

**\*Today in Black History -February 3 \***

1855 - The Wisconsin Supreme Court declares that the United States Fugitive Slave Law is unconstitutional.

1874 - Blanche Kelso Bruce is elected to the United States Senate from Mississippi. He will be the first African American senator to serve a full term and the first to preside over the Senate during a debate.

1879 - Charles Follis is born in Wooster, Ohio. He will become the first African American professional football player in the United States reported by the press. He will play for professional team known as the Shelby Blues, in Shelby, Ohio, starting in 1904 and will retire in 1906 due to injuries. Most sources will state that 1904 was when his career started, when he signed a contract on [September 16](#), but Hall of Fame research indicates the 1902 Shelby Athletic Club that Follis played on, was indeed professional. Editor's note: In 1972, The Pro Football Hall of Fame will discover proof that William(Pudge) Heffelfinger, a Yale All-American, played one game for \$ 500, for the Allegheny Athletic Association in 1892, making him the actual 'first' to play football for pay. Follis will join the ancestors on [April 5, 1910](#) after succumbing to pneumonia.

1935 - Johnny "Guitar" Watson is born in Houston, Texas. He will become a guitarist and singer known for his wild style of guitar playing and the sound which merged Blues Music with touches of Rhythm & Blues and Funk. He will join the ancestors after succumbing to a heart attack, while performing at the Yokohama Blues Cafe in Japan, on [May 17, 1996](#).

1938 - Emile Griffith is born in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. He will move to New York City as a young man and discover boxing. He will win the Golden Gloves title and turn professional in 1958. In his career, he will meet 10 world champions and box 339 title-fight rounds, more than any other fighter in history. He will be elected to the International Boxing Hall of Fame with the distinction of being the third fighter in history to hold both the welterweight and middleweight titles.

1938 - Elijah Pitts is born in Mayflower, Arkansas. He will become professional football player with the Green Bay Packers. Major contributor as a running back, he will help his team win Super Bowl I. He will spend nine years with the Green Bay Packers during their championship years under Hall of Fame coach Vince Lombardi. The Packers will win four NFL championships and two Super Bowls during his career. He will return to the Super Bowl thirty years later as a running back coach with the Buffalo Bills. He will join the ancestors on [July 10, 1998](#) after succumbing to abdominal cancer.

1939 - The Baltimore Museum of Art exhibit, "Contemporary Negro Art", opens. The exhibit, which will run for 16 days, will feature works by Richmond Barthe, Aaron Douglas, Archibald Motley, Jr., and Jacob Lawrence's Toussaint L'Ouverture series.

1947 - Percival Prattis of "Our World" in New York City becomes the first African American news correspondent admitted to the House and Senate press galleries in Washington, DC.

1948 - Laura Wheeler Waring, portrait painter and illustrator, joins the ancestors. Trained at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, she received the Harmon Award in 1927 for achievement in the fine arts and, with Betsey Graves Reyneau, completed a setoff 24 renderings of their works entitled "Portraits of Outstanding Americans of Negro Origins" for the Harmon Foundation in the 1940's.

1948 - Rosa Ingram and her fourteen and sixteen-year-old sons are condemned to death for the alleged murder of a white Georgian. Mrs. Ingram states that she acted in self-defense.

1964 - School officials report that 464,000 Black and Puerto Rican students boycotted New York City public schools.

1980 - Muhammad Ali starts tour of Africa as President Jimmy Carter's envoy.

1981 - The Air Force Academy drops its ban on applicants with sickle-cell trait. The ban was considered by many a means of discriminating against African Americans.

1984 - A sellout crowd of 18,210 at Madison Square Garden in New York City sees Carl Lewis best his own world record in the long jump by 9-1/4 inches.

1989 - Former St. Louis Cardinals' first baseman, Bill White becomes the first African American to head an American professional sports league when he was named to succeed A. Bartlett Giamatti as National League president.

1993 - The federal trial of four police officers charged with civil rights violations in the videotaped beating of Rodney King, began in Los Angeles.

1993 - Marge Schott is suspended as Cincinnati Reds owner for one year for her repeated use of racial and ethnic slurs.