

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

In November of 1968, *Life Magazine* published an extensive article titled: "In Search of a Black Past." Earlier, that year, CBS aired a program narrated by Bill Cosby called: "Black History: Lost, Stolen or Strayed." Those two events marked the first time that the subject of Black American History had been presented by media on a national level.

Those productions sent ripples through American society. As a nation, we had relied on our educational institutions to bring us knowledge of our history. Regrettably, a good portion of that history had been omitted. Very little was written or taught about the black experience in this country. In those rare instances when such did indeed occur it was invariably at the small black colleges of the south. The nation, at large, was deprived of that information. That deprivation adversely affected not only the manner in which black Americans were perceived by others but also how the preponderance of black Americans saw themselves.

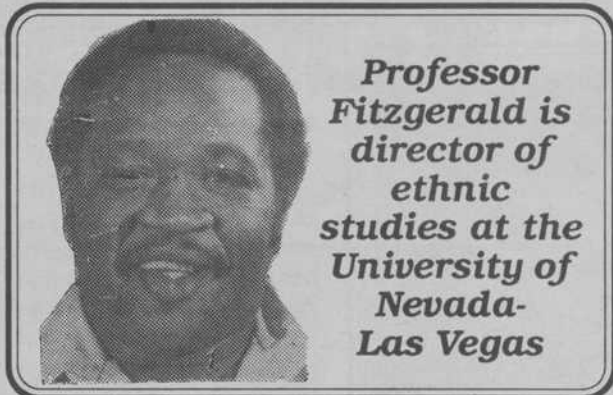
Perhaps the only source of information about black people, which was reasonably readily available to a large segment of Americans, were those articles and photographs found in the *National Geographic Magazine*. It is apparent that even in reference to Black Africans or dark-skinned Pacific Islanders and others, the photographers and writers were primarily interested in showing "T & A" with at least as much abandon as *Penthouse* or *Playboy* magazines. While those efforts had nothing to do with black Americans, the fact that in the minds of some who maintained a stereotypical view of black people, they erroneously represented a view of black Americans simply because of their blackness.

Textbooks used in the schools of the United States have, until this generation, been almost devoid of any significant references to Black Americans. Those limited references had had to do with the "peculiar institution", Booker T. Washington, Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong and maybe Jackie Robinson. Blacks, as whole, were an embarrassment and were kept in the "closet". Because the task of providing Americans with an accurate multi-racial history was not being done where it should

have been — in the schools of America — it became necessary to do it elsewhere. That elsewhere was the introduction of Black History Week and its evolution into Black History Month.

For the next four weeks I will offer some of the many contributions which black Americans have made to America and the world. I will not restrict my effort. I will give examples of involvements for many professions and thereby help dispel the stereotype of the "one-dimensional" black personae. There were scientists, athletes, attorneys, doctors, professors, architects, military people, nurses, teachers, politicians, entertainers, heroes, bums, those who were born to failure, those to whom failure was thrust upon and those who overcame all obstacles. In short, blacks are just like other people. That might seem simplistic but sometimes, somewhere, someone needs reminding.

ON THIS DATE IN FEBRUARY IN BLACK AMERICAN HISTORY....



Professor Fitzgerald is director of ethnic studies at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas

by Professor Roosevelt Fitzgerald

- February 1 — Langston Hughes, world famous author, poet, playwright was born in Joplin, Missouri in 1902; — Four black college students of North Carolina A & T College sat down at a "white" lunch counter in Greensboro, N.C. in 1960 and initiated the "sit-in" movement.
- February 2 — In 1865, John S. Rock became the first black admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court; — Johathan J. Wright became Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of South Carolina in 1870.
- February 3 — Auberine

- Luch, a black student, enrolled at the University of Alabama in 1956 despite protests and threats to her life; — Charles Henry Turner was born on this date in 1867. His studies on animal behavior ranked him among the best scientist in the field of zoology. Among his studies, "Psychological Notes on the Gallery Spider", was published by the Journal of Comparative Neurology in 1892; — Laura Wheeler Waring, an outstanding portrait painter and illustrator died in 1948
- February 4 — On this date,

in 1872, the Colored Opera Company produced Eichberg's "The Doctor of Alcantara" in Lincoln Hall, Washington, D.C.; — James G. Birney, Free Soil candidate for president was born in 1792.

- February 5 — Louis Lautier became the first Black journalist admitted to the National Press Club in 1956; — Jefferson F. Long, Congressman representing the State of Georgia (1869-71) died on this date.
- February 6 — First organized emigration of U.S. Blacks to Africa from New York to Sierra Leone took place in 1820.
- February 7 — Monte Irvin,

star of the New York Giants and the former Negro National League's Newark Eagles was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1973;

- This day marks the beginning of an annual week-long observance of the contributions of Black Americans. The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History was founded by Dr. Carter G. Woodson.
- February 8 — On this date, in 1866, Frederick Douglass challenged President Andrew Johnson on his opposition to the freemen's right to vote. His demand for a state of equal justice between all classes appeared in the *Wash. Chronicle*.



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