



CONNECT

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Black History



Black American History

By: **Cedalia Ellis**

Black History Month is an annual celebration to recognize the achievements of African Americans in the U.S., initially conceptualized in 1925 by historian Carter G. Woodson and other prominent African Americans. Across the U.S., organizations celebrate Black History Month every February. It's an important time for workplaces to recognize African Americans' role throughout history and promote diversity within their organizations addressing the root systemic causes of inequity. This year's theme is "Black Resistance." According to the "2023 Black History Theme Executive Summary" by the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, this theme presents "a call to everyone to study the history of Black Americans' responses to establish safe spaces, where Black life can be sustained, fortified, and respected." As the saying goes, Black history is American history — and it's a varied and rich history. As a nation we must honor and learn from our past and refuse to let the essential facts about our shared and collective memory disappear into the depths of forgotten history. The past shapes and informs the future, and it is important to set aside a month for learning as much as we can about our history which includes Black history.

DIVERSITY EQUITY & ENGAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

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SOPHIE KLOPPENBURG

By: Alexis Osgerby

Alexis Osgerby recently sat down with Sophie Kloppenburg to interview her on a recent project she undertook to honor victims of a lynching that occurred in Posey County in 1878. As a result of her efforts, Sophie has earned acclaim and recognition throughout the tri-state area.

Sophie Kloppenburg, now 18 years old, is a proud member of the Posey County community and plans to further her education at Columbia University this fall.

Sophie shared that she was given an assignment in her Innovation in Open-Source Learning class, where she was supposed to create something that could benefit her community.



After thinking and talking with others, she learned about a book called Judge Lynch from her drivers education teacher. Judge Lynch recounts the story of Daniel Harrison, Jr., John Harrison, Daniel Harrison, Sr., Jim Good, William Chambers, Edward Warner, and Jeff Hopkins and how they were lynched following false rape allegations made by white women back in 1878.

After learning about their stories, Sophie decided she wanted to do something to honor these men whose lives were unjustly taken from them. Sophie talked about how for her to start something, she had a conversation with her school social worker, who was a member of the city council and was able to coordinate a meeting.

All she wanted to do was be able to discuss with the city council getting a historical marker put on the steps of the courthouse honoring these men. She was directed to the County Commissioners.

After some time, Sophie was given an audience with members of the County Commission. Although they were not opposed to the creation of a marker, County Commissioners expressed that thought would need to be given to the language used on the marker, and that there were concerns about whether the original version she proposed would be palatable to the community. Whether we personally experienced historical events or not, it can be painful to read about the past, and emotional connections to the community, to our ancestors, and even to our preconceived notions of the past run deep. Commissioners were fielding complaints, and Sophie was instructed to remove key phrases that were originally present, including “African American,” “Lynched,” “Mob,” and “Murder”. Sophie talked about some of the issues that went into going forward with this type of project, due to the emotions at play. Although she was not personally criticized throughout this process, she was aware of the need for negotiation in response to these tensions.

Some of the emotions she felt during this project were frustration that an event like this ever could have happened, and not only did it happen to these men, she felt frustration that it happened to many African American families within Southern Indiana and throughout the United States. Sophie also talked about how she felt curious about what happened and the impact of events on so many different African American families in the area. Her curiosity resulted in many meaningful interactions with more members of the African American community in Posey County, and because of those conversations, Sophie talked about the pride that she feels being a member of the African American community. Not only that, but she also feels pride for the history that comes with being a strong, African American woman making change.

Sophie would like people to take away from her project that giving people their name back is not as easy as it looks, but it is worth the effort. Sophie has been able to talk to descendants of the Harrison and Good families, to get them to Posey County so that they are able to see that their family can rest in peace, and to recognize that they are now being honored. She also wants people to remember that Black history is Posey County history, and yet she feels so much of this history has been ignored.

There are so many different plaques around the courthouse that talk about the accomplishments of Posey County citizens, but they do not commemorate anything that African American citizens did.

Although Sophie could not change this, she and some professors from the University of Southern Indiana are working to create a curriculum that integrates these men’s stories into the history books of students who go to school in Vanderburgh and Posey Counties. Sophie wants to make sure that, with this plaque in place and their stories being reevaluated, they are not forgotten and erased.

Sophie talked about some of the ways that this project has shaped her future. She talked about how she has a new sense of confidence to get things done, especially projects that have a hard starting point. She also realized that it is okay to learn as you go. It is why Sophie has strong African American role models like Michelle Obama, who she feels is the epitome of a strong black woman that people can follow.

Sophie gave some advice for people who are wanting to give back other victims their name. “Don’t stop, even if something is discouraging, try a new route. Those people deserve to be acknowledged, remembered, and not forgotten.”





THE BUFFALO SOLDIER

By: Terry Gish

Years before the 1896 courthouse declaration of “separate but equal,” the United States was already very separated by skin color, and this extended to the nation’s military. One of many who were impacted by the army’s segregated structure was my father’s cousin (several generations back), Thomas Preston Gish. Thomas was a member of “F” Company in the 10th Cavalry Regiment, more popularly known as one of the “Buffalo Soldier” regiments, composed of Black enlisted men. The “Buffalo Soldiers” nickname purportedly came from the Native Americans they encountered, because they likened the Black soldiers’ hair to that of a buffalo.

Thomas was born and raised in Kentucky. He enlisted into the segregated Buffalo Soldier unit and was called west into service. From the records I’ve seen, it appears that Thomas never cast a backward glance at Kentucky. He packed up what little he had and reported to duty in Texas. From his enlistment in 1873 until his discharge in 1883, Thomas served in several now-historic forts, including Fort Concho and Fort Richardson. Throughout his military career, he rose through the ranks to become a Corporal.

During Thomas’ tenure as a Buffalo Soldier, the 10th Cavalry was charged with protecting and improving transportation routes and helping to map out uncharted western terrain. History records that they “scouted 34,420 miles of uncharted terrain, opened more than 300 miles of new roads, and laid over 200 miles of telegraph lines.” Though uncredited in textbook history, it was the scouting expeditions of Thomas and his comrades that allowed later settlement in these areas.

One of the less fortunate experiences that Thomas had as a Buffalo soldier was military conflict with Native American groups, particularly Apache forces led by a Chief called Victorio. The 10th Cavalry matched wits and arms with Victorio’s warriors, each side operating under the belief that they were right and that the ground they fought on belonged to them. The Buffalo soldiers repeatedly held Victorio off, but there was no moral victory.

Thomas married one year after leaving the military. Still, his wanderlust persisted, and the years following would find him living in Kansas, then California, and finally Arizona, where the nomadic spirit would achieve eternal rest.

If I could step back in time, I’d love to meet Cousin Thomas and hear about him reflect on his adventures. I’d also like the opportunity to tell him that his years spent as a Buffalo Soldier earned him prominence not just in our family history, not just in Black history, but in American history.



Black History Spot Light

Cedalia A. Ellis

By: Jamie Childers

Many of you know Cedalia Ellis as the Director of Community Support Services (CSS) here at Southwestern Behavioral Healthcare. But did you know that she is our very own Black History hero at SWBH? Cedalia is a trailblazer in her community, leading by example for women, colleagues, friends, and her two daughters.

Cedalia is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who has served in the Social Work profession for over 15 years. Behind the distinction of being a licensed social worker serving her community, Cedalia serves a myriad of important roles that help to paint a picture of who she is and who she shares with us each day: Mom, Wife of a Firefighter, SWBH Leader, Boss, Friend, Confidante, Advocate, Community Leader, Trainer, Woman of Color, Graphic Designer, Mentor, and more. Each of these roles adds value to our organization and the CSS team; further, it is the totality of these special attributes – the depth and unique set of qualities – that allows Cedalia to grow in her capacity as a leader at SWBH and her community at-large.

Fueled by her passion for equity and “love of people and personal experiences,” Cedalia founded the Committee for Diversity, Equity, and Engagement at Southwestern in February, 2021, serving as Chair and mentor for the team’s co-chairs and members. Through her work with the D.E.E. Team, Cedalia has developed close community partnerships, steadily building a cache of resources for current and future clients at SWBH. She led the team to a recent nomination in the Celebration of Leadership event, honoring individuals, projects, businesses, and local organizations “in our region that is an example of servant leadership.”

The award celebrates: commitment to community inspiration and growth; practicing collaborative and servant leadership; and commitment to equity and diversity. More notably, Cedalia was recently nominated for the University of Southern Indiana’s 22nd class of “Phenomenal Women of USI and the Community.” She stands out in this group which honors “silent members” in our community who “serve as role models and impact lives as champions of diversity.”

Cedalia is a leader, mental health advocate, friend, mom, wife, and true champion of people in need; she is passionate about helping to “inspire, motivate, and change the lives of those who have difficulties coping with life lemons.” A hero and advocate for others, Cedalia believes in and moves in her credo: “Without self-reflection, self-discovery cannot take place.”



My Black History Hero

“Michele Obama. Michelle is a great role model for women and worked as an advocate for poverty areas, education, nutrition, and staying physically active. She is brave and her upbringing story is inspiring!”

Danielle Day, Peer Support Specialist

“Tony Dungy. Tony is an inspiration, as he is a man of faith. “

Jeff Gray, Mobile Crisis Team Responder

“Ida B. Wells. bravery, ability to mobilize, anti-lynching campaign despite paying a personal high price for her work.”

Lisa Withrow, Director of Innovative Practices

Tarana Burke – A contemporary hero who has dedicated much of her work to developing resources for young women of color. Creator of the “Me Too” movement, Ms. Burke spread the sentiment of “empowerment through empathy.” Her campaign aimed to facilitate healing and to “train survivors to work in communities of color.”

Jamie Childers, Corporate Trainer

Marsha P. Johnson- Marsha was an incredibly influential Black transwoman who was pivotal in the gay rights movement during the 1960s and 1970s in New York City. Marsha advocated for homeless LGBTQ+ youth, those affected by HIV and AIDS, and for transgender and gay rights. She fought on the front lines during the Stonewall Inn riot and afterwards led a series of protests. She advocated for inclusion of transgender and LGBTQ+ people of color, who were often excluded from the gay rights movement. Her untimely death in 1992 at forty-six was a tragedy, but her life and the impact she left on this world continue to persevere.

Jennifer Greenlee, Integrated Skills Coach



My Black History Hero

Mrs. Lola Akande was a 4th grade teacher at Caze Elementary and taught my daughter. She was a very influential person in my daughter's life. She conducted a classroom that made every child feel special yet individual. The children were not grouped together and taught that way but worked with individually and those with difficulties treated equally to those children who excelled. She was always available to the children and parents. She went well beyond the working day to ensure each child did thrive and had what they needed individually to meet their educational needs. My daughter went on to get her license as an Elementary teacher and Special Education teacher. She was offered and now works in a position at UE as Senior Associate Director of Admissions where she works with students and their families daily. When we are fortunate to see Mrs. Akande from time to time, she still knows Catie's name, what she is currently doing, and takes the time to still make her feel special. One of the most wonderful, caring individuals I have had the honor to know, she has changed the world one child at a time. -Linda Taylor, support staff

"Ida B. Wells – she was acquaintances with Jane Addams (so called "Mother of Social Work"), but challenged her implication and implicit racism that African Americans might be responsible for the crimes they committed that led to their lynching. Ida was an outspoken activist for the anti-lynching campaign, worked alongside Frederick Douglass in Chicago, was a brilliant writer, and was an early founder of the NAACP."

Leah Dugan, Mobile Crisis Team Responder

Harriet Tubman – She's a small woman whose actions left a large impact. She persevered in freeing other enslaved people regardless of the cost of her own life, and she supported the suffragist movement. What a renegade!

Jenny Collins, Patient Financial Representative

Ruby Bridges – At only 6 years old, she could not have understood the enormity of attending an all-white school. Her attendance and dedication helped pave the way to further school integration in the South. She founded The Ruby Bridges Foundation which spreads the message that "racism has no place in the hearts and minds of our children."

Stephanie Raley, Compliance Manager



Baptistown History

By: Tyler Plogher

Although most would likely agree that history is important, for many, its lessons remain vague and abstract, like events on the other side of the world. We might recognize a loose association between the past and our current circumstances, yet the specific chain of events that led us to this moment seem unknowable and remote and, therefore, of little interest to the pressing matters of modern life. African American history, specifically, might feel even more distant for those of us who do not identify as people of color, especially if asked to reflect on local African American history. What was it like for African Americans living in Evansville only a few short generations ago, and how could we possibly know? Given that a church built by former enslaved men and women can be seen from the windows of our downtown offices, one could argue that African American history is especially pertinent to our agency and the work we do.

Our downtown offices stand right on the border of Baptistown, the largest settlement of formerly enslaved and freeborn African Americans in southern Indiana in the decades following emancipation. At times, between 1880 and 1910, more African Americans per capita live in Baptistown than in any other part of Indiana. Baptistown grew into a thriving and vibrant African American community, marked by architecturally distinct buildings and institutions that served as sources of pride for Baptistown residents.

It is a common misconception that segregation did not exist in the former Union states. Although Baptistown grew into an African American community in part due to the natural kinship and affection all people tend to feel for others with similar lived experiences, Baptistown also developed out of necessity. In Evansville, many establishments owned by those of European descent were unwilling to serve African Americans.

Which of the following Baptistown landmarks do you recognize? It is likely that you drive by them every day, or that you have served clients who are descendents of the brave men and women who created a safe space for their families in a new and unfamiliar state.



Liberty Baptist Church

A small church founded in 1865 to serve a congregation of former enslaved people, it was rebuilt by formerly enslaved people in 1887, after the original structure was destroyed by a tornado. An historically significant church, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is located just east of our downtown offices. Many of us can see this red brick Gothic Revival church from our office windows.



Lincoln School



Lincoln School was originally established as a K-12 school, and it was distinguished as one of the only African American high school in the region, which extended its significance to families well beyond Baptistown. When classes began in 1928, African American children from Grandview, Mt. Vernon, Newburgh, and Rockport were bussed to Lincoln School. In 1962, when Lincoln School switched its curriculum to K-8, it graduated its last entirely African American senior class.

Lincoln Gardens



As more and more African Americans relocated to Baptistown, overcrowding ensued, as the aging infrastructure of the settlement struggled to meet the needs of a burgeoning population. In 1916, over one third of its residents had no access to sewage systems, prompting a newspaper at the time to describe Baptistown as “an area dominated by filthy shacks without sanitary facilities”. Baptistown would receive an influx of funding and support to address these conditions under the Franklin Delano Roosevelt administration, as part of his New Deal to combat the tragedies of the Great Depression. Lincoln Gardens was the second public housing project to be constructed in the United States by the Public Works Administration. When construction began in 1937, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt visited Baptistown to dedicate the complex. At its completion, it was hailed not only as the pride of Baptistown, but the pride of the city, “rising as a monument to the relentless spirit and efforts of the public spirited citizens of Evansville.” Only one building remains from Lincoln Gardens. Today, you might recognize it as the Evansville African American Museum.

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 COMMITTEE

Sponsor By: CareSource



**STEVEN D. KNIFFLEY JR.,
 PSYD MPA ABPP HSP**



SPEAKER SPOTLIGHT

Steven D. Kniffley Jr., PsyD MPA ABPP is Spalding University's Chief Diversity Officer, an Associate Professor in Spalding University's School of Professional Psychology, and Coordinator for the Collective Care Center Racial Trauma Clinic. Dr. Kniffley's area of expertise is research and clinical work with Black males and the treatment of race based stress and trauma. Dr. Kniffley also serves as an organizational diversity consultant and works with law enforcement departments on addressing conflicts between communities of color and police officers. Dr. Kniffley has written numerous books, book chapters, and articles on Black male mental health, Black males and the criminal justice system, racial trauma treatment and training, and academic achievement. He is also the President for the Kentucky Psychological Association. Additionally, Dr. Kniffley was recently selected as one of Louisville's top 40 under 40 for 2020, a recipient of the 2020 MediStar Healthcare Advocacy Award, a 2021 Louisville Healthcare Hero, and the inaugural recipient of the University of Louisville Diversity Leadership Award.

**RACIAL TRAUMA
 TRAINING
 THURSDAY,
 FEBRUARY 16TH
 @10AM**

VIA ZOOM

For More Information:
<https://www.indianacouncil.org/upcoming-events/>

2023

Upcoming Community Black History Events



7:00PM

Film Screening of "Look Away, Look Away"
Eykamp Hall at the University of Evansville and is free and open to the public.



5:00 PM

Black-owned business Blixer
At the University of Evansville and is free and open to the public.



TBD

"Fences"
Performance of "Fences" by University of Evansville Theatre Program students

2023

Upcoming Community Black History Events



16
FEB

6:00 PM - 7:00PM

Women of Action

Celebrating Black History and Exploring Needs
Location: Evansville African American Museum



17
FEB

5:00 PM

Black History Month Art Contest

Throughout February, artwork representing what Black History Month means to local students. Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library's east branch.



19
FEB

5:00 PM

Evansville Black History Month Unity Concert

The concert is presented by Evansville African American Museum.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH -February 2023 - National Today. <https://nationaltoday.com/black-history-month/>

Black History Month Resources for 2023 - buildfaith.org. <https://buildfaith.org/black-history-month-resources-for-2023/>

February celebrates Black History Month | News, Sports, Jobs - The
<https://www.mininggazette.com/news/features/2023/02/february-celebrates-black-history-month/>

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