



OCTOBER

## This Month in Black History

### *Fact Sheet*

- October 1 **Jerry Rescue Day** celebrates the rescue of William Jerry Henry. Known as “Jerry,” Henry was a **fugitive slave captured in Syracuse, New York, but he was freed from jail on October 1, 1851**, with abolitionists’ help. Initially, a protest against the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850—the “Jerry Rescue”—was commemorated on that day each year from 1852 to 1859, and on occasion after that time.
- October 2 On this day **in 1967, Chief Justice Earl Warren swore in Thurgood Marshall as the first black U.S. Supreme Court justice in the nation’s history**. As chief counsel for the NAACP, Marshall devised the legal strategy to end officially sanctioned racial segregation in the United States of America
- October 3 On this day **in 1904, Mary McLeod Bethune opened the Daytona Literary and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls** with \$1.50. This would become **Bethune-Cookman University**.
- October 4 On this day **in 1969, Howard N. Lee and Charles Evers were elected the first African-American mayors of Chapel Hill, N.C., and Fayette, M.S., respectively**.
- Cynthia Delores Tucker**, an American politician and civil rights activist was **born in 1927**. She had a **long history of involvement in the American Civil Rights Movement and politics**.
- October 5 **Yvonne Brathwaite Burke**, an American politician, and lawyer was born. She was the **first African-American woman to represent the West Coast in Congress**.
- October 6 **Fannie Lou Hamer**, American voting and women’s rights activist, community organizer, and leader in the civil rights movement, was born in 1917.
- October 7 **Desmond Mpilo Tutu**, a South African Anglican cleric and theologian known for his work as an **anti-apartheid and human rights activist**, was born in 1931.
- October 8 On this day **in 1941, Jesse Louis Jackson**, an American political activist, Baptist minister, and politician, was born. He was a candidate for the Democratic

presidential nomination and the founder of the organizations that merged to form Rainbow/PUSH.

**Norbert Rillieux, a French American inventor** who was widely considered **one of the earliest chemical engineers** and noted for his **pioneering invention of the multiple-effect evaporator, died in 1894.**

**Powhatan Beaty, an African American soldier, and actor, was born (1837).** He served in the Union Army's 5th United States Colored Infantry Regiment during the American Civil War throughout the Richmond–Petersburg Campaign. After all officers had been killed or wounded, he **received America's highest military decoration—the Medal of Honor**, to command his company at the Battle of Chaffin's Farm.

October 9      On this day **in 1823, Mary Ann Shadd Cary was born.** Cary was the **first black woman publisher in North America and the first woman publisher in Canada.**

October 10     On this day **in 1901, Frederick Douglass Patterson, an American academic administrator, the president of Tuskegee University (1935–1953), and founder of the United Negro College Fund (1944) was born.**

October 11     On this day **in 1940, The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF) was founded.**

October 12     On this day **in 1932, Dick Gregory was born.** Gregory was an **American comedian and a civil rights activist.**

October 13     On this day **in 1901, Edith Spurlock Sampson was born.** She was an **American lawyer and judge and the first Black U.S. delegate appointed to the United Nations.**

October 14     On this day **in 1896, Oscar McKinley Charleston was born.** He was an **American center fielder, and manager in Negro league baseball.**

**William Boyd Allison Davis was born in 1901.** He was the **first African American to hold a full faculty position at a major white university** when he joined the staff of the University of Chicago in 1942.

October 15     On this day, the **Senate voted 52–48 to confirm Clarence Thomas as an associate justice of the Supreme Court in 1991.**

October 16     **John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry was launched in 1859.** From October 16–18, 1859, the rebellion initiated a slave revolt in Southern states by taking over the United States arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia.

**Lucy Stanton Day Sessions was born in 1831.** She was an American abolitionist and the first African-American woman to finish a four-year study at a college or university (Oberlin College).

October 17     On this day **in 1957, Mae Carol Jemison was born.** Jemison became the **first black woman to travel into space** when a mission specialist aboard the Space Shuttle Endeavour.

**Elijah Eugene Cummings, an American politician and civil rights advocate who served in the United States House of Representatives for Maryland's 7th congressional district, died in 2019.** The community he represented included over half of the city of Baltimore.

**Lerone Bennett Jr. was born in 1928.** Bennett was an **African-American scholar, author, and social historian** known for analyzing race relations in the United States.

October 18     On this day **in 1958, Thomas Hearns was born.** Hearns is an **American former professional boxer who competed from 1977 to 2006.** Hearns became the first boxer to win world titles in five weight divisions: welterweight, light middleweight, middleweight, super middleweight, and light heavyweight.

**John Chavis, a free Black educator, and Presbyterian minister in the American South during the early 19th century, was born in 1763.** He fought for the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War and was the **first African American known to attend college in the U.S.**

October 19     On this day **in 1934, Richard Arrington Jr. was born.** He is the **first Black mayor of Birmingham, Alabama.** He served for twenty years—1979 to 1999.

**Johnnetta Betsch Cole was born in 1936.** Cole was the **first female African-American president of Spelman College,** a historically black college, serving from 1987 to 1997.

October 20     On this day **in 1904, Enolia Pettigen McMillan was born.** She was an American educator, civil rights activist, community leader, and the **first female national president of the NAACP.**

October 21     On this day **in 1950, the American NASA Astronaut and physicist Ronald Erwin McNair was born.** He died during the launch of the Space Shuttle Challenger on mission STS-51-L.

October 22     On this day **in 1936, Robert George Seale was born.** Seale is an **American political activist and author.** In 1966, he co-founded the **Black Panther Party with fellow activist Huey P. Newton.**

- October 23 On this day **in 1940**, the former Brazilian professional football (soccer) player **Edson Arantes do Nascimento (known as Pelé) was born.**
- October 24 On this day in **1948, Kweisi Mfume was born.** He is currently serving as the U.S. Representative for Maryland's 7th congressional district, first serving from 1987 to 1996 and since 2020.
- American businesswoman Marjorie Joyner was born in 1896.** Joyner is the first African-American woman to create and patent a permanent hair-wave machine.
- October 25 On this day **in 1958, approximately 10,000 young people, mostly of high school to college-age, marched to the Lincoln Memorial to promote the desegregation of American public schools.**
- The African American abolitionist, Civil War Union officer, and Freemason **William Dominick Matthews was born in 1829.**
- October 26 **On this day, American gospel singer Mahalia Jackson was born in 1911.** With a career spanning 40 years, Jackson was integral to developing and spreading gospel blues in black churches throughout the U.S.
- October 27 On this day **in 1922, American actress, poet, playwright, and civil rights activist Ruby Dee was born.** She originated "Ruth Younger" in the stage and film versions of *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961). Her other notable film roles include *The Jackie Robinson Story* (1950) and *Do the Right Thing* (1989).
- October 28 On this day **in 1798, the abolitionist Levi Coffin was born.** An active leader of **the Underground Railroad in Indiana and Ohio, some unofficially called Coffin the "President of the Underground Railroad,"** estimating that three thousand fugitive slaves passed through his care.
- October 29 On this day **in 1969, the ruling in the Alexander vs. Holmes County Board of Education, 396 U.S. 19 Case, the United States Supreme Court ordered immediate desegregation of public schools in the American South.** It followed fifteen years of delays in implementing Brown vs. Board of Education (1954) that stated that segregated public schools were unconstitutional.
- October 30 On this day **in 1920, the architect Benjamin F. McAdoo was born.** He established the first African American-owned architecture firm in Seattle and was the first black man to practice architecture in Washington.
- William J. Simmons, former president of the State University of Kentucky (now known as Simmons College of Kentucky), died in 1890.** In 1886, he became

the president of the American National Baptist Convention, one of the organizations to form the National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated.

October 31    On this day in **1899**, **William F. Burr** received the **patent for the switching device for railways** which improved the performance of street railways.