

Black History Month Too Short

By WALIDAH IMARISHA

February has rolled around again, and it usually means a flurry of activity for any vaguely politically-minded or socially aware black person. Yep, it's Black History Month again. It's an emotionally relaxing time to be a New Afrikan, because even though there are events to go to, activities to plan, and new information to learn, it's the only time that blackness in available and Afrocentric affairs abound.

It's all over too quickly and when the rush of adrenaline wars off, nagging doubts and complaints start to form. The thin veil is torn from Black History Months and it can readily be seen for what it is, a time for people to celebrate their history and culture.

People make jokes all the time about Black History Month be-

ing in February, the shortest month of the year. There is a lot of truth in jest and I personally would be very interested in finding out why exactly black folks got stuck with this month.

That however, is not the central issue. It wouldn't matter if it was in the longest month of the year. It wouldn't even matter if they made up a new month that was 100 days long exclusively for Black History Month. The fact that a month has to be devoted to black history still indicates that people are not adequately learning about it in mainstream education. Partially because there is a Black History Month, there is less of an outcry for black history in the public school curriculum, and certainly not even a murmur from the white community. People just seem to say to themselves, "Well sure my

history book makes no mention of black people, except when discussing the Civil War and of course Martin Luther King Jr., but I can learn all that in Black History Month."

A single month can not take the place of a thorough education all year round in a controlled class setting with a mapped out curriculum. If left to their own devices, most people won't learn what they don't have to. That is why, despite the fact that Black History Month has been around for a number of years, many people are still virtually ignorant of the basics of New Afrikan history.

Black History Month is also used as a means of placing the sort of education and history that people learn in check.

When companies do their tribute to Black History Month, or

school children do special projects for the month, names of sports heroes and entertainers, or "safe" black leaders who preach either moderation or non-violence, are extolled. Only black people who weren't a threat to the power system are mentioned, or the truth is twisted in such a way as change menaces to the societal order into its best friend.

Take Martin Luther King Jr.,

the only person of color to have his own national holiday.

He once said, "Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor, it must be demanded by the oppressed."

That is somewhat different from the image of him that the public is fed. Society has tried to water him down, and make him more acceptable.

People trumpet Jackie Robinson,

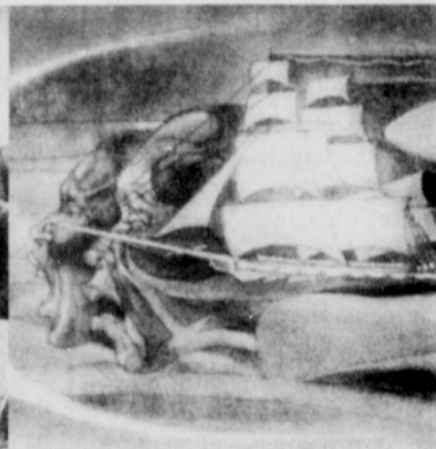
but they don't discuss the history behind the segregation that kept black people out of baseball before him. New Afrikans are given "safe" heroes, but the context, culture, and history which created them is completely left out.

New Afrikans can appreciate and enjoy "their month," but they cannot let it lull them into thinking that the battle for equality is over.

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Also tune-in to these programs that commemorate BLACK HISTORY MONTH:

Civil Rights Landmarks Part I	Feb. 21	10am ET
Civil Rights Landmarks Part II	Feb. 22	10am ET
Buffalo Soldiers	Feb. 23	8am ET
Freedom's Road: Slavery & Opposition	Feb. 25	8am ET
John Brown's War	Feb. 26	8am ET



AMERICA'S BLACK WARRIORS
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Feb. 22



THE HISTORY CHANNEL.
WHERE THE PAST COMES ALIVE.



Vanport residents fleeing flood on May 30, 1948. The disaster was a turning point in changing the race relations in Portland.

Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society.



Holladay school children model knit hats. May, 1949.

Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society.

McMenamins Kennedy School is a proud participant of Black History Month, with the recent west coast premiere of "Through the Open Door" the opening movie of The Cascade Festival of African Films.



Sleep In Class

A great introduction to McMenamins Kennedy School is the **Schoolyard Package**. Included in this special offer are a night's lodging for two, dinner and breakfast in the Courtyard Restaurant, and admission to the movie theater and soaking pool.

The cost of the Schoolyard Package is \$99 per night, per couple, Sunday through Thursday (add 9% county room tax). Based on availability. Call (503) 249-3983 for reservations.

Upcoming Events

Whiskies of the World Dinner • March 6 • 7:00 • \$60
Brewer Dinner • March 11 • 7:00 • \$30

Thursday Night Concerts

All music shows from 7:00 - 10:00 pm • Kennedy School Gymnasium • No Cover
Matchbox Blues • February 12
Jive Talking Robots • February 26
Groove Revelation • February 19
Jane Doe • March 11

McMenamins Kennedy School

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The Portland Observer

would like to thank the Oregon Historical Society for its's kind donation to this year's Black History Month