



CONNECT

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Celebration of Black History

By: **Cedalia Ellis, MSW, LCSW**

The month of February is dedicated to celebrating Black achievements and the historical contributions made by the black community. Originally Black History Month started as Negro History Week in 1926 by Carter G. Woodson. In 1969, black students at Kent State University proposed expanding the week to a month. Kent State first celebrated Black History Month in February 1970 and was later officially honored as a country in 1976. Black history is rich and vast, and its significance is universal. We cannot recognize American history without including Black history. The black community has faced oppressive and horrific trials and tribulations, but despite the lot given, they remained resilient. And in that resilience, African Americans found more strength, innovation, and hope to move the needle forward. Acknowledging the past gives the freedom to heal, support one another, and move forward. So, let us take time to reflect and see how far we have come as a nation. Happy Black History Month!

**DIVERSITY EQUITY &
ENGAGEMENT
NEWSLETTER**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Historically Black Fraternities & Sororities • P. 2, 3

Did You Know? • P. 4

The Cherry Street Library • P.5

Achievements of African Americans in Medicine • P. 6

The Significance of the Black Church P. 7, 8

My Family History P. 9

Black History Books P.10

Chinese New Year P.11, 12

HISTORICALLY, BLACK FRATERNITIES, AND SORORITIES

CEDALIA ELLI, MSW, LCSW

Black Greek-Letter organizations, often referred to as BGLO's or The Divine Nine, played a pivotal role in African American history and culture. The nine fraternities and sororities were founded on historically black colleges between 1906 and 1963. Their strong traditions of fostering brotherhood and sisterhood among their members, influence in the African American community, and being on the forefront of civic action, community service, and philanthropy has been a central resource for the African American community (Brown, T.L., Parks, G., & Phillips, C.M. 2012). BGLO's were created in the early 20th century to unite African American collegiate men and women who shared core ideas, principles, and to be a support due to the many trials and tribulations faced within the community.

Launched on the campuses of historically black colleges, these organizations have been a fundamental resource for support and service in the advancement of the educational realm while strengthening the social bonds of African American students, entrepreneurs, and professionals, especially when the organizations expanded to majority white institutions of higher learning. BGLOs used the power of unity and collected resources to combat social and systemic injustices on college campuses, as many campus organization memberships were exclusionary to students and professionals of color.

Many influential African American leaders are members of BGLO's, Martin Luther King Jr., Shirley Chisholm, Kamala Harris, Aretha Franklin, Cicely Tyson, Lisa Leslie, Ambassador Shabazz, John Lewis, Collette V. Smith, Hattie McDaniel, Steve Harvey, Cedric the Entertainer, and the list goes on.



HISTORICALLY, BLACK FRATERNITIES, AND SORORITIES

CONTINUED

BGLOs are still on the front lines educating and advocating for equity and breaking social and racial barriers within the political, community, and corporate realm. As a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., I am proud to say I am a member of the BGLO community. Many of us have dedicated our lives to public service while shifting and shaping the culture of spaces that do not reflect our heritage. We've created the space for others that look like us to have the opportunity to thrive. Giving marginalized communities hope by providing career advancement opportunities, health initiatives, education development and international development.

As we celebrate black history month, it is important to recognize the historical advancements and impact of BGLOs within the African American community. Without their courage, persistence, service and advocacy, many inherited struggles faced within the African American community would have been overlooked.



PHOTOS: BLACK GREEK ORGANIZATIONS MARCH FROM CITY HALL TO THE AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM



DID YOU KNOW?



Dr. Elbert Frank Cox, born in Evansville, IN on December 5, 1895, was the first Black person in the entire world to receive a PhD in mathematics.

Dr. Elbert Frank Cox

In November 1914, the Cherry Street Library in Evansville, Indiana first opened its doors. According to BlackPast.org, Cherry Street was “the first free public library built north of the Ohio River exclusively for African Americans.” It’s a distinction of Black History pride for Evansville but one that few residents today probably know about.

An Evansville Courier headline about the library’s opening declared, “3,000 BOOKS READY IN COLORED LIBRARY – Secretary of State Commission Congratulates Negroes at Its Opening.” Opening day drew quite a bit of media attention, and speakers from around the state (and farther) extolled the library and its potential. Speeches were given, choirs sang, and the Cherry Street Library was loudly celebrated into existence.

The library’s assembly room was made available for community use and was highly utilized. I came across newspaper articles of Christmas parties, board meetings, and other community events that made the library’s importance in the Black Community about more than just books.

Lillian Childress began working at Cherry Street Library in January 1915. In July, she was promoted to the position of librarian. According to Wikipedia, this made Lillian “the first professionally trained African-American librarian in Indiana and the first to graduate from the Indiana State Library school.”

After 1933, library segregation was relaxed, and Black patrons began to slowly (and cautiously, I’m sure) drift into local libraries that they were previously barred from. Central Library, opened in 1932, stood just four blocks away from Cherry Street Library and offered a much greater selection of reading material. Patronage of Cherry Street Library gradually declined until, in 1955, it closed. The building was sold to a local Boy Scouts chapter, and profits of the sale were used to fund a community Bookmobile.

The building that housed Cherry Street Library has long since been demolished, the land swallowed up by expansion of Welborn Baptist Hospital. Its 515 Cherry Street location is literally around the corner from my office, a short walk to local history. On some sunny day, I’ll have to pass by the ground where Cherry Street Library once stood. I’ll close my eyes, lose myself in the past, and think about the day when books and opportunity were opened to eager, deserving young minds.

THE CHERRY STREET LIBRARY

TERRY GISH



CHERRY STREET LIBRARY (PHOTO FROM BLACKPAST.ORG)

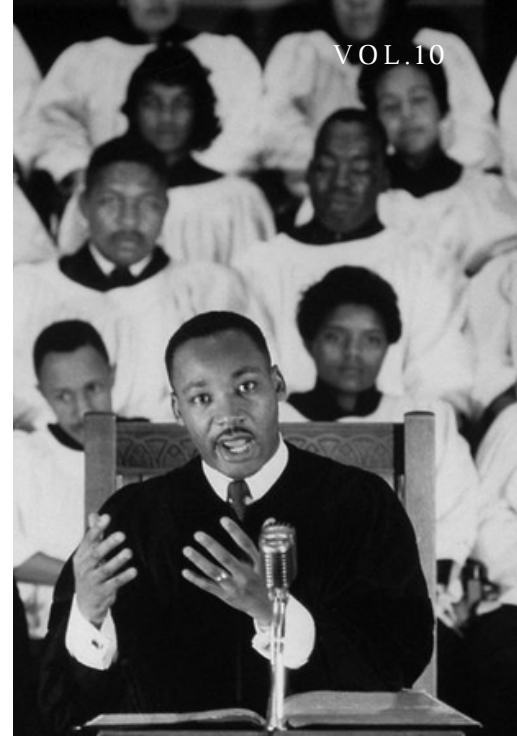


LILLIAN CHILDRESS HALL
(PHOTO FROM WIKIPEDIA AND [HTTPS://WWW.EVPL.ORG/POSTS/WOMEN-OF-EVPL/](https://www.evpl.org/posts/women-of-evpl/))

ACHIEVEMENTS OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN MEDICINE

- **1721- Onesimus**, an enslaved African, describes to Cotton Mather the African method of inoculation against smallpox. The technique, later used to protect American Revolutionary War soldiers, is perfected in the 1790's by British doctor Edward Jenner's use of a less virulent organism.
- **1837- Dr. James McCune Smith** graduates from the University of Glasgow, becoming the first African American to earn a medical degree.
- **1864- Dr. Rebecca Lee Crumpler**, the first African-American female to earn a medical degree, graduates from New England Female Medical College, Boston.
- **1997- Dr. Donna Christian-Christensen** is the first woman physician and first African-American woman physician in the U.S. Congress.
- **2020- Kizzmekia Corbett, PhD**, is one of the National Institutes of Health's leading scientists working directly to develop and produce the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. A native of North Carolina, Corbett's work helps to highlight the significance of supporting black students in entering STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields.





“If a people cannot imagine a future, then its culture will die. ...[but] Black culture didn’t die. The signal aspects of African American culture were planted, watered, given light, and nurtured in the Black Church, out of the reach and away from the watchful eyes of those who would choke life out of it.” - Henry Louis Gates Jr. (Gates, H. L., 2021)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BLACK CHURCH

BY: TYLER PLOGHER, BS

African American identity was forged in the Black Church. Although the hundreds of thousands of Africans shipped directly to North America would, in time, become the forebears and progenitors of a shared African American culture, enslaved Africans were so culturally diverse that many would have been unable to understand one another (Trans-Atlantic Slave Database, 2022). African slaves were not, at first, African Americans, but the BaKongo and the Mandé; they were the Akan, the Wolof, and the Igbo; some were of the Yoruba, others the Chamba or the Makua; they spoke hundreds of languages, and their religions and belief systems were equally as diverse (Hall, G. M., 2007).

It is unlikely that many from these early generations would have identified as Christian, although enslavers and missionaries alike are known to have introduced Africans to the Bible or, in some cases, abridged Bibles emphasizing examples of slavery and obedience, with references to rebellion or equality redacted (Martin, M., 2018). A surviving copy of *Parts of the Holy Bible, selected for the use of the Negro Slaves, in the British West-India Islands* published in 1807, for instance, contained only a fraction of the Old Testament and about half of the New Testament. Verses reinforcing slavery, such as the following, were maintained.

“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ.” Ephesians 6:5



Initially, enslavers required that slaves attend white churches led by white preachers, to control the narratives slaves were exposed to, and to reduce the likelihood that slaves might become sympathetic to Biblical events that paralleled their own lives, such as the exodus of enslaved Israelites from Egypt (Ebersohl, C., 2017). Surviving accounts from former slaves, though, suggest that these efforts were so transparent, most enslaved people detested attending white sermons and were disgusted by the words of white preachers. It was for these reasons and during this time, therefore, that the societal institution now openly revered as the Black Church was developed in secret. An invisible institution of worship emerged, nurtured by enslaved Africans, for enslaved Africans, and it was in these secret, sacred meetings in drafty cabins and cold, dark gullies that African Americans asserted their new oneness of culture and dared to dream (Gates, H. L., 2021).

In a white world that sought to define and contain Blackness, and in a society that denied African Americans their very humanity, Black congregations allowed Black men and women the space to build intimate relationships with God on their own terms, and to do the same with each other, and with themselves. In the Black Church, a man could rise above his peers and become a leader of his people, and Black communities could cultivate social hierarchies among their peers,

earning and awarding the status, respect, and power their white neighbors would deny them at all costs. It was in the Black Church that African Americans first glimpsed their freedom, and it was in the Black Church that a culture of incommunicable resilience was nurtured, which would prepare the children and grandchildren of slaves for the march ahead.

It is no accident that the civil rights movement was driven and empowered by faith, or that so many Black politicians have refined their oratory skills at the pulpit. The sociopolitical landscape of our nation has been, and continues to be, shaped and reformed by the Black Church, because as the oldest and most enduring institution created by and for Black Americans, it has always been the furnace in which the strengths of African American culture have been forged. Although Black churches and congregations are religious bodies, they are not, and never have been, just places of worship. Within Black churches, the spiritual and the secular needs of Black communities are met, the vulnerable are given refuge, and the voiceless can be heard. In the Black church, the religious narratives once meant to oppress and subjugate an entire people were repurposed, transformed, and placed in a new context, which has served as a spiritual salve in the darkest of times, and a source of courage, empowering Black Americans to help our nation heal as they try to heal themselves.

MY FAMILY HISTORY

Almanza Betts is the mother of my DNA-verified cousin, Kathy Harper of Louisville, Kentucky. In 1955, she placed 2nd in a statewide playwriting contest. "So, Terry, what's the big deal about that?" It's a big deal because Almanza Betts, a Black student in a segregated Kentucky school in 1955, was recognized for her achievement, in a contest and newspaper article that made no mention of her skin color.

The drama department of the Transylvania College (later renamed Transylvania University) in Lexington sponsored the contest. Louisville was close enough for the drama department to know, when they saw her contest submission, that Almanza's high school (Frederick Douglass School) was for Black students. Still, they did not factor Almanza's ethnicity into their decision-making. Even more impressive for the time, as one of the contest's top three, Almanza was invited with her two peers to a picnic on the college campus. This was EIGHT YEARS before Transylvania accepted its first Black student.

Almanza's photo was displayed prominently above the newspaper article, an angelic brown face nestled between pictures of the two equally good-looking white students. This integrated photo line-up was something that just wasn't seen at the time.

Nowhere in the Courier-Journal article was Almanza's ethnicity mentioned. Nowhere. This was extremely unusual because throughout the 1950s, the same newspaper stamped the term "Negro" into print 11,496 times. Whoever wrote this article, though, neglected to designate Almanza as such, choosing instead to focus on her writing skills, not her complexion.



BY: TERRY GISH, BS

Less than one month after word of Almanza's achievement made print, a young lady named Helen Cary Caise, 16 years old, enrolled in a summer class at an all-white high school in Lexington. She was the first Black student at any white school in the county (before returning to her segregated school in the fall). Had she been inspired at all by Almanza? Had she seen Almanza's photo in the newspaper, and wondered if perhaps she, too, could be viewed as a high school student, irrespective of her color?

By sharing this, I celebrate Almanza Betts, my cousin's mother and so, very possibly, my cousin, too. However, I also praise the 1955 drama department at the Transylvania College and whoever wrote the newspaper article for the Louisville Courier Journal. In a world that still painted hard lines between Black and white, these people regarded Almanza not as Black, Negro, or Colored, but simply as a bright young lady who wrote plays and wrote them well.

There is a sad postscript to this story. I spoke with Cousin Kathy several years ago, and she shared with me that Almanza has Alzheimer's Disease. When Kathy asked Almanza about being a finalist in the state playwriting contest, she couldn't recall anything about it. However, I sent a copy of the article to Kathy, so she could know the story and be proud. Proud like I am.

BLACK HISTORY BOOKS

- 1) "12 Years a Slave" by Solomon Northup
- 2) "100 Amazing Facts About the Negro" by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
- 3) "A Death in the Delta" by Stephen J. Whitfield
- 4) "Between the World and Me" by Ta-Nehisi Coates
- 5) "Dear Senator" by Essie Mae Washington-Williams
- 6) "Double Victory" by Cheryl Mullenbach
- 7) "First Class" by Alison Stewart
- 8) "Hidden Figures" by Margot Lee Shetterly
- 9) "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" by Maya Angelou
- 10) "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl" by Harriet Ann Jacobs
- 11) "Long Time Coming" by Michael Eric Dyson
- 12) "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass" by Frederick Douglass
- 13) "Never Caught" by Erica Armstrong Dunbar
- 14) "One Righteous Man" by Arthur Browne
- 15) "She Came to Slay" by Erica Armstrong Dunbar
- 16) "Stolen" by Richard Bell
- 17) "The Best of Enemies" by Osha Gray Davidson
- 18) "The Burning: The Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921" by Tim Madigan
- 19) "The Firebrand and the First Lady" by Patricia Bell-Scott
- 20) "The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks" by Rebecca Skloot
- 21) "The Long Shadow of Little Rock" by Daisy Bates
- 22) "The Warmth of Other Suns" by Isabel Wilkerson
- 23) "Time on Two Crosses" by Bayard Rustin
- 24) "We Speak for Ourselves" by D. Watkins
- 25) "Well-Read Black Girl" by Gloria Edim





Year of the Tiger



HAPPY CHINESE NEW YEAR 2022



How Long is Chinese New Year?

16 Days Celebrations last up to 16 days, but only the first 7 days are considered a public holiday (January 31st–February 6th, 2022)

2022 Chinese Zodiac

Tiger



Year of the Tiger

SINCE THE CHINESE ZODIAC CYCLE REPEATS EVERY 12 YEARS, IT'S EASY TO FIGURE OUT IF IT'S YOUR YEAR—JUST CHECK IF YOUR AGE IS A MULTIPLE OF 12! LISTED BELOW ARE THE 12 ZODIAC ANIMALS IN ORDER WITH ACCOMPANYING YEARS:

WHICH CHINESE ZODIAC ARE YOU?

											
RAT	OX	TIGER	RABBIT	DRAGON	SNAKE	HORSE	GOAT	MONKEY	ROOSTER	DOG	PIG
2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971
1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947
1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923
1900	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911

BUSINESS INSIDER

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