

Today in Black History -February 15

1848 - Sarah Roberts is barred from a white school in Boston, Massachusetts. Her father, Benjamin Roberts, files the first school integration suit on her behalf.

1851 - African American abolitionists invade a Boston courtroom and rescue a fugitive slave from federal authorities. The fugitive, Shadrach Minkins was about his job as a waiter in Boston when United States federal officers showed up at his workplace and arrested him. Minkins had escaped from slavery in Virginia the previous year. An act passed by Congress in 1850, the Fugitive Slave Law, had just been enacted, allowing slaveholders to enlist the aid of the federal government in recapturing runaway slaves. The Minkins case is to be a nearly test of the new law. Within a few hours of his arrest, Minkins is brought before a federal commissioner. But as he is being led from the courtroom, a group of Boston African Americans overpower the guards and free him. He immediately disappears and is never seen in Boston again. With the help of the Underground Railroad, Minkins will travel north through New Hampshire and Vermont, crossing into Canada six days after his rescue. Out of reach of the U.S. government, Minkins will settle in Montreal, marry an Irish woman and raise two children before his death in 1875. Minkins's rescue will come to symbolize the spirit of resistance to the legal institutions of the slave system.

1960 - Darrell Ray Green is born in Houston, Texas. He will become a professional football player with the Washington Redskins. He will, for 20 years, be a defensive threat and one of the fastest men in the NFL. He will retire in 2002 at the age of 42, the oldest Redskin, having played for six head coaches. He will be enshrined into the College Football Hall of Fame in 2004. On [February 2, 2008](#), he will be voted into the NFL Hall of Fame on his first ballot, and will be inducted with former Redskins teammate Art Monk on [August 2, 2008](#).

1961 - U.S. and African Nationalists protesting the slaying of Congo Premier Patrice Lumumba disrupt United Nations sessions.

1964 - Louis Armstrong's "Hello Dolly," a song the world-renowned trumpeter recorded and almost forgot, becomes the number-one record on Billboard's Top 40 charts, replacing The Beatles "I Want to Hold Your Hand." It is Armstrong's first and only number-one record.

1965 - Nat King Cole, singer and pianist, joins the ancestors in Santa Monica, California at the age of 45. He succumbs to lung cancer.

1968 - Henry Lewis becomes the first African American to lead a symphony orchestra in the United States when he is named director of the New Jersey Symphony.

1969 - Noted historian John Henrik Clarke, speaking before the Jewish Currents Conference in New York City, says, "You cannot subjugate a man and recognize his humanity, his history...so systematically you must take this away from him. You begin by telling lies about the man's role in history."

1978 - Leon Spinks defeats Muhammad Ali for the world heavyweight boxing championship in a 15-round decision in Las Vegas, Nevada.

1992 - At memorial services attended by over 1,600 in Memphis, Tennessee, author Alex Haley ("Roots," "Autobiography of Malcolm X") is eulogized by his wife, who says, "Thank you, Alex, you have helped us know who we truly are."

1992 - NAACP Executive Director, Benjamin L. Hooks, announces that he would retire from the organization in 1993. He will have headed the organization for sixteen years.

1999 - The body of Amadou Diallo, an unarmed West African gunned down by New York City police, is returned to his native Guinea.