

Written by Kathy
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By Wilma Johnston, Contributing Writer, Cleveland Urban News. Com and The Cleveland Urban News.Com Blog, Ohio's Most Read Online Black Newspaper

CLEVELAND, Ohio-It's Black history month, so let's talk a little bit about Black history. Do we really know the true history of the plight of African-Americans and their African ancestors?

First, Black people were enslaved initially by Blacks and Islamic people in Africa and then sold to be brought to America for further slavery to work our fields and to perform other subservient measures. But remember that it was White men that brought our ancestors to America in chains. Those chains still plague the Black community through high unemployment, disproportionate incarcerations of Black men and women, and underfunded public school districts that serve majority Black and poor children, among other systemic problems.

The very first Black killed in a major American war was a Black man named Crispus Attucks, who died in the Revolutionary War. Hundreds of Black soldiers were among the casualties at Bunker Hill.

Blacks were at one time, if not even now in some situations, counted as 3/5 of a person. And while the slavery of Blacks is not mentioned in the constitution, it is implicated under the 14th Amendment, which demands equal protection under the law for members of a protected class like Black people, and women.

President Abraham Lincoln's executive order of The Emancipation Proclamation did not start the American Civil War, but it help to end it. President Lincoln was a Republican, as was Civil Rights activist and historian Frederick Douglas.

Jim Crow laws kept Blacks traditionally enslaved and the Ku Klux Klan was started in part because racist Whites wanted to keep former slaves in line and were angry that slavery had ended in the official sense.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's served to stop the Jim Crow laws. King gave his life to better America, and the official holiday named in his honor is well deserved.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed by Democratic President Lyndon B. Johnson, with some saying he did so solely under threat of an override veto. Still, Johnson pushed the federal act through Congress, along with Dr. King, and a host of others.

What will children in our schools be taught this month about Black history? Will it be that Michael Jackson (pictured) was a great man? How do we define greatness? Do we forgive major flaws? Yes we can. Pop singer Michael Jackson knew his craft, and was truly a great musician and song writer of all time.

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Some of the other true greats include the late Carl B. Stokes (pictured), the first Black mayor of a major American city, whom Cleveland voters elected in 1967. Stokes later held the post under former president Bill Clinton of U.S. Ambassador to Seychelles and was a Cleveland Municipal Court judge.

Legendary singer Nat King Cole, boxer Muhammad Ali, poet Maya Angelou and Malcolm X are also among notables, as are the following:

Native Clevelander Garrett A. Morgan invented the traffic light and gas mask

George Crum was inventor of the potato chip

Frederick McKinley Jones invented the refrigeration unit for trucks

Dr. Patricia Bath invented laser eye surgery for cataract removal

Thomas L. Jennings invented dry-cleaning products

Hiram Revels (R-MS) was the first Black in Congress as a U.S. senator

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