



SEPTEMBER

This Month in Black History Fact Sheet

September 1 **On September 1, 1975, Daniel “Chappie” James** was promoted to **the four-star rank of general, becoming the highest-ranking African American** in the history of the United States military to that date. He was assigned as commander in chief of NORAD/ADCOM at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado. In these dual capacities, he had operational command of all United States and Canadian strategic aerospace defense forces.

September 2 **James Forten, an African-American abolitionist, inventor, and wealthy businessman, was born in 1766.** Born free in the city, he became a sailmaker after the American Revolutionary War. Based on the equipment he had developed; he established a highly profitable business.

September 3 **On September 3, 1838, Frederick Douglass successfully escaped slavery.** He travelled north by train and boat. Dressed in a sailor's uniform provided to him by Anna Murray, a free black woman, who also gave him part of her savings to cover his travel costs, he carried identification papers and protection papers that he had obtained from a free black seaman.

Charles Hamilton Houston, who earned the title as “The Man Who Killed Jim Crow,” was born in 1895. He was Dean of Howard University Law School, and the NAACP’s first special counsel. Houston played a significant role in dismantling Jim Crow laws, especially attacking segregation in schools and racial housing covenants.

September 4 **Richard Nathaniel Wright (September 4, 1908 – November 28, 1960)** was an **American author** of novels, short stories, poems, and non-fiction. Literary critics believe his work, including his memoir *Native Son*, helped change race relations in the United States in the mid-twentieth century.

The Little Rock Nine was a group of nine African-American students enrolled in Little Rock Central High School. Their enrollment was followed by the Little Rock Crisis, in which the students were initially **prevented from entering the racially segregated school by Orval Faubus**, the Governor of Arkansas, **on September 4, 1957.** They then attended the school after the intervention of President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

September 5 **Claudette Austin Colvin, a pioneer of the 1950s Civil Rights Movement and retired nurse aide, was born in 1939.** On March 2, 1955, she was arrested at the age of fifteen in Montgomery, Alabama for refusing to give up her seat to a white

woman on a crowded, segregated bus. This occurred nine months before the more widely known incident in which Rosa Parks, secretary of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), helped spark the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott.

- September 6 At the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome, **Rafer Johnson became the first African American to win the gold medal in the decathlon.** He subsequently embarked on an acting career. A campaign worker on Robert F. Kennedy's presidential bid, he was present when Kennedy was assassinated in 1968 and helped to subdue the gunman, Sirhan Bishara Sirhan.
- September 7 **Paul Cuffee**, American shipowner, merchant, and Pan-Africanist who was an influential figure in the nineteenth-century movement to resettle free black Americans to Africa, **died in 1817.**
- September 8 **Horace King, an African-American architect, engineer, and bridge builder was born in 1807.** King is considered the most respected bridge builder of the nineteenth century Deep South, constructing dozens of bridges in Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi.
- September 9 **Carter G. Woodson** founded **The Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) in Chicago, Illinois, on September 9, 1915.** ASALH's official mission is to promote, research, preserve, interpret, and disseminate information about black life, history, and culture to the global community.
- September 10 **A commemorative stamp was issued by the United States Postal Service to honor Henry Ossawa Tanner,** the first African-American artist elected to the National Academy of Design in 1973.
- September 11 **J. H. Jackson was elected president of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated (NBCUSAI) at the Annual Session in Miami, Florida in 1953.** He was the pastor of Mount Olivet Baptist Church in Chicago and the longest serving President of the NBC, USA Incorporated from 1953-1982.
- September 12 **Stephen Bantu Biko**, one of the earliest icons of the South African movement against apartheid and the **"Father of Black Consciousness"** was **martyred in 1977.**
- September 13 **Alain Locke**, who was **an American writer, philosopher, educator and the first African-American Rhodes Scholar, was born in 1886.** He became known as the "Dean," the philosophical architect of the Harlem Renaissance.
- September 14 **Constance Baker Motley**, who was a **key strategist of the Civil Rights Movement**, lawyer, judge, state senator, and Borough President of Manhattan, New York City, was **born in 1921.** A former law clerk to Thurgood Marshall, she

later became the **first African-American woman appointed to the federal judiciary**, serving as a United States District Judge of the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York.

- September 15 **A white supremacist terrorist bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, occurred in 1963.** Four girls—**Addie Mae Collins** (age 14), **Carol Denise McNair** (age 11), **Carole Rosanond Robertson** (age 14), and **Cynthia Dionne Wesley** (age 14)—**were killed in the attack.** It marked a turning point in the United States during the Civil Rights Movement and contributed to support for passage by Congress of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- September 16 **B.B. King**, a famous African-American blues musician, singer-songwriter, and record producer **was born in 1925.**
- Elgin Baylor**, who was a professional basketball player, coach, and executive **was born on September 16, 1934.**
- September 17 **On September 17, 1849, Harriet Tubman**, along with her brothers Ben and Henry **escaped their Maryland plantation.** The brothers, however, changed their minds and went back. With the help of the Underground Railroad, Harriet persevered and traveled ninety miles north to Pennsylvania and freedom. Later, Tubman, called the “Black Moses,” led hundreds of slaves to freedom as a conductor on the Underground Railroad.
- September 18 **On September 18, 1895**, African-American spokesman and leader **Booker T. Washington** spoke before a predominantly white audience at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta. His “**Atlanta Compromise**” address, as it came to be called, was one of the most important and influential speeches in American history.
- September 19 **Clark Atlanta University** (CAU or Clark Atlanta) is a private Methodist historically black research university in Atlanta, Georgia. Clark Atlanta University is the first HBCU in the Southern United States. **Founded on September 19, 1865, as Atlanta University**, it consolidated with Clark College (established in 1869) to form Clark Atlanta University in 1988.
- September 20 **On September 20, 1958**, Izola Ware Curry, a 42-year-old mentally disturbed woman, **stabbed Martin Luther King, Jr.**, while he signed copies of his book, *Stride Toward Freedom*, at Blumstein’s Department Store in Harlem, New York.
- September 21 **On September 21, 1905, the Atlanta Life Insurance Company was founded.** They are the largest Black-owned stockholder insurance company in America. Founded by former slave, Alonzo Franklin Herndon, he purchased a small benevolent association for \$140, and with the acquisition and reorganization of two other companies in that year, formed the Atlanta Mutual Insurance Association.

Maria W. Stewart was the first African American woman to give a public lecture, she was also the first American woman to speak to an audience of both men and women. **On September 21, 1832, she delivered her speech “Why Sit Here and Die”** at Franklin Hall, Boston to the New England Anti-Slavery Society, an abolitionist society organized in 1831 by William Lloyd Garrison, the editor of The Liberator.

September 22 **George Washington Murray, who was elected in the 1890s as a United States congressman from South Carolina as born in 1853.** He was the only black member in the 53rd and 54th Congresses. Because South Carolina passed a constitution in 1895 that effectively disenfranchised blacks and crippled the Republican Party, Murray was the last Republican elected in the state for nearly one-hundred years.

September 23 **Amzie Moore, an African-American civil rights leader, World War II veteran, and entrepreneur in the Mississippi Delta, was born in 1911.** Although one of the lesser known Civil Rights Movement leaders, he was extremely influential in advocating and registering African Americans in Mississippi to exercise their right to vote as American citizens.

Mary Church Terrell, one of the first African-American women to earn a college degree and became known as a national activist for civil rights and suffrage was born in 1863.

September 24 **E. Franklin Frazier, who was elected as the first black president of the American Sociological Association was born in 1894.** He published numerous other books and articles on African American culture and race relations.

On Sept. 24, 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower ordered units of U.S. Army’s 101st Airborne Division to escort nine Black students, nicknamed the “Little Rock Nine,” into the previously all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. The “Little Rock Nine” attended their first full day of class on Sept. 25, 1957; and to ensure their safety, the federal officers were ordered to escort them to classes throughout the school year.

September 25 **On September 25, 1861, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles allowed the recruitment of blacks into the Navy, but only with the rank of “boy” and at a compensation of no more than ten dollars per month.** The step caused little comment, perhaps because “boys” on ships were not expected to shoot rebels or to function as part of the military establishment.

September 26 **Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, also known as Winnie Mandela, was born in 1936.** She was a South African anti-apartheid activist and politician, and the second wife of Nelson Mandela.

Serena Williams, widely regarded to be one of the greatest female tennis players of all time was born in 1981. She holds the most Grand Slam titles in singles, doubles, and mixed doubles combined among active players.

September 27 **Hiram Rhodes Revels was born on September 27, 1827.** He was an American politician, minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and a college administrator. A Republican to represent Mississippi in 1870 and 1871 during the Reconstruction era, he was **the first African American to serve in either house of the U.S. Congress.**

September 28 **David Walker, an American abolitionist, anti-slavery activist, and writer who published *An Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World in Four Articles with a Preamble, to the Colored Citizens of the World*, was born in 1796.** He used references with the Bible and the Declaration of Independence to passionately argue against slavery and discrimination.

September 29 In **1979**, while teaching at Princeton University, **Sir William Arthur Lewis won the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences**, for his pioneering research on developing nations.

Tom Bradley, who was the first, and thus far, the only African-American mayor of Los Angeles, died in 1998. His twenty years in office mark the longest tenure by any mayor in the city's history

September 30 **On September 30, 1962**, a group of marshals, including the deputy attorney general, escorted **James Meredith, the first African-American student at Mississippi State University**, to his dormitory. James Meredith officially became the first African-American student at the University of Mississippi on October 2, 1962.