

# Diversity Digest



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# Message From The Chief Diversity Officer

Black History Month is not only a time to recognize and focus on the unique history and contributions of the Black/African American community and understand that Black/African American history is American history, but also a time for self-reflection. Within the context of Black/African American history, we strive to understand the resilience and struggles in the face of oppression and discrimination by Black/African Americans. It is an opportunity to think about the community we live in and want in the future.

Throughout February as well as throughout the year, celebrate Black History Month. The national theme for Black History Month is "African Americans and the Arts" to recognize the impact of Black, African Americans on the visual arts, music, culture and much more. I call the Gonzaga University community to celebrate and study the history of Black/African Americans in February, throughout the year, and every year including the contributions made to the arts. Enjoy events, lectures, and presentations throughout the month and year and celebrate "African Americans and the Arts."

Please see our "Education Corner" in this month's Diversity Digest to learn more about Black History and Black, African Americans in the arts, who have and still do drive much of the American story, history, and culture.

A prayer for Black History Month and the year:

Most Loving and Merciful God,

In whose law we find our guidance, in whose Love we find our healing and joy, and in whose will, we find our peace, rule over our spirits in this hour that we will go from this worship with the freedom of those who trust you and need have no anxiety for themselves. Empower us, O God to be open to the seasons of life and give of our hearts Love generously to all in need. Grant us the silence of heart so that we can grow in your word.

As we go through this worship today and culminate what we call "Black History Month," help us to never forget our history and instill in us the willingness to share our history with our youth and others throughout the year.

Now Lord God, fill us with the solemnity of the faith of the great commission; but also provide us with the means and the will to stay in Loving and Joyous relationships with one another and the world. We ask a special blessing for our pastor who will bring the message by sharing historical reflections.

Lord, we praise and adore you and we thank you for the joy we have in worshipping you in spirit and in truth.

In your name we pray,

Amen. -Author Unknown

Robin Kelley, Ph.D.  
Chief Diversity Officer



# Black History Month

The theme for 2024's Black History Month is "African Americans and the Arts." As a nation and as a campus, we are called to explore the enormous impact that Black artists have had on so many parts of our lives. From tap dance to break-dancing, jazz music to hip-hop, the Harlem Renaissance to slam poetry, African American art has been uniquely influential to all forms of media that we enjoy, and yet uniquely under-recognized for the way in which it has shaped popular culture. This month, the Office of Inclusive Excellence invites you to learn more about Black artists, musicians, dancers, and writers and we've compiled a list of short biographies and performances for you to enjoy! We also encourage you to check out the "What's Poppin'?" section of the digest to find campus and local events to delve in deeper.

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[Gregory Hines](#) (February 14, 1946 – August 9, 2003) was an American dancer, actor, choreographer, and singer. He is one of the most celebrated tap dancers of all time. Hines was an avid improviser of tap steps, tap sounds, and tap rhythms alike. His improvisation was like that of a drummer, doing a solo and coming up with rhythms. He also improvised the phrasing of a number of tap steps, mainly to fit the unfolding sound.

Although he inherited the roots and tradition of Black rhythmic tap, he also promoted the new Black rhythmic tap. "He purposely obliterated the tempos," wrote tap historian Sally Sommer, "throwing down a cascade of taps like pebbles tossed across the floor. In that moment, he aligned tap with the latest free form experiments in jazz and new music and postmodern dance."

[Watch Gregory Hines perform a Tribute to Gene Kelly at the 1982 Kennedy Center Honors](#)

[Savion Glover](#) (born November 19, 1973) is an American tap dancer, actor, and choreographer. Glover stated that his style is "young and funk." When asked to describe what funk is, he says it is the bass line. "Funk is anything that gets one's head on beat. It is riding with the rhythm. It is a pulse that keeps one rolling with the beat." Gregory Hines, a tap legend, was one of Glover's tap teachers. Hines stated that "Savion is possibly the best tap dancer that ever lived." Glover liked to start his pieces with some old school moves from famous tappers and then work his way into his own style. Hines said it is like paying homage to those he respects.

[Watch Savion Glover Perform His Piece "Please Don't Shoot"](#)



# Black History Month

[Patricia Smith](#) (born 1955) is an American poet, spoken-word performer, playwright, author, writing teacher, and former journalist. She is a four-time individual National Poetry Slam champion and appeared in the 1996 documentary *SlamNation*, which followed various poetry slam teams as they competed at the 1996 National Poetry Slam in Portland, Oregon. Patricia Smith is hailed as the first African-American woman to publish a weekly metro column for the *Boston Globe*. Her many accomplishments include a Guggenheim fellowship, acceptance as a Civitellian, a National Endowment for the Arts grant recipient, and two-time winner of the Pushcart Prize. She is a former fellow of Yaddo and the MacDowell Colony, and she is the most successful poet of the National Poetry Slam competition. Currently, Smith is a professor at the Lewis Center for the Arts at Princeton University, a core faculty member in the MFA program at Sierra Nevada University, and a resident in VONA and in the Vermont College of Fine Arts Post-Graduate Residency Program.



[Watch Patricia Smith perform her poem "My Son" at the National Poetry Slam in 2000](#)

[Esperanza Spalding](#) (born October 18, 1984) is an American bassist, singer, songwriter, and composer. Her accolades include five Grammy Awards, a Boston Music Award, a Soul Train Music Award, and two honorary doctorates: in 2018 from her alma mater Berklee College of Music and in 2022 (along with Charles Lloyd and Wayne Shorter) from CalArts. From Portland, Oregon, Spalding began playing music professionally in her childhood, performing as a violinist in the Chamber Music Society of Oregon at age five. She was later both self-taught and trained on other instruments, including guitar and bass. Her proficiency earned her academic scholarships to Portland State University and the Berklee College of Music, both of which she attended, studying music.



[Watch esperanza spalding's Tiny Desk \(Home\) Concert from 2022](#)



# Education Corner

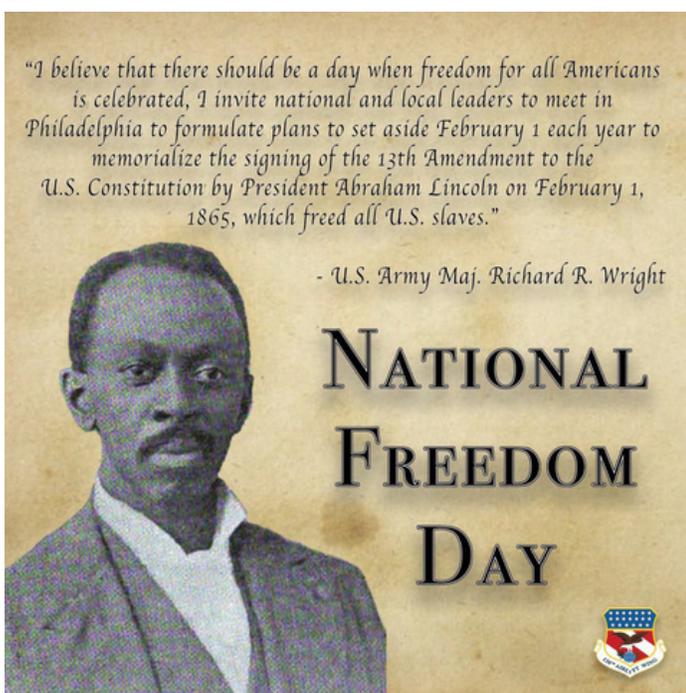
## Significant Dates in Black History Month

### February 1: Freedom Day

“...Congress adopted a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution which would outlaw slavery in the United States...the resolution was signed by President Lincoln on February 1, 1865, and thereafter led to the adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment to the constitution; and...by a joint resolution approved June 30, 1948 (62 Stat. 1150), the Congress authorized the President to proclaim the first day of February of each year as National Freedom Day in commemoration of the signing of the resolution of February 1, 1865.

...and the Government and people of the United States wholeheartedly support the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948, which declares that "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world"..

Now, Therefore, I, Harry S. Truman, President of the United States of America, do hereby designate February 1, 1949, and each succeeding February 1, as national Freedom Day; and I call upon the people of the United States to pause on that day in solemn contemplation of the glorious blessings of freedom which we humbly and thankfully enjoy.” - Harry S. Truman ([Link to Full Proclamation](#))

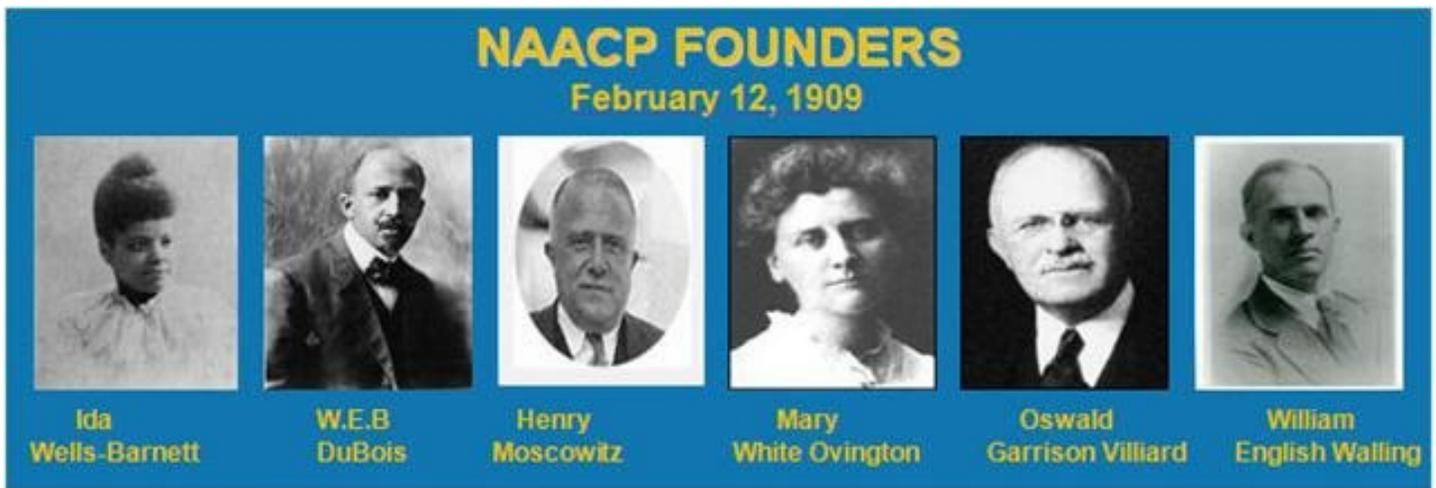


# Education Corner

## Significant Dates in Black History Month

### February 12th: NAACP Day

“In 1908, a deadly race riot rocked the city of Springfield, eruptions of anti-black violence – particularly lynching – were horrifically commonplace, but the Springfield riot was the final tipping point that led to the creation of the NAACP. Appalled at this rampant violence, a group of white liberals that included [Mary White Ovington](#) and Oswald Garrison Villard (both the descendants of famous abolitionists), William English Walling and Dr. Henry Moscowitz issued a call for a meeting to discuss racial justice. Some 60 people, seven of whom were African American (including [W. E. B. Du Bois](#), Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and Mary Church Terrell), signed the call, which was released on the centennial of Lincoln's birth...”



“On February 12, 1909, the nation's largest and most widely recognized civil rights organization was born. Echoing the focus of Du Bois' Niagara Movement for civil rights, which began in 1905, NAACP aimed to secure for all people the rights guaranteed in the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the United States Constitution, which promised an end to slavery, provide equal protection of the law, and the right for all men to vote, respectively. Accordingly, the NAACP's mission is to ensure the political, educational, equality of minority group citizens of States and eliminate race prejudice. The NAACP works to remove all barriers of racial discrimination through democratic processes.” ([Link for more information](#))

# Education Corner

## Significant Dates in Black History Month

### February 14th: Black Literacy Day

“Chicago’s only Black woman-owned bookstore opened in the summer of 2019. Since then, Semicolon bookstore owner DL Mullen continued to find ways to give back to her community. She launched a fundraiser called #ClearTheShelves, which strives to encourage a life-long love of reading by giving free books to Chicago students - their first event was in May 2021. But that’s not all! Mullen has been pushing for a national holiday to celebrate these efforts and support readers in low-literacy communities. She has carefully selected Valentine’s Day, hoping people will spread the love. It also falls on Frederick Douglass’ birthday, as well as being at the center of Black History Month. In 2021, she received the support of Chicago Mayor Lightfoot, who issued an official proclamation. Since then, February 14th has served as National Black Literacy Day.” ([Link to Full LitHub Article](#))



“The idea for NBLD came about as our focus began to center more on literacy rates. The racial inequity that educational gaps create can begin to be solved by observing a community’s connection to reading, and we wanted a big way to combat that. We began working on it in January of 2021, after our holiday rush, and crossed our fingers hoping people would actually take us seriously.” - DL Mullen

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To learn more, visit: [History of Black History Month](#), [The Origins of Black History Month](#), [Black History Month Themes](#), and [BlackHistoryMonth.gov](#).

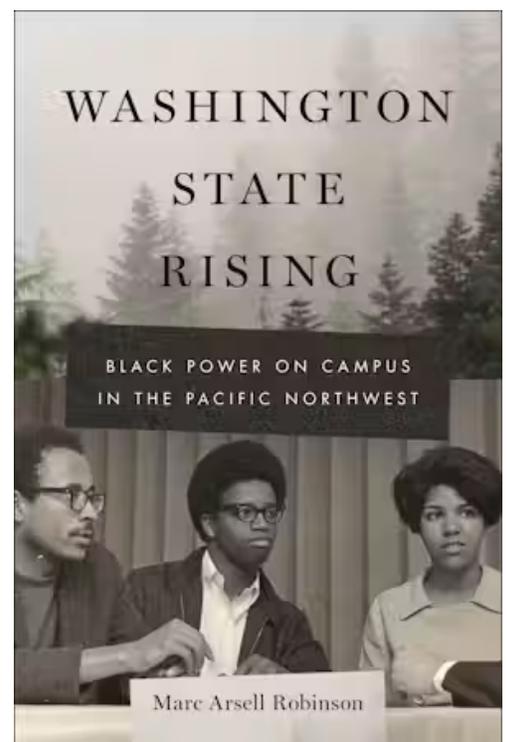
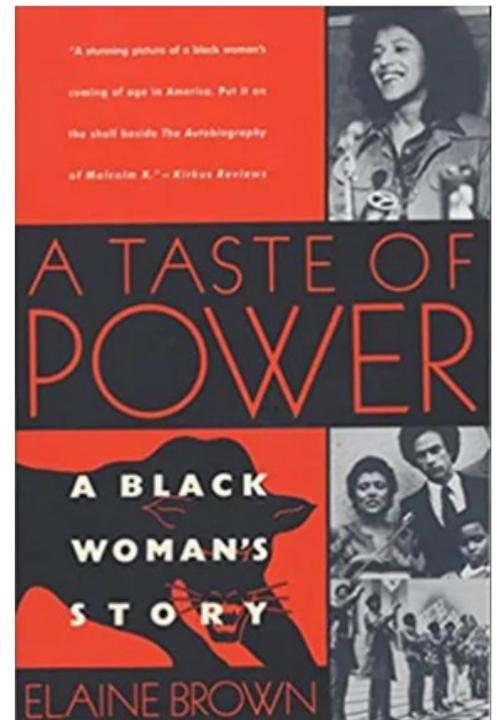
# Media Recommendations

**[A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story](#)**: Elaine Brown assumed her role as the first and only female leader of the Black Panther Party with these words: “I have all the guns and all the money. I can withstand challenge from without and from within. Am I right, Comrade?” It was August 1974. From a small Oakland-based cell, the Panthers had grown to become a revolutionary national organization, mobilizing black communities and white supporters across the country—but relentlessly targeted by the police and the FBI, and increasingly riven by violence and strife within. How Brown came to a position of power over this paramilitary, male-dominated organization, and what she did with that power, is a riveting, unsparing account of self-discovery.

“Profound, funny ... wild and moving ... heartbreaking accounts of a lonely black childhood.... Brown sees racial oppression in national and global context; every political word she writes pounds home a lesson about commerce, money, racism, communism, you name it ... A glowing achievement.”- Los Angeles Times

**[Washington State Rising: Black Power on Campus in the Pacific Northwest](#)**: Washington State Rising documents the origins, actions, and impact of the Black Student Union (BSU) in Washington from 1967 to 1970. The BSU was a politicized student organization that had chapters across the West Coast and played a prominent role in the student wing of the Black Power Movement. Through accounts of Black student struggles at two different college campuses in Washington, one urban and one rural, Marc Arsell Robinson details how the BSU led highly consequential protest campaigns at both institutions and beyond, which led to reforms such as the establishment of Black Studies programs, increased hiring of Black faculty and staff, and new initiatives to recruit and retain students of color.

Dr. Robinson was able to visit campus to discuss his book on February 1st. Thank you, Dr. Robinson!



# What's Poppin'?: Announcements & Events

## February through Spring Break:

- Black Liturgies for Staying Human: A Space for Healing: [Link](#) and [Full Calendar](#)

## February 1st:

- Washington State Rising- Book Discussion: [Link](#)
- Northwest Passages presents The Black Lens- Spokane Black Voices Symposium: [Link](#)

## February 6th:

- The Sound of [Black] Music: [Link](#)



## February 8th:

- We Are Never, Ever Getting Back Together: Rejection, Break-Ups, and Supporting Your Friends: [Link](#)

## February 24th:

- Duke Ellington: From Swing to Sacred: [Link](#)

For Community Events, click [here](#).

Thanks for reading this month's Diversity Digest! [Click Here to Subscribe!](#)

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