

CPCS Honors Black History Month 2023

“I am America. I am the part you won’t recognize. But get used to me. Black, confident, cocky; my name, not yours; my religion, not yours; my goals, my own; get used to me.” — Muhammad Ali

The 2023 Black History Month theme is Black resistance, a phrase that speaks to the Black community and their allies of affirmation, power, and self-determination. For others, there is a risk of misconstruing this construct and its actual meaning to pose a threat within the twisted construct of race as retribution, otherness, or anger. It is difficult to read or understand this phrase without full context or meaning to appreciate the connection to the Black American experience of having to stand up against oppression, hatred, and terror over centuries.

Black resistance is reflected in the earliest efforts to support the United States against British subjugation and our ugly American practice of slavery. Resistance is also found in the insights, wisdom, and audacity of Black writers, inventors, builders, and thinkers who gave America prosperity and created much of our infrastructure while being denied access to their history, dignity, and freedom to live as equals. Black Resistance is reflected in children who braved dogs, fire hoses, and physical and mental assault to demand respect for the right to equality and in the protests against Jim Crow practices that denied Black people equal access to services from transportation to housing and public accommodations.

Over history, we have a rich progression of Black resistance in the Underground Railroad that helped enslaved people escape bondage, to the writing, speaking, and numerous arrests of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as expressions of nonviolent leadership in the civil rights movement. We saw Black resistance in the Black Power salute at the 1968 Olympics, in the armed monitoring against police abuse by the Black Panther Party along with their Ten Point Plan for freedom and equality. We can hear Black resistance in jazz singer Billie Holiday’s chilling “Strange Fruit,” Marvin Gaye’s “What’s Going On,” James Brown’s “Say it Loud – I’m Black and I’m Proud,” and the Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes “Wake up Everybody.”

Today, Black resistance is in hip-hop music, in Black people audaciously taking control of economic opportunities, political power, Black art, culture and cuisine, all to build self-respect and dignity along with an unvarnished view of Blackness.

“If we accept and acquiesce in the face of discrimination, we accept the responsibility ourselves and allow those responsible to salve their conscience by believing that they have our acceptance and concurrence. We should, therefore, protest openly everything... that smacks of discrimination or slander.” — Mary McLeod Bethune

In reflecting on this rich history, the question that sadly remains is “What is there to be feared?” given the backlash that is never late against Black efforts towards progress and equality. The nationwide effort by some to question President Obama’s place of birth. deride Colin Kaepernick for taking a knee against racial injustice or to contort the Black Lives Matter

movement as a nefarious plot are just recent gestures of this nature. No one of us is perfect, no movement is perfect, and the reality of oppression that plays out today in the lives of so many Black people, starting with our clients, makes the case that Black resistance is not just needed – it is essential to any progress we will make as a society against the sin of racism.

No one seeks a life of resistance, yet from the first bully we face to the last breath we take, confronting what we cannot ignore, asserting ourselves and even our defiance are just simple attributes of human existence. This reality should be no different for Black people, yet their resistance too often gives haters a reason to undermine, rage, or enact vile and malicious acts toward vengeance, control, or intimidation of Black people from fully expressing and exploring themselves. So for this Black History Month, CPCS, please take a moment to reflect on Black resistance and how important it is for all of us to grow toward a better understanding and embrace of the will of Black people to live, survive and thrive on equal terms.

Here are some links to events courtesy of our EID Events Committee, led by CAFL Supervising Attorney Kisha Jones, as well as links to further reading, viewing or listening on some of the people and moments referenced in this note:

February Events – Black History Month – Statewide and National

Newton

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/newton-community-pride-announces-black-history-month-events/ar-AA16GWms>

Boston

<https://www.boston.gov/news/event-calendar-marking-black-history-month-boston>

<https://www.mos.org/public-events/black-history-month-2023>

Northampton- access via “Event” link

<https://news.northampton.edu/news/2022/02/celebrating-black-history-month/>

North Andover

<https://allevents.in/north%20andover/african-american-women-and-social-change-stages-of-liberation/10000512158147807>

<https://allevents.in/north%20andover/the-grimkes-a-legacy-of-slavery-in-an-american-family/10000512191978997>

<https://allevents.in/north%20andover/african-american-history-month-kick-off-celebration/10000503987749927>

Springfield College

Which Lives Matter

<https://allevents.in/springfield/200023938795941>

What and why we celebrate black History month

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/what-and-why-we-celebrate-black-history-month-tickets-499013481757?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=listing&utm-source=cp&aff=escb>

Stax Music Academy presents the 2023 Black History Month Production, "Soul Of America: The Evolution of Soulsville."

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/stax-music-academy-2023-black-history-month-production-tickets-495218962247?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=listing&utm-source=cp&aff=escb>

BLK House Virtual: A Black History Month Celebration by Toasted Life

We're celebrating Black History Month in a BIG way with an epic celebration and dance party! Get ready for some fun!

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/blk-house-virtual-a-black-history-month-celebration-by-toasted-life-tickets-516962868857?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=listing&utm-source=cp&aff=escb>

Black History Month | Anne Arundel County Webinar: Banneker-Douglass Museum "The Radical Voice of Blackness Speaks of Resistance and Joy"

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/black-history-month-webinar-tickets-512131076837?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=listing&utm-source=cp&aff=escb>

Black History Month Paint Party

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/black-history-month-paint-party-tickets-514396061467?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=listing&utm-source=cp&aff=escb>

African Symbols Decoded: An Online Black History Month Presentation

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/african-symbols-decoded-an-online-black-history-month-presentation-tickets-489720516247?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=listing&utm-source=cp&aff=escb>

2023 Black History Month - Resistance to Restoration

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2023-black-history-month-resistance-to-restoration-tickets-523691815317?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=listing&utm-source=cp&aff=escb>

For further Reading, Viewing, and Listening

Readings

African Americans in the Revolutionary War

<https://www.nps.gov/chyo/learn/historyculture/african-americans-in-the-revolutionary-war.htm>

Boston Becomes the Antislavery Hub

<https://www.masshist.org/features/boston-abolitionists/antislavery-hub>

Former Slaves and Reflections on Resistance

<https://shec.ashp.cuny.edu/exhibits/show/slavecommunities/item/1001>

Black Panther Party - Ten Point Plan

<https://web.archive.org/web/20110401183141/http://www.blackpanther.org/TenPoint.htm>

Videos

Olympian Tommie Smith on the Black Power Salute at the 1968 Olympics

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0H9WP6n-Zno>

Dr. Mary McCleod Bethune recognized in US Congress

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cN-iyFmlnR8>

Music (these selections are leaning old school, but they are essential to appreciate the trajectory and we will focus on Hip Hop and its contemporary influence along with other song and art)

Billie Holliday – Strange Fruit (Note: there is difficult imagery here but the version of this song is most clear and the images of Ms. Holliday are wonderful)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHGAMjwr_i8

James Brown – Say it Loud (I'm Black and I'm Proud)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hj1iWqoYEc&list=PLoPrclQ-3avt_Mgiz6Is7JX0uXVUKI_2

Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes – Wake up Everybody

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TDfPg3Kyc>

Marvin Gaye – What's Going On?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o5TmORitlKk>