

THE NORTH WEST FACTS

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FEBRUARY: BLACK HISTORY MONTH
by George J. FOUNDER

Dr. Carter J. Woodson, a pioneering historian, scientist, educator and astronomer, started Negro History Week in 1926.

In 1972, it was changed from Negro History Week to Afro-American (Black) Month because of the focus on the new thinking by Black Americans. It indicated a new recognition of American background and the appreciation of the Black person as an individual, a citizen and a contributor to the American scene.

In 1976, February was chosen as the month for the Afro-American (Black) History Month because it contains the birth dates of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. The month-long observance allows for recognition of many ethnic groups, not only Black Americans, and provides more time for programs, observances and celebrations.

Blacks have always had a role in history, but only recently have Americans been made more aware. Here are a few significant historic events involving Blacks:

1375 - A legend existed among North American Indians about people coming from the land of the sun (the east) who had black skins and "curly" hair.

1526 - The first slave revolt on United States soil took place at Lake Uasquex d'Allgon, a colony of San Miguel. This settlement later became either Virginia or South Carolina.

1619 - Twenty blacks landed with the earliest English colonists at Jamestown, before the "Mayflower" arrived.

1791 - Benjamin Banneker, America's first Black scientist (mathematician and astronomer) of wide reputation sent Pres. Thomas Jefferson an almanac and reminded him of the incongruity of the Declaration of Independence and the holding of slaves.

1838 - Frederick Douglass, one of the greatest Americans of all times; he was an abolitionist and federal office holder.

1881 - Booker T. Washington founder, Tuskegee (Alabama) Institute, became an outstanding American educator.

1902 - Lanston Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri. He was a caustic and keen observer of the American racial scene; a widely-quoted poet who had his first book published in 1926.

1921 - The Black National Anthem (Lift every Voice and Sing) was published and copyrighted. Its authors were J. W. and J. Kosamond Johnson. It's three verses follows:

Lift ev'ry voice and sing, Till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty; Let our rejoicing rise,
High as the list'ning skies, Let it resound loud as the rolling seas;
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun
Let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod, Bitter the chast'ning rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat, Have not our weary feet

Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered
We have come, treading our path thro the blood of the slaughtered,
Out from the gloomy past, Till now we stand at last.

Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.
God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who hast by Thy might, Led us into the light,

Representative Peggy Maxie First Black Legislator



The first Black woman legislator in Washington State's history says "everyone has an important responsibility in maintaining accessibility and responsiveness in our government."

Elected to the House of Representatives in 1971, Rep. Peggy Joan Maxie is serving her fifth term in the Legislature. After almost ten years of public service, Representative Maxie believes Washington's Legislature has become "significantly more open, accessible and responsive to the concerns of people at every income level."

While representing Seattle's 37th District which encompasses one of the most economically diverse areas of the state, ranging from the International District to Madrona-Magnolia and from Lake Washington to Elliott Bay, Representative Maxie encourages her constituents to remain interested and involved at all levels of the decision-making process.

At a time when major gains are systematically challenged and eroded, we must mobilize and make sure that we receive our fair share in a participatory democracy. Refuse to be manipulated by those who relish in divisive tactics to block progress. Build on your strengths and become involved with issues which affect your lives. Otherwise, she says, our nation's two party system is in danger of disintegrating into closed, elitist societies and mere window dressing.

"If the public fails to pay attention to government, our government will soon fail to pay attention to the interest of the public," says Maxie.

In the Legislature, Maxie is a key force on government reform and has received national and international recognition for her contribution in opening up the

system to public participation in legislative decision-making. While she continues to stand up for her constituents no matter who the opposition may be, she emphasizes teamwork with constituents.

Maxie played a major role in pushing for legislation leading to annual sessions of limited length and developing a professional non-partisan staff for the Legislature.

Rep. Maxie is the only woman serving on the House Rules Committee, which is considered the most powerful committee in the Legislature. She has served a chairwoman of the House Higher Education Committee and as a key member of the Judiciary, Local Government, Constitution and Elections, Ways and Means and Appropriations committees.

Born in Amarillo, Texas, Maxie has spent most of her life in Seattle, receiving her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology from Seattle University and Master of Social Work Degree from the University of Washington. Her career in social work includes student and family counseling at Seattle University and three years as executive director and consultant to the Central Area Council on Alcoholism. She is president of Peggy Maxie and Associates, a human resources consulting firm.

St. Martin's College, Olympia, has awarded Representative Maxie an Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree. She is listed in several Who's Who publications including Who's Who in Government and the International Who's Who of Intellectuals.

As Washington's first Black woman legislator, Maxie is featured in "The Washington Story," the Seattle Public Schools Washington State History textbook.

Keep us forever in the path we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places our
God, where we met Thee
Lest our hearts; drunk with the wine of
the world, we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand, May we
forever stand.
True to our God, True to our Native Land

Therefore, when you see a place of business with a name like Langston Hughes Cultural Arts Center, Douglass-Truth Library, Martin Luther King School, or the Medger Evers Pool, ask yourself this question, "Who were these people and what did they contribute to American history?"

(George J. Founder, the author of this article attended an all black school in Tennessee, lived in Seattle since 1966, and works as a letter carrier for the US Postal Service. He was chairperson of the EEO Committee at the Post Office for two years. George was just promoted to Sgt 1st Class in the 174th General Support Group US Army Reserve where he serves as the Race Relations/Equal Opportunity (RR/EO) Non-Commissioned Officer in charge.)