

* Today in Black History - February 29 *

1892 - Augusta Savage is born in Green Springs, Florida. She will become a sculptor, teacher, and one of the most influential forces among Harlem Renaissance artists.

1940 - Robert Sengstacke Abbott, newspaper editor and publisher of the Chicago Defender, joins the ancestors in Chicago, Illinois. His newspaper became a bold voice for African Americans in the North, advocating during the wave of lynchings after World War I the slogan, "if you must die, take at least one with you," later simplified to "an eye for an eye." Abbott passes away as his nephew, John Sengstacke, is establishing the National Newspaper Publishers Association in Washington, DC.

1940 - In Hollywood, Hattie McDaniel receives an Academy Award for best supporting actress for her role in "Gone With the Wind." She is the first African American to win an Oscar. Often criticized for her portrayal of maids, she will say, "It's much better to play a maid than to be one. The only choice permitted me is either to be a servant for \$7 a week or portray one for \$700 a week."

1968 - The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, convened by President Lyndon B. Johnson after riots occur in major cities throughout the United States, issues its report. The commission will be called the "Kerner Commission" after its chairman, Governor Otto Kerner of Illinois. The report concludes that white racism is one of the fundamental causes of riots in the United States. It also cited what was needed to avert future violence -- jobs, open housing laws and the elimination of defacto school segregation. It also concluded the United States was "headed toward two societies, one Black and one White -- separate and unequal." A 30-year update of the Kerner Commission reports "the divide between rich and poor has become greater in the United States and the challenges from within more formidable."

1988 - South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu and other religious leaders are arrested while kneeling near Parliament with a petition against government bans on anti-apartheid groups.

1996 - Daniel Green is convicted in Lumberton, North Carolina, of murdering James R. Jordan, the father of basketball star Michael Jordan, during a 1993 roadside holdup. (Green will be sentenced to life in prison; an accomplice who had testified against him, Larry Demery, also will receive a life sentence.)