

Celebrate Black History Month



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Tony Dungy

Tony Dungy grew up in a home of educators and his parents encouraged a focus on academics. Tragically, his early family life was marred by his father's alcoholism. Ultimately, his father conquered his addiction by finding strength in his religion. His father's experience had a profound impact on Dungy who grew to become deeply religious and who has been known to use no alcohol, profanity nor tobacco products. He excelled in athletics and went to college on an athletics scholarship. He would later play pro-football then later was a coach to several NFL teams. He is credited with turning around the Tampa Bay Buccaneers but was fired from the job. He landed in Indianapolis soon afterwards. There he became the first African-American head coach to win the Super Bowl, defeating the Chicago Bears, led by his former mentee, Lovie Smith.

Because of his deep faith, Dungy found comfort after his teenaged son's tragic suicide. Leaning on his Christian faith, he believed he was chosen to extract a positive from tragedy. He and his wife donated his son's organs and later became involved in suicide prevention programs. In fact, Dungy always has been about helping others. He raises money to fund college scholarships for underprivileged children, frequently speaks to faith-based groups and has worked with prison ministries and foster-parent organizations, among others. (based on a *USA Today* article by Jarrett Bell, *Current Biography* magazine (Sept 2007) article)

Carter Goodwin Woodson saw African American history in the history of the United States as a painful, speechless void in a sea of beautiful voices. Filling this void was his imperative, the sole purpose of his life. He understood that lack of recognition of contributions would lead to misconceptions and lack of appreciation for a people and ultimately to its devaluation whether deliberate or accidental. In his research he found that achievements of those of African descent were overlooked, ignored or even suppressed by writers of history textbooks.



Prior to 1915, America had no knowledge nor acknowledgment of the contributions and achievements of its black citizens. In 1915, Dr. Carter G. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. Later in 1926, he created Negro History Week which grew to be Black History Month.

For the majority of his life, he dedicated his life to researching and recording the facts of African and African American history. He sacrificed health, happiness and professional gain to write what he felt was the single most barren, impoverished chapter in the wealth known as history. By the end of his life in 1950, Woodson had lived to see his dream and life's work result in black history being celebrated by parades, speeches, recitations, and banquets across the country as well as libraries, schools and museums offering booklets, books and research on the subject.

On cover: John 3:16 in Amharic (the language of Ethiopia, east Africa)



Rep. Charles Rangel, J.D.

Charles Rangel grew up in New York City and had a childhood that never pointed to the greatness he would later achieve. He was a high school dropout who would earn a GED and make a living in a minimum wage job. Then Rangel was drafted during the Korean War and sent to Korea. Shortly after his arrival, he and his company ran into enemy fire that lasted overnight. During the battle, Rangel later told others that he was in fear of his life and decided to "turn it over to Jesus." He did and survived. He won the Bronze Star for heroic service.

Rangel would go on to graduate from New York University and St. John's University School of Law. He entered public services as an Assistant U.S. attorney then was elected to the New York State Assembly. He was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1970 and has served there since then. Rangel founded the Congressional Black Caucus and is now the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. He is credited with sponsoring legislation to help the poor, elderly, veterans, and ex-offenders.

For more information, read his autobiography, [I Haven't Had a Bad Day Since](#).

Based on the House of Representatives website

Vernon Johns

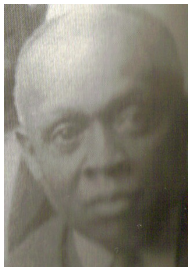
Vernon Johns was an American minister and civil rights leader who was active in the struggle for civil rights long before the Civil Rights Movement. His civil rights work started in the 1920s. By many, he is considered the father of the Civil Rights Movement, having laid the foundation on which Martin Luther King, Jr. and others would build. In fact, Johns was fired from his pulpit at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, because of his hell-raising sermons, only to be replaced by another radical-in-the-making, the then-unknown Martin Luther King, Jr. Johns was a mentor of Ralph Abernathy and others in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Johns died of a heart attack at age 73 in 1965.

For more information, view the film *Road to Freedom: The Vernon Johns Story* or visit the website www.vernonjohns.org.

William Sinkford

Rev. William Sinkford was elected in June 2001 to be president of the Unitarian-Universalist Association. He became Unitarian at age 14 in the 1960s and was president of denomination's youth organization. He joined the Unitarians as he felt, when he walked into the congregation, welcomed for the first time. He left in 1970s when he saw what he called a "retreat from engagement with racial justice." He returned in the early 1980s to seek a religious home for his children. Sinkford was ordained in 1995. Believing "differences need not divide us, they can be a blessing," Sinkford is the first African-American to head the 250,000 member organization. The Unitarians are unique in that there are more women ministers than men.

(based on an Associated Press article)



Evangelist Edward Carter

Born in Colorado in 1877, Edward Carter settled in Los Angeles. There, he worked as a cook. One day, he experienced a sensational, religious calling while cooking. This experience led him to become a powerful, religious speaker. He would later marry Mary Stuart, a convert and Indian immigrant. Together, they became active with evangelical work, moving to India as missionaries in 1925.

Having known the sting of racism, Carter was shocked to find animosity between biracial Indians and other Indians, the caste system and color consciousness. Carter's missionary work is credited with having brought at least 1,000 Indians to faith and with providing several social programs in India.

Family troubles in 1927 led to Carter to leave India for a return to the United States; however, he and the children were cast off the boat in Shanghai, China because of the illness of one child. During the child's recovery, Carter began to feel the call to remain in China to preach, and he did. He was aided by Chinese Christians and preached to the Chinese people through a translator. By some accounts, Carter welcomed more than a 1,000 Chinese to faith including Chiang Kai-shek, president of China. His work in China eventually ended after the Japanese invasion. His oldest son, Edward Carter, Jr., would go on to win the Medal of Honor.



Marian Anderson

Marian Anderson grew up in Philadelphia in a devoutly Christian but impoverished home. At an early age she exhibited extraordinary musical talent. Her father bought a piano for her when she was 8 but the family could not afford music lessons. She taught herself. When she was 15, she began voice lessons with Mary Saunders Patterson, a prominent black soprano. Shortly later, the Philadelphia Choral Society held a benefit concert to raise money for her to study with leading contralto Agnes Reifsnnyder. Her neighbors were so taken and convinced of her promise that they raised enough money for her to study under Guisepe Boghetti, a legendary voice teacher. She had been rejected because of her race from a local music school. From there, Anderson won a New York Philharmonic Society contest. Then she received a Julius Rosenwald scholarship to study in Europe and Russia.

She leaned on her faith in dealing with racism. As a contemporary of the fiery Paul Robeson, she was a sharp contrast, dealing with adversity and racism with a quiet, firm demeanor. She is best remembered for the 1939 incident in which the Daughters of the American Revolution refused to let her sing in Constitution Hall. That rejection led to a public outrage in which then First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt resigned from the organization in protest. In keeping with her personality, a quiet but effective rebuke took place when the Secretary of the Interior arranged a free open-air concert for her at the Lincoln Memorial. Her faith inspired her to volunteer with the United Nations Trusteeship Committee which helped people in Africa and the South Pacific. She lived to be 96 and died in 1993.

Jason Simmons

In a friendly competition between NFL football players newly traded to the same team, Ahman Green, a former Green Bay Packer, and Jason Simmons vied for the jersey No. 30. Green had worn the number in college and as a pro. Simmons offered him the number if Green would help him make a down payment on a house for a single parent.

Simmons and Green formed a program (Simmons-Green Home Down Payment Grant) which granted \$75,000 to a single mother with an autistic child in its first year. He is active with the Special Olympics, veterans support programs and the Reliant Energy Power Readers Program and other charitable work. Simmons credits his Christian faith and family for teaching him about giving. (*Spirit* magazine, September 2007 and Houston Texans website)



Israel Gaither

In May 2006, Israel Gaither was named the Commissioner (e.g., president) of the Salvation Army, topping over 40 years of service. He is the first African-American to hold that position. Before that, Gaither also was the first African-American to serve as a divisional commander. Prior to being appointed to lead the Salvation Army in the USA Eastern Territory, Gaither and his wife, Eva, served as the Territorial Leaders of the Army's work in Southern Africa.

(based on the Salvation Army website)

(based on Honoring Sergeant Carter by Allene G. Carter and Robert L. Allen)