

“JOY!”

A Quarterly Newsletter

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BLACK HISTORY A MONTH OF CELEBRATION

Each year, Black History is celebrated during the month of February. It is a time when we reflect on the contributions, achievements, triumphs and struggles of African Americans throughout U.S. history.

The acknowledgment has received official recognition from governments in the United States as well as Canada and recently in Ireland and the United Kingdom. Many have argued that Black history should be taught and celebrated year-round, not just one month each year.

According to Dr. W. Marvin Dulaney,¹ **Carter G. Woodson**, (the “father” of Black history, an American historian, a scholar and the founder of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History), designated a time to promote and educate people about Black history and culture in 1926. Dr. Dulaney, explains that Mr. Woodson envisioned a week-long celebration to encourage the coordinated teaching of Black history in public schools. Mr. Woodson’s goal was to celebrate in the field of history a “*serious area of study.*” The celebration was initially organized for the second week of February as Negro History week; however, it later evolved into Black History month.

The idea to celebrate Black History was not to place limitations but to focus and broaden the nation’s consciousness. Fifty years after the first celebrations, President Gerald R. Ford officially recognized Black History month during the country’s 1976 bicentennial. President Ford called upon Americans to “*seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history.*”

Years later, President Barak Obama made the following statement, “*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, it is 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.*”

KJGM believes Black History is American History. We believe that all students deserve to live in a world of equality. The curriculum used to educate them should be inclusive of all that has gone on before them. Celebrating Black History every day is an invaluable tool to help instill empathy and understanding for all.

-- KJGM

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Our December 2023 fundraiser was a success!!!! Thanks to all who participated. Video footage of the drawing is available on the KJGM website. The winner of the fourth drawing was Marilyn Clark. Congratulations Marilyn! Another SW drawing will take place on June 29, 2024. Don’t forget to purchase your lucky ticket!!

Looking to become a Mechanic for Southwest Airlines? If you are a highly motivated, people-oriented, outgoing and energetic individual who wants to join the Southwest Maintenance Team, the Apprentice Aviation Maintenance Technician (AMT) Program may be just for you. Contact Southwest Careers for more info. Classroom and on-the-job training are offered.

Do you know of an incredible student who is not a dependent of a Southwest Airlines employee and is looking to pursue higher education in the area of aviation? Tell them to check out the Southwest Airlines Community Scholarship program. Full eligibility and application information can be viewed at swa.is/scholarship.



¹ Dr. W. Marvin Dulaney serves as the Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Museum’s curator, he is a historian and the president of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History also known as ASALH.

NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY INDUCTEE



Miss. Nadia Buckner was recently inducted into the National Honor Society at Uplift Hampton Preparatory School. Nadia has a 3.5 grade point average and climbing. She is a sophomore this year and aspires to be a pediatric surgeon. Nadia is a member of the KJGM 2018–2019 debate team (third class). Congratulations to Nadia and to the Buckner family who continues to walk with her every step of the way.

We know big things are on the horizon for you Nadia! Stay the course!

“THE ESSENCE OF BLACK HISTORY”

By: Aleisa Daniel

When asked to, in a nutshell, define and describe Black History, it’s not unusual that one might find themselves at a sudden loss for words. How might you even begin to encapsulate centuries of change, progress, creativity and, innovation in a few mere sentences? This small feat, it occurs to me, is a challenge that, in a poetic stroke of irony, resembles a struggle that is inherently characteristic of Black History itself – a grappling that endures, fortifies, transforms, clarifies, and – eventually – inspires.

Truthfully, the complete, colorful story of Black people is much too rich, vast rugged, and nuanced that attempting to tell it and to lay bare its depths, would require limitless pages and countless contributing perspectives. So, to simplify it, annually, I like to ring in the season of celebrating Black History by distilling all that I’ve learned and heard of it throughout my life and extracting from that a kind of essence, or spirit, which I believe can be applied to all facets of Black History.

I truly believe we all have the ability to practice this small, yet powerful, thing by simply contemplating who and what comes to mind for us when we consider Black History. I strongly encourage you, as the reader, to give it a try.

I, for example, when contemplating the spirit of Black History, oftentimes consider my great-aunt Joy, the legacy she imprinted, and her most memorable phrases that have, to this day, stuck with me. In recent periods of my own life, I’ve frequently thought of how her favorite rallying phrases like “*No Ways Tired*” and “*The Best is Yet to Come*” might have took root in her heart and mind during those pivotal, ground-breaking, and difficult periods of time in Black History she powered through.

How did those punchy chosen phrases help shape, structure, and solidify her outlook and then create room for hope, grit, and resolve to expand in her with every step forward she took, pouring freely into every positive impact she made?

It is in reflective moments when I consider this that I become certain that the essence of Black History itself can be sourced in the outlook, mentality, and meticulous heart positioning that allows for history to be made.

When attempting to make history, we need only look at our collective mental state.

My great-aunt Joy left behind gilded arrows pointing to the spirit of Black History by implanting in our minds repeat phrases I have briefly touched on here – “*No Ways Tired*” highlighting the need for endurance and “*The Best is Yet to Come*” illuminating hope for the future.

Although the historic and turbulent conditions that compelled her to always keep these phrases near and dear to her heart were very unique to her time, the prevailing message underscored in them combined – of perennial hope and endurance – is an everlasting nugget of the essence, or spirit, of Black History that can and should always be carried on from generation to generation.

To celebrate Black History this season, these recollective musings are what I am choosing to draw from and reflect on.

Now, you, pulling from your own memories, experiences, and knowledge of Black History, reader, reflect on what has stood out to you. Can you find a theme? What is the core essence? Can you locate the spirit?

I am certain you will find it.

Tech Tid-Bits Projects



Gerald Dunn

Black history is ever evolving as we trailblaze into the future. Technology is now at the forefront of history as we can use technology now to tell more accurate depictions of history.

In pre-modern tech times, history was captured in writings and books then next came photographs and video. With technology, it now enables us to take advantage of the advances and create an in-depth experience for the future generations.

There are many ways that technology is helping restore and preserve history. One way of preserving our history is using products such as Microsoft's program called AI for Cultural Heritage which can be used to preserve and treasure people, places and artifacts of our culture.

Technology has made great strides in antiques restoration which can rebuild artifacts similar to a jigsaw puzzle. Technology also has given historians the ability

to create 3D replicas from digital photos. Another technology that is allowing history to be preserved is digitization. Lasers are used to scan an artifact to create 3D models.

There are many African Americans that are blazing trails with technology and making history. Some of the technologists that have made black history are **Jesse Russell**, who created wireless communication base stations, **Jerry Lawson**, who created video game console and cartridges, **Mare Van Brittan Brown**, who developed closed circuit television security, and **James E. West**, who invented the foil electric microphone. These and many more great black technologists have helped shape black history that will help along the dreams of future technologists. Let's continue to make black history!

[Gerald Dunn is a Systems Engineer and Master of Science in Data Science]

OUR GREAT DEBATERS!

Poet and professor Melvin B. Tolson taught at the predominately black Wiley College in Marshall, Texas. His desire to commence a debate team was nearly unheard of at a black college. He formed a team of strong-minded, intelligent young students who became the first black debate team to challenge Harvard's prestigious debate champions.

The KJGM youth debate team has not yet grown to the level of debating students at Harvard University, but they are well on their way. Our Class of 2023-2024 made their debut at the Atlanta Urban Debate League Tournament on Friday, March 8, 2024. The tournament is sponsored every year by Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia and yes, you guessed it – "We have winners!"

Our 2023-2024 debate team winners are **Matthew Cash Hill; Jayce Dabney; Ella Najm; Savannah Lewis; Jackson Yates and Claudette Ponders**. This year all participating teams were asked to come up with a plan to "reduce human-caused climate change." The KJGM debaters came up with a plan that was precise and to the point. Both teams won both rounds of their competition. Exceptionally well done!!!

All of the debaters are from the South Dallas community. This year the students decided to give themselves an official name. We are now called the "**South Dallas Gilliam Debaters**." This team has a range of personalities – bold; confident;

determined, outspoken and quite energetic. We will continue to plant the seed for success in October 2024 when we will pick up where we left off working with this group of bright minds. We will invite at least one new team of three to join the group. Congratulations "South Dallas Gilliam Debaters!" You make us all proud!

Congratulations also to our amazing coaches. This season we have been blessed to have Cheryl Wattlely (Professor of Law at UNT Dallas) and son Andrew Wattlely (Intellectual Standup Comic) join the program. "Yes, he keeps on blessing us!" The coaches bonded instantly with the students. This is a remarkable mother and son tag team who gave each student 100% of their time in preparing for the tournament. Such a unique pair – sharp and funny which allows the students to relate. The coaches offered their assistance on a volunteer basis to help broaden these young minds. With their patience and genuine concern to see this group of young students succeed, they have truly made a difference. We thank them for planting memories that will follow each debater for many years to come. We thank them for believing in the power of words and for showing the students what real teamwork looks like.

Congratulations also to our terrific parents who ensured their student remained engaged. Lastly, many thanks to Carla Ranger who continues to encourage each debater to reach for the stars and to always believe in themselves.

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS . . .



Retired U.S. Ambassador Meets South Dallas Gilliam Debaters



The *South Dallas Gilliam Debaters* were fortunate to meet face-to-face with U.S. Ambassador Carolyn Patricia Alsup (retired) while in Atlanta, GA. During a visit with the team, Ambassador Alsup reemphasized how important it is to make their voices heard and encouraged them to remain diligent in learning new and exciting things.

Ambassador Alsup is a former Ambassador for the Gambia. She was nominated by President Barack Obama on June 8, 2015 and confirmed by the Senate on October 8, 2015. She joined the Foreign Service in 1992. Over the course of 27 years in the Foreign Service, Ambassador Alsup's assignments covered a wide range of issues – including political, human rights, humanitarian, and commercial issues. On behalf of the U.S. government, she engaged with government officials, political leaders, academics, military leaders, religious leaders, civil society activists, local community representatives, and business representatives. She also engaged with international organizations, such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization.

Ambassador Alsup was a delight to meet and made her appearance easy and comfortable for the students and others to engage her in conversation. It was a pleasure to exchange in communication with such a prestigious diplomat. Her presence will be one in which the students will recall for many years to come.

Aleisa's Corner



Aleisa Daniel



Amir Najm is a bright former debater of the KJGM debate team turned junior debate coach. Once a member of the 3rd debate team cohort, Amir traveled alongside team members to the 2024 Atlanta debate competition to assist as junior coach – he vividly details his experiences from the trip in this interview. Amir, now a 9th-grader, Amirehas many interests, hobbies, and sources of personal fulfillment. He is driven, prodigious, and determined to be a role model to his community. In this Q&A interview, we discuss his favorite activities, sense of style, thoughts on Black History, entrepreneurial endeavors and more.

What did you enjoy most about being on the Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Museum debate team?

[I enjoyed] how open I can be with everyone and having a voice to speak.

Those are some really good ones. When you say having a voice to speak can you share more about what you mean?

I mean, not so much of having the attention, but being more verbal and speaking correctly in [the way of] defense.

Yes. So, being able to speak up and argue your perspective?

Right. Without being negative.

Those are some very valuable and necessary tools that you can use in life. Have you noticed how that might have transferred and helped you in other areas of your life?

So, I'm a business owner. I have a brand called Generation Cuts. It helped me with clientele, it helped me be more comfortable speaking in school and classrooms. Speech, all over, has been a tremendous struggle for me, but debate 100% helped me out.

That's great! So, what are some of the challenges you had specifically with speech that you had to work on a little bit more?

I'll give you an example because that's easier for me – is that okay with you?

Yes. Of course.

So, let's say that I'm debating someone – I will believe I am correct when practicing it in the classroom, but when it's time ... when stuff hits the fan... I [might not] pronounce it correctly or I [might] say it in a questionable way. To this day I still [struggle with that] but debate has made it a lot easier for me to get through it and also just have the confidence because when I have a [lack] of confidence I struggle to pronounce or say a full sentence clearly.

Yes, I understand exactly what you mean. And I think that also just gets better with time and practice.

Yes. It does.

So, beyond debating – you did mention your business – what are some of your other hobbies, interests, and extracurricular activities?

I did dance for 4-5 years: ballet, jazz, hip-hop – had scholarships along the way with different dance communities such as Dallas Black, Ballet North Texas, and TMJ dance project. So that was a big part... what else? I also love detailing cars. Mainly it's going to be school or something such as my business. Hmm, I did boxing for a little bit – I'm going to get back into that as a hobby again. I'm not too much into video games....oh...and reading books.

Nice! It seems like you really have a lot of different areas of interest. Do you just really like trying new things?

Yes. And I did forget to mention Lacrosse.

Oh. Cool!

I like trying new things out in any form or fashion like food, styles....and another hobby – I don't know if this is a hobby or not – but I like outfits and dressing is one of them.

I can definitely relate to that, and I do think that counts as an interest. Do you ever try out different outfits – are you adventurous when it comes to different clothing –or do you already know what your style is?

I used to have a style of skinny jeans for some reason.

I think everyone goes through that phase.

I want to try different things and I think I'm very different... so I've got oversized tees and I like my flare pants. I like graphic tees – I like a lot of graphic stuff but [while] keeping it simple. And I am a sneaker head.

Nice. Fashion is also a form of self-expression. Is it a way for you to express yourself?

Yes... a big way.

That's really cool! So, we've kind of touched on your businesses. I've heard that you're very entrepreneurial at heart. What are some of the aspects or areas of business that you're most interested in. You mentioned your barbershop but what are some other areas of business that interest you or that you've had a hand in?

That's a good question. I'm going to try to answer that one as best as I possibly can. So, before I was cutting hair, I used to like washing cars, cutting grass, and pressure washing such as trash cans and anything you need pressure washing for like a house or a garage. So, I would like to get back into car detailing, pressure washing, and dryer vent cleaning.

Nice!

Dryer vent cleaning might sound boring but to me it's satisfying, and it protects homes from catching fire and [improves the quality of] your clothes.

Those [services] are cool, too, because they're practical skills and something that people will always need. I think it's really good that you've found enjoyment in skills and services that are very practical and useful to people.

Yes!

So, the theme of this newsletter is "This is Black History." Can you explain what Black History means to you?

That one is pretty deep... because, you know, I have my theories. For one I think that we can celebrate Black History better such as giving thanks to our ancestors that fought for us to be here and are still fighting for the future. I believe that Black History is to represent all the engineering that we have put into it, all the hard work and leadership that we needed and role models that are not here to this day that we can still be like, man, look at how great we are because of what our community has done.

Absolutely. In a similar vein, what does excellence mean to you, personally? What does excelling look like for you?

Excelling to me looks like striving – one is the role model I was just talking about – being a role model to the community is what it means for me personally. Having a drive that everybody can see and say "man, he's going somewhere" or "he's going to have excellent stuff going for himself," so when I become that I can teach everybody else and have them do great things and excel. That's what it means to me... empowering others.

Yes – a huge aspect of that is developing resilience and being able to overcome challenges and setbacks in life. I know you've had some learning challenges specifically. Do you mind sharing a little about your learning challenges and how you've overcome them or worked to overcome them?

Dyslexia was one of my learning challenges. And I didn't like reading books – well, actually – I did like reading books, but it depended on [the topic]. I think that what helped me with dyslexia was to help myself like what I'm learning. I noticed if I don't like what I'm learning I don't have the same drive to learn it – I don't ask questions and when you ask questions about a topic you learn more and more and more. I struggle with it a lot less because I'm old enough to say, "I need to do this so I'm going to do it." [Whereas] when I was younger it was just like, "man this is difficult, I'm just going to do it in my own way in my own time." So, what I did was, not force myself to like it, but just get more curious about the topic because the more curious I get about it the more I learn, and I do end up liking it.

That's a very good tip! Just to clarify, when you're studying a topic do you ever find yourself looking at it from a different angle or a different perspective than it's presented to you in order to develop your own perspective, and your own questions, and your own curiosity about the topic outside of the curriculum or the way it's being instructed to you?

Not as much – but yes. Like in biology I do that, and it does help me to better understand the topic and to connect the dots.

I could see how that would be. That's very good. Thank you for sharing that.

You went on the recent debate team trip to Atlanta. Can you share a little about that experience and what were some highlights of the trip for you?

I'm going to start with the airport. We got there early, and I was eager to go to Atlanta – I was like "man, this is going to be great. I haven't been to Atlanta in a long time." And then as soon as we hopped on the airplane I was scared. But then I was like, "I can't be up here scared in front of all these people and my debate team." So yeah, I was really just holding my abs in. But going there? When we got to the hotel it was nice. And just being close to the debate team and learning [more about] everybody was phenomenal it was like "this is more than just debate...this is about us as individuals seeing how far we can take it with the debate." And going to the museums, especially the history museums, was tough. Seeing how much stuff we went through and that that's all we know and that there's plenty more we would probably have to do our own research on that probably wouldn't even get put in museums... just to see that and how it impacted the students was crazy. It was more than just debate. It was phenomenal. And when we came back, I wanted to go again!

I'm sure you will be able to go again perhaps next year. And you're a junior debate team coach now [assisting with the primary school debaters], so what has that transition been like going from debater to junior debate coach? How have you pulled from

your own experiences to help the current debaters who are the age you were when you started?

It's crazy and funny at the same time. Because I had to put those shoes on and lace them up, I just know what they need to work on. I wish I had worked a little bit more with them, but I know that comes with it as time goes on – but just to see that I can impact the kids and see when they are where I was at is just a feeling that you can't even describe because of how good it is.

That's great. It sounds like it was a very rewarding experience for you. What's also really interesting is hearing how your perspective is so much about giving back and how you can help your community. In your answers, it really shows how much you care about helping others and giving what you've gained back to others.

Right.

That's an amazing mentality to have. So, tell me, what are some of the things that you look forward to in the future as a junior debate coach or some of the

things that you would like to focus on as you grow in that role?

I would say getting students more comfortable with their problems to help find solutions. That's a big one. I wish I could go into detail because it's [difficult to explain] but I wish I could better help them with solutions to see how their brain functions, what their stress level is, and what their comfort level is to get them outside of their comfort zone without causing them stress.

That's really good! Thank you for taking the time to interview with us, Amir.

Thank you so much.

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www.kathlynjoygilliammuseum.org

For Correspondence & Donations:

P.O. Box 152593
Dallas, TX 75315-2593

Telephone: (469) 458-0208
Email: admin@kathlynjoygilliammuseum.org

Facebook: Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Museum
 Twitter: Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Museum

Editor: Connie Harris
Co-Editor: Gerald Dunn
Contributor: Aleisa Daniel

KATHLYN JOY GILLIAM MUSEUM
3817 Wendelkin Street
Dallas, Texas 75215