

## \*Today in Black History -February 4 \*

1794 - Slavery is abolished by France. France will have a very lukewarm commitment to abolition and will, under Napoleon, reestablish slavery in 1802, along with the reinstatement of the "Code Noir," prohibiting blacks, mulattos and other people of color from entering French colonial territory or intermarrying with whites.

1822 - The American Colonization Society founds the African colony for free African Americans that will become the country of Liberia, West Africa.

1913 - Rosa Louise McCauley is born in Tuskegee, Alabama. In 1932, she will marry Raymond Parks. She will work at a number of jobs, ranging from domestic worker to hospital aide. At her husband's urging, she will finish high school studies in 1933, at a time when less than 7% of African Americans had a high school diploma. Despite the Jim Crow laws that made political participation by Black people difficult, she will succeed unregistered to vote on her third try. In [December 1943](#), she will become active in the Civil Rights Movement, joining the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP. When the seamstress and NAACP member refuses to yield her seat to a white man on a Montgomery, Alabama bus on [December 1, 1955](#), her actions will spark a 382-day boycott of the buses in Montgomery, halting business and services in the city and become the initial act of non-violent disobedience of the American Civil Rights movement. She will be honored with the NAACP's Spingarn Medal for her heroism and later work with Detroit youth (1979) and be called the "Mother of the Civil Rights Movement." She will join the ancestors on [October 24, 2005](#). The United States Senate will pass a resolution on [October 27, 2005](#) to honor Mother Parks by allowing her body to lie in honor in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda. The House of Representatives approved the resolution on [October 28](#). Since the founding of the practice of lying in state in the Rotunda in 1852, she will be the 31st person, the first woman, the first American who had not been a U.S. government official and the second non-government official (after Frenchman Pierre L'Enfant). On [October 30, 2005](#) President George W. Bush will issue proclamation ordering that all flags on U.S. public areas both within the country and abroad be flown at half-staff on the day of her funeral. On [February 5, 2006](#), at Super Bowl XL, played at Detroit's Ford Field, the late Coretta Scott King and Mother Parks, who had been a long-time resident of "The Motor City", will be remembered and honored by a moment of silence.

1947 - Sanford Bishop is born in Mobile, Alabama. He will graduate from Morehouse College and Emory University Law School. He will specialize in civil rights law and will become a member of the Georgia Legislature from 1977 to 1993 (House and Senate). In 1993, he will be elected a member of the United States House of Representatives from Georgia. 1952 - Jackie Robinson is named Director of Communication for WNBC in New York City, becoming the first African American executive of a major radio-TV network.

1965 - Joseph Danquah joins the ancestors in Nsawam Prison in Ghana at the age of 69. He had been a Ghanaian scholar, lawyer and nationalist. He had led the opposition against Kwame Nkrumah who had him imprisoned.

1969 - The Popular Liberation Movement Of Angola begins an armed struggle against Portugal.

1971 - The National Guard is mobilized to quell civil disobedience events in Wilmington, North Carolina. Two persons are killed.

1971 - Major League Baseball announces a special Hall of Fame wing for special displays about the Negro Leagues. These exhibits will provide information on these most deserving but rarely recognized contributors to Baseball.

1974 - The Symbionese Liberation Army kidnaps nineteen-year-old newspaper heiress Patricia Hearst from her apartment in Berkeley, California.

1980 - Camara Laye joins the ancestors in Senegal at the age of 52. He was a Guinean novelist considered a pioneer of West African literature.

1986 - A stamp of Sojourner Truth is issued by the United States Postal Service as part of its Black Heritage USA commemorative series. Truth was an abolitionist, woman's rights activist and a famous "conductor" on the Underground Railroad.

1996 - Congressman J.C. Watts (R-Oklahoma) becomes the first African American selected to respond to a State of the Union address.

1997 - Sixteen months after O.J. Simpson was cleared of murder charges, a civil trial jury blames him for the killings of his ex-wife and her friend and orders him to pay millions in compensatory damages.

2003 - Charlie Biddle, a leader of Montreal's jazz scene in the 1950s and '60s who played bass with Thelonious Monk and Charlie Parker, joins the ancestors after a battle with cancer at the age of 76. Biddle was a native of Philadelphia who moved to Canada in 1948. Over the next five decades, the World War II veteran and former car salesman became synonymous with jazz in Montréal. Biddle opened his own club, Uncle Charlie's Jazz Joint, in suburban Ste-Therese in 1958. He later performed in such legendary Montreal nightspots as The Black Bottom and the Penthouse, where he worked with the likes of Oscar Peterson, Art Tatum, Charlie Parker and Lionel Hampton. When there were no jobs in Montreal, he played smaller Quebec cities with group called Three Jacks and a Jill. Until the time of his passing, he played four nights a week at Biddle's Jazz and Ribs, a Montreal landmark for nearly 25 years. In 1979, he organized the three-day festival that some say paved the way for the renowned Montreal International Jazz Festival.

2005 - Ossie Davis, renowned actor and civil rights advocate, joins the ancestors in Miami, FL, while on location for yet another acting project at the age of 87.

2007 - For the first time in Super Bowl history, two African American coaches will lead their teams in the NFL Championship game. The Chicago Bears will be coached by Lovie Lee Smith and the Indianapolis Colts will be coached by Tony Dungie. The Indianapolis Colts and the Chicago Bears will be set to faceoff in South Florida during Super Bowl XLI in a historic meeting where both African American coaches will vie for the Vince Lombardi Trophy. The winner will be the first African American coach to win the Super Bowl.