

\* Today in Black History - February 27 \*

1844 - The Dominican Republic gains its independence from Haiti, which had occupied the whole island of Hispaniola since 1822. Prior to Haitian rule, France had administered the eastern part of the island starting in 1795, when Spain ceded the territory to France. The leader of Dominican independence against Haiti was Juan Pablo Duarte.

1869 - John Willis Menard, the first African American elected to Congress in 1868, is never seated. When he pleads his own case before the House of Representatives, he becomes the first African American to speak on the floor of the House.

1872 - Charlotte Ray graduates from Howard Law School in Washington, DC. She will become the first African American woman lawyer in the United States and the third woman admitted to the bar to practice law (April 23, 1872).

1897 - Marian Anderson is born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She will become the first modern African American to win international renown as an opera singer and will be considered one of the great operatic voices of the century. Singing at a time of great social upheaval for African Americans, Anderson's professional career will contain many operatic and civil rights milestones and recognition, including Kennedy Center Honors in 1978. The Kennedy Center will hold a gala in observance of the 100th anniversary of her birth in 1997. Many sources, including the "Encyclopedia Britannica" and "Africana" have her birth year as 1902 or 1900. According to her nephew (with whom she lived until her death), when she became the first African American to sing a principal role with the Metropolitan Opera, her publicist thought her age should be reduced by five years. The media therefore, establishes her birth year erroneously as 1902.

1942 - Charlayne Hunter is born in Due West, South Carolina. One of the first students to integrate the University of Georgia, Charlayne Hunter-Gault will become a print and broadcast journalist and win two Emmy awards for her work on public TV's "The MacNeil/Lehrer News-Hour."

1961 - James Worthy is born in Gastonia, North Carolina. He will become a starting forward for the Los Angeles Lakers. He will be selected as the 1988 NBA Playoff Most Valuable Player. He will play with three NBA championship Laker teams (1985, 1987, 1988).

1967 - Antigua & St. Christopher-Nevis-Anguilla become associated states of the United Kingdom.

1967 - Dominica gains its independence from England.

1988 - Debi Thomas, a world-class figure skater, wins a bronze medal in the Winter Olympic Games in Calgary. She is the first African American to win a medal in the Winter Games.

1992 - Eldrick "Tiger" Woods is the youngest amateur golfer in 35 years to play in a PGA tournament when he tees off at the Los Angeles Open at the age of 16.

1999 - The Rev. Henry Lyons, president of the National Baptist Convention USA, is convicted in Largo, Florida, of swindling millions of dollars from companies seeking to do business with his followers.

1999 - Nigerians vote to elect Olusegun Obasanjo their new president as the country marks the final phase of its return to democracy.