

**Manasota ASALH, Inc.**  
**Branch Activities Report**  
**Calendar Year 2019**

**January**

**January 12**

The branch hosted a meeting of the ASALH Florida Coalition attended by over 20 representatives from the six Florida ASALH branches.

**January 14**

Manasota ASALH was one of the sponsors of the annual Sarasota Martin Luther King, Jr. Awards Breakfast, titled “Don’t Sleep the Revolution.”

Several branch members attended the breakfast. The branch received a plaque recognizing its contributions to the local community.

**January 24**

The branch’s annual Black Muse Art Exhibit – sponsored by Manasota ASALH – had its grand opening. Artists from diverse backgrounds had their pieces on exhibit and for sale. Almost 200 people attended the grand opening celebration that was held from 5 – 7 P.M. The exhibit ran through March 1.

**January 25**

The branch held its initial meeting of the year at the Betty J. Johnson North Sarasota Public Library. Our Moment in History speakers were Judge Charles Williams and Ms. Kate Alexander who discussed the historical and ongoing efforts of the Florida Studio Theater to co-sponsor programs with the branch. The new branch officers were installed at the meeting.

**January 25**

Executive Board member, David Wilkins began teaching a seven-session course entitled, “No, Mr. West, Slavery was Never a Choice,” at Temple Beth Sholom as part of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (“OLLI”) at Ringling College. The course ran through March 19.

## January 28

Four branch members were members of a panel exploring the topic, “Who is James Baldwin? A Conversation about His Life and Ideas.” The event was held at the Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe in conjunction with its performance of Baldwin’s classic play, “The Amen Corner.” Funding for this program was provided through a grant from the Florida Humanities Council with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

## February

### February 1

The branch initiated a Culturally Responsive Education after-school program for 3-5 grade students focusing on literacy and math and science skills at the Booker Elementary School in Sarasota.

### February 2

The 2019 Black History Month theme “Black Migrations” was the focus of a film screened through the Dr. S. Carroll Buchanan Film Series under the direction of former Manasota ASALH President Robert Fitzgerald. The film, “GOIN’ to CHICAGO, focuses on a return trip to the South by persons who migrated to Chicago.

### February 3 & 10

Branch President, James Stewart, was a guest on the local TV show, “Black Almanac.” The interviews covered a variety of topics.

### February 5

Branch President, James Stewart, presented a lecture entitled “Speaking Truth to Power: The Role of Hip Hop in the Post-Obama Era” as part of the Black History Month Celebration at the New College of Florida.

### February 14

The branch and the African American Resource Center co-sponsored the annual Black History Month program exploring the 2020 Black History Month theme, “Black Migrations.” The program focused on the migration

of African Americans to the Sarasota area and included samples of cuisines from various regions.

#### February 21

The branch co-sponsored a Boxser Diversity Initiative Program entitled “The Language of Racism & Intolerance.” The program was held at the New College of Florida.

#### February 22

The branch held its monthly general membership meeting. Our Moment in History speaker was Ms. Wanda Gilbert, former Internal Affairs Administrator crime analyst of Miami Gardens. She discussed her efforts to combat questionable/bad arrests in the community by police officers, and her subsequent success in obtaining a financial settlement for her unlawful termination for reporting corruption.

#### February 23

The branch sponsored a table at the sixth annual A. Jean Battie Scholarship Fundraiser held by the Light of the World International Church.

#### March

#### March 23

Manasota ASALH held its monthly meeting. The Moment in History speaker was retired educator, Dr. Vivian Johnson. As part of her presentation Dr. Johnson presented a visual display of the art of branch member, Dr. Eleanor Merritt Darlington (1933-2019). The primary focus of her talk was the artwork of Juan de Pareja (1610-1670), who was the son of an enslaved African woman and a white Spaniard.

#### March 30

The film, “Unite-Serve-Lead,” was screened as part of the Dr. S. Carroll Buchanan Film Series. This documentary explores the founding and impact of the Harvard Business School African-American Student Union. The film includes the perspectives of branch member, Lillian Lambert, the

first Black woman to receive an MBA from the school and a founding member of the Union.

April

April 12 & 13

Manasota ASALH held its annual Randy Rankin Scholarship Classic. The event features tennis competition on Friday and golf and table games on Saturday morning. An awards luncheon is held Saturday afternoon.

Proceeds from the classic support the Manasota ASALH Scholarship fund. Over 240 people participated.

April 15 – 19

Forty-three branch members participated in a field trip to Montgomery, Selma, and Tuskegee, Alabama. The trip was organized and co-ordinated by branch member, Sherry Suggs. Sites toured included the Edmund Pettus Bridge, the Lowndes County Interpretive Center, several historic churches in Montgomery, the Equal Justice Initiative and National Memorial, the Rosa Parks Museum, the Southern Poverty Law Center, Tuskegee University, and the Tuskegee Airmen and Veterans historic site.

April 26

Manasota ASALH held its April general membership meeting. Our Moment in History speaker was branch member, Morrie Tharps. His presentation was informed by the 2019 Black History Month theme, “Black Migrations,” and described many traumatic and “near death” experiences he has survived and overcome throughout his life.

April 27

The film “Zora’s Roots” was screened at the Betty J. Johnson North Sarasota Library as part of the Dr. S. Carroll Buchanan Film Series. The documentary explores the life, literary and creative influences of Zora Neal Houston, one of the most famous and prolific writers of the Harlem Renaissance.

May

May 25

Manasota ASALH held its monthly general membership meeting at the Family Heritage House Museum located on the Florida State College campus in Bradenton, FL. Twenty scholarships were awarded totaling over \$40,000. Since the program's inception Manasota ASALH has awarded more than \$370,000 to deserving students. The Moment in History speaker was Dr. La Shawn Frost, Principal of Booker Middle School and Principal-of-the-year in Sarasota. During the meeting James Stewart, Manasota ASALH President, presented a \$1,000 donation to the Family Heritage House Museum.

June

The branch made a donation to the Westcoast Black Theater Troupe in support of two summer educational programs, Jazzlinks and Stage of Discovery, which offer exposure and training in the arts for local African American students.

June 15

Branch member, David Wilkins, taught the first session of the course entitled "The History of American Slavery" at the Betty J. Johnson North Sarasota Library. A total of eight sessions were held over the course of the summer, the last on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. A total of approximately 100 different individuals attended at least one of the sessions.

June through August

No meetings were held during the summer months as many of our members spend the summer months in the northern states.

September

September 16

The first session of the ASALH Academics at Booker High School program was held. This program is using content from the "History of American Slavery" course to introduce the topic to four 11 grade African

American/ Latin American History classes taught by branch member, Edna Sherrell. This initiative is led by branch member, David Wilkins, who was assisted by eight other branch members who served in various capacities. Some 160 students attended a screening of the film, "Harriet" through this initiative.

September 27

Manasota ASALH resumed its monthly general membership meetings. Our Moment in History speaker was Lisa Berger, Executive Director of the Arts Center of Sarasota. She recounted important events that have been sponsored through an 11-year partnership with the branch.

October 2 – 6

Seven members of the Manasota ASALH branch attended this year's National Conference in Charleston, South Carolina.

October 10

The branch hosted a "Welcome Back" reception for members at the campus of the Westcoast Black Theater Troupe attended by over 100 members.

October 16

The branch co-sponsored an exhibition reception for artist, Horace Imhotep. The exhibition title was "Lions, Tigers, Bears and a Draco." The exhibition and reception were held at the Art Center Sarasota.

October 25

Manasota ASALH held its monthly general membership meeting at the Betty J. Johnson North Sarasota Library. The Moment in History speaker was Mrs. Johncyn McRae, a retired Bradenton educator. Her topic was the History of African Americans in Manatee County.

November

November 16

Manasota ASALH held its monthly membership meeting. The Moment in History presenter was Ms. Vickie Oldham, President/Chief Executive of

the Sarasota African American Coalition, Inc. She was assisted by Mr. Walter Gilbert, a former President of the Sarasota NAACP. Ms. Oldham's PowerPoint presentation focused on current efforts to establish a Museum/Community Center celebrating the history and accomplishments of African Americans in the region. Branch member, Gary Giscombe, assisted by Sherry Suggs, shared a slide presentation entitled "Tracing Images of Our Past." The presentation documented the April 15 -19 trip to Montgomery, Selma, and Tuskegee.

November 30

The film, "The Six Triple Eight" was screened at the Betty J. Johnson North Sarasota Library. This is a documentary about the U.S. Army's first Black, all-female Black battalion that served in Europe during WWII.

December

December 5

Manasota ASALH held its annual holiday brunch at the Palm Aire Country Club. More than 250 people – many in holiday garb, attended this year's breakfast. The event theme was "Showtime at the ASALH," patterned after the famous "Showtime at the Apollo" talent competition. In addition to showcasing the artistic talents of many members, the Moment in History presentation by Dr. Nancy Boxhill-Thompson offered an educational historical tribute to the people and places of Harlem.

December 16

The Manasota branch hosted the annual Dr. Carter G. Woodson Birthday Celebration. This annual event is co-sponsored with the St. Petersburg branch. The event was held at the Family Heritage House Museum located on the Florida State College campus in Bradenton, FL. The speaker for this event was Dr. William Woodson, Dean of Outreach and Chief Diversity Officer at the New College of Florida. A total of fifty Manasota and St. Petersburg ASALH members attended this event.