Some Significant Dates
in Black American History

1502  First Africans arrive in the New World.
1619  Twenty Africans arrive on Dutch man-of-war at Jamestown, Va.

1619-1803  Legal slave trade: 400,000 to 1 million of the 10 to 50 million Africans forcibly transported to America arrive. Others smuggled in illegally until 1860.

1662  Virginia enacts a statute making slavery hereditary, following the status of the mother.

1770  Crispus Attucks, first of five men killed in the Boston Massacre.

1787  Richard Allen and Absalom Jones found the Free African Society, precursor of the Bethel AME Church, founded in 1794.

1800  Gabriel Prosser, a Virginia slave, hanged together with a number of his followers, for plotting to lead a slave attack on Richmond, Va.

1815  Free Negro battalion fights in the Battle of New Orleans against the British.

1815  Paul Cuffee carries thirty-eight Negro immigrants to Africa at his own expense.

1817-1842  Blacks and Indians fight against federal troops in the First and Second Seminole wars.

1816-1817  American Colonization Society organized by Bushrod Washington, Henry Clay, and other whites to take blacks to Africa.

1820  Missouri Compromise enacted prohibiting slavery north of Missouri.

1822  Denmark Vesey’s slave conspiracy takes place in Charleston, S.C.

1827  Samuel E. Cornish and John Russwurm found Freedom’s Journal in New York.
1829  David Walker publishes *Walker's Appeal*, a militant antislavery pamphlet.

1831  William Lloyd Garrison founds the *Liberator*.

1831  Nat Turner's slave rebellion takes place in Southampton County, Va.

1833  Free Negroes and whites found the American Anti-Slavery Society, which meets in Philadelphia.

1834  Prudence Crandall's School for Negroes attacked by citizens and closed by local authorities in Canterbury, Conn.

1838  *Mirror of Liberty*, the first black magazine, begins publication in New York City.

1849  Benjamin Roberts loses court challenge to segregation in Boston schools.

1852  Publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

1853  Publication of *Clotel*, the first novel by a black American, William Wells Brown.

1857  The Supreme Court decides *Dred Scott v. Sanford*.

1858  William Wells Brown publishes the first American black-authored play, *The Escape*.

1859  Martin R. Delany and Robert Campbell lead the Niger Valley exploring party to explore possible settlements of American blacks in Africa.


Jan. 1863  Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation.

Mar. 1863  First National Draft Act passed; does not exclude blacks.

Mar. 1865  Freedman's Bureau Act, including provision for land for the freedmen, passed.

Apr. 1865  Opening of the government-chartered Freedmen's Bank; goes bankrupt after being milked by directors in June, 1874.

Dec. 1865  Ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery.

Apr. 1866  Civil Rights Act passed by Congress, giving black citizens civil rights equal to those of whites.

Mar. 1867  Reconstruction Act, including voting rights for blacks, passed by Congress.
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July 1868  Ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment protecting civil rights from state interference.
1869  First of twenty blacks to serve in the House of Representatives during Reconstruction seated.
1870  Hiram Revels elected to the Senate from Mississippi.
Mar. 1870  Ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment prohibiting denial of the right to vote on the grounds of race or previous condition of servitude.
1873–1879  Exodus of blacks from the South to Kansas.
1874  Blanche K. Bruce elected to the Senate from Mississippi, the only black elected to a full term until 1966.
1875  Civil Rights Act providing equal public accommodations passed by Congress.
1877  Reconstruction ends with withdrawal of the last federal troops from the South.
1881  Booker T. Washington founds Tuskegee Institute.
1883  Civil Rights Act of 1875 declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.
1895  Frederick Douglass dies February 20.
1896  Plessy v. Ferguson decided by the Supreme Court, approving separate but equal facilities.
June 1898  Ninth and Tenth Cavalry, two of four black regiments in the Regular Army, and Theodore Roosevelt’s Rough Riders at San Juan Hill during the Spanish-American War.
1900  Booker T. Washington founds the National Negro Business League.
1905  W. E. B. Du Bois, Monroe Trotter, and others found the Niagara Movement to fight for civil rights.
1906  Brownsville, Texas, shooting incident involving black troops.
1909  Springfield, Ill., lynching and subsequent white attacks in black neighborhoods leads to founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.
1910 W. E. B. Du Bois starts *Crisis* as the official NAACP publication.

1915 NAACP wins *Guinn v. U.S.*, finding use of the grandfather clause to qualify voters unconstitutional.


1915 Ghanaian Alfred Sam leads black emigration movement to Africa from black towns organized earlier in Oklahoma.

1916 Marcus Garvey arrives in New York from Jamaica and founds the Universal Negro Improvement Association.

1917 Houston, Texas, shooting incident involving black troops.


1925 A. Philip Randolph organizes the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids.

1928 Oscar DePriest elected to Congress, the first black since the term of George White of North Carolina ended in 1901.

1930 Black Muslims founded by W. D. Fard, succeeded by Elijah Muhammad in 1934.

1935 National Council of Negro Women founded with Mary McLeod Bethune as president.

1941 A. Philip Randolph's threat of a march on Washington leads Roosevelt to issue Executive Order 8802.

1946 *Ebony* magazine started by John Johnson.

1949 Secretary of Defense Lewis Johnson issues orders to desegregate opportunities in the military service.

1950 Ralph Bunche becomes the first black man to receive Nobel Peace Prize.

1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decided by Supreme Court.

1955 Court order requiring desegregation with all deliberate speed issued in the Brown case by the Supreme Court.

1956 Montgomery, Ala., bus boycott led by Martin Luther King, Jr.
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1956 Atherine Lucy expelled from the University of Alabama.

1957 Eisenhower orders use of troops in enforcing Little Rock, Ark., school desegregation.

1957 Congress passes the Civil Rights Act creating the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and a Civil Rights Division in the Justice Department.

1960 Sit-ins at lunch counters in Greensboro, N.C.

1961 W. E. B. Du Bois joins the Communist party, renounces his U.S. citizenship, and moves to Ghana.

1961 CORE Freedom Rides in interstate transportation.

1962 Mississippi officials attempt to keep James Meredith out of the University of Mississippi; leads to violence.

1963 Assassination of Medgar Evers, leader of the NAACP in Mississippi.


Sept. 1963 Four black children killed in bombing of a black church in Birmingham, Ala.

1964 Civil Rights Act creating the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and ending discrimination in public accommodations, passed by Congress.

July 1964 Lemuel Penn shot by the Ku Klux Klan while driving along a road in Georgia.

Aug. 1964 Three civil rights workers—James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman—murdered in Mississippi; bodies found.

Oct. 1964 Martin Luther King, Jr., receives the Nobel Peace Prize.


Aug. 1965 Riot set off by police arrest in Watts, Los Angeles, Calif.

1965 Robert C. Weaver appointed Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the first black cabinet officer.

June 1966 On the march for freedom from fear led by James Meredith in Mississippi, "Black Power" slogan attributed to Stokely Carmichael, head of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee.
1966  Edward Brooke of Massachusetts elected to the Senate, the first black elected since Reconstruction.

1966  Founding of the Black Panther party by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale in Oakland, Calif.

June 1967  Muhammad Ali convicted for draft evasion and his heavyweight boxing title taken away. After he wins on appeal, he has to fight George Foreman three years later to win back the title.

1967  In *Loving v. Virginia* Supreme Court declares illegal the ban on interracial marriage.


Apr. 4, 1968  Martin Luther King, Jr., assassinated.

1971  Jesse Jackson founds Operation PUSH.


1978  *Bakke v. University of California* decided by Supreme Court. Racial quotas cannot be used in university admissions decisions, but race may be taken into account.

1979  *Weber v. Kaiser Aluminum* decided by Supreme Court. Voluntary agreements to give preferential training opportunities to blacks in an industry are legal.
