

St. Mary Magdalene Parish's Cultural Action Team's Calendar for Black History Month February 2021

February 1st: Birthday of Langston Hughes, 1902-1967, author/social activist

“Hold fast to dreams
for if dreams die
life is a broken-winged bird
that can not fly.

Hold fast to dreams
for when dreams go
life is a barren field
frozen with snow.”

— Langston Hughes, The Collected Poems

February 2nd: National Day of Prayer for the African American Family, Fr. James Goode OFM Founder; A day to set aside to give special thanks to God for our families and place our every care in the arms of Jesus.

Prayer by Fr. Goode:

God of mercy and love, we place our African American and African Families before You today. May we be proud of our history and never forget those who paid a great price for our liberation. Bless us one by one and keep our hearts and minds fixed on higher ground.

Help us to live for you and not for ourselves, and may we cherish and proclaim the gift of life. Bless our parents, guardians and grandparents, relatives and friends. Give us the amazing grace to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Help us, as Your children, to live in such a way that the beauty and greatness of authentic love is reflected in all that we say and do.

Give a healing anointing to those less fortunate, especially the motherless, the fatherless, the broken, the sick and the lonely. Bless our departed family members and friends. May they be led into the light of your dwelling place where we will never grow old, where we will share the fullness of redemption and shout the victory for all eternity.

This we ask in the precious Name of Jesus, our Savior and Blessed Assurance. Amen. Holy Mary, Mother of Our Families, pray for us.

February 3rd: Mother Mary Lange died February 3rd; Mary Lange O.S.P. (c.1784-1882) was a black Catholic religious sister who founded the Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first ever African-American religious congregation. She was also the first ever black Mother Superior.

February 4th: Birthday of Rosa Parks, 1913-2005, Mother of the Freedom Movement. Rosa Parks rejected a bus driver's order to vacate the first row of four seats in the "colored" section of a bus when the "white" section was full, resisting bus segregation.

February 5th: African American History in Pittsburgh. Check out visitpittsburgh.com to take a journey through more than 200 years of the African-American experience in southwestern Pennsylvania. View the interactive map of African American Historic Sites in Pittsburgh.

February 6th: Check out online the **UGRR (Underground Rail Road) History Center** located in Blairsville, PA. undergroundrailroadblairsvillepa.com . The Blairsville Area Underground Railroad is committed to preserving, promoting, and presenting the history of the Underground Railroad in Indiana County and surrounding region.

February 7th: **Spiritual of the Week for St. Mary Magdalene Parish:**

I Know the Lord Has Laid His Hands on Me

This spiritual is an example of responsorial singing: a refrain is sung by the entire group and a soloist sings that stanzas with melodic and rhythmic freedom. Those who sing this song find comfort in the image of the hands of the Lord which guide, protect, and uphold. Spirituals helped slaves endure and persevere under the physical and psychological pressures of their daily lives.

February 8th: **Feast Day of St. Josephine Bakhita** who lived from 1868-1947

St. Josephine was kidnapped by slave traders as a child from her native Sudan. She eventually went to Italy as a slave with her owners. When the family wanted to return to Sudan, Josephine refused to go. Italian law, which did not recognize slavery, allowed her to be freed. She was taken in the the Canossian Sisters in Italy and was a sister for over 40 years. St. Josephine had endured much suffering and many beatings when she was a slave but she was able to find joy in the love of the Lord and the Holy Mother.

February 9th: **Leroy “Satchel” Paige** was the first Negro League Player nominated into the Baseball Hall of Fame on this day in 1971

February 10th: In 1964 the U.S. House of Representatives passed the **Civil Rights Act of 1964** with a vote of 290-130. The bill prohibited any state or local government or public facility from denying access to anyone because of race or ethnic origin. It also gave the U.S. Attorney General the power to bring school desegregation law suits.

February 11th: **World Day of the Sick**; Look up **Henrietta Lacks** online. She was a black woman who lived from 1920-1951. Her cancer cells are the source of the HeLa cell line. Her cells are the most important cell line in medical research. Notable was that Henrietta Lacks never gave permission for these cells to be used for research and neither she nor her family were ever compensated for the use of the cells.

February 12th: **Make plans for a visit to the Heinz History Center to view the Exhibit: *From Slavery to Freedom*.** The journey begins in 18th century Africa and continues through 21st Century Western Pennsylvania. Go to heinzhistorycenter.org for more info.

February 13th: **Spiritual of the Week for St. Mary Magdalene Parish:**

Hush, Hush, Somebody’s Callin’ My Name

This spiritual is an example of one that has two meanings. On the surface the song speaks of death, but the song is multi-layered as it also brings a message of hope, perseverance, and at times even a chance for freedom on the Underground Railroad. Many slaves heard the song and heard the opportunity for freedom in its words.

February 14th: Mary Caldwell Dawson (born 2/14/1894)

She founded the **National Negro Opera Company House** in Pittsburgh (on 7101 Apple Street in Homewood!) in 1941. Dawson provided talented African American singers with opportunities denied to them by unjust Jim Crow segregation. She trained students and produced acclaimed opera performances. The opera house was recently named one of the 11 most endangered places in America by the national Trust for Historic Preservation.

February 15th: In 1851, Robert Morris Sr. became one of the first black lawyers in the U.S and the first black lawyer to file a lawsuit on behalf of a client. With the help of Lewis Hayden, Morris removed a newly arrested fugitive slave from the court house and helped him escape to freedom in Canada. Morris was arrested for this but later acquitted.

February 16th: James Baskett (born 2/16/1904)

He was the first African American male to win an Academy Award. He portrayed Uncle Remus, singing the song *Zip-a-dee-doo-dah* in the 1946 Disney film, *Song of the South*.

February 17th: Albert Richardson invented the butter churn.

This allowed for an easier way to make butter and changed the food industry.

February 18th: Chloe Anthony Wofford, AKA, Toni Morrison (born 2/18/1931) is an internationally known African American author. She won a Pulitzer Prize for her 1987 novel, *Beloved*, a novel about the atrocities of slavery. She won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003.

February 19th: Lauren Anderson (born 2/19/1965) is an American ballet dancer and a former principal dancer/prima ballerina with Houston Ballet. In 1990, she was one of the first African American ballerinas to become a principal for a major dance company, a huge milestone for African American ballet dancers.

February 20th: Spiritual of the Week for St. Mary Magdalene Parish:

Wade in the Water

This song also has two meanings and was used to tell escaping slaves to get off the trail and into the water to make sure that slave owner's dogs could not track their scents.

February 21st: Eunice Kathleen Waymon (born 2/21/1933) AKA Nina Simone was a prominent singer, song writer, Civil Rights Activist. Her debut album was *Little Blue Girl* in 1959.

February 22nd: Frank E. Peterson Jr. was named the first black general in the Marine Corps in 1979.

February 23rd: Constance Baker Motley was elected Manhattan Borough president in 1965, the highest elective office held by a black woman in a major American city.

February 24th: Rebecca Lee Crumpler became the first black woman to receive an M.D. degree in 1864. Dr. Crumpler's *Book of Medical Discourses* is one of the very finest medical publications by an African American.

February 25th: Hiram Rhodes was sworn into the U.S. Senate in 1870, becoming the first African American to in Congress.

Also, **February 25th:** Martin Luther King was ordained as a Baptist minister in 1948

February 26th: Trayvon Martin, a 17 year old African American who was walking home from a trip to a convenience store, was fatally shot by George Zimmerman in 2012.

Also, **February 26th:** Carter G. Woodson started Negro History Week in 1926 which would later become Black History Month.

February 27th: Spiritual of the Week for St. Mary Magdalene Parish:

Steal Away

The words of this song also have a double meaning as do other Underground Railroad songs. On the surface this song speaks of dying and going to heaven but it also symbolizes escaping to freedom.

Also, **February 27th:** In 1988 figure skater, Debi Thomas, becomes the first African American to win a medal (bronze) at the Winter Olympic Games.

February 28th: In this last day of February we remember and honor Sr. Thea Bowman (12/29/1937-3/30/1990), religious sister, teacher, scholar, and evangelist.

"I think the difference between me and some people is that I'm content to do my little bit. Sometimes people think they have to do big things in order to make change. But if each one would light a candle we'd have a tremendous light." –Thea Bowman