voted to adopt the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Eleanor Roosevelt made the following remarks in response to what has come to be called “The Great Question”:

“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home — so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they *are* the world of the individual person: The neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”

Though Roosevelt was speaking in a geopolitical register, her basic point is just as fitting to the spirit of Black History Month, namely, that dignity, empathy, equality, respect, justice—if we have these at all, it is not simply on account of the protection and police power of charters and statutes, rather, we have them because we promote and cherish them ourselves, in the smallest contours of our daily lives and relationships. Roosevelt simply and wisely reminds us that good worlds and happy lives start at home, by knowing, loving and living with those in our most immediate communities, whether that be next door, in the same congregation, in the break room, or in the school hallways.

With this in mind, we are honored and thrilled to be able to cap off our celebration of Black History Month in the Upper School by holding an assembly visit and conversation with the directors of the [Afro-American Historical Association of Fauquier County](#). Student leaders of Highland’s Social Justice Club will frame the conversation, and we are eager to learn about the AAHA directors’ ongoing work to document the history of African-American life and landmarks in the Fauquier area, and hear their stories of how the spirit of black history—and of human rights and dignity more broadly—lives inside the churches, schoolhouses, and neighborhoods that so many of us encounter every day. We hope to record and share this assembly conversation with you, but we also invite you to explore [the interactive story map, “Fauquier’s Historic African American Communities,”](#) that the AAHA created in partnership with the Piedmont Environmental Council.