

## Observe Black History Month - Four Historical Facts for Black History Month

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*Photo by Glodi Miessi on Unsplash, taken at the annual Notting Hill Carnival, celebrating Black-British culture and history through dance, food and music*

As Americans, it is important to understand the history of our country and our country's people. Some of us don't know the timeline of the World Wars, or how we came to be a free country. Knowing your history is imperative, yet there are many facts and figures which have changed our history that are only half-known, and some are completely unknown.

Observe Black History Month with the knowledge from these 4 historical facts that reveal our African American history.



Goree Island, Senegal: central slave trade location

the transatlantic slave trade.

### **The Transatlantic Slave Trade**

From 1500 to 1866, the transatlantic slave trade was in full swing. New advancements for ship building and seafaring made it possible for European countries to connect to West Africa. America was a latecomer in the slave trade, with the majority of the slaves arriving between 1700 and 1866. Due to the building of plantations, a labor force was in demand, marking the beginning of what would become

More than 12 million Africans were taken from their homeland, out of which an estimated 388,000 became American slaves.

### **Buffalo Soldiers**

In the 1980s, Bob Marley wrote a song called "Buffalo Soldiers," and, as the lyrics state, these Buffalo Soldiers were stolen from Africa and brought to America, fighting for their own survival.

From 1861 to 1865, 5,000 Africans and African Americans fought in the Civil War, after which Congress passed a legislation creating a peacetime military that would protect and defend those in the south and western frontier. While it was proposed that Africans be integrated with Caucasians, the 9th and 10th cavalries were comprised solely of African soldiers, tasked with guarding the mail wagons, helping transport Native Americans, surveying, and general home guard. These cavalries were dubbed "Buffalo Soldiers" by the Native Americans, who honored the buffalo and saw them for their valor and bravery in battle.



### **Tubman and Truth Guided by God**

When we hear the names Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman, we recognize them as historical figures who fought for freedom. But, did you know their fight for freedom was inspired by God?

Born in 1797 New York, Truth was bought and sold to four different masters, who treated her cruelly. However, she found her way to God through silent sojourns in the woods. It was here that she was hit with a sudden flash of lightning, a vision, a call to freedom by God. So, she escaped from slavery with her daughter. Years after being freed, on Pentecost in 1843, Truth was struck by a spirit who told her to leave New York to lead the life of an itinerant preacher, spreading her voice of wisdom for the nation to follow Jesus, and so named herself "Truth," a Sojourner for the people.

Born in 1820 Maryland, Harriet Tubman had endured a life of severe beatings that led to brain damage. Tubman turned to God and prayed, "I trust you. I don't know where to go or what to do, but I expect you to lead me." And in 1849, Tubman escaped and headed to Philadelphia, where she was active in the Underground Railroad to help others find freedom.

In *Voices of Love from the Light*, a channeled text by Unificationist Philip Burley, Tubman comes through from the spirit world and recounts, "The voice of God spoke to me, and I followed what God directed. This helped me to find my way so that I lived with courage and determination and not in fear... I discovered there is a Christ light in each one of us, the brilliant light of God's presence." (175)



### **The Harlem Renaissance: A Cultural Hub**

In the early 20th century, Harlem, New York became an epicenter for a whole host of artists, intellectuals and businessmen, a space for identity and community reclamation in a country that was still so racially divided. Coming from the rural south, many African Americans came and settled in urban centers and attracted the creatives who were ready to depict the still virulent issues like alienation, discrimination and "otherness." Creatives like Langston Hughes, W. E. Dubois, Zora Neale Hurston, and Claude McKay were speaking for their time, depicting the African American experience in post-Civil War America. Their efforts rippled out, and to this day we still reap the benefits of their creations such as jazz.

Black History Month sheds light on the reality of discrimination, exclusion and alienation, feelings of which we may all face throughout our lives. Let's honor those who have overcome and produced so much, and whose lives and sacrifices should not be relegated to the shadows of history.