

# History Offers Wealth Of Material For Observance Of Negro History Week Which Begins February 10

## Highlights On Last Year's Observance Are Recalled

By THOMAS L. DABNEY  
"What consolation, then, does the Muse of History offer the troubled souls of black folks? The reason references in Holy Writ are sufficient to show that the Ethiopians were a people of great wealth and military power in ancient times; Simon, the African, assisting Christ to bear the Cross; the high treasurer of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia; reading the Scriptures and reaching the conclusions, under Philip's guidance, that Jesus was the Son of God; and David's exuberant declaration that 'Princess shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God,' are luminous rays from the torch of sacred history that fall athwart the black man's troubled path; profane history seems to have reached us as the one-sided chronicles of Aryan prejudice."

Thus spoke Dr. C. V. Roman, dean of Negro physicians and a noted historian, on many occasions. This conviction led the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, directed by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, to inaugurate Negro History Week in 1926. Since that time it has become an annual observance and "has helped to arouse the people to a keener appreciation of the contribution of the Negro to civilization."

### Methods of Observance

The various methods by which Negro History Week is now observed is strikingly illustrated by last year's observance. The programs included a variety of features and covered a wide area reaching from Boston to New Orleans and from New York to California. There were mass meetings, special exercises at school and college assemblies, art exhibits, book gifts to libraries, plays, and special lectures on the life and achievements of the race.

A unique feature of the observance was the administration of the duties of the officials of Atlantic City by a staff of 100 Negro high school students for one hour under the sponsorship of the Board of Trade of that city. In Washington, D. C., "The Jealousy of the Blind Man" and dramatic sketches from the lives of interesting Negro personalities such as Phyllis Wheatley, Harriett Tubman, Benjamin Banneker, and Crispus Attucks, were presented at the Children's Theatre where mere tots participated on the program under the direction of Miss Gertrude McBrown. Baltimore observed the week with three plays and is giving plans again this year during the national observance.

### Wealth of Information

There is a wealth of information which can be called from the history of the Negro for the observance of Negro History Week. Whether we turn to Africa of centuries ago or to more recent events in the life of the race in America we can find material for the inspiration and edification of our youth.

Turning the musty pages of African history we discover a people who were the first to develop trial by jury and to discover iron and with it fashion out beautiful things of art and usefulness. They were the first, we are told to domesticate animals. Before the Africans knew about the European system of writing and printing, the Vai tribe and the natives of the Cameroon had a written language. Leaders of various expeditions in Africa have marveled at the discoveries which indicate that the Africans in many instances had well organized and stable governments based on law and order.

### Helped Discover America

Negroes participated in the discovery of America. They came

here with Columbus, Balboa, Ponce de Leon, De Soto and other early explorers. A Negro with Cortez planted the first wheat produced in America. A Negro, Little Stephen, was a leader in the famous Spanish exploration of that section of our country now known as Arizona and New Mexico.

Negroes played a conspicuous part in Wolfe's triumph over Montcalm at Quebec. George Washington was assisted by 4,000 Negroes in the American Revolution for which a Negro, Crispus Attucks was the first American to shed his blood on Boston Commons, in 1770. There were 178,000 Negro soldiers in the Civil War and since that time Negroes have participated with valor and great credit in the wars in which this country engaged.

On the more constructive side,

American Negroes have to their credit such persons as Benjamin Banneker, inventor of the clock and almanac; Jan Metzinger, inventor of a machine for lasting shoes; Dr. George Carver, agricultural chemist, who has discovered 180 ways to use the peanut and sweet potato for valuable by-products; Dr. D. H. Williams, who performed the first successful operation on the human heart.

### Spingarn and Harmon Award

Since the first Spingarn award was made to Prof. E. E. Just, head of the department of physiology of Howard University on February 12, 1915, the award has been made to 18 other distinguished Negroes for the highest achievement in some field of endeavor. The Harmon award has been made to a large number of Negroes for achievements in science, literature, education, music, fine arts, industry

## Suggestions Listed For Model Program During Week

and business, race relations, and religious service.

Individual success stories among Negroes have increased rapidly within the past ten years. Outstanding among these are William G. Hayes, chemist, who was employed for two years during the World War as a chemist for a wholesale drug house in Omaha, Nebraska; E. Simms Campbell, who does cartoons and art work for Life, Opportunity, Esquire, and other magazines; and Walter Arthur Gordon, one time popular assistant coach of the football team of the University of California, where he won his A. B. degree in 1918.

Elmer Smith, who developed great efficiency as a radio technician, rose in five months from radio operator to chief technician with the Canadian Navigation Company of Belize, Honduras. In the field of civil engineering Charles Sumner Duke has an excellent record. Sinclair Jeter, artificial limb maker, of Dover Plains, New York, achieved quite a distinction at his trade.

### Others Who Achieved

The black and white world is well acquainted with the success of Roland Hayes, tenor; Paul Robeson, bass; Marion Anderson, Ethel Waters, Joseph Douglass, Clarence Cameron White, Etta Moton, Louise Beavers, James Weldon Johnson, first Negro to lecture regularly at New York University, William Stanley Braithwaite, Henry O. Tanner, Maggie L. Walker, R. R. Moton, Major R. R. Wright, A. Phillip Randolph, Rudolph Fisher, Richard R. Harrison, Florence Mills, Charles Gilpin, Bert Williams, Josephine Baker, Mordecai W. Johnson, Mary McCloud Bethune, Laura Wheeler Waring, W. E. B. DuBois, R. Nathaniel Dett, Max Yergan, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Palmer C. Hayden, Archibald Motley, Jr., Harry T. Burleigh, P. B. Young, Sr., Robert S. Abbott, Robert L. Vann and others.

Arthur H. Mitchell, Democrat, first Illinois congressional district, is our first Negro Democratic member of Congress. On November 6, when he was elected to Congress, Negro candidates were elected to the legislatures of eight states. From 1868 to 1901 there were two Negro senators in Congress—Hiram R. Revels, of Mississippi, and Blanche K. Bruce, also from Mississippi, and 21 members of the House of Representatives, the last Negro until the election of Oscar DePriest in 1928 was George H. White who left Congress in 1901.

### Material For Celebrations

There is more material for use for the proper observance of Negro History Week now than there was in 1926 when the first observance was held. For public and private schools and clubs and small groups "America's Tenth Man" distributed by the Commission on Interracial Cooperation at Atlanta, Ga.; annual pamphlets distributed by the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1538 Ninth St., N. W., Washington, D. C.; "He Crashed the Color Line," a pamphlet by the National Urban League; pamphlets by the Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia, Pa.; and similar material by the Federal Council of Churches in America, are suitable for use for special programs and papers on the Negro.

Books suitable for additional material are "The Negro in Africa," "The Negro in the Discovery and Exploration of America," "Negro Labor in the United States," "The Negro Inventor," "The Negro Soldier," "The Negro Poet," "The Negro in Art," "The Negro Spokesman," "The Negro Press," "The Negro in Business," "The Negro in the Professions," "The Educa-

tion of the Negro Prior to 1861," "History of the Negro Church," all of which may be obtained from Dr. Carter G. Woodson in Washington, D. C.

### Books Available

Other books especially suitable for elementary school exercises are "Negro Makers of History," "African Myths," "For Freedom," "What the Negro Thinks," "Black Manhattan," "The Gift of Black Folk," and "Women Builders." All these books may be secured from Dr. Carter G. Woodson, 1538 Ninth St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Certain definite things should be done during the week besides speech-making. They include the organization of the community for a creditable celebration. An appeal might be made to the local and state school board for the adoption of textbooks on Negro history and Negro literature and art.

Books might be donated to the local community and school libraries treating various aspects of Negro life and history together with pictures of interesting and outstanding Negro leaders and movements. One day might be set aside as a book and picture fund day when citizens will be called upon to assist in raising money for books and pictures dealing with Negro life and history. Visits should be made to Negro businesses.

Everyone is urged to send to the History Association for any impor-

tant facts and documents about Negro families in the community or any data bearing on Negro life and history. Further interested persons should form a committee for the establishment of a branch of the association. Another very important aspect of the observance might be the raising of funds for the association. In the public schools a penny from each child and ten cents from each teacher during the week would help considerably to swell the funds of the organization for research work. And a summary of what leading groups do in observance of other localities.