

Today in Black History – February 2

1914-William Ellsworth Artis is born in Washington, North Carolina. He will become one of the finest African American artists of the twentieth century. He will be educated at Syracuse University and become a student of Augusta Savage. Artis's sculptures will exhibit a strong originality and a romantic, almost spiritual appeal. His works will be exhibited at Atlanta University, the Whitney Museum, the "Two Centuries of Black American Art" exhibit and collected by Fisk University, Hampton University, the North Carolina Museum of Art, and private collectors. He will join the ancestors in 1977 in Northport, New York.

1915-Biologist Ernest E. Just receives the Spingarn Medal for his pioneering research on fertilization and cell division.

1938-Operatic baritone, Simon Estes is born in Centerville, Iowa. He will be noted for his leading roles in Wagnerian operas and will sing at the opening of the 1972 Summer Olympic Games in Munich, Germany. He will enjoy the acclaim of audiences and critics around the globe. Since his debut with the Deutsche Opera Berlin in 1965, he will perform with major international opera companies including the Metropolitan Opera, New York; Lyric Opera, Chicago; San Francisco Opera; La Scala Milan; Deutsche Opera, Berlin; Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; The Washington Opera; L'Opéra de Paris; Gran Theater del Lichenin Barcelona; the States Operas of Hamburg, Munich, Vienna and Zurich and at the Bayreuth, Salzburg and Glyndebourne Festivals. A noted recitalist and orchestra soloist as well, he will sing with the world's leading orchestras. His love and concern for youth is manifested in the four scholarship organizations that bear his name; The Simon Estes Scholarship Fund at the University of Iowa; The Simon and Westella H. Estes Scholarship Fund at Centerville Community College, Centerville, Iowa; The Simon Estes Iowa Arts Scholarship and The Simon Estes Educational Foundation, Inc. in Tulsa, Oklahoma. This latter Foundation being the most broad-based will spawn the formation of The Simon Estes International Foundation, Inc., Zurich, Switzerland in 1984 and The Simon Estes Foundation, Cape Town, South Africa in 1996. Restricted music scholarships are offered in his name at Centerville Community College, the University of Iowa and through the Simon Estes Iowa Arts Scholarship Fund.

1948-President Harry S. Truman sends a message to Congress pressing for civil rights legislation, including anti-lynching, fair employment practices, and anti-poll tax provisions.

1956-Autherine J. Lucy becomes the first African American student to attend the University of Alabama.

1956-Seven whites and four African Americans are arrested after an all-night civil rights sit-in at the Englewood, New Jersey city hall.

1956-Four African American mothers are arrested after a sit-in at a Chicago elementary school. The mothers later receive suspended \$50 fines. Protests, picketing and demonstrations continue for several weeks against defacto segregation, double shifts and mobile classrooms.

1971-Ugandan army strong man Major- General Idi Amin ousts Milton Obote and assumes full power as military head of state and forms an 18-man cabinet to run the country. Amin, a Muslim, strengthens ties with Arab nations and launches a genocidal program to purge Uganda's Lango and Acholi ethnic groups. He will order all Asians to leave the country, which will thrust Uganda into economic chaos. During Amin's regime, about 300,000 Ugandans will be killed.

1984-Ralph Sampson, one of the Houston Rockets' 'Twin Towers', is named Rookie of the Month in the National Basketball Association. To earn the honor, Sampson averages 24.4 points, 12 rebounds and 2.43 blocked shots per game during the month of January. In addition, Sampson will become the only rookie (up to that time) to be named to the NBA's All-Star Game.

1988-A commemorative stamp of James Weldon Johnson is issued by the United States Postal Service as part of its Black Heritage USA series.

1990-In a dramatic concession to South Africa's Black majority, President F.W. deKlerk lifts a ban on the African National Congress, and sixty other political organizations and promises to free Nelson Mandela.