

Out of Africa

Website shines a light on the dark history of African-Americans

Black History Month is observed in February because the birthday of Frederick Douglass — an enslaved person who escaped and became prominent in the abolitionist movement in the second half of the 19th century — is Feb. 14, and the birthday of President Abraham Lincoln — who abolished slavery in America in 1863 — is Feb. 12.

While history is not black or white, the teaching of it can be colored by who is recording and retelling it. Black History Month is an attempt to give appropriate credit to people of color who may have been left out of, or marginalized, in conventional history lessons. It also serves to honor those of all races who have served the cause of advancing the rights of African-Americans.

History.com, a website that is dedicated to all history, has a special section for black history. Normally it can be found under the Topics link at the top of the page. Click on the link and then scroll down to find Black History under the Movements heading. There also is a



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Black History timeline at the top of the Topics section. This month, the section has a prominent link high on the site's home page in addition to its regular location.

The section is divided into two subsections, one featuring articles and the other videos. Many of the articles also have a video component. A gallery of photo links allows you to browse the subjects in each section.

The subjects include: prominent people, both historical and contemporary; important court cases and legislation; constitutional amendments; and movements, such as abolition and civil rights. The people featured run the gamut from politics, activism, culture, sports, literature and more. The contributions of women are prominently featured throughout the site.

The timeline begins with the arrival of the first enslaved people brought to North America in 1619. It ends with the election of President Barack Obama in 2008. Videos are interspersed along the timeline, but it's still a bit of a slog as it covers a lot of ground.

Artwork and videos break up the type on the site, but there's no getting around reading if you want to learn history. You can spend a lot of time on this site. There's a wealth of information on many people and events. Fortunately, it's well-written and interesting material.

The stories of the people who have fought for equal rights are remarkable. Many have endured treatment that most of us can't even imagine and still rose to accomplish great things. Reading the words of those who have made history, and in some cases watching and listening to them, is a powerfully moving experience.

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