



FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH

February is designated as African/Black History Month in North America. The idea to set aside time to remember the achievements of Blacks was initiated by an Afro-American historian Carter G. Woodson in the 1930's, and was referred to as "Negro History Week".

February was chosen because of the birth dates of two key men in the emancipation of African Americans -the great Black Abolitionist and nationalist: Frederick Douglas, and President Abraham Lincoln, who signed the Emancipation Proclamation during the American Civil War--freeing the slaves. Even though Lincoln's real intention was to save the Union, slaves gained freedom in the process.

The name Black History Month was adopted in the 1960's in keeping with black consciousness movement. The month of February was kept because it has other historical dates of importance to African Americans. Today, the focus of the month has shifted from concentrating on Black historical achievements, to the global liberation of African people. Even though the evolution of mankind and early civilizations originated out of Africa, the continent and its people have generally been ignored. Consequently, many scientific breakthroughs made by Africans have generally benefited others at the expense of the indigenous African populations.

The Ontario Historical Society formed in 1978, has been at the forefront of promoting Black History Month in Canada. In 1996 the House of Commons in Ottawa unanimously passed a motion by Jean Augustine, M.P. (Metro Toronto) to note "the important contribution of Black Canadians to the settlement, development and growth of Canada, the diversity of the Black community in Canada and its importance in the history of this country, and recognize February as Black History Month". February is now National Black History Month, and we use this occasion to celebrate a community that has been in Canada since 1604.

There is debate whether February should be called "Black or African History Month. Most progressive Africans are moving away from the "colour" label and starting to refer to it as African History Month. But, whatever it is called, it is contingent on what the community considers itself to be, and the significant thing to be asked when February ends, is whether the focus for human rights and dignity end along with it?



FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH -- SOME INTERESTING NOTES AND FACTS

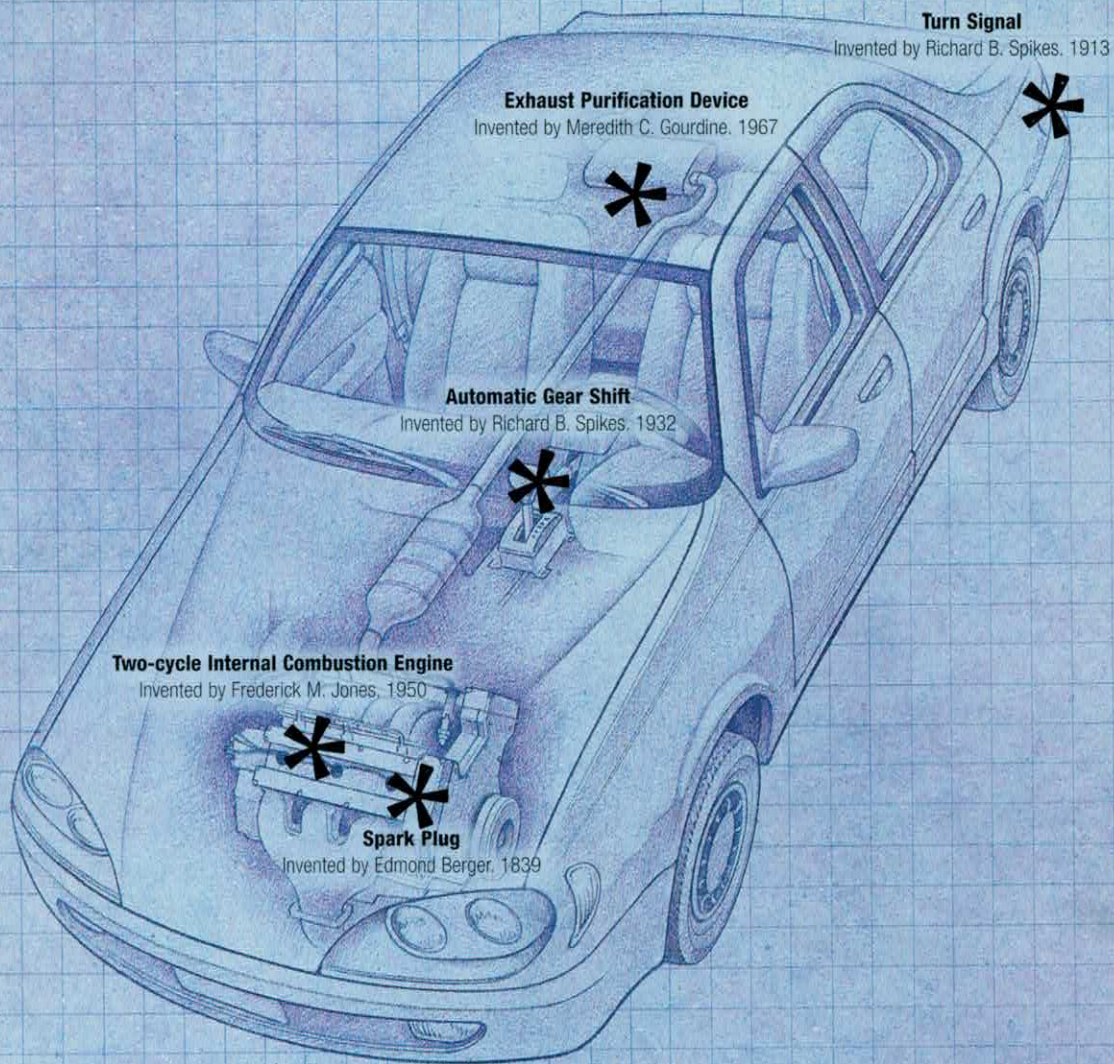
Historian Carter G. Woodson initiated 'Negro History Week' in 1926 to heighten awareness of Black History in the United States of America, and honour the accomplishments of African-Americans. The name Black History Month (BHM) was adopted in 1976. The Ontario Historical Society formed in 1978 was at the forefront of promoting BHM in Canada, and Parliament officially recognized February as BHM in 1995.

Did you know that...

- Pedro Alonso Nino, a Black man was on Christopher Columbus' ship on the first Spanish voyage to the New World -1492
- Sailors of African descent accompanied Balboa, Cortes, Ponce de Leon and other early European explorers to America
- The importation of Africans as slaves to the Americas began in the early 1500s.
- Mathieu da Costa, the first Black man to visit Canada travelled on Champlain's expedition in the Atlantic region in 1604.
- The first recorded slave purchase in New France (Quebec) was in 1628 for a boy (Olivier Le Jeune) from Madagascar.
- In 1685, "Code noir" or the "Black Code" became law and provided elaborate guidance on topics such as the sale of slaves, their religious instruction, training, and disposition of their offspring.
- Slavery became legal in Quebec in 1709.
- The British Parliament passed an act abolishing slavery in all British territories on August 28, 1833.
- July 31, 1834, slavery came to an end in British North America.
- Harriet Tubman began the Underground Railroad across the USA border into Canada to free slaves in 1851.
- The Emancipation Proclamation was passed in the United States of America in 1863
- In 1909, Matthew Henson, a Black guide for Robert Perry was the first person to reach the Geographic North Pole.

Some African-American Inventions:

- The portable X-ray machine, truck refrigerator systems & starting gasoline motor were invented by Frederick Jones
- Dr. Charles Drew "father of blood banks" discovered ways of preserving plasma.
- Dr. Daniel Hall Williams first performed open-heart surgery successfully
- The self-lubricating machine was invented by Elijah McCoy, born in Ontario, Canada to freed slaves from the USA. The term 'Real McCoy' used to refer to the 'real thing' or genuine parts comes from the quality of his invention.
- Practical incandescent light-bulb filaments were invented by Lewis Latimer.
- The control unit used in pace-makers, chemical air-filters, and electronic devices for radios, Televisions and other electronic equipment were invented by Otis Boykin.
- John Stanard invented the Refrigerator
- The electric incubator, automatic air brake, telephone receiver, and the device to power trains by electricity rather than steam were invented by Granville T. Woods.
- George Sampson created the clothes dryer.
- Norbet Rillieux automated sugar refining
- Jan Matzeliger invented a machine that made mass production of shoes possible
- Peanut butter, linoleum, fuel briquettes, synthetic rubber and synthetic marble are some of the many inventions/ discoveries by George Washington Carver.
- The spark plug was invented by Edmond Berger in 1839.
- Alexander Miles invented the automatic sliding doors for the elevator
- The turn signal was invented by Richard B. Spikes in 1913. He also invented the automatic gear shift.
- The two-cycle internal combustion engine was invented by Frederick M. Jones
- The exhaust purification device was invented by Meredith Gourdine in 1967.
- Dr. Mark Dean developed the systems that led to the modern day personal computer.
- Garrett Augustus Morgan invented the automatic traffic light, gas-mask, safety hood, and hair-straightener.
- Benjamin Bannaker invented the first clock in the United States of America.



There's a part of black history
in every automobile.

Toyota recognizes that African American automotive inventors have always been a big part of our success. That's why we sponsor the Los Angeles Urban League Automotive Training Center. Because our past is the blueprint for our future.

