

*Alabama*  
AFRICAN  
AMERICAN  
*History Calendar*  
2015

[www.alafricanamerican.com](http://www.alafricanamerican.com)

Presented by 

# A Letter from the President

Over the past five years, I have had the privilege of meeting many of the remarkable individuals honored in the Alabama African American History Calendar or family members and close friends who shared rich and powerful stories about the honorees. Each story is different, but in each case, these remarkable men, women and children found the courage and dedication to make a difference. I am very pleased that, for the fifth year, AT&T is presenting this inspirational calendar to the children of Alabama, children who will someday be recognized for their own amazing achievements and become role models for future generations.

At AT&T, we believe in the importance of education and the power of individuals to rethink possibilities and seize opportunities to create a more promising future. Through AT&T's Aspire program, we have committed to investing \$350 million in education to help improve high school graduation rates, with the ultimate goal of reaching a national graduation rate of 90 percent by 2020. Additionally, in February 2014, we announced a \$100 million, three-year commitment to provide middle school and high school students in Title 1 schools free Internet connectivity for educational devices. This service will enable students to utilize tablets and other mobile devices for educational purposes that support learning in new and more effective ways.

A special thanks to all of our partners for their contributions and commitment to making the History Calendar a resource that encourages and inspires all of us.



Fred McCallum  
President  
AT&T Alabama



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Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Carl Van Vechten Collection, [reproduction number, e.g., LC-USZ62-54231]

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## Sylvester Croom, Jr.

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Photo courtesy of Talladega College

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# Zora Neale Hurston

THE POWER OF WORDS

# January

**Zora Neale Hurston** was born on January 7, 1891, in Notasulga, Alabama. Hurston became one of the most successful and acclaimed African American female writers of the 20th century. Over a career that spanned more than 30 years, she published four novels, two books of folklore, an autobiography, numerous short stories, essays, articles, and plays.

Hurston moved with her family to Eatonville, Florida when she was still a toddler. Established in 1887, the rural community near Orlando was the nation's first incorporated black township. In Eatonville, Hurston was never made to feel inferior, and she could see the evidence of black achievement all around her. She could look to town hall and see African American men, including her father, John Hurston, formulating the laws that governed Eatonville. She could look to the Sunday schools of the town's two churches and see African American women, including her mother, Lucy Potts Hurston, directing the Christian curricula. She could look to the porch of the village store and see men and women sharing their worlds in the form of colorful, engaging stories.

Hurston had a fiery intellect, an infectious sense of humor, and "the gift," as one friend put it, "of walking into hearts." Hurston used these talents, and dozens more, to elbow her way into the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, befriending such luminaries as poet Langston Hughes and popular singer/actress Ethel Waters.

Hurston graduated from Barnard College in 1928 with a degree in anthropology. By 1935, she had published several short stories and articles, as well as a novel (*Jonah's Gourd Vine*) and a well-received collection of black Southern folklore (*Mules and Men*). But the late 1930s and early '40s marked the real zenith of her career. She published her masterwork, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, in 1937; *Tell My Horse*, her study of Caribbean Voodoo practices, in 1938; and another masterful novel, *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, in 1939. When her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road*, was published in 1942, Hurston finally received the well-earned acclaim that had long eluded her. That year, she was profiled in *Who's Who in America*, *Current Biography*, and *Twentieth Century Authors*. She went on to publish another novel, *Seraph on the Suwanee*, in 1948.

Despite her success, Hurston never received the financial rewards she deserved, consequently when she died from a stroke on January 28, 1960, her neighbors in Fort Pierce, Florida, had to take up a collection for her funeral. The collection didn't yield enough to pay for a headstone, so Hurston was buried in a grave that remained unmarked.

In the summer of 1973, a young writer named Alice Walker traveled to Fort Pierce to place a marker on the grave of the author who had so inspired her own work. At the end of a dead end street, Walker found the Garden of Heavenly Rest, a segregated cemetery, abandoned and overgrown with yellow-flowered weeds. Walker bravely entered the snake-infested cemetery where Hurston's remains had been laid to rest. Wading through waist-high weeds, she soon stumbled upon a sunken rectangular patch of ground that she determined to be Hurston's grave. Borrowing from a Jean Toomer poem, she dressed the marker up with a fitting epitaph: "Zora Neale Hurston: A Genius of the South."

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1

President Abraham Lincoln issues Emancipation Proclamation, 1863.

2

Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander, the first African American woman to receive a Ph.D. in the United States, was born in Philadelphia, 1898.

3

William Tucker, the first recorded African American born in the American colonies, was born in Jamestown, Virginia, 1624.

4

Grace Bumbry, opera singer, was born in St. Louis, Missouri, 1937.

5

Alvin Ailey, Jr., hall of fame choreographer and activist, was born in Rogers, Texas, 1931.

6

Louis Allen Rawls, soul, jazz and blues singer, died in 2006.

7

Zora Neale Hurston, author and playwright, was born in Notasulga, Alabama, 1891.

8

Charles Deslondes leads slave revolt in Louisiana, 1811.

9

Earl Gilbert Graves, Sr., publisher, entrepreneur, philanthropist, and founder of Black Enterprise magazine was born in Brooklyn, New York, 1935.

10

George Washington Carver, agricultural scientist, inventor, and educator born in 1864.

11

Reuben V. Anderson, first African American to be appointed to Mississippi Supreme Court, 1985.

12

U.S. Supreme Court rules that African Americans have the right to study law at state institutions, 1948.

13

L. Douglas Wilder becomes first African American U.S. governor (Virginia) since Reconstruction, 1990.

14

Dudley Randall, founder of Broadside Press, was born in Washington, D.C, 1914.

15

Martin Luther King, Jr., clergyman, activist and leader of the Civil Rights Movement, was born in Atlanta, Georgia, 1929.

16

Marcelite Jordan Harris, the first African American female general in the United States Air Force, was born in Houston, Texas, 1943.

17

Three-time heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali was born in Louisville, Kentucky, 1942.

18

Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, pioneer heart surgeon, was born in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania, 1856.

19

John Harold Johnson, publisher (Ebony and Jet magazines), author, and businessman was born in Arkansas City, Arkansas, 1918.

20

Colin Luther Powell became the first African American United States Secretary of State, 2001.

21

Leonard Roy Harmon, the first African American to have a navy ship named in his honor, was born In Cuero, Texas, 1917.

22

Susan Rice confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., the first African American female to hold that position, 2009.

23

"Roots" the television miniseries based on Alex Haley's book "Roots: The Saga of an American Family," began airing on ABC, 1977.

24

Jackie Robinson is first African American elected to Baseball Hall of Fame, 1962.

25

Black Entertainment Television began broadcasting, 1980.

26

Angela Yvonne Davis, political activist and educator, was born in Birmingham, Alabama, 1944.

27

Leontyne Price made her Metropolitan Opera debut, 1961.

28

Ronald Ervin McNair, physicist & NASA astronaut, died, along with six other crew members, during the launch of the Space Shuttle Challenger, 1986.

29

Violette Nealy Anderson becomes the first African American woman admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court, 1926.

30

Franklin Thomas named president of Ford Foundation, 1979.

31

Benjamin Lawson Hooks, attorney, minister and civil rights leader, was born in Memphis, Tennessee, 1925.



# Sheyann Webb-Christburg

THE SMALLEST FREEDOM FIGHTER

# February

**Sheyann Webb-Christburg** was born on February 17, 1956, in Selma, Alabama. A voice for justice, equality, and self-achievement, Webb-Christburg is a humanitarian, civil rights activist, mentor, and youth advocate. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. named her the “Smallest Freedom Fighter”. She is the co-author of *Selma, Lord, Selma: Girlhood Memories of the Civil Rights Days*. In 2000, the NAACP Image Awards nominated *Selma, Lord, Selma*, the 1999 Disney TV Movie based on her book, for Best Television Mini Series. The movie depicts her childhood experiences as one of the youngest activists during the civil rights movement in 1960s Selma and her interactions with civil rights leaders.

At age eight, Webb-Christburg would sneak out of her house to attend meetings and often led the congregation in singing freedom songs. She was the youngest participant to take part in the historic first-attempted march from Selma to Montgomery known as “Bloody Sunday”.

Webb-Christburg attended a segregated public school in Dallas County, Alabama until junior high when she became one of the first African Americans to integrate an all-white school. Her junior high years were among her most horrific. She was pushed down stairs, called bad names, suspended from school, and spat on, while school administrators took no action.

Because of Webb-Christburg’s numerous encounters with racism and poverty, she has dedicated her life to assisting American youth in building self-esteem and confidence, overcoming adversity, and finding real purpose in their lives. Her commitment to these goals began in 1980 when she founded KEEP Productions Youth Development Mentoring and Modeling Program. This program is designed for youth ages two through eighteen to enhance their personal growth and develop leadership skills and individual talents. She has helped many youth gain the confidence to break out of non-productive patterns and reach for success. She also works with adult models ages 19 and up.

Webb-Christburg speaks to various groups, organizations, and particularly youth across the country. She serves as a beauty pageant, fashion, and wedding consultant. She has worked as Minuet and Waltz Choreographer for Debutante Cotillions in Alabama and Georgia for over twenty-eight years.

Webb-Christburg has appeared on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, *Good Morning America*, *The Tom Joyner Morning Show*, and other major media Radio and T. V. Talk Shows. She is also featured in the PBS documentary, “Eyes on the Prize”. She has received numerous civic and community service awards in the State of Alabama and abroad. Webb-Christburg is a 1979 graduate of Tuskegee University.

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1

National Freedom Day. President Lincoln signed resolution that proposed the 13th Amendment which would officially abolish slavery, 1865.

2

Alfred L. Cralle received patent # 576395 for a lever operated ice cream scoop, a design still widely used today, 1897.

3

Eric H. Holder Jr. sworn in as the nation's first African American attorney general, 2009.

4

Rosa Parks, civil rights pioneer, who sparked the 1955 Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott, was born in Tuskegee, Alabama, 1913.

5

Henry Louis "Hank" Aaron, hall of fame baseball player, was born in Mobile, Alabama, 1934.

6

Arthur Ashe Jr., hall of fame tennis player, humanitarian and activist, dies, 1993.

7

The first day of Negro History Week, originated by historian Carter G. Woodson. Negro History Week later became Black History Month, 1926.

8

Debra Janine "Debi" Thomas became the first African American to win the United States National Ladies' Figure Skating title, 1986.

9

Bernard Anthony Harris, Jr. becomes first African American astronaut to walk in space, 1995.

10

Mary Violet Leontyne Price, internationally acclaimed opera singer, was born in Laurel, Mississippi, 1927.

11

Nelson Mandela of South Africa is released from prison after 27 years, 1990.

12

NAACP founded, 1909.

13

Edward Gay Robinson, hall of fame football coach, was born in Jackson, Louisiana, 1919.

14

Frederick Douglass, abolitionist, women's suffragist, editor, author and statesman, was born in Tuckahoe, Maryland, 1818.

15

Henry Lewis becomes the first African American to lead a symphony orchestra in the United States, 1968.

16

James Baskett, first African American male actor to receive an Oscar, was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, 1904.

17

James Nathaniel "Jim" Brown, hall of fame football player and actor, was born in St. Simons Island, Georgia, 1936.

18

Toni Morrison, recipient of the 1993 Nobel Prize for Literature and the 1988 Pulitzer Prize for her novel Beloved was born in Lorain, Ohio, 1931.

19

Vonetta Flowers becomes Winter Olympics' first African American gold medalist, 2002.

20

Sidney Poitier, actor, director, author and diplomat, was born in Miami, Florida, 1927.

21

John Robert Lewis, civil rights leader, politician and author, was born in Troy, Alabama, 1940.

22

James Reese Europe, ragtime and jazz bandleader, arranger and composer, was born in Mobile, Alabama, 1881.

23

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, civil rights activist, historian and author, was born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, 1868.

24

Rebecca Lee Crumpler becomes first African American woman to receive a medical degree (New England Female Medical College), 1864.

25

Hiram R. Revels, first African American to serve in the U.S. Senate. He filled the seat once held by Jefferson Davis, 1870.

26

Civil rights activist Jimmie Lee Jackson dies after being shot by state police in Marion, Alabama, 1965.

27

Marian Anderson, world-renowned opera singer and civil rights activist, was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1897.

28

Michael Jackson, musician and entertainer, wins eight Grammy Awards, 1984.

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**Sylvester Croom, Jr.** was born on September 25, 1954 in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, home of the University of Alabama Crimson Tide. However, he made history when he led his football team onto Scott Field welcomed by ringing cowbells and the thundering roar of 50,000 maroon and white Bulldog fans yelling “Go Dogs!” In 2004 Croom accepted the head football coach’s position at Mississippi State University becoming the first African American to be named head football coach in the Southeastern Conference.

Croom attended Tuscaloosa High School where he was a star linebacker and tight end. After graduation, he went to the University of Alabama where he earned three football varsity letters. He was the starting center on the Crimson Tide’s 1973 national championship team, and in his senior year was named to the All-SEC and Kodak All-American teams. He was also awarded the Jacobs Blocking Trophy as the best offensive linemen in the conference.

Growing up in a family of schoolteachers, Croom was taught the value and importance of education. At age 20, he earned a bachelor’s degree in history with a minor in biology and went on to earn his master’s degree in educational administration. Unfortunately, in 1960s Alabama, segregation and racism were pervasive. To escape the hatred, football became his sanctuary. His dream was to play for the University of Alabama, led by the legendary coach Paul “Bear” Bryant. In 1971, his dream became reality and over the next 4 years, as in the classroom, he excelled on the gridiron. In his senior year, he was named team captain and, because of his dedication to the sport, the Alabama Athletic Department created the Sylvester Croom, Jr. Commitment to Excellence Award in his honor.

After graduation, Croom played one season with the New Orleans Saints and then returned to the University of Alabama to begin his coaching career. During the 11 years he coached at Alabama, the Crimson Tide played in 10 bowl games and won back-to-back national championships in 1978 and 1979. In 1987, he moved from the collegiate level to the NFL and spent 17 years developing some of the greatest players ever to play the game. He was the offensive coordinator with the Detroit Lions when Barry Sanders became the third player in NFL history to rush for 2,000 yards in a season. In the entire history of the NFL, only seven players have accomplished this feat.

In 2003, Croom was a finalist for the head coaching position at the University of Alabama, his alma mater, but the job was given to Mike Shula. The following year, Mississippi State University selected Croom for their head football coach, making him the first African American to serve in that position in the Southeastern Conference. In a little over three years, Croom turned around this much-beleaguered program, producing MSU’s first winning season in 6 years. In 2007, MSU finished the year with a 7-5 record and received a bowl bid. Croom was also named Southeastern Conference Coach of the Year in 2007. He returned to the NFL in 2009 and is currently the running backs coach with the Tennessee Titans.

# Sylvester Croom

*A FIRST FOR THE SOUTHEASTERN CONFERENCE*

# March



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1

The Civil Rights Act of 1875 was signed into law by President Ulysses Grant, 1875.

2

David Satcher, physician, United States Surgeon General and Assistant Secretary for Health, was born in Anniston, Alabama, 1941.

3

Thomas L. Jennings, first African American to receive a U.S. patent (number 3306x) for a dry-scouring process, now known as dry-cleaning, 1821.

4

Garrett Augustus Morgan, Sr., inventor and entrepreneur, was born in Paris, Kentucky, 1877.

5

Crispus Attucks one of the first casualties of the American Revolution, was killed in the Boston Massacre, 1770.

6

The Supreme Court decided Dred Scott v. Sandford. This opinion declared that slaves were not U.S. citizens and could not sue in Federal courts, 1857.

7

The first Selma to Montgomery march ended when marchers were attacked by state and local police at the Edmund Pettus Bridge "Bloody Sunday", 1965.

8

Alexander T. Augusta, surgeon, Civil War veteran, and highest-ranking African American officer in the Union Army, born in Norfolk, Virginia, 1825.

9

Oscar Stanton De Priest, the first African American elected to Congress in the 20th century, was born in Florence, Alabama, 1871.

10

Harriet Tubman, abolitionist, Union Army spy and suffragist, died. Tubman was buried with military honors., 1913.

11

Ralph David Abernathy, minister and civil rights leader, was born in Linden, Alabama, 1926.

12

Virginia Hamilton, children's books author, was born in Yellow Springs, Ohio, 1936.

13

Cowtown/Work to Ride polo team from Philadelphia, PA, first African American team to win the National Interscholastic Polo Championship, 2011.

14

Quincy Delight Jones, Jr., trumpeter, music conductor and arranger, record producer, and film composer, was born in Chicago, Illinois, 1933.

15

Joseph Jenkins Roberts, the first President of the Republic of Liberia, was born in Norfolk, Virginia, 1809.

16

Mississippi became the last state to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution which abolished slavery, 1995.

17

Nathaniel Adams "Nat King" Cole, hall of fame jazz pianist and singer, was born in Montgomery, Alabama, 1919.

18

Fred Shuttlesworth, minister and civil rights activist, was born Freddie Lee Robinson in Mount Meigs, Alabama, 1922.

19

Rev. Leon Sullivan elected to board of directors of General Motors., 1971.

20

Jan E. Matzeliger received patent 274,207 for his Automatic Method for Lasting Shoes, 1883.

21

Lewis H. Latimer of New York City shared patent number 255,212 for a Globe Supporter for Electric Lamps, 1882.

22

Joseph Paul Reason, the first African American four-star admiral in the United States Navy, was born in Washington, D. C., 1941.

23

Maynard Holbrook Jackson, Jr., the first African American mayor of Atlanta, Georgia, was born in Dallas, Texas, 1938.

24

Janet Harmon Waterford Bragg, the first African American female to hold a commercial pilot license, was born in Griffin, Georgia, 1907.

25

Aretha Louise Franklin, hall of fame pianist, singer and songwriter, was born in Memphis, Tennessee, 1942.

26

Thomas J. Martin of Dowagiac, Michigan received patent number 125,063 for improvements in the fire extinguisher, 1872.

27

Arthur Mitchell, hall of fame dancer and choreographer, was born in Harlem, New York, 1934.

28

William Christopher "W. C." Handy, hall of fame blues composer and musician, died, 1958.

29

Andrew Jackson Beard, hall of fame inventor, was born in Woodland, Alabama, 1849.

30

The Fifteenth Amendment was adopted into the Constitution granting African American men the right to vote, 1870.

31

Thomas M. Peterson of Perth Amboy, NJ cast the first vote by an African American after the passage of the 15th Amendment, 1870.

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# Herman H. Long

*RACE RELATIONS SCHOLAR*

# April

**Dr. Herman Hodge Long**, president of the United Negro College Fund from 1970-1975, adopted the tagline "A mind is a terrible thing to waste", one of the most famous and apropos mottos created for any institution. Dr. Long was a scholar, researcher, college administrator, and author of several pioneering studies dealing with race relations. Research used in Long's book "People vs. Property: Race Restrictive Covenants in Housing", co-authored with Charles S. Johnson in 1947, was a pivotal component in the movement that led to the US Supreme Court's decision to outlaw a state's ability to enforce racially restrictive housing covenants. These neighborhood covenants were contractual agreements between property owners that prohibited occupying, leasing, and selling a piece of property to a particular group of people.

Long was born in Birmingham, Alabama in 1912. During his childhood, his family moved to Chicago, where he grew up in the racially segregated Southside. He returned to Alabama in 1931 to attend Talladega College, where he received a bachelor's degree in psychology in 1935. He later earned a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan.

Long's journey toward becoming a leading researcher in sociology began when he went to Fisk University, which was considered the leading center for training African Americans in the field of sociological research. There, he worked with Dr. Charles S. Johnson, the most acclaimed African American sociologist in the United States. Long went on to become the head of the university's Race Relations Institute and produced several pieces that were published nationally and referenced in many sociological texts.

Long was not shy about voicing his opinions and challenging the status quo. Dr. Vivian W. Henderson, Long's colleague at Fisk, wrote about Long's impact upon race relations: "In spite of the fact that you are stubborn as hell, you have been a tower of strength in this land. Your participation in race relations was crucial in some of the most difficult times this nation faced."

In 1964, Talladega College's Board of Trustees offered Dr. Long the prestigious position of president. He served as president until his death on August 8, 1976 and was considered one of Talladega's greatest leaders. Long is credited for improving campus morale and securing funding from state and national organizations for the institution.

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1

Dr. Charles R. Drew, medical researcher who developed techniques for processing and preserving blood, died in a car accident, 1950.

2

Georgetown coach John Thompson becomes first African American coach to win NCAA basketball tournament, 1984.

3

Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech in support of the striking sanitation workers in Memphis, TN, 1968.

4

Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, 1968.

5

Booker Taliaferro Washington, educator, author and political leader, was born enslaved on the Burroughs Plantation in Virginia, 1856.

6

Matthew A. Henson becomes one of the first people to reach the North Pole, 1909.

7

Granville T. Woods patents (#315,368) apparatus for transmission of messages by electricity, 1885.

8

Hank Aaron hits his 715th career home run, surpassing Babe Ruth as Major League Baseball's all-time home-run leader, 1874.

9

Marian Anderson performed her critically acclaimed concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, 1939.

10

Robert Lee Elder became the first African American to play in the Masters Golf Tournament, 1975.

11

Percy Lavon Julian, research chemist and pioneer in the chemical synthesis of medicinal drugs from plants, was born in Montgomery, Alabama, 1899.

12

Harold Washington becomes first African American mayor of Chicago, 1983.

13

Sidney Poitier became the first African American man to win the Academy Award for Best Actor for his role in the movie "Lilies of the Field.", 1964.

14

First abolitionist society in U.S. is founded in Philadelphia, 1775.

15

Jackie Robinson became the first African American major league baseball player of the modern era, 1947.

16

Slavery abolished in the District of Columbia, 1862.

17

Mifflin Wistar Gibbs, businessman, politician and the first elected African American municipal judge, was born in Philadelphia, PA, 1823.

18

Alice Walker wins Pulitzer Prize for fiction for The Color Purple, 1983.

19

Stationed in Germany, Major Gen. Frederic E. Davidson becomes first Black to lead an army division, 1972.

20

George Faison became the first African American to win the Tony Award for Best Choreographer - "The Wiz", 1975.

21

Locksley Wellington "Slide" Hampton, jazz trombonist, composer and arranger, was born in Jeannette, Pennsylvania, 1932.

22

Catherine L. Hughes, business executive and founder of Radio One & TV One, was born Catherine Elizabeth Woods in Omaha, Nebraska, 1947.

23

Clatonia Joaquin Dorticus patents photographic print washer patent number 537,968. 1895.

24

David Harold Blackwell, the first African American inducted into the National Academy of Sciences, was born in Centralia, Illinois, 1919.

25

The United Negro College Fund was founded to raise funds for private historically Black colleges and universities, 1944.

26

Sarah Boone patents ironing board, patent number 473,653. 1892.

27

Coretta Scott King, civil rights leader and author, was born in Marion, Alabama, 1927.

28

Sojourner Truth, abolitionist & women's rights activist, first African American woman to be honored with a bust in the U.S. Capitol, 2009.

29

Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington, hall of fame pianist, composer and big band leader, was born in Washington, D. C., 1899.

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Michelle J. Howard, first African American woman to command a U.S. Navy ship and first female four-star admiral, was born in Riverside, CA, 1960.

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# Juanakee Adams

THE GIFT OF SIGHT

# May

**Dr. Juanakee Adams** was born in Detroit, Michigan on September 25. She received an Advanced College Preparatory Diploma from John Carroll High School in Birmingham, Alabama and a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Dillard University in New Orleans, Louisiana. She was the youngest person to be granted early admission to Indiana University School of Optometry in Bloomington, Indiana. After earning her Doctorate of Optometry, she returned to Alabama in 1981 and opened Adams Eye Care, becoming the first African American female optometrist to practice in the state.

Adams's passion for optometry is obvious. She believes that next to life itself, one of God's most precious gifts is the gift of sight. Although she was faithful in doing her part to give back to the community that had given her so much, she felt in her heart that she was chosen and called to do much more. This burning desire created a vision to form a consortium of health care services for less fortunate Alabamians. In 2010, she founded The Juanakee Adams Initiative for Excellent Eye Care and Optimum Health, fulfilling her dream to create a total health and wellness program. Total health is created and achieved by a collaborative effort of all health care specialties (optometry, ophthalmology, medical, dental, pharmacists) and principalities (pharmaceutical representatives, nurses, opticians, church leaders, and congregants).

Adams built her practice, Adams Eye Care, with no advertising budget, relying on speaking engagements, a column in the local newspaper, and networking. Her accomplishments and hard work ethics have allowed her to serve in various capacities across the nation. She now helps young optometrists launch their careers by serving as a mentor to guide them through the aspects of marketing and managing the business of a private practice.

In 2003, she began making monthly mission trips with the Spirit of Luke Foundation to serve impoverished counties in Alabama's Black Belt region, providing medical and vision care, food, and clothing to residents. She has also traveled to Venezuela and Ghana on medical missionary trips.

Adams is a licensed and ordained minister and member of More Than Conquerors Faith Church. She is also an inspirational speaker and life coach. She acknowledges that "unto whom much is given, much is required", therefore, she is always willing to help others, especially the less fortunate.

Adams is a member of various professional, civic, and social organizations such as The National Optometric Association, The American Optometric Association, Alabama Optometric Association, and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. She currently serves on the board of directors of Kid One, a non-profit organization that transports children and expectant mothers to health care facilities for treatment. She also served three terms on the Fairfield City Council. In addition, she has appeared on the "big screen" as an extra in Tyler Perry's "Madea's Family Reunion". Look for her in the picnic scene just before the fight wearing a lime-green shirt.

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Gwendolyn Elizabeth Brooks became the first African American to win the Pulitzer Prize for her book of poetry "Annie Allen.", 1950.

The Children's Crusade began in Birmingham, Alabama, 1963.

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The Supreme Court of the United States decided in the case of Shelley v. Kraemer that courts could not enforce racial covenants on real estate, 1948.

Thirteen Freedom Riders set off from Washington D.C. to New Orleans., 1961.

Eugene Marino becomes first African American installed as a Roman Catholic archbishop in the U.S., 1988.

William Howard "Willie" Mays, Jr. hall of fame baseball player, was born in Westfield, Alabama, 1931.

Joseph R. Winters patents first fire escape ladder, 1878.

Matthew A. Cherry of Washington, D. C. received patent number 382,351 for improvements in velocipede (bicycle/tricycle), 1888.

John Albert Burr received patent number 624,749 for an improved rotary blade lawn-mower, 1899.

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Pickney Benton Stewart Pinchback, the first African American to become governor of a state in the United States, was born in Macon, GA, 1837.

William Grant Still, the "Dean of African American Classical Composers" was born in Woodville, Mississippi, 1895.

Albert L. Murray, literary, music and social critic and novelist, was born in Nokomis, Alabama, 1916.

Joe Louis, hall of fame boxer known as "the Brown Bomber," was born Joseph Louis Barrow in La Fayette, Alabama, 1914.

Rosa Jinsey Young, "the mother of Black Lutheranism in Alabama," was born in Rosebud, Alabama, 1890.

Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity (the Boulé), the first African American Greek lettered organization, was founded in Philadelphia, PA, 1904.

Dr. William Harry Barnes becomes first African American board-certified medical specialist, 1927.

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U.S. Supreme Court declares segregation in public schools unconstitutional in Brown v. Board of Education decision, 1954.

Plessy vs. Ferguson, Supreme Court upholds the doctrine of "separate but equal" education and public accommodations, 1896.

Malcolm X, was born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska, 1925.

John Matthew Shippen, Jr., the first African American professional golfer, died, 1968.

Katherine Mary Dunham, hall of fame dancer, choreographer, author, educator, activist and "Matriarch and Queen Mother of Black Dance," died, 2006.

James Mercer Langston Hughes, poet, novelist and playwright, died, 1967.

Sgt. William H. Carney becomes the first African American awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, 1900.

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Madam C.J. Walker, first American woman to become a millionaire through her own business, died, 1919.

Miles Dewey Davis III, hall of fame jazz trumpeter, bandleader and composer, was born in Alton, Illinois, 1926.

Ernest Gideon Green became the first African American to graduate from Little Rock Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, 1958.

Horace King, the most respected bridge builder in AL, GA, and northeastern MS during the mid-1800s, died, 1885.

Sojourner Truth delivered her famous "Ain't I a Woman" speech at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, 1851.

Vivian Malone becomes the first African American to graduate from the University of Alabama, 1965.



# John Mitchell, Jr.

*MORE THAN JUST A GAME*

# June

**John Mitchell, Jr.** was born in Mobile, Alabama on October 14, 1951. In 1971, he became the first African American to play varsity football for the University of Alabama. In his second season he became the team's first African American co-captain. At age 21, he accepted a coaching position at the University of Alabama and became the first African American assistant coach and the youngest coach to have ever been hired at Alabama.

Mitchell played football and basketball at Williamson High School in Mobile, Alabama. In his senior year he played on the offensive line and although he was tall enough, standing 6 feet 3 inches, he only weighed 195 pounds, which was considered too light for an offensive lineman in Division I Football. Consequently, he was not offered a football scholarship by any major colleges in Alabama, but he was offered an academic scholarship to both the University of Alabama and Auburn University. Wanting to play football, he eventually accepted a scholarship from Eastern Arizona Junior College.

After two seasons at Eastern Arizona and being named to the All-American team both years as a defensive end, Mitchell was one of the top junior college recruits and was heavily recruited by several Division I football powerhouses. In 1971, he transferred to the University of Alabama and became a starting defensive end. In 1972, he earned All-American honors on the gridiron, but even more importantly he earned his bachelor's degree.

Mitchell's first two coaching assignments were on the staff of two of college football's greatest coaches. He was a defensive line coach under "Bear" Bryant at Alabama (1973-76) and he held the same position at Arkansas (1977-82) under Lou Holtz. In 1983, he returned to the state of Alabama when he accepted the position of defensive line coach for the United States Football League (USFL) Birmingham Stallions. After three seasons the USFL ceased operations and he returned to the college football ranks. In 1990, he became the first African American defensive coordinator in the Southeastern Conference when he accepted the position at Louisiana State University.

Mitchell joined the National Football League (NFL) coaching ranks in 1991, when he became the defensive line coach for the Cleveland Browns. In 1994, he joined the Pittsburgh Steelers' organization as their defensive line coach and after 20 seasons he still remains a Steeler. Under Mitchell's leadership, Pittsburgh's defensive line helped the Steelers lead the NFL in rush defense five times and finish in the top three on 13 separate occasions. In 2007, he was promoted to assistant head coach/defensive line coach.

Mitchell has been a football coach for over 40 years. In 2009, he was elected into the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame. Mitchell and his wife, Joyce, currently reside in Pittsburgh.

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Morgan Porterfield Freeman, Jr., actor and film director was born in Memphis, Tennessee, 1937.

2

Charles Sifford, hall of fame golfer who helped to desegregate the PGA of America, was born in Charlotte, NC, 1922.

3

Josephine Baker, entertainer and actress, was born Freda Josephine McDonald in St. Louis, Missouri, 1906.

4

Roland G. Fryer, Jr., youngest African American ever granted tenure at Harvard University, was born in Daytona Beach, 1977.

5

John Wesley Carlos, hall of fame track and field athlete and 1968 Olympics medal ceremony protester, was born in Harlem, New York, 1945.

6

Tommie Smith, hall of fame track and field athlete and 1968 Olympics medal ceremony protester, was born in Clarksville, Texas, 1944.

7

Gail Fisher became the first African American to win an Emmy Award, 1970.

8

William D. "Willie" Davenport, hall of fame track and field athlete, was born in Troy, Alabama, 1943.

9

William Pinkney became the fourth American and the first African American to sail solo around the world, 1992.

10

Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Jr., publisher, entrepreneur, orator and Black Nationalist, died, 1940.

11

George Wallace stood in the doorway of Foster Auditorium blocking Malone and Hood, from enrolling, 1963.

12

Medgar W. Evers, civil rights leader, is assassinated in Jackson, Mississippi, 1963.

13

Thurgood Marshall nominated to the U.S. Supreme Court by President Lyndon Johnson, 1967.

14

Nat (pronounced Nate) Love, one of the most famous cowboys of the Old West, was born in Davidson County, Tennessee, 1854.

15

Ella Jane Fitzgerald, hall of fame jazz and pop vocalist also known as the "First Lady of Song," died, 1996.

16

Eddie Levert, lead vocalist of the R&B vocal group The O'Jays, was born in Bessemer, Alabama, 1942.

17

Minuteman Peter Salem fights in the Battle of Bunker Hill, 1775.

18

Sallie Martin, the "Mother of Gospel Music" and entrepreneur, died, 1988.

19

African Americans in Texas are notified of Emancipation Proclamation, issued in 1863. "Juneteenth," marks the event, 1865.

20

Lionel Brockman Richie, Jr., singer, songwriter and record producer, was born in Tuskegee, Alabama, 1949.

21

James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, civil rights activist, were murdered near Philadelphia, MS, 1964.

22

Joe Louis knocked out Max Schmeling at 2:04 of 1st round at Yankee Stadium, 1938.

23

Wilma Rudolph, first American woman to win 3 Gold medals in track and field in a single Olympic Games, was born in Clarksdale, TN, 1940.

24

Jeanine Menze became the first African American female to earn United States Coast Guard aviation designation, 2005.

25

James H. Meredith, the first African American student at the University of Mississippi, was born in Kosciusko, Mississippi, 1933.

26

James Weldon Johnson, author, diplomat, poet, songwriter of "Lift Every Voice and Sing", and civil rights activist died, 1938.

27

Paul Laurence Dunbar, poet, was born in Dayton, Ohio, 1872.

28

U.S. Supreme Court overturned the conviction of Muhammad Ali for refusing to be inducted into the military, 1971.

29

Charles Everett Dumas became the first person to high jump seven feet, 1956.

30

Lena Mary Calhoun Horne, singer, actress, dancer and civil rights activist, was born in Brooklyn, New York, 1917.

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# Onnie Lee Logan

A MIDWIFE'S STORY

# July

**Onnie Lee Logan** was born in Marengo County, Alabama near the city of Sweet Water circa 1910. She was an extraordinary woman and midwife, who became a folk hero when her life story was published, *Motherwit: An Alabama Midwife's Story*, in 1989. Growing up in rural Alabama she knew at an early age she wanted to be a midwife and how important midwives were to the community. Her mother was a midwife, as was her grandmother, who was a slave. For over 50 years she delivered hundreds of babies in south Alabama. From 1931 to 1984 Logan delivered almost every child born in Prichard, Alabama and the predominantly African American neighborhoods in Mobile, Alabama.

During the Great Depression, Logan, along with other midwives, played a major role in delivering children to mostly poor white and black mothers, providing help when doctors were either not available or unwilling to provide services to these groups of women. She delivered babies regardless of race or the parent's ability to pay for her services. Although she delivered hundreds of babies in her lifetime, in order to support her family she had to also work as a domestic servant for a physician.

Up until 1949, the midwife profession was not regulated in Alabama and a person did not need any formal training, a license, or permit to practice. Because of Logan's expertise in the field and with almost 20 years of experience, she received her permit to practice midwifery faster than any other applicant. In her autobiography *Motherwit: An Alabama Midwife's Story*, she attributes "motherwit", an inborn knowledge that comes from God, as the reason for her success and why earning her license was so easy, "There was a high power and God give me wisdom. Motherwit, common sense. Wisdom comes from on high. You got it and you can't explain how you got it yourself. It's motherwit." "I do whatever is suitable for that minute or that hour or that situation.. Whether I've seen it in a book or read it or not, I do it. And it works. A lot a mothers says: 'I didn't do that with my other baby.' I say: 'That was that baby, honey. This is this one. They are all different.'"

In 1976, lay midwives were outlawed by the state of Alabama. At the time, Logan was the only midwife remaining in Mobile. However, because of her excellent track record and the stature she had achieved in Mobile, she was allowed to continue her practice under a special permit from local authorities until 1984. When Logan was finally forced to retire, she was one of the last midwives in the country. For many years after her license was revoked, she continued to provide guidance and moral support to husbands needing assistance with their wives during childbirth. Logan died on July 10, 1995.



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Frederick Carlton "Carl" Lewis, hall of fame track and field athlete, was born in Birmingham, Alabama, 1961.

2

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson, 1964.

3

Macon Bolling Allen became the first African American licensed to practice law in the United States, 1844.

4

Arthur George "A. G." Gaston, entrepreneur and businessman, was born in Demopolis, Alabama, 1892.

5

Andrew Jackson Beard of Woodlawn, Alabama received patent number 478,271 for an improved rotary steam engine, 1892.

6

Donnie L. Cochran, first African American to command the U.S. Navy Blue Angels, was born near Pelham, GA, 1954.

7

Leroy Robert "Satchel" Paige, hall of fame baseball player, was born in Mobile, Alabama, 1906.

8

The Clotilda, the last known United States slave ship to bring enslaved Africans to the U. S., arrived in Alabama with 110 African captives, 1860.

9

Dr. Daniel Hale Williams performs first successful open heart surgery, 1893.

10

Mary Jane McLeod Bethune, hall of fame educator and civil rights leader, was born in Mayesville, South Carolina, 1875.

11

W.E.B. DuBois and William Monroe Trotter organize the Niagara Movement, a forerunner of the NAACP, 1905.

12

Frederick McKinley Jones received three patents (numbers 2,475,841 – 2,475,843). Patent 2,475,841 was for a portable air-cooling unit for trucks, 1949.

13

Thurgood Marshall becomes first African American appointed U.S. solicitor general, 1965.

14

Sarah E. Goode, first African American woman to receive a patent (322,177) for her invention of the cabinet bed, 1885.

15

Maggie Lena Walker, hall of fame businesswoman, educator and the first female bank president, was born in Richmond, Virginia, 1864.

16

Ida Bell Wells-Barnett, journalist and civil and women's rights activist, was born enslaved in Holly Springs, Mississippi, 1862.

17

Billie Holiday, hall of fame Jazz singer and songwriter known as "Lady Day," died, 1959.

18

Nelson R. Mandela, first South African president to be elected in a fully representative democratic election, was born in Mvezo, South Africa, 1918.

19

William Henry Hastie was confirmed as Judge of the Third U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals, the first African American federal circuit judge, 1950.

20

Violet Palmer, the first woman to officiate a National Basketball Association game, was born in Compton, California, 1964.

21

The National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Inc. was founded in Washington, D.C., 1896.

22

Emlen Lewis Tunnell, the first African American inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, died, 1975.

23

Jackie Robinson becomes first African American baseball player in the major leagues inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame, 1962.

24

Alexander Dumas, playwright and novelist, was born Dumas Davy de la Pailleterie in Picardy, France, 1802.

25

Garrett A. Morgan, Sr. used his gas mask to rescue men trapped in an underground tunnel, 1916.

26

President Harry S. Truman issues Executive Order 9981, ending segregation in armed forces, 1948.

27

The Chicago Race Riots, the worst of the country's riots during the Red Summer of 1919, began, 1919.

28

14th Amendment, granting African Americans full citizenship rights, becomes part of the Constitution, 1868.

29

Keeth Thomas Smart, the first American to be named the top-ranked fencer internationally, was born in Brooklyn, New York, 1978.

30

Elizabeth R. Haynes, first African American woman to serve on the national board of the YWCA, was born in Lowndes County, AL, 1883.

31

Whitney Moore Young, Jr., civil rights leader, was born in Lincoln Ridge, Kentucky, 1921.

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# Louis J. Willie

*BREAKING THE COLOR BARRIER*

# August

**Louis J. Willie, Jr.** was born on August 22, 1923, in Fort Worth, Texas. Willie was a successful business executive who helped break the color barrier in business and sports circles. He was the first African American to be admitted to several segregated social and civic clubs in Birmingham, Alabama, including the Kiwanis Club of Birmingham, Downtown Club, The Club, and Shoal Creek Country Club.

Willie grew up in the Dallas area and attended Lincoln High School in Dallas, Texas. He earned a BA degree in economics from Wiley College, an MBA from the University of Michigan, and a CLU designation from the American College of Underwriters.

In 1952, Willie came to Birmingham for an interview with A.G. Gaston. He was hired as a comptroller for Booker T. Washington Insurance and within 10 years rose to become Gaston's top assistant and advisor. He helped Mr. Gaston build a business empire that included Booker T. Washington Insurance, Citizens Federal Savings Bank (now Citizens Trust Bank), and two radio stations. Willie became President & CEO of Booker T. Washington Insurance in 1986 and held that position until his retirement in 1994. He also assumed the role of President at Citizens Federal Savings Bank.

Willie was a founding member of the A. G. Gaston Boys and Girls Club. He served on the boards of Alabama Power, Southern Company, AmSouth Bank (now Regions Bank), the Birmingham Museum of Art, St. Vincent's Hospital, Operation New Birmingham (now REV Birmingham), and the Birmingham Regional Chamber of Commerce (now Birmingham Business Alliance). Willie was also a member of the Board of Directors of the Birmingham Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta and served as its Chairman for one year.

One of Willie's most notable moments occurred when Birmingham's Shoal Creek Country Club was the site of the 1990 Professional Golf Association Championship. Protests mounted after the club president announced that Shoal Creek would not be pressured into accepting black members. The PGA of America was very close to canceling the championship. Risking his reputation and business, Willie defused a highly charged situation by accepting an honorary membership. "I did not volunteer for this," Willie said. "But the mayor sent word he would like for me to do this. I am doing it for the community."

After the Shoal Creek controversy, the PGA and other golf organizations declared they would not hold tournaments at clubs that lacked minority or female members. Shoal Creek's first African American member to obtain full membership joined in 1996.

Willie received numerous awards for his civic and community work, including the National Conference of Christians and Jews and the Greater Birmingham Area Community Service Awards.

Louis J. Willie, Jr. was married to the former Yvonne Kirkpatrick of Pembroke, Bermuda. They had one son, Louis J. Willie III. Willie died on September 16, 2007.

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Michael Duane Johnson became the first man to win Gold medals in the 200 and 400 meter races at the same Olympic Games, 1996.

2

James Arthur Baldwin, novelist, playwright, poet, essayist, and civil rights activist, was born in Harlem, New York, 1924.

3

Frank Godden instrumental in the growth of the Santa Clarita Valley's Val Verde, known as "the black Palm Springs," died, 2012.

4

Barack Hussein Obama II, the first African American President of the United States, was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, 1961.

5

Shirley Jackson, first female and African American president of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, was born in Washington, D. C., 1946.

6

President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the National Voting Rights Act, guaranteeing African Americans the right to vote, 1965.

7

Ralph Johnson Bunche, Nobel Peace Prize winner, political scientist and diplomat, was born in Detroit, Michigan, 1904.

8

William Augustus Hinton, bacteriologist, pathologist, educator, and first African American to publish a medical textbook, died, 1959.

9

Jesse Owens wins fourth gold medal at Summer Olympics in Berlin, 1936.

10

General Colin Powell is nominated chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, the first African American to hold the post, 1989.

11

Alex Haley, author of "Roots" and "The Autobiography of Malcom X", was born in Ithaca, New York, 1921.

12

Emma Ophelia DeVore, the first prominent African American model in the United States, was born in Edgefield, South Carolina, 1922.

13

The Brownsville Raid of 1906, "Brownsville Affair," resulted in the largest U.S. Army dismissal, 167 African American soldiers, 1906.

14

Maria Halle Berry, first African American to win an Academy Award for Best Actress, was born in Cleveland, Ohio, 1966.

15

Monroe Nathan Work, sociologist and bibliographer, and publisher of the "Negro Year Book", was born in Iredell County, North Carolina, 1866.

16

Carol Elizabeth Moseley Braun, the first African American woman elected to the United States Senate, was born in Chicago, Illinois, 1947.

17

Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Jr., publisher, entrepreneur, orator and Black Nationalist, was born in St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica, 1887.

18

James H. Meredith became the first African American to graduate from the University of Mississippi, 1963.

19

Benjamin Banneker, wrote a letter to then U.S. Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson pointing out the hypocrisy of slavery, 1791.

20

The first 20 Africans were brought to what would become Jamestown, Virginia aboard a Dutch ship, 1619.

21

George Franklin Grant, pioneering dentist and inventor of the golf tee, patent number 638,920, died, 1910.

22

The Haitian Revolution began when slaves in Saint Domingue (Haiti) rose in revolt and plunged the colony into a 12 year war, 1791.

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Althea Gibson, first African American to win the French, Wimbledon, and U. S. Open singles titles, was born in Silver, South Carolina, 1927.

19th Amendment to the Constitution ratified, giving women the right to vote, 1920.

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, civil rights activist, historian and author, died, 1963.

March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom and Dr. King delivers his "I have a dream" speech, 1963.

Michael Joseph Jackson, hall of fame singer and the "King of Pop," was born in Gary, Indiana, 1958.

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# Shelley Stewart

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

# September

**Dr. Shelley Stewart** was born in the Rosedale section of Birmingham, Alabama on September 24, 1934. Stewart's background can be understood in two words - obstacles overcome. Today he is a successful businessman, however as a child, his future was anything but bright. Stewart's rise to prominence began as a radio personality in the 1950s and '60s. His radio broadcasts were a conduit for protest organizations during Birmingham's civil rights struggles. His expansion into marketing also began in the 1960s, culminating in his position as the President and CEO of o2ideas, one of the country's longest-running and largest privately held corporate communication companies.

Stewart overcame impoverished beginnings and horrific family tragedies as a child. At age 5, he witnessed his father murder his mother, Mattie C., with an ax. Later, living with relatives, he was stripped, suspended from the ceiling, and whipped until bloody. Salt was then placed in his wounds. When he and his brothers were returned to his father, he was forced to sleep on his father's front porch until he ran away. Out of this story of poverty and neglect emerged a man whose voracious appetite for reading fueled his later success.

In 1949, Stewart got a job as a school reporter at WBCO in Bessemer. There, he began to develop his radio personality. After graduation, he didn't get the college scholarship he expected. His principal told him he lacked the family support required for college, even though he had top grades. Needing a job, Stewart joined the Air Force and served 2 years. He returned to Birmingham in 1953 and got a job at WEDR radio. "Shelley the Playboy", his radio persona, had arrived.

At WEDR, Stewart quickly grew a loyal following, which also included a large number of white listeners. However, his popularity with white kids did not sit well with everyone. In 1958, his radio station went off the air when the broadcast tower was cut down. In 1960, he barely escaped with his life, when the Ku Klux Klan broke up one of his platter parties because they objected to white and black teenagers dancing in the same room.

His broadcasts during Birmingham's human rights struggles of the 1960s served as a critical communication mechanism for young African Americans involved in street protests. During the civil rights spring of 1963, Stewart joined other African American radio personalities in broadcasting coded messages to young demonstrators telling them when and where marches would occur. Stewart and other radio personalities helped Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. mount the historic Children's March through the streets of Birmingham.

Stewart retired from broadcasting in 2002. While visiting his brother Sam in a California prison, he learned that most of the inmates never finished school. In 2007, he started the Mattie C. Stewart Foundation, an organization that works to reduce the high school dropout rate. Today, the offices of o2ideas sit on land that was once Edgewood Lake where Stewart and his brother fished as children. His lifetime odyssey is chronicled in *The Road South*, a book he co-authored, and *Mattie C's Boy – The Shelley Stewart Story*.

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Halle Tanner Dillion Johnson becomes first woman of any race to practice medicine in Alabama, 1891.

2

Joseph Hatchett, becomes first African American Supreme Court justice in FL, 1975.

3

Dorothy Maynor, concert soprano and founder of the Harlem School of Arts, was born in Norfolk, Virginia, 1910.

4

Lewis Howard Latimer, draftsman and hall of fame inventor, was born in Chelsea, Massachusetts, 1848.

5

Claudette Colvin, civil rights pioneer, arrested for refusing to give up her bus seat on March 2, 1955, was born in Montgomery, AL, 1939.

6

Lee Roy Young, Jr. became the first African American Texas Ranger in the police force's 165-year history, 1988.

7

Earl Manigault, street basketball player known as "The Goat," was born in Charleston, South Carolina, 1944.

8

Ruby Bridges Hall, first African American to desegregate a southern elementary school, was born in Tylertown, MS, 1954.

9

Sonia Sanchez, poet and playwright, was born in Birmingham, Alabama, 1934.

10

Hoyt William Fuller, editor, critic and leading figure in the Black Arts Movement, was born in Atlanta, Georgia, 1923.

11

James Charles Evers, first African American elected mayor of a MS city since Reconstruction, was born in Decatur, MS, 1922.

12

Mae Carol Jemison becomes first African American woman to travel in space, 1992.

13

Nell Carter, singer and film, stage, and television actress, was born Nell Ruth Hardy in Birmingham, Alabama, 1948.

14

Prince Hall, the founder of "Black Freemasonry," was born (approximate birth date), 1735.

15

The 16th Street Baptist Church bombed in Birmingham, Alabama, 1963.

16

Frederick McKinley Jones became the first African American awarded the National Medal of Technology, 1991.

17

Vanessa Williams becomes first African American woman named Miss America, 1983.

18

Booker T. Washington delivered his "Atlanta Compromise" speech at the Cotton States and International Expo in Atlanta, GA, 1895.

19

The first International Congress of Black Writers and Artists was convened at the Sorbonne in Paris, France, 1956.

20

Charles Howard Wright, physician, author and museum founder, was born in Dothan, Alabama, 1918.

21

Clifford Leopold Alexander, Jr., lawyer, businessman and the first African American Secretary of the Army, was born in New York City, 1933.

22

The Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) ordered an end to segregation on interstate transportation and within transportation facilities, 1961.

23

Nancy Green, born a slave, one of the first African Americans hired to promote a corporate trademark "Aunt Jemima", died, 1923.

24

Executive Order 11246 was signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson requiring equal employment opportunity, 1965.

25

William Craft, subject of "Running...; or, the Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery", was born in Macon, GA, 1824.

26

William Levi Dawson, professor, choir director, and composer, was born in Anniston, Alabama, 1899.

27

Donald Cortez Cornelius, television show host and producer (Soul Train), was born in Chicago, Illinois, 1936.

28

The National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. was formed in Atlanta, Georgia, 1895.

29

The Committee on Urban Conditions Among Negroes (The National Urban League) founded in New York City, 1910.

30

Charles Sylvan "Cholly" Atkins, dancer and Tony Award winning choreographer, was born in Pratt City, Alabama, 1913.

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# J. Gary Cooper

A REMARKABLE LIFE OF SERVICE

# October

**J. Gary Cooper** was born on October 2, 1936, in Lafayette, Louisiana. Cooper's remarkable journey of service to our state and country began in 1958, when he was commissioned second lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps. While serving in Vietnam in 1966, Cooper became the first African American Marine Corps officer to lead an infantry company into combat. After serving as an active duty Marine Corp officer from 1958-1970, he joined the Marine Corps Reserve and in 1971, became the first African American to command a Marine reserve unit. In 1984, he was promoted to brigadier general, becoming the first African American to attain the rank of general from the Marine infantry ranks.

Cooper was raised in the "Down the Bay" section of Mobile, Alabama, south of the Mobile Civic Center. He graduated from Most Pure Heart of Mary High School in 1954 and enrolled at the University of Notre Dame where he was one of only three African Americans in his 1958 class of 1,500. While at Notre Dame, he joined The Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). After graduating with a degree in finance, he was commissioned second lieutenant in the Marine Corps. Within a year, he was promoted to first lieutenant, and in 1963 to captain.

During Cooper's decorated military career, he reached the rank of major general and earned the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, two Purple Hearts, and the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm, Silver and Bronze Stars. In 1989, President George H.W. Bush nominated, and the Senate confirmed, Cooper as the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower, Reserve Affairs, Installations, and the Environment. During his tenure as Assistant Secretary, he participated in the planning of Operation Desert Storm.

Outside of his military service, in 1973, Cooper and John LeFlore were the first African Americans elected to the Alabama House of Representatives, from Mobile, since Reconstruction. In 1978, Alabama Governor George Wallace appointed Cooper Commissioner of the Alabama State Department of Human Resources. In this Cabinet position, he managed a staff of over 4,000 and the largest agency budget in the state. In 1994, President Bill Clinton nominated, and the Senate confirmed, Cooper to serve as the United States Ambassador to Jamaica, a position held from 1994-1997.

As a private citizen, Cooper has served as Director and Corporate officer of Christian Benevolent Funeral Home, Inc. This family-owned business has been in operation for over eighty-five years. In 1976, he co-founded Commonwealth National Bank in Mobile, Alabama, the first minority-owned and operated bank in Alabama. For 13 years he served as vice president and senior vice president at David Volkert and Associates, a regional engineering and architectural firm. He has also served on the Boards of GenCorp, United States Steel Corporation, Protective Life Corporation, PNC Financial Service Group, Inc., Talladega College, and Spring Hill College.

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The 24th Infantry Regiment (the deuce four), the last all-Black military unit, was deactivated in Korea, 1951.

2

Thurgood Marshall was sworn in as the first African American Justice of the Supreme Court, 1967.

3

Nat King Cole becomes first African American to host his own TV show, 1956.

4

Geoffrey S. Fletcher, first African American to receive an Academy Award for writing "Precious..." was born in New London, CT, 1970.

5

Autherine Juanita Lucy, the first African American student to attend the University of Alabama, was born in Shiloh, Alabama, 1929.

6

Fannie Lou Townsend Hamer, voting rights activist and civil rights leader, was born in Sunflower County, Mississippi, 1917.

7

Toni Morrison became the first African American woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, 1993.

8

Jesse Louis Jackson, Sr., clergyman and civil rights leader, was born Jesse Louis Burns in Greenville, South Carolina, 1941.

9

Eugene Jacques Bullard, the only African American pilot in World War I, was born in Columbus, Georgia, 1894.

10

Frederick Douglass Patterson, educator and founder of the United Negro College Fund, was born in Washington, D. C., 1901.

11

Granville T. Woods patents telephone system and apparatus, patent number 371,241., 1887.

12

Wilton Norman "Wilt" Chamberlain, only player in NBA history to score 100 points in a game and average 50 points per game in a season, died, 1999.

13

Shirley Ann Caesar, hall of fame gospel singer and songwriter known as "First Lady of Gospel," was born in Durham, North Carolina, 1938.

14

At age 35, Martin Luther King, Jr. becomes youngest man ever to win Nobel Peace Prize, 1964.

15

The AL Penny Savings Bank was founded in Birmingham, AL. One of the first 3 African American owned and operated U.S. financial institutions, 1890.

16

Million Man March held in Washington, D.C., 1995.

17

Mae Carol Jemison, hall of fame astronaut, physician and the first African American woman in space, was born in Decatur, Alabama, 1956.

18

Terry McMillan, author, was born in Port Huron, Michigan, 1951.

19

Richard Arrington, Jr., the first African American Mayor of Birmingham, Alabama, was born in Livingston, Alabama, 1934.

20

Fayard Antonio Nicholas, half of the hall of fame Nicholas Brothers dance team, was born in Mobile, Alabama, 1914.

21

Valerie Thomas received patent number 4,229,761 for her invention of the Illusion Transmitter, 1980.

22

The Supremes become the first all-female music group to attain a No. 1 selling album (The Supremes A' Go-Go), 1966.

23

William A. Leidesdorff, one of the first Black settlers in CA, often called the first Black millionaire, was born in St. Croix, Virgin Islands, 1810.

24

Marjorie S. Joyner, inventor of the permanent wave machine, patent number 1,693,515, was born in Monterey, VA, 1896.

25

Emmett W. Chappelle, hall of fame scientist and researcher, was born in Phoenix, Arizona, 1925.

26

Regina Marcia Benjamin, former Surgeon General of the United States, was born in Mobile, Alabama, 1956.

27

Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. becomes first African American general in U.S. Air Force, 1954.

28

Leonard Randolph "Lenny" Wilkens, hall of fame basketball player and coach, was born in Brooklyn, New York, 1937.

29

Martha Minerva Franklin, hall of fame nurse and founder of the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses, was born in New Milford, CT, 1870.

30

Richard Arrington elected first African American mayor of Birmingham, Alabama, 1979.

31

Ethel Waters, hall of fame gospel, blues and jazz vocalist and actress, was born in Chester, Pennsylvania, 1896.



# Percy Sledge

*AN INSTANT CLASSIC*

# November

**Percy Sledge** was born in Leighton, Alabama on November 25, 1940. Growing up in rural Alabama, Sledge never imagined that a simple melody he constantly hummed would eventually lead to his first single and cement his place in music history. An instant classic considered to be one of the greatest soul ballads ever performed, "When a Man Loves a Woman", made Sledge an international superstar and in 2005 earned him a place in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Growing up in an area populated by descendants of African American sharecroppers, Sledge spent much of his early years chopping and picking cotton. Like many singing legends, his singing career started in the church. However, unlike many R&B and soul artists, his music style was also heavily influenced by country and western, partly because it was the only music his radio could pick up in Leighton. In the early sixties, he worked as an orderly at Colbert County Hospital (now the Helen Keller Memorial Hospital in Sheffield) during the week and on the weekends he performed with a local singing group, the Esquire Combo. The group performed mainly in clubs and at fraternity parties. His childhood melody was the foundation for the group's most popular song, even though the lyrics changed from venue to venue depending on the crowd.

In 1965, Sledge met and signed a contract with Quin Ivy, owner of Norala, a recording studio in Sheffield, Alabama. On February 17, 1966, Sledge had his first recording session with Ivy and guitarist Marlin Greene. Sledge's melody that had always generated so much interest was finally being recorded. Initially, the song centered around the phrase "Why Did You Leave Me". However, by the end of the session, the phrase had evolved into "When a Man Loves a Woman". Atlantic Records picked up the record and released it in the spring of 1966. The song topped Billboard's Hot 100 for two weeks and Billboard's R&B charts for four weeks and remained in the Top 100 for 16 weeks. It became the first Atlantic single to be awarded gold status by the Recording Industry Association of America on July 15, 1966. Ironically, this wasn't Sledge's favorite song on his debut album, and he did not think it would be a hit.

Over the years, Sledge had multiple hit records including: "Warm and Tender Love", "It Tears Me Up", "Out of Left Field", "Take Time to Know Her", "Cover Me", and "I'll Be Your Everything." In 1988, "When a Man Loves a Woman" was named one of the "Best 100 Singles of the Last 25 Years" by Rolling Stone magazine. In 1989, Sledge won the Rhythm and Blues Foundation Pioneer Achievement Award, and in 1993, the Alabama Music Hall of Fame presented Sledge with its Lifework Award for Performing Achievement. Sledge moved to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1996, and resides there today with his wife, Rosa.



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John H. Johnson published the first issue of Ebony Magazine, 1945.

2

President Ronald Reagan signed the legislation creating a federal Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, 1983.

3

John Baxter Taylor, Jr., the first African American to win an Olympic Gold medal, was born in Washington, D. C., 1883.

4

Barack Obama was elected the first African American President of the United States, 2008.

5

Shirley Chisolm of Brooklyn, NY, becomes the first African American woman elected to Congress, 1968.

6

James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamond Johnson compose "Lift Every Voice and Sing", widely regarded as the Black national anthem, 1901.

7

L. Douglas Wilder becomes the first African American to be elected governor in the United States, 1989.

8

Crystal B. Fauset, elected state representative in PA, becoming the first African American woman to serve in a state legislature, 1938.

9

Benjamin Banneker, mathematician, inventor, astronomer, surveyor and almanac author, was born in Ellicott's Mills, Maryland, 1731.

10

Benjamin Thornton received patent number 1,831,331 for an Apparatus for automatically recording telephone messages, 1931.

11

George R. Carruthers awarded patent 3,478,216 for his Image Converter for Detecting Electromagnetic Radiation, 1969.

12

The National Negro Opera Company was founded in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania by Mary Cardwell Dawson, 1941.

13

Whoopi Goldberg, actress, comedienne and activist, was born Caryn Elaine Johnson in New York City, 1955.

14

Condoleezza Rice, professor, diplomat and national security expert, was born in Birmingham, Alabama, 1954.

15

Lydia Newman of New York City received patent number 614,335 for a new and improved hair brush, 1898.

16

William Christopher "W.C." Handy, hall of fame blues composer and musician, was born in Florence, Alabama, 1873.

17

Samuel L. Younge, Jr., first African American college student to die in the Civil Rights Movement, was born in Tuskegee, AL, 1944.

18

Harold W. Moon, one of only two people to be enshrined in the Canadian and the Pro Football Hall of Fame, was born in Los Angeles, CA, 1956.

19

Annette Gordon-Reed, first African American to win the Pulitzer Prize for History "The Hemingses of Monticello..." born in Livingston, TX, 1958.

20

Dominique M. Dawes, member of the first U.S. women's team to win an Olympic Gold in gymnastics, was born in Silver Spring, MD, 1976.

21

George Branham, III, the first African American to win a Professional Bowlers Association title, was born in Detroit, Michigan, 1962.

22

William J. Powell, the first African American to design, build and operate his own golf course, was born in Greenville, Alabama, 1916.

23

John L. Love, received patent 594,114 for a pencil sharpener that used a crank to sharpen pencils, 1897.

24

Oscar Palmer Robertson "The Big O", hall of fame basketball player, was born in Charlotte, Tennessee, 1938.

25

Percy Sledge, hall of fame R&B and soul performer, was born in Leighton, Alabama, 1940.

26

Sojourner Truth, abolitionist and women's rights activist, died, 1883.

27

James Marshall "Jimi" Hendrix, hall of fame guitarist, singer and songwriter, was born in Seattle, Washington, 1942.

28

Berry Gordy, Jr., hall of fame record producer and founder of Motown Records, was born in Detroit, Michigan, 1929.

29

Coleman Alexander Young, the first African American Mayor of Detroit, Michigan, died, 1997.

30

James Arthur Baldwin, novelist, playwright, poet, essayist and civil rights activist, died, 1987.

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# Fred David Gray

DEFENDER OF CIVIL RIGHTS

# December

**Fred David Gray**, a native of Montgomery, Alabama, was born on December 14, 1930. He was a pivotal player in the civil rights movement, with a legal career spanning more than 59 years. One of Gray's most notable cases was *Williams v. Wallace*, in which the Court ordered the state of Alabama to protect marchers from Selma to Montgomery after protestors were beaten on Bloody Sunday. Other notable cases include *City of Montgomery v. Rosa Parks*; *State of Alabama v. Martin Luther King, Jr.*; and *Malone v. University of Alabama*. He served as counsel in the case of *Pollard, et al v. United States of America*, preserving and protecting the rights of persons involved in the infamous Tuskegee Syphilis Study in 1972.

Gray was educated at the Nashville Christian Institute in Tennessee, earned a Bachelor's Degree from Alabama State University, and a Juris Doctor degree from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. His first civil rights case was the representation of Claudette Colvin, a 15-year old African American high school student who refused to give up her seat on a city bus in Montgomery, Alabama in March 1955. He was also Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s first civil rights attorney. Gray is admitted to practice in the Supreme Court of Ohio, Supreme Court of Alabama, U.S. District Court for the Middle, Northern & Southern Districts of Alabama, U.S. Court of Appeals for Fifth, Sixth and Eleventh Circuits, and the Supreme Court of the United States.

Many of the cases Gray won may be found in most constitutional law textbooks. These cases include those listed above as well as *Aurelia A. Browder, et al v. WA. Gayle, et al* (integrated buses in the City of Montgomery); *Gomillion v. Lightfoot*, (laid the foundation for the concept of "one man, one vote"); *William P. Mitchell, et al v. Edgar Johnson, et al* (one of the first civil actions brought to remedy systematic exclusion of blacks from jury service); *Lee v. Macon County Board of Education* (integrated all state institutions of higher learning under the Alabama State Board of Education, and 104 of the then 121 elementary and secondary school systems in the state); *NAACP v. Alabama, ex rel. John Patterson, Attorney General; Dixon, et al v. The Alabama State Board of Education*; and *Franklin v. Auburn University*.

One of the first African Americans to serve in the Alabama Legislature since Reconstruction, Gray is also the first African American elected as president of the Alabama State Bar Association (2002-2003). Gray also served as the 43rd president of the National Bar Association. He is a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation, American College of Trial Lawyers, and International Society of Barristers. He served on many court-appointed committees, including the Merit Selection of Appellate Judges Committee in 2007.

He is the recipient of numerous awards including the Charles Hamilton Houston Medallion of Merit from the Washington Bar Association; Harvard University Law School's Charles Hamilton Houston Medallion; American Bar Association's Thurgood Marshall Award, and the Federal Bar Association's Sarah T. Hughes Civil Rights Award. Gray has also been featured in many publications, radio and television interviews, and serves on many boards and organizations. Gray is the recipient of many honorary degrees.

Gray is an accomplished author. *Bus Ride to Justice* was released in February 1995, and *The Tuskegee Syphilis Study* was released in May 1998. He also wrote *The Sullivan Case: A Direct Product of the Civil Rights Movement*, an article for the Case Western Reserve Law Review.

Gray is the senior partner in the law firm of Gray, Langford, Sapp, McGowan, Gray, Gray & Nathanson PC., with offices in Montgomery and Tuskegee, Alabama. He is the principal founder of the Tuskegee Human and Civil Rights Multicultural Center, in Tuskegee, Alabama, which serves as a memorial to the participants of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study and educates the public on the contributions made in the fields of human and civil rights by Americans of African, European, and Native American descent.

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Rosa Louise McCauley Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama city bus, 1955.

2

Odetta Holmes, singer, actress, songwriter, human rights activist, "The Voice of the Civil Rights Movement", died, 2008.

3

Frederick Douglass publishes first issue of North Star, 1847.

4

The American Anti-Slavery Society was founded to abolish slavery in the U.S. under the leadership of William Lloyd Garrison, 1833.

5

Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott began, 1955.

6

The Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution was adopted, 1865.

7

Comer Cottrell, businessman and founder of Pro-Line cosmetics, was born in Mobile, Alabama, 1931.

8

Sammy Davis, Jr., singer, dancer, film and stage actor, was born in New York City, 1925.

9

P.B.S. Pinchback of Louisiana becomes first African American governor in U.S., 1872.

10

Ralph J. Bunche becomes first African American awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, 1950.

11

Henrietta Bradberry, received patent number 2,390,688 for a waterproof pneumatically operated way to fire torpedoes under water, 1945.

12

George Franklin Grant received patent number 638,920 for his invention of the golf tee, 1899.

13

Jamie Foxx, stand-up comedian, actor and singer, was born Eric Marlon Bishop in Terrell, Texas, 1867.

14

Ernest Davis, hall of fame college football player and the first African American to win the Heisman Trophy, was born in New Salem, PA, 1939.

15

William A. Hinton, first African American on Harvard Medical School faculty, developer of Hinton test to detect syphilis, was born in Chicago, IL, 1883.

16

Andrew Jackson Young, Jr., first African American to be nominated as the Ambassador to the United Nations, 1976.

17

Condoleezza Rice became the first female to hold the position of United States National Security Advisor, 2000.

18

Raiford Chatman "Ossie" Davis, actor, director, playwright and social activist, was born in Cogdell, Georgia, 1917.

19

Carter Godwin Woodson, "father of Black history", educator, historian, author and journalist, was born in New Canton, Virginia, 1875.

20

South Carolina becomes the first state to secede from the Union, 1860.

21

Josh Gibson, hall of fame Negro League baseball player, was born in Buena Vista, Georgia, 1911.

22

Jerry Pinkney, award winning illustrator of children's books, was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1939.

23

Madam C.J. Walker, businesswoman and America's first self-made female millionaire, was born Sarah Breedlove in Delta, LA, 1867.

24

Ernest Nathan "Dutch" Morial, the first African American Mayor of New Orleans, Louisiana, died, 1989.

25

Cabell "Cab" Calloway III, hall of fame jazz singer and bandleader, was born in Rochester, New York, 1907.

26

John A. "Jack" Johnson, becomes first African American World Heavyweight Boxing Champion with a 14th round TKO of Tommy Burns, 1908.

27

Ruth Carol Taylor, nurse, journalist and the first African American airline stewardess in the United States, was born in Boston, Massachusetts, 1931.

28

Oscar-winning actor Denzel Washington, was born in Mount Vernon, New York, 1954.

29

Thomas J. Bradley, the first African American Mayor of Los Angeles, California, was born in Calvert, Texas, 1917.

30

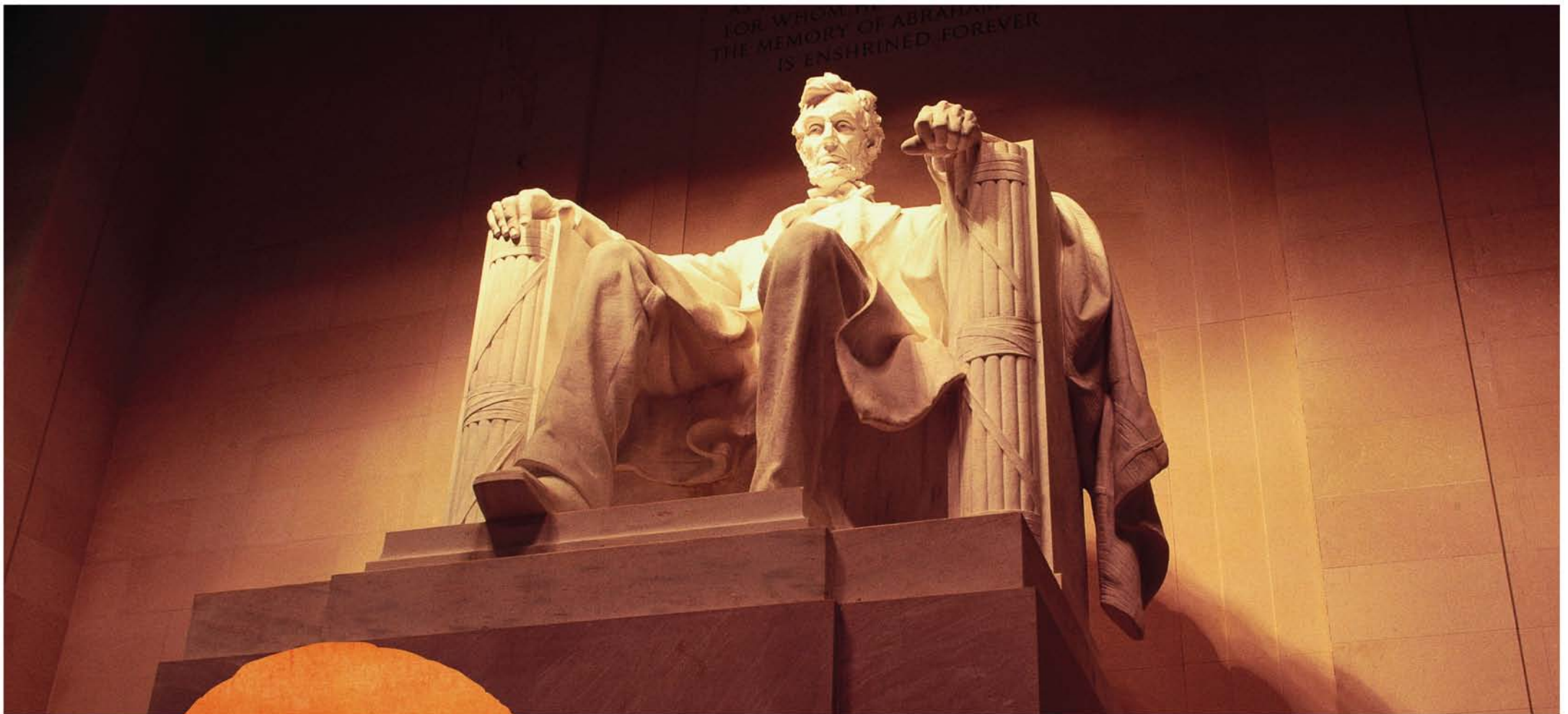
Eldrick Tont "Tiger" Woods, one of the most successful golfers of all time, was born in Cypress, California, 1975.

31

Gabrielle "Gabby" Douglas, first African American gymnast to win the Olympic individual all-around Gold medal, born in Virginia Beach, VA, 1995.

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# Equality

Progress begins with men and women of courage and conviction, whose actions inspire others and spark opportunities that echo through generations. At AT&T, we are dedicated to delivering the innovations and technologies which can help dreams become reality, for we believe each person has the potential to impact tomorrow's history, beginning today.

AT&T is pleased to present the 2015 edition of the Alabama African American History Calendar and to honor the men and women whose lives and accomplishments are highlighted in its pages.

