



JULY

This Month in Black History

Fact Sheet

- July 1 **Thomas Andrew Dorsey**, an American musician, composer, and Christian evangelist, who influential in the development of early blues and twentieth-century gospel music was **born (1899)**. He penned three thousand songs, a third of which were gospel, including “Take My Hand, Precious Lord” and “Peace in the Valley.”
- Benjamin Oliver Davis Sr.**, the **first African American** to achieve the rank of **brigadier general** in United States Army general, was **born (1877)**. During World War II, Davis held troubleshooting staff assignments designed to assist the expanded role of African Americans in the military, albeit in segregated units.
- Admiral Michelle J. Howard** became the **second highest-ranking officer in the Navy** when she was appointed as the **Vice-Chief of Naval Operations (2014)**. Upon her swearing-in, Howard became the highest-ranking woman in United States Armed Forces history, and the highest-ranking African American and woman in Navy history.
- July 2 **Thurgood Marshall**, who was the U. S. Supreme Court’s first African-American justice, was **born (1908)**. Marshall, prior to his judicial service, was a civil rights activist and a lawyer. He successfully argued several cases before the Supreme Court, including Brown vs. Board of Education.
- Medgar Wiley Evers**, an **African-American civil rights martyr**, Mississippi’s NAACP state field secretary, and a World War II veteran; was **born (1925)**. He worked to overturn segregation at the University of Mississippi, end the segregation of public facilities, and expand opportunities for African Americans, which included the enforcement of voting rights.
- July 4 **Mary Edmonia Lewis**, “Wildfire,” who was an American sculptor, of mixed African American and Native American (Ojibwe) heritage, was **born (1844)**. Born free in Upstate New York, she worked for most of her career in Rome, Italy. She was the **first African-American sculptor to achieve national and then international prominence**.
- John Arthur Johnson**, nicknamed the “Galveston Giant,” successfully **defended his heavyweight championship by knocking out Jim “The Great White Hope” Jeffries (1910)**. Widely regarded as one of the most influential boxers of all time, one of the period's most dominant champions, and as a boxing legend, his fight against Jeffries was dubbed the “fight of the century.”
- Benjamin Oliver Davis Jr.**, who was the **first African-American brigadier general in the United States Air Force and commander of the World War II Tuskegee Airmen**, **died (2002)**. Davis followed in his father's footsteps in breaking racial barriers, as Benjamin O. Davis Sr. was the first black general in the United States Army.
- July 5 **Frederick Douglass** gave an address at an Independence Day celebration organized by the Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society **(1852)** entitled, **“What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”** In the scathing speech, Douglass stated that “This Fourth (of) July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn.”
- July 6 **Althea Gibson** became the **first African-American woman to win Wimbledon in 1957**. In her lifetime, she won eleven Grand Slam tournaments: five singles titles, five doubles titles, and one mixed doubles title.

Louis Daniel Armstrong, nicknamed “Satchmo,” “Satch,” and “Pops,” **died (1971)**. He was an American trumpeter and vocalist who is among the most influential figures in jazz. His career spanned five decades and different eras in the history of jazz.

July 7 **Margaret Walker**, who was an African-American poet and writer, was **born (1915)**. Her most notable works include *For My People* and the novel *Jubilee*.

National Baseball Hall of Famer **Leroy Robert Paige**, better known as “**Satchel Paige**,” who was known for playing in both the Negro League and the Major League Baseball, was **born (1906)**.

July 8 **David Harold Blackwell**, who was an American statistician and mathematician who made significant contributions to game theory, probability theory, information theory, and Bayesian statistics, **died (2010)**. He was the first African American inducted into the National Academy of Sciences, the first black tenured faculty member at the University of California, Berkeley, and the seventh African American to receive a Ph.D. in Mathematics.

William Clarence Eckstine, who was an American jazz and pop singer and a bandleader during the swing era, was **born (1914)**.

July 9 **Francis Lewis Cardozo** was elected in South Carolina as Secretary of State and thereby becoming the first African American to hold a statewide office in the United States (1868). He was a well-known American clergyman, politician, and educator.

James Franklin Baskett, an American actor who portrayed Uncle Remus, singing the song “Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah” in the 1946 Disney feature film *Song of the South*, **died (1948)**. In recognition of his portrayal of the famous black storyteller, he was given an Academy Honorary Award, making him the first black, male performer to receive an Oscar.

July 10 **Mary McLeod Bethune**, an American educator, stateswoman, philanthropist, humanitarian, and civil rights activist, was **born (1875)**. Bethune founded the National Council for Negro Women in 1935, served as national adviser to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and founded Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach, Florida.

July 11 **The Niagara Movement** was founded in 1905 by a group of activists—many of whom were among the vanguard of African-American lawyers in the United States—led by W. E. B. DuBois and William Monroe Trotter. It was organized to oppose racial segregation and disenfranchisement.

July 13 **Shirley Chisholm** became the first African-American presidential nominee, with votes from 151 votes from delegates polled (1972). In 1968, she became the first black woman elected to the United States Congress.

July 14 **Sarah E. Goode**, a furniture store owner and inventor, **patented a folding cabinet bed in 1885**. Her invention was the precursor to the Murphy bed, which was patented in 1900.

July 15 **Joshua Johnston**, also known as Joshua Johnson, was a portraitist active in Baltimore, Maryland, between 1790 and 1825, and the first African American to gain recognition as an artist—obtained his freedom (1782). Primarily a painter of members of the slave-holding aristocracy, he also painted black subjects, including Daniel Coker, a founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

July 16 **Ida Bell Wells-Barnett**, an American investigative journalist, suffragist, educator, and early leader in the civil rights movement, was **born (1862)**. In 2020, Wells was posthumously honored with a Pulitzer Prize special citation “for her outstanding and courageous reporting on the horrific and vicious violence against African Americans during the era of lynching.”

July 17 On July 17, 1862, the **Second Confiscation and Militia Act** officially authorized the President to employ **Black soldiers during the Civil War**.

- July 18 **Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, South Africa's first black head of state and the first elected in a fully representative democratic election was born (1918).** A member of the African National Congress party beginning in the 1940s, prior to his ascension to the presidency, he was a leader of both peaceful protests and armed resistance against the white minority's oppressive regime in a racially divided South Africa. His actions landed him in prison for nearly three decades. Released in 1990, he participated in the eradication of apartheid and in 1994 became the first black president of South Africa, forming a multiethnic government to oversee the country's transition.
- The 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment**, an infantry regiment that saw extensive service in the Union Army during the American Civil War, made a famous charge on Fort Wagner in the Charleston, SC harbor (1863).
- July 19 **Alice Dunbar Nelson**, an American poet, journalist, and political activist was **born (1875)**. Among the first generation born free in the South after the Civil War, she was one of the prominent African Americans involved in the artistic flourishing of the Harlem Renaissance.
- July 21 **James Enos Clyburn**, a Democratic member of the United States House of Representatives from South Carolina, was **born (1940)**. He is the third-ranking Democrat in the House, currently serving as the majority whip.
- July 22 **Danny Glover**, an American actor who has starred in over seventy Hollywood films, was **born (1946)**.
- July 23 **Jackie Robinson** was inducted into the **National Baseball Hall of Fame (1962)** in Cooperstown, New York. He was the **first African American to play in Major League Baseball (MLB) in the modern era.**
- July 24 **Alexandre Dumas**, a French writer of Haitian mulatto descent, was **born (1802)**. He is one of the most widely read French authors and his historical novels of high include *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *The Three Musketeers*.
- July 25 **W.E.B. DuBois**, in **1900**, gave the closing address at the first Pan African Convention wherein he uttered one of his most quoted statements, **"The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line . . ."**
- July 26 In **1948**, President **Harry S. Truman** signed an executive order establishing the **President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services**, committing the government to integrate the segregated military.
- July 28 **The 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1868**, granted citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the United States—including formerly enslaved people—and guaranteed all citizens "equal protection of the laws."
- July 29 In **1894**, **Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin** founded the **Women's New Era Club**, a charitable organization of sixty prominent black women in Boston. Later, in **1895**, Ruffin organized and convened the first National Conference of Colored Women at the Charles Street A. M. E. Church in Boston.
- July 30 Activist and politician **Adam Clayton Powell Jr.** was **elected congressman from Harlem (1945)**. He was the first African American to be elected to Congress from New York, as well as the first from any state in the Northeast.
- July 31 **Deval L. Patrick**, the **second African American elected as a state Governor** in the history of the United States, was **born (1956)**. Patrick's 2006 election themes and slogans in his successful quest for the Massachusetts governorship served as a model for the national Obama campaign in 2008.