

Black History Month

History helps us to understand society, preserve stories, and understand change. It also provides a sense of identity. It's important to hear and see ourselves within history. February is Black History Month, honoring and bringing to life stories of those who have endured centuries of struggle and those who continue to fight for civil rights. Please read the following article from Golden Valley Orchard Parent, Ray LaPoint. Ray eloquently shares his perspective of Black History Month and what it means to him as a Black Man:

“Black History Month shouldn’t be treated as though it is somehow separate from our collective American history, or somehow just boiled down to a compilation of greatest hits from the March on Washington, or from some of our sports heroes,” said President Barack Obama in a 2016 speech. “It’s about the lived, shared experience of all African Americans, high and low, famous and obscure, and how those experiences have shaped and challenged and ultimately strengthened America.”

I identify as Black, not African American. This is part of my preference as with Indigenous vs. Native American. I grew up as a Black child in the middle of Texas hearing the stories of my parents and grandparents. Many of their stories shared fun family experiences growing up in the south. However, a number of them were cautionary tales of the inequality and racism that existed in the state of Texas between the years of 1900 to 1960. Unlike my grandparents, I never picked cotton, nor do I have stories of being chased by racist men. But, like my parents and grandparents, I share a passion and desire to provide my children with a better future and more opportunities than I have had in my life, and to teach them about our country’s Black history leaders and legends, past and present.

Black History Month is important to me for a few reasons. One, I am a parent of two bi-racial boys. Some people see my kids as Black, while others see them as bi-racial or multiracial. Regardless, it is important for me to teach my children that being Black is a good thing and to be proud of their heritage and culture. I teach my children about the many accomplished Black inventors, entrepreneurs, entertainers, teachers, musicians, scientists, astronauts, and politicians who have changed the world. These legends of history need to be represented and showcased in American history.

However, American history excludes stories about “Black Wallstreet”, the “40 Acres and a Mule” promise, and the Tuskegee Airmen. Why are these events omitted from American history? It is my hope that one day my children, and all-American children, will be educated on these heroic efforts that created important changes in the lives of all humans around the world - not just here in America. Examples include icons who have helped millions discover a love of books and reading like Lavar Burton and Oprah Winfrey; athletes who have broken racial boundaries and opened the door for all Black children to be equal on the playing field like Venus and Serena Williams and Arthur

Ashe; and political leaders who have served our country and its people in its highest positions like President and First Lady Obama and Vice President Harris

In the month of February, we celebrate and acknowledge the African American leaders and change makers who have shaped our nation's history. The month-long celebration takes place in public schools and libraries across the country. It's even more important that it's celebrated in the homes of American families. Therefore, I encourage each of you to visit your local library and ask for books that speak about Black history or that highlight the accomplishments of Blacks in America. The number of amazing Blacks in America is endless. There are so many people who could, and should, be mentioned and remembered in American history. Many have fought and continue to fight for a country that still struggles to recognize their equality. As February is upon us, now is the time to acknowledge and respect moments in history where African Americans or Blacks have paved the way. And as the month of March begins, don't forget, but continue to learn, honor, and overcome.