

# Really Good Gazette

All The Stuff That's Fun To Learn!

Black History Month Edition

Volume 008

## CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY

### African American Poets: Past and Present



#### Past:

Phyllis Wheatley is considered to be the first recognized African-American writer in America.

She came from Africa in 1761 to become a house slave for John Wheatley, a Boston merchant. John Wheatley's wife, Susanna, and their daughter, Mary, recognized Phyllis's intelligence. They taught Phyllis to read and write during a time when few African-Americans were allowed to learn. Wheatley loved to write poems and her first poem, "On Messrs. Hussey and Coffin," was published when she was only 12 years old.

#### Present:

Maya Angelou was born on April 4, 1928, in St. Louis, Missouri. Growing up, she experienced racial discrimination but



was encouraged by the traditional values of her family, community, and culture. As a teenager and young adult, Angelou was interested in the arts but did not publish her first book, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, until 1970. Since then, she has published over 30 best-selling books of poems, nonfiction, and fiction.



Bettmann/Corbis

### Father of Black History Month

When Carter G. Woodson was a boy in Virginia, he loved listening to stories. His parents used to be slaves, and they had lots of stories to share. None of the stories about African-American life could be found in books. Woodson decided to change that. He taught himself how to read and write. Eventually, he earned a PhD in history at Harvard University. In 1926, Woodson established Negro History Week to help all Americans learn about the accomplishments of African-Americans. Later, the week was expanded into Black History Month. Every February since 1976, the United States celebrates black history and the contributions African-Americans have made to this country.

### First African-American President

Barack Obama was born in 1961 in Honolulu, Hawaii. He graduated from Harvard Law School and became a civil rights lawyer. In 1996, he was elected a state senator from Illinois and went on to become a U.S. senator. In 2008, Obama decided to run for president. On January 20, 2009, Mr. Obama made history by becoming the first African-American president of the United States.



### A Peaceful Sit-In

On February 1, 1960, four African-American college students sat down at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. Ordinarily that wouldn't be courageous, but they sat where African-Americans were not allowed to sit. The four students wanted to protest segregation at the lunch counter. They were not served lunch but remained quietly in their seats until the store closed. Each day, they came back and were joined by more and more students. These peaceful sit-ins were noticed and soon spread to other states in the South. Thanks to the "Greensboro Four," Woolworth's began serving African-Americans at its lunch counter 6 months later.

### I Have a Dream

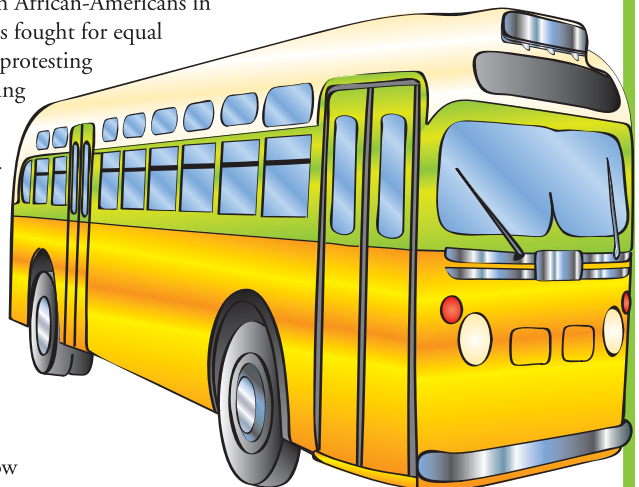


Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was an important figure in the civil rights movement. He helped bring about positive change through his speeches and the civil rights marches that he led. Dr. King encouraged nonviolent actions to create a better life for all African-Americans. In 1963, Dr. King gave a speech to civil rights marchers in Washington, D.C., where he inspired everyone by saying, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." The speech containing this line became known as the "I Have a Dream" speech and has inspired people across the nation.

### A Seat on a Bus

Rosa Louise Parks is considered to be the "mother of the modern-day civil rights movement" in America. The civil rights movement was when African-Americans in the 1950s and 1960s fought for equal rights by peacefully protesting segregation (separating races) and discrimination (unfair treatment of a group of people). In 1955, Parks was expected to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, to a white passenger, which Parks refused to do. Her courageous act helped to change how

America viewed African-Americans' rights and encouraged people to think about equal rights for all.



## Searching for Freedom

Prior to and during the Civil War, many African-Americans were slaves in the South. Some of these slaves escaped to the North, where they could be free, through a system of hiding places called the Underground Railroad. They traveled north by following the Big Dipper constellation, which they called the "Drinking Gourd". A song was created and passed from slave to slave to share the directions to freedom. Read the words, and then trace the stars to see the drinking gourd.

### Follow the Drinking Gourd

When the sun comes back and the first quail calls,  
Follow the Drinking Gourd.  
For the old man is waiting for to carry you to freedom,  
If you follow the Drinking Gourd.

The river bank makes a very good road,  
The dead trees show you the way.  
Left foot, peg foot, traveling on,  
Follow the Drinking Gourd.

The river ends between two hills,  
Follow the Drinking Gourd.  
There's another river on the other side,  
Follow the Drinking Gourd.

Where the great big river meets the little river,  
Follow the Drinking Gourd.  
For the old man is waiting to carry you to freedom,  
If you follow the Drinking Gourd.

The first verse told the slaves to escape at the end of winter and walk toward the Big Dipper constellation in the sky. They would meet up with a guide that would help the slaves with their journey.

The second verse told the slaves to follow the Tombigbee River north and to look for dead trees along the bank that were marked with drawings of a left foot and a peg foot. These markings meant the slaves were on the right trail.

The third verse told the slaves to continue following the Tombigbee River north toward the Big Dipper and then go over the hills to the Tennessee River.

The last verse told the slaves to continue walking north along the Tennessee River until they reached the Ohio River where they would meet a guide on the other side to take them to freedom.

## Let's Hear It for Sports



Jackie Robinson was the first African-American baseball player to play in a modern major league. His first game was played with the Brooklyn Dodgers on April 15, 1947. That season, Robinson led the National League in stolen bases and was named Rookie of the Year. During the next nine seasons, Robinson helped the Dodgers win six championships and a World Series, leading the way for more and more African-American athletes to play for other professional sports teams.

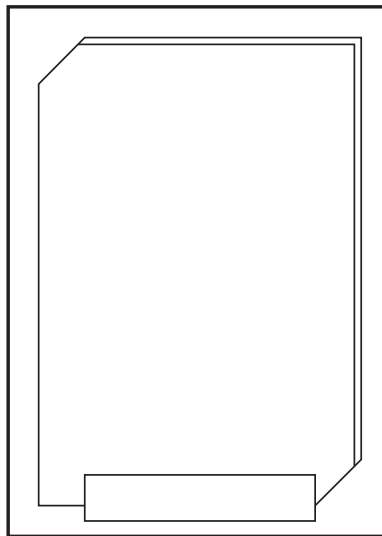
## Making a Difference with Inventions

Many African-Americans have invented things that have improved our lives. Here are a few examples:

- Alfred Cralle invented the ice-cream scoop.
- Charles Brooks invented the street sweeper.
- Dr. Patricia E. Bath invented a method of eye surgery to help some blind people to see.
- Garrett Morgan invented the first traffic light.
- George Crumb invented the potato chip.
- George Washington Carver invented peanut butter.
- John Albert Burr invented the rotary lawn mower.
- John Lee Love invented the pencil sharpener.
- Lewis Latimer invented the carbon filament that goes in a light bulb.
- Otis Boykin invented the heart pacemaker.
- Phillip B. Downing invented the drop mailbox.

## Create a Sports Card

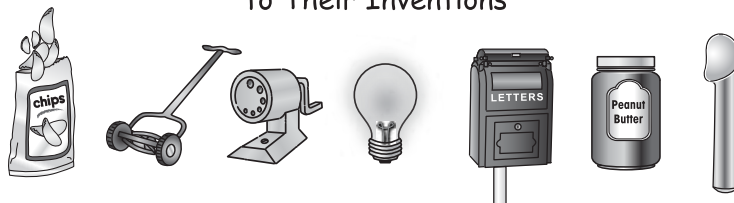
Choose a famous African-American athlete and design a players' card for that athlete using the pattern below. Some examples to choose from include: Michael Jordan, basketball; Muhammad Ali, boxing; Wilma Rudolph, track; Walter Payton, football; Serena or Venus Williams, tennis; and Debi Thomas, figure skating.



## Black History Time Line

<b>1500-1750</b>	<b>African slaves arrive in the Americas</b>
	Black Africans are kidnapped and shipped to the Americas to be sold as slaves.
<b>1840s</b>	<b>The Underground Railroad</b>
	People use their homes to help black slaves escape from the South.
<b>1863</b>	<b>The Emancipation Proclamation</b>
	President Abraham Lincoln frees all the slaves in the South.
<b>1865-1870</b>	<b>The 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution</b>
	Slavery is abolished, black Americans are made citizens, and black men are given the right to vote.
<b>1954</b>	<b>Brown v. Board of Education Decision</b>
	The U.S. Supreme Court rules that black children can now go to the same schools as white children.
<b>1955</b>	<b>Rosa Parks's Stand</b>
	Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat on a bus. The U.S. Supreme Court eventually rules that public buses cannot be segregated.
<b>1963</b>	<b>Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Speech, Washington, D.C.</b>
	Dr. King delivers his inspirational "I Have a Dream" speech to millions of civil rights marchers.
<b>1964</b>	<b>The Civil Rights Act</b>
	President Lyndon Johnson signs a law making segregation of public places and discrimination when hiring for a job illegal.
<b>1968</b>	<b>Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Assassination</b>
	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is shot and killed while standing on the balcony of his motel room in Memphis, Tennessee.
<b>2008</b>	<b>Barack Obama's Presidential Election</b>
	Barack Obama is the first African-American to be elected president of the United States.

## Match the Famous African-American Inventors to Their Inventions



John Lee Love    Phillip B. Downing    John Albert Burr    George Crumb    Alfred Cralle    Lewis Latimer    George Washington Carver