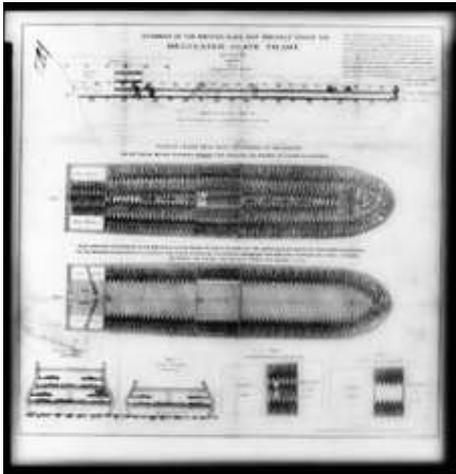


Slavery in American History: The Struggle Continues
by Marquex Faulkner

The U.S. has had a difficult time with historical discussions about slavery. Even though talking about the subject of slavery tends to make people uncomfortable, it is a part of American history that needs to be addressed. There are a number of museums throughout the country that have permanent exhibits or even small-scale museums dedicated to the history of African-Americans, and as a result, slavery. These exhibits are important in order to both educate citizens about slavery and to acknowledge the history of slavery in the U.S. and its effects on our society.



In the words of the philosopher, George Santayana, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." The history of slavery is a history that should not be forgotten; this is a way to honor the millions that died during the slave trade, or over the hundreds of years of slavery that followed, and even the years of segregation that resulted from slavery. No one has walked through a full-scale replica of a slave ship and few can imagine being confined and chained to another human being. In fact, many people are unaware of the millions of people who lost their lives in the journey across the Middle Passage (as the slaves' trip from Africa to the Americas was called).

Americans face a constant struggle when it comes to slavery. Emotions run the gamut, from denial, to anger, to forgiveness. One thing that is certain is that slavery has had a tremendous impact on the U.S. and its people. Black Americans are continuously trying to trace their roots, a search which often ends with ancestors who were sold into slavery.



Ties to people throughout the country, even the globe, go unmasked because – excluding the census – there are few records of ancestry, and certain limits to the amount of information a person can trace through his or her own family. Even today, many black families cannot go past four generations without hitting a wall. Families being split apart and sold to slaveholders, oftentimes in different states – this was not conducive to allowing family heirlooms, keepsakes, or even oral histories, to be passed along. The manner in which slavery was carried out generally did not leave relics for a repository of the history of slaves and many black Americans are left to piece together the missing parts of their history.

The lack of acknowledgement of slavery has always been a sore subject. Many young people do not understand or even know much about slavery. Our history books have only recently made it a significant part of the curriculum and even then, much of the time dedicated to learning about slavery is tied to Black History Month. It is true that slavery is a part of our past; however, it can be difficult to let go when its effects can still be seen today.

(Continued on page 2)



Then President-elect Barack Obama (left), and his wife Michelle and daughters Sasha (right) and Malia, are seen on the podium moments before Obama was sworn in as the 44th president at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. on January 20, 2009. (AP Photo/Chuck Kennedy, Pool)

The American Center

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E-mail: mumbaipublicaffairs@state.gov; Website: <http://mumbai.usconsulate.gov>
Office Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Monday through Friday)

H O L I D A Y S

February 21: Presidents' Day

A WORD FROM THE CENTER

Dear Readers,

February is Black History Month, and it is exciting to be writing this Word from the Center not too long after the visit of the first African-American president, Barack Obama, to Mumbai. It was so moving to see President Obama and the First Lady, Michelle Obama, interact with children and learn the Koli dance. You didn't get to shake his hand? Neither did I, but I still cherish the images of that historic visit.

During Black History Month, we celebrate the unique history of black America – a history shared by Americans of every color and ethnicity. How important are black Americans to the United States – and to the world? Try to imagine where we would be without Harriet Tubman, leader of the “Underground Railroad,” a network of people who helped slaves escape to freedom. Or Thurgood Marshall, who became the first African-American U.S. Supreme Court Justice. Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat at the front of the segregated bus – and a year later, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that segregation on public transportation was illegal.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was the dominant force in the Civil Rights Movement (taking his nonviolent methods directly from India's own Mahatma Gandhi), and Jackie Robinson integrated the great American sport of baseball. Toni Morrison, winner of the Pulitzer Prize in 1988 and the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1994, gave an expressive voice to black America and paved the way for other black writers. Even Oprah Winfrey – did you know she was the first female and first black television news anchor in the state of Tennessee?

Certainly the world would be a poorer place without all of these well-known African-Americans. But so many more need to be celebrated – this Black History Month, check out www.america.gov for the stories of some black Americans that may not be as familiar to you: Benjamin Banneker, Dr. Charles Richard Drew, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Matthew Alexander Henson, just to name a few. Please join me in honoring the truly rich history of African-Americans.

Sincerely,

Anne E. Grimes
Public Affairs Officer

(Continued from page 1)

Slavery is a significant, although horrible, part of our past, but education about slavery provides the proper recognition it deserves, and allows people to begin to heal as a result. The truth remains, blacks in our country face the reality of reconciling their place in the history of a country that once treated their ancestors as property.

We should continue to educate our communities, particularly young people, about the history of slavery in order to help heal and learn from our history.

Note: Opinions expressed by the author are her own and do not reflect the views of the U.S. Government.

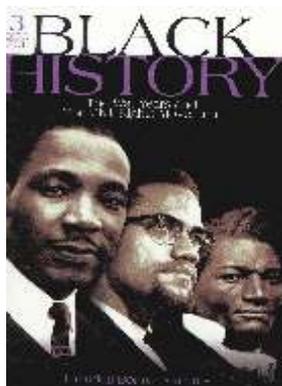
Marquex Faulkner works at the U.S. Consulate General, Mumbai



The signature of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., on a copy of *Time* magazine naming him Man of the Year, is featured in an exhibit of black journalism as part of Black History Month at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., on February 3, 2006. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)

NOTES FROM THE AMERICAN LIBRARY

Select DVDs on African-Americans



Black History: The War Years and The Civil Rights Movement

St. Clair Vision

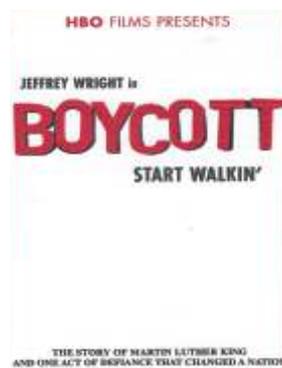
(2007, 11 hours and 52 mins)

This three-part documentary film describes the story of black Americans from the time of the Civil War to the Civil Rights Movement.

Disc 1 (10 episodes): *In the Beginning* features – among others – The Civil War, Booker T. Washington: The Life and Legacy, and The Maggie Lena Walker Story.

Disc 2 (6 episodes): *WWII, The Beginning of Change* includes Black Wings: The American Black in Aviation, African-Americans in World War II, and others.

Disc 3 (12 episodes): *Civil Rights Movement* features episodes including those on Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., and Open Mind With Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

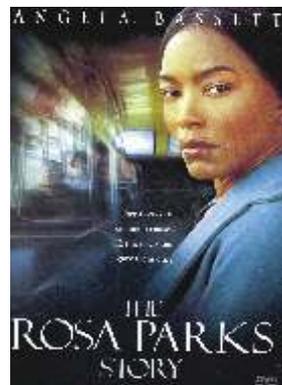


Boycott: The Story of Martin Luther King and One Act of Defiance That Changed a Nation

HBO

(2001, 112 mins)

This documentary dramatizes the true events that were triggered in Montgomery, Alabama, on December 1, 1955, when Rosa Parks was arrested after refusing to surrender her seat in the “whites only” section of a public bus. Using real and fictional documentary footage, the story of the Montgomery bus boycott is narrated in this film.

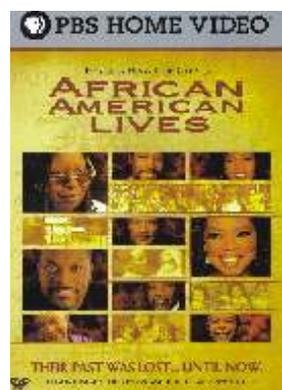


The Rosa Parks Story

Xenon Pictures, Inc.

(2001, 94 mins)

In this documentary film, actress Angela Bassett portrays Rosa Parks, whose Montgomery bus boycott in Alabama triggered the Civil Rights demonstration.



African American Lives: Their Past Was Lost ... Until Now

PBS Home Video

(2006, 240 mins)

Eminent Harvard professor, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., uses revolutionary breakthroughs in genealogical research and DNA analysis to take eight prominent African-Americans on once-unimaginable journeys into their past – tracing their family sagas down through U.S. history and even back to Africa. Whoopi Goldberg, Chris Tucker and Oprah Winfrey are among the eight personalities featured.

Ask a Librarian: Please write to the American Library at libref@state.gov for research queries related to information on U.S. international relations, education, law and legislation, English language, and literature.

**Achieving Higher Heights:
African-American Women**
Discussion led by **Stephanie Woodard**

Monday, February 14 **6:00 p.m.**
American Center Auditorium

Michelle Obama, Oprah Winfrey, Whoopi Goldberg, just to name a few, are black women in the United States who have achieved higher heights in America. Please join us at the American Center to learn more about how these extraordinary women and others were able to overcome stark obstacles in order to become legendary leaders in contemporary America. February, which is Black History Month in the United States, is a time to celebrate the contributions of African-Americans to the wonderful interwoven amalgamation of cultures in the United States. With that said, the past, present, and future of black women in America is not short of wonderful stories of triumph and achievement to tell, so please join us to learn more about successful African-American women in the United States.

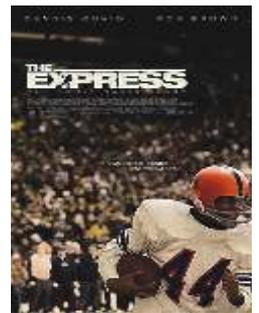
Stephanie Woodard is a first tour officer working at the American Consulate. Stephanie has a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Dillard University and a Master's in International Affairs from Columbia University. She has participated in several talks involving the state of African-Americans in America. One was a nationally televised show titled *State of the Black Union*. Stephanie has also worked with several women's NGOs internationally.

American Center Auditorium
3:30 and 6:30 p.m.

Friday, February 18

Powerful sports biopic tells the inspiring true story of Ernie Davis (Rob Brown), the first African-American Heisman winner. Recruited by Syracuse University in 1959, Davis would face seemingly insurmountable racism, developing an unexpected supporter in his bigoted coach (Dennis Quaid) and battling a devastating illness that would end his pro football career before it started.

The Express
(2008, 130 mins)



Friday, February 25

Seen as a radical by many whites in his 1930s Texas community, Wiley College professor, Melvin Tolson (Denzel Washington, who also directed the film), finds himself at the center of a racially charged firestorm as he leads his African-American debating team to the national championships.

The Great Debaters
(2007, 124 mins)



Kids Saturday
@ AMERICAN CENTER
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Saturday, February 26 @ 10:00 a.m.

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Admission to American Center programs, restricted to persons over 14, unless otherwise specified, is on a first-come, first-served basis. The auditorium doors will open 30 minutes before the start of the program.