



# Black History Month

## **Black History Month messages to DJJ employees**





# Black History Month

## The History of Black History Month



Dr. Carter G. Woodson

Americans have recognized black history annually since 1926, first as "Negro History Week," and later as "Black History Month." What you might not know is that black history had barely begun to be studied – or even documented – when the tradition originated. Although people of African descent have been in America at least as far back as colonial times, it was not until the 20th century that they gained a respectable presence in the history books.

We owe the celebration of Black History Month, and more importantly, the study of black history, to Dr. Carter G. Woodson. Born to parents who were former slaves, he spent his childhood working in the Kentucky coal mines and enrolled in high school at age 20. He graduated within two years and later went on to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard. The scholar was disturbed to find in his studies that history books largely ignored the black American population. And when black people did figure into the picture, it was generally in ways that reflected the inferior social position they were assigned at the time.

Always one to act on his ambitions, Dr. Woodson decided to take on the challenge of writing African Americans into the nation's history. He established the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (now called the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History) in 1915, and a year later founded the widely respected Journal of Negro History. In 1926, he launched Negro History Week as an initiative to bring national attention to the contributions of black people throughout American history.

Dr. Woodson chose February to observe Negro History Week because it was the month in which a number of events that greatly influenced the African American population took place.

- Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, and W.E.B. DuBois were born.
- Feb. 3, 1870 – The 15th Amendment was passed, granting black citizens the right to vote.
- Feb. 25, 1870 – Hiram R. Revels, the first black U.S. Senator, took the oath of office.
- Feb. 12, 1909 – The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded by a group of concerned black and white citizens in New York City.
- Feb. 1, 1960 – In what would become a civil-rights movement milestone, a group of black Greensboro, N.C., college students began a sit-in at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter.

– By Elissa Haney, from website "Infoplease."





# Black History Month

## Virginia Civil Rights Memorial Marks 10th Year

As part of this year's Black History Month observance, we take note that the Virginia Civil Rights Memorial, located on the grounds of the Virginia State Capitol, will mark its tenth year since it was dedicated in 2008. On July 21 of that year, Gov. Timothy M. Kaine officially unveiled the memorial at an event attended by more than 4,000 people. The sculpture by artist Stanley Bleifeld portrays Barbara Johns, who, when she was 16 years old, led a student walkout from the woefully inadequate high school for African Americans in Farmville. In addition to Johns, the sculpture depicts other students, community members, and the lawyers who championed their case. The memorial is located near the entrance to the Executive Mansion in Capitol Square.



The student strike at Robert Russa Moton High School in Prince Edward County played an important role in ending racial segregation in United States public schools. The school was designed to house 180 students and was a simple, one-story brick building. The school's enrollment quickly outgrew the original building, reaching 450 students by 1950. The white school board's response to repeated petitions for a new school was the construction of three large plywood buildings covered with tarpaper. Unsatisfied with the buildings, Barbara Johns and other students began a strike on April 23, 1951, keeping nearly 400 students out of school for two weeks.

Also portrayed on the sculpture is Rev. L. Francis Griffin, a Prince Edward County civil rights activist, who supported and encouraged the students and their parents. The students asked Richmond civil rights attorneys Oliver W. Hill and Spottswood W. Robinson III to sue for equal facilities, but instead they decided to bring suit to end segregation. On May 23, 1951, Robinson filed Dorothy Davis et al. v. County School Board of Prince Edward County, which was later incorporated into the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas Supreme Court of the United States case.

The memorial's creator, Stanley Bleifeld, won the commission for the sculpture through a competitive process. An internationally famous artist, Bleifeld was raised in Brooklyn, N.Y. He attended Temple University in Pennsylvania. Although trained in painting, early in his career he turned to sculpture. Bleifeld received numerous public commissions, most notably for the The Prophets, at Vatican Pavilion, for the New York World's Fair in 1964 and for the Lone Soldier a larger-than-life sculpture that is a part of the United States Navy Memorial in Washington, D.C. Bleifeld died in 2011.





# Black History Month

## A Message From Former Barrett JCC Resident Dr. Vanessa Owens

How well can some of us identify with the lyrics of the old Negro spiritual, "There Is A Balm In Gilead:"

*"Sometimes I feel discouraged and think my work's in vain.  
But then the holy spirit revives my hope again."*

I recognize and I applaud you for your relentless effort to make a difference in the lives of the youth that pass through DJJ. As I listened to Director Block's TED Talk on the transition and progress of DJJ, it warmed my heart and caused me to reflect on Janie Porter Barrett (1865-1948). As an exemplary African-American correctional educator, she saw the need for change and made it happen. While the industrial school was under Barrett's supervision in the early 1920s, the Russell Sage Foundation rated it as one of the five best schools of its kind in the United States. With so many young women being successfully rehabilitated and going on to lead successful lives after graduation, the school became highly revered, especially for its cultivation of character and morals, and began to serve as a model of its type.



I entered the Janie Porter Barrett School for Girls as a resident in 1966, when Thomas Bynum was superintendent, and Julia Buck was the assistant superintendent. When I arrived, Ms. Barrett's method of reform instantly resonated with me. Like many of the other girls who went through the school, I was trained in vocational skills and completed morality programs that were designed to cultivate character, self-reliance, and self-discipline; which are the cornerstones of all I do today.

The need to assist in the transition of our youth today into adulthood is just as great as it was then, and I know firsthand the power and importance of the resident specialists. You really are the "balm."

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*Dr. Owens is an ordained minister who for over 40 years pastored a church and served as CEO of the Martin Luther King Family Life Center Inc. in Lebanon, PA. In 2015 she returned to her native city of Virginia Beach and continues to operate out of the MLKFLC's satellite office in Norfolk. The MLKFLC was organized to create a bridge to help meet some of the core needs of spiritually and economically challenged citizens in both the local and global communities. The mission is to support and strengthen communities by serving youth and families through advocacy, counseling, education, housing and recreational activities. This organization is guided by the vision to "Build strong leaders for our local and global communities through education and empowerment for today's diverse and complex world."*





# Black History Month

## **Annie E. Casey Posts Video On Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities To Honor Black History Month**

Last year as you may recall, we partnered with the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services to hold a two-day learning opportunity focused on racial and ethnic disparities (RED) in the justice system. Stakeholders, including social workers, law enforcement, and school officials from eight different localities across the Commonwealth, gathered with DJJ staff to talk about fairness – or the lack thereof – why it is important and, most specifically, strategies we must consider and develop to insure that our juvenile justice system in Virginia is as fair as it can possibly be.

As I told you at the time, the conference kicked off a more intentional focus by DJJ on the complex and vexing problem of Racial and Ethnic disparities in our juvenile justice system.

In the time since that initial two-day convening, DJJ staff have taken additional steps to become more thoughtful, strategic, and effective in how we address this problem. Lisa Garry, Maryland DJS Director of Systems Reform, joined DJJ at the CSU Leadership Summit last year and shared some of her work addressing the issues in Maryland, along with examples of specific strategies that we might explore in Virginia. Also, staff attended a Georgetown University Collaborative with other Virginia child serving agencies to develop plans to address disparity across agencies. Additional local teams from across the department have had the opportunity to participate in RED training sponsored by DCJS and to develop approaches to begin addressing the problem in their communities.

We will not stop there. Informed by lessons learned from the team that gathered at Georgetown and the work that is happening at a local level, we are now formulating further steps down this important road.

In observance of Black History Month, the Annie E. Casey Foundation posted this video on its website. It features Tshaka Barrows, the executive director of the W. Haywood Burns Institute, who addresses juvenile justice practitioners about reducing racial and ethnic disparities. He urges practitioners to focus on what they have control over and engage with community members. I feel this is a powerful message appropriate to the observance of Black History Month.

To view the video, click on the link below. More videos like this one are on JDAIconnect, a free online community for everyone who cares about youth justice to connect, find resources and learn. To sign up, visit [www.jdaiconnect.org](http://www.jdaiconnect.org). On the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Community Café, click on the "Non-Casey Staff Login" link. Then fill in your email address and click confirm. Check your e-mail for instructions.

Thanks, as always, for the hard and important work you do. I look forward to seeing you soon.

Andy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5Fkfx7Darg&feature=youtu.be>





# Black History Month

## **Central Office Luncheon Feb. 28, 2018**





# Black History Month



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

## *Black History Month Luncheon*

*Understanding the PAST, Improving the PRESENT,  
and Preparing for the FUTURE*

February 28, 2018

12:00-1:30 PM

Welcome & Purpose

**Valerie Boykin**

Lift Every Voice and Sing

**ALL**

Greetings

**Andy Block**

Description of Storybook and  
Artifact Gallery (*View at Leisure*)

**Greg Davy**

Blessing of the Food

**Frances Walton-Smith**

### LUNCH IS SERVED

Introduction of Youth

**Joyce Holmon**

Presentation: Youth Voices

**Bon Air Youth**

Expressions & Reflections  
(*2 minutes each*)

**Participants  
Volunteers**

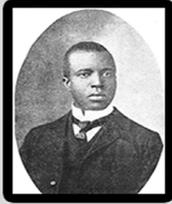
Black History Quiz & Activities

**Deidre Davis  
Nina Joyner**

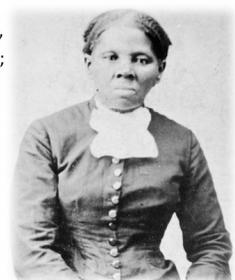
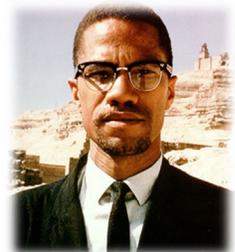
Wrap Up

Introduction of RED Work





# Black History Month



## *Lift Every Voice and Sing*

*James Weldon Johnson*

Lift every voice and sing till earth and heaven ring,  
ring with the harmonies of liberty;  
let our rejoicing rise high as the listening skies,  
let it resound loud as the rolling sea.

Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,  
sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;  
facing the rising sun of our new day begun,  
let us march on till victory is won.

Story the road we trod, bitter the chastening rod,  
felt in the days when hope unborn had died;  
yet with a steady beat, have not our weary feet  
come to the place for which our people sighed?

We have come over a way that with tears has been watered;  
we have come, treading our path through  
the blood of the slaughtered,

out from the gloomy past, till now we stand at last  
where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,  
thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;  
thou who hast, by thy might, led us into the light,  
keep us forever in the path, we pray.

Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met thee,  
lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget thee;  
shadowed beneath thy hand, may we forever stand,  
true to our God, true to our native land.

## *Black History Month Commemoration Committee*

Evelyn Barbee  
Valerie Boykin  
Deidre Davis  
Tabitha Dowtin  
Johnell Ferrell  
Nina Joyner  
Romilda Smith  
Lara Todd

Dianne Berry  
Sheanita Carter  
Greg Davy  
Jeanna Easton  
Wendy Hoffman  
Ayana Obika-Clayborne  
Beth Stinnett  
Frances Walton-Smith





# Black History Month





# Black History Month





# Black History Month

**Photos of artifacts on display at luncheon, courtesy of Valentine Museum in Richmond, reflecting Virginia's African American history**





# Black History Month



## Lunch Counter at Broad Street Woolworth's

On Feb. 1, 1960, student activists began sit-ins at the segregated lunch counter of F.W. Woolworth's in Greensboro, N.C. Virginia Union University students started a similar sit-in at Woolworth's on E. Broad Street in Richmond. By the summer of 1963, more than 100 of Richmond's 400 restaurants and cafes had been integrated.



Images courtesy of the  
Valentine Museum,  
Richmond



# Black History Month



## **Stained Glass Window Gravel Hill Baptist Church**

Following emancipation in 1865, freedmen formed independent churches that grew to become important centers for African American community life. This church window comes from Gravel Hill Baptist Church, formed in 1872 by formerly enslaved African Americans. When congregants built a new brick sanctuary in the early 21st century, they saved architectural elements from the earlier church.



Images courtesy of the  
Valentine Museum,  
Richmond



# Black History Month



## Leg Shackles

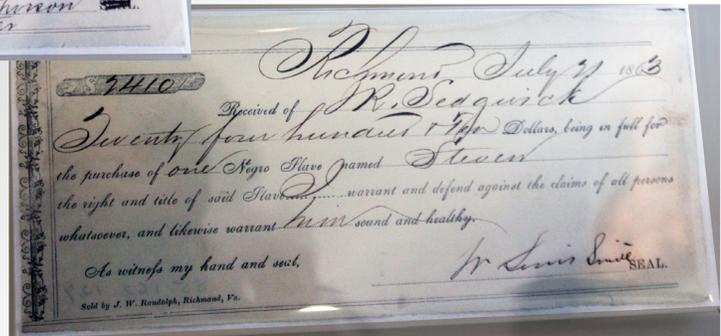
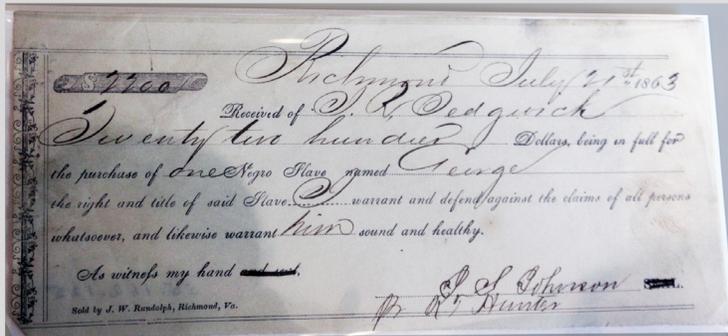
Seventeenth-century Virginia statutes authorized slavery in the Colonies. Richmond was an integral player in this economic system from the start. By the 1850s, the slave trade had become the largest form of commerce in Richmond. These leg shackles are from about 1825.



Images courtesy of the  
Valentine Museum,  
Richmond



# Black History Month



## Slave Bills of Sale



Images courtesy of the  
Valentine Museum,  
Richmond





# Black History Month

**Storyboards displayed at luncheon featuring notable African Americans who made significant contributions to civil rights or the juvenile justice field.**





# Black History Month

## Janie Porter Barrett

*Education Pioneer*

Janie Porter Barrett, for whom DJJ's former Barrett Juvenile Correctional Center was named, was an American social reformer, educator and welfare worker. She established the Virginia Industrial School for Colored Girls, a pioneering rehabilitation center for African American female delinquents. She was also the founder of the Virginia State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs

Ms. Barrett graduated from the Hampton Institute in 1885. She worked as a teacher in a rural school in Dawson, GA, and then at Lucy Craft Laney's Haines Normal and Industrial Institute in Augusta, GA. In 1908 Barrett helped to organize, and was the first president of, the Virginia State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs. For several years after 1911, the Federation gradually raised money for the establishment of a residential industrial school for the large number of young African American girls that were being sent to jail. They planned to pay in full for land after five years of fundraising. However in 1914, Barrett read in a newspaper that an 8-year-old girl had been sentenced to six months in jail and she immediately appealed to the judge in Newport News to send the girl to the Weaver Orphan Home in Hampton, where Barrett was living at the time. The judge reluctantly released the child into her care. The Federation quickly raised \$5,300 and bought a 147-acre farm in Hanover County and chartered their center.



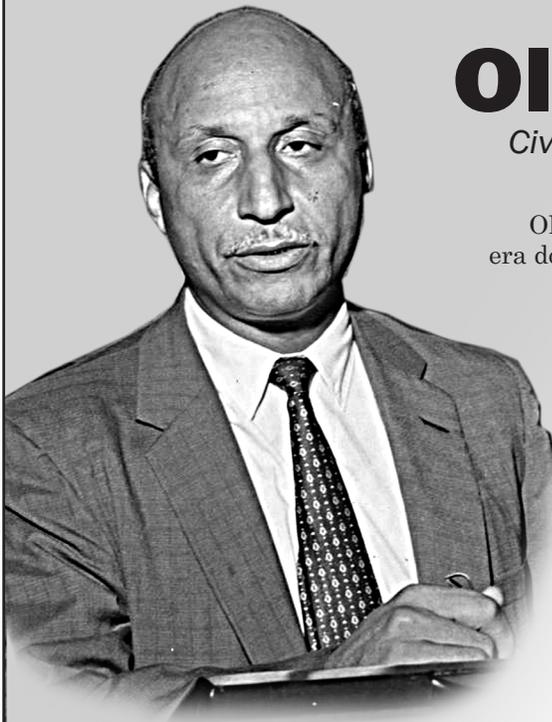
The center was a rehabilitation center for African American female juvenile delinquents and was called the Industrial Home for Wayward Girls. It opened in January 1915 with 28 students. After several name changes the center became known as the Virginia Industrial School for Colored Girls. The school developed a program that stressed self-reliance and self-discipline. The school had academic and vocational instruction, visible rewards, "big-sister" guidance, and close attention to individual needs.

Barrett was deeply involved in every aspect of the Industrial School's program. She excelled in her role at the school. Her childhood had equipped her to deal with the socially important white women who controlled the trustee board and who were able to influence state legislators to appropriate funds for the school. She said: "You know we cannot do the best social welfare work unless, as in this school, the two races undertake it together." She was held in such a high regard that she could demand that the future Caucasian employers of her students treat them humanely.





# Black History Month



## Oliver Hill

*Civil Rights Attorney*

Oliver Hill's sharp legal mind helped shred the segregation-era doctrine of "separate but equal."

He is best known for his role in *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, the landmark Supreme Court decision striking down segregated schools. Hill's team of lawyers filed more civil rights suits in Virginia than were filed in any other Southern state during the segregation era. At one point, the team had 75 cases pending. The *Washington Post* once estimated that Hill's team was responsible for winning more than \$50 million in higher pay, new buses and better schools for black teachers and students.

Hill graduated from Dunbar High School. He went on to Howard University, where he received his undergraduate degree and graduated second in the Howard University Law School class of 1933 behind Thurgood Marshall. Marshall and Hill would remain good friends.

Hill's early years as a lawyer were inauspicious. At one point, he abandoned his practice and worked in Washington as a waiter. He later moved to Richmond, where he began his law practice in 1939. He won his first civil rights case in 1940 in Norfolk, where the school system was ordered to provide equal pay for black teachers. In April 1951, Hill and his partner, Spottswood Robinson III, received word that students at all-black R.R. Moton High School in Farmville had walked out of the leaky, poorly heated tar-paper buildings that served as their school. Hill was one of the trial lawyers in the resulting desegregation lawsuit, *Davis vs. County School Board of Prince Edward County*. It would become one of the five cases decided under *Brown vs. the Board of Education*.

He ran for the Virginia House of Delegates in 1947, losing by fewer than 200 votes. The following year, he was elected to the Richmond City Council. During those campaigns, about a third of the votes cast for Hill were from whites. Although he lost his re-election bid in 1950, he is credited with paving the way for future black politicians.



– MICHAEL PAUL WILLIAMS  
*Richmond Times-Dispatch Feb. 7, 1997*



# Black History Month

## Yvonne B. Miller

*Legislator/Advocate For Minorities*

Yvonne B. Miller, for whom DJJ's high school is named, in 1983 became the first African American woman to be elected to the Virginia Assembly. Four years later, she was elected to the State Senate, and was consistently re-elected until her death.

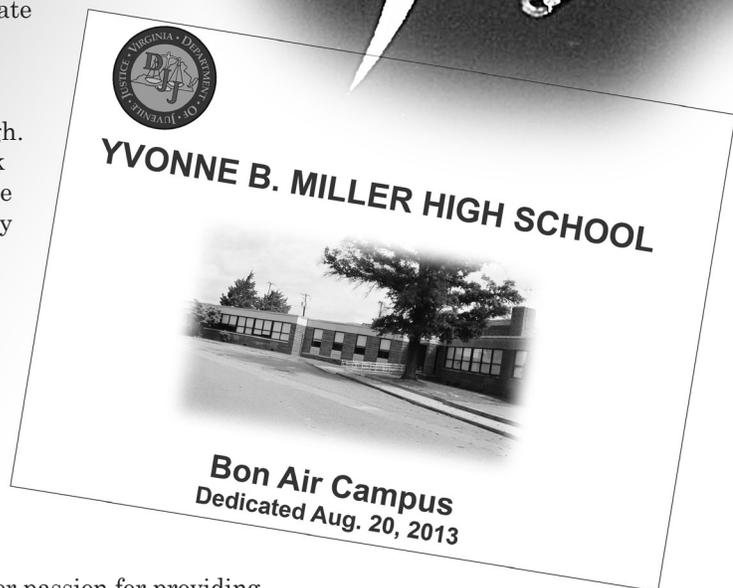
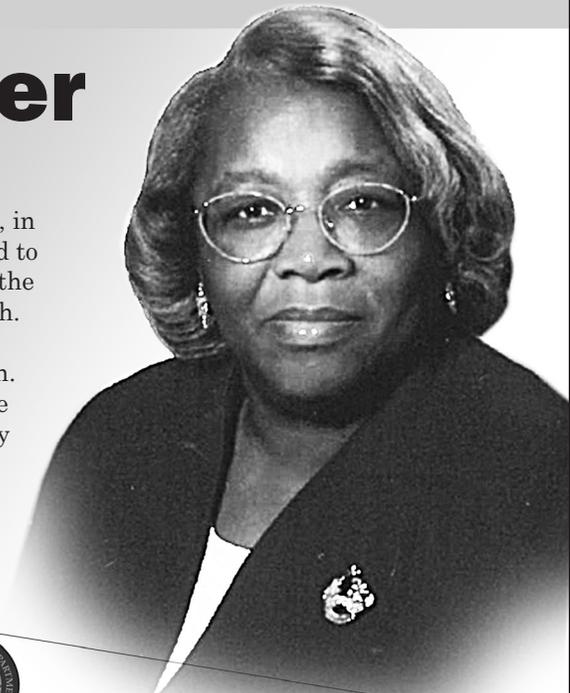
She was born in Edenton, N.C., the eldest of 13 children. She was reared in Norfolk after her family moved there. She attended local public schools, which were then segregated by state law.

Ms. Miller attended Norfolk Division of Virginia State College, a historically black college (now Norfolk State University), for two years. She completed a bachelor's degree in 1956 from Virginia State College in Petersburg, now Virginia State University. She earned a master's degree from Columbia University and a Ph.D. in education from the University of Pittsburgh. She joined the education faculty at Norfolk State, becoming a professor and head of the Department of Early Childhood/Elementary Education. In 1999 she retired and was named Professor Emeritus.

She was a young teacher when the U.S. Supreme Court ordered desegregation of public schools as a constitutional issue, and the white-dominated Virginia state legislature and school districts promoted "massive resistance" to the ruling. This was a formative experience for her, resulting in her lifelong support of civil rights and her passion for providing

quality education to all. As an elected official, Ms. Miller became known as an outspoken advocate for Virginia's poor and minorities. "Our children are our replacements," she said. "Virginians should consider the education of all children a top priority, not just the ones who are the recipients of the luck of the draw in a lottery. All of our children should have a high-quality, first-rate education."

At the time of her death in 2012, Ms. Miller was the longest-serving woman in the Virginia Senate, ranking 4th in overall seniority.





# Black History Month

## Vanessa Owens

CEO, Martin Luther King Family Life Center  
Former Barrett JCC resident

How well can some of us identify with the lyrics of the old Negro spiritual, "There Is A Balm In Gilead":

*"Sometimes I feel discouraged and think my work's in vain.  
But then the holy spirit revives my hope again."*

I recognize and I applaud you for your relentless effort to make a difference in the lives of the youth that pass through DJJ. As I listened to Director Block's TED Talk on the transition and progress of DJJ, it warmed my heart and caused me to reflect on Janie Porter Barrett (1865-1948). As an exemplary African-American correctional educator, she saw the need for change and made it happen. While the industrial school was under Barrett's supervision in the early 1920s, the Russell Sage Foundation rated it as one of the five best schools of its kind in the United States. With so many young women being successfully rehabilitated and going on to lead successful lives after graduation, the school became highly revered, especially for its cultivation of character and morals, and began to serve as a model of its type. The need to assist in the transition of our youth today into adulthood is just as great as it was then, and I know firsthand the power and importance of the resident specialists. You really are the "balm."

I entered the Janie Porter Barrett School for Girls in 1966, when Thomas Bynum was superintendent, and Julia Buck was the assistant superintendent. When I arrived, Ms. Barrett's method of reform instantly really resonated with me. Like many of the other girls who went through the school, I was trained in vocational skills and completed morality programs that were designed to cultivate character, self-reliance, and self-discipline, which are the cornerstones of all I do today. Activities were anchored around the love of race, love of fellow man, and love of country, which I have committed most of my life to demonstrating, promoting, and upholding. I've been most fortunate to have had two families: my biological family, the McCoys, and my village family, the Janie Porter Barrett School for Girls. In October of 2015, it was my honor to be a guest speaker at the event commemorating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Virginia Industrial School for Colored Girls. Thank you, Ms. Barrett, for planting a palace of the light in me.



*Dr. Owens is an ordained minister who for over 40 years pastored a church and served as CEO of the Martin Luther King Family Life Center Inc. in Lebanon, PA. In 2015 she returned to her native city of Virginia Beach where she continues to operate out of the MLKFLC's satellite office in Norfolk.*





# Black History Month

## John H. Smyth

*Education Pioneer*

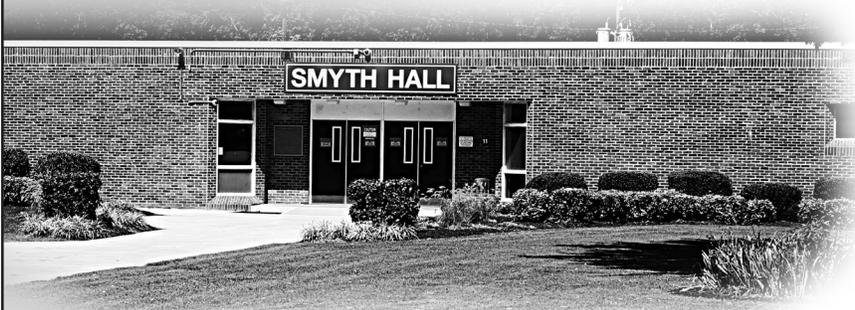
John Henry Smyth, for whom the Virginia Public Safety Training Center's Smyth Hall is named, was born a slave in Richmond in 1844. He entered the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts at age 14, and graduated from the Institute for Colored Youths in 1862. In 1865, he was appointed the U.S. Minister and Resident Counsel General to Liberia. As a graduate of Howard University Law School, Mr. Smyth was awarded an honorary doctor of law degree for his distinguished service to African Americans and his country.

Late in the 1800s, Smyth saw the need for a reform school for black boys. According to his 1897 Annual Report, Smyth's vision was to establish an institution where black children could learn skills or trades to help them avoid lives of crime:

"The school is intended to be a reformatory, in which reading, writing and arithmetic, farming, carpentry, blacksmithing and brickmaking are to be taught the boys; gardening, dairy work and house work to be taught the girls; and Christian training of a non-sectarian character to be given all the inmates."

Through fundraising efforts, mainly in the Northern states, enough money was collected to purchase a 400-acre farm in Hanover County in 1898. In 1900, the General Assembly chartered the Negro Reformatory Society, which opened the Virginia Manual Labor School to house around 100 boys.

By 1903, the school was housing an average of 25 boys per month. Funding for the school came from the state as well as from private donors, most notably railroad entrepreneur Collis P. Huntington. The farm produce from the school also supplemented its income.



Smyth served as President of the Negro Reformatory Association of Virginia until his death in 1908.





# Black History Month

**Storyboards displayed at luncheon featuring current DJJ employees who shared their perspective of Black History Month.**

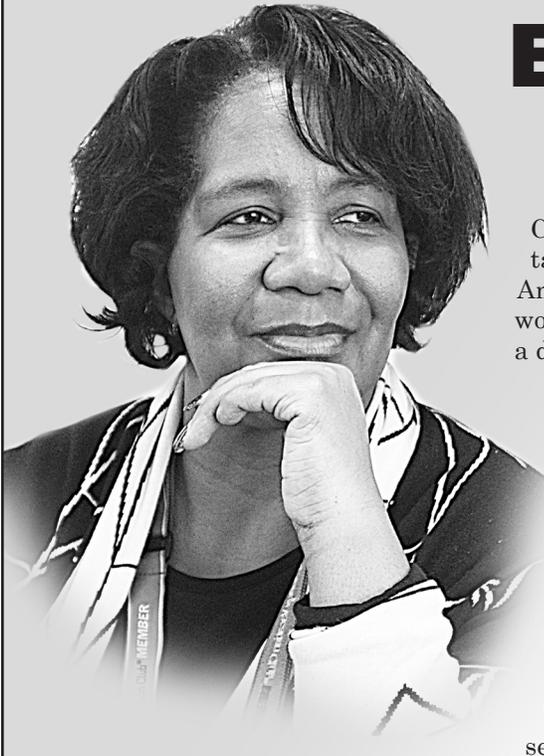




# Black History Month

## **Evelyn Barbee**

*Fiscal Technician Senior*



As an African American woman working in DJJ's Central Office for the past 24 years, Evelyn Barbee has taken note of the disproportionately high number of African American youth in the court system. Though she does not work directly with youth in her DJJ job, she is quietly making a difference through her church.

Ms. Barbee first became involved with youth when she was asked to help out with the church's Cub Scout pack. She then began working with the youth ministry, where she found that, simply by listening to youths and letting them tell their stories, she could change lives.

She remembers one young woman she encountered who had been assigned to a mental institution because of her behavior. Ms. Barbee says she allowed the woman to tell her story without judgment -- just a sympathetic ear. "Years later, I found out this woman went on to become a sergeant in the military," she says. "What I began to realize is that the kids in the ministry were counting on me. They

call me 'mom.' I always give them a hug.

"It's very sad," she says. "We need to move away from the stigma surrounding these kids and try to understand them. They simply want to be nurtured, wanted and valued. They are our future."

Ms. Barbee says that when she visits Bon Air JCC since our transformation effort began, "I see how far these kids have come. It makes me proud that DJJ is doing something right -- helping these kids to further themselves. That should be our goal."





# Black History Month

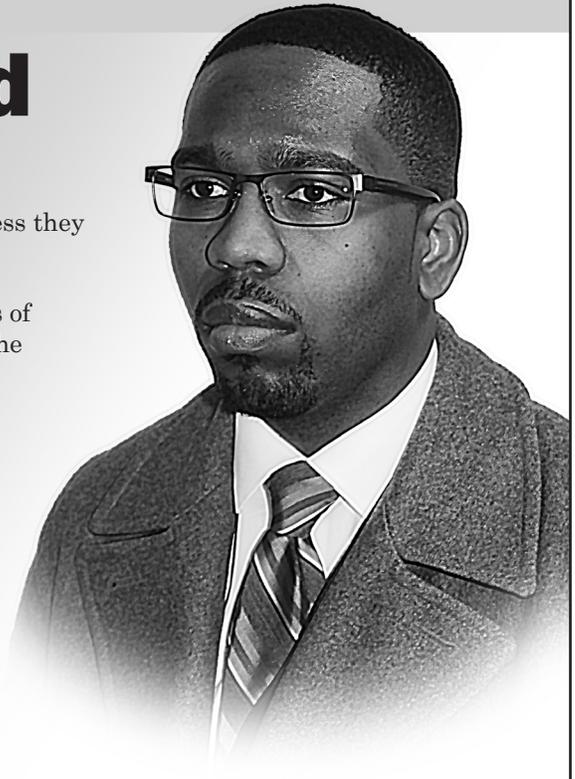
## Joshua Brevard

*DJJ Senior Research Analyst*

I believe people do not truly know who they are unless they know their history.

As a black man in this country, there are huge parts of my history that are unknown to me. Some people have the privilege of knowing where they hail from, but many of those who look like me have no idea. I will never know where my ancestors came from or what their names were. While my personal family history is lost, I do have the collective history of black people in America. This history is defined by two intertwined struggles: one for freedom and one against the notion of our inherent inferiority. There are countless examples of black people who fought for liberty and for their equal rights as citizens of this country. From black soldiers fighting in the Civil War to black children desegregating schools, the battles fought across generations have direct implications on my life.

I am well aware that where I am today is because people were willing to fight and die so that their descendants could live in a better world. As such, black history is more than a mere month for me. It informs who I am every single day. For those who may not know much about the history of black people in America, I hope this month inspires them to learn more. While it is important to know the contributions black people have made to this country, I also hope they can understand the barriers fought to make those contributions.





# Black History Month

## Alice Brown

*Instructional Assistant  
Yvonne B. Miller High School*

I spent 14 of my first 20 years at a Baptist children's home, so I get it when the kids we work with at DJJ come into my classroom having no concept of family.

I've been working with court-involved kids for 35 years – 16 years as a corrections officer and the last 19 as a teacher. I've worked with hundreds of very caring professionals who have tried their best to be the mothers and fathers these kids never really had. As agency titles and philosophies changed over the years, so did their methods. Some worked, and some didn't.

But I've always believed in the notion of "It takes a village." I think this is especially true when trying to rear a child. I like the Community Treatment Model we have in place now, because it has that "village" concept. When I look at our Resident Specialists of today interacting with our residents, I see them serving as a parent figure. That to me is what the Community Model is all about. It's our job to put tools into their mental toolboxes so they can be successful.

I do see positive changes happening. I've seen tremendous change in behaviors, and graduation rates are way up. Are we improving? Yes. Is there room for continued improvement? Always. A big part of Black History Month to me is remembering where we've been, and keeping a laser sharp focus on where we need to be. We need to keep bringing fresh, new ideas forward. All ideas don't always work out – but at least have an idea.

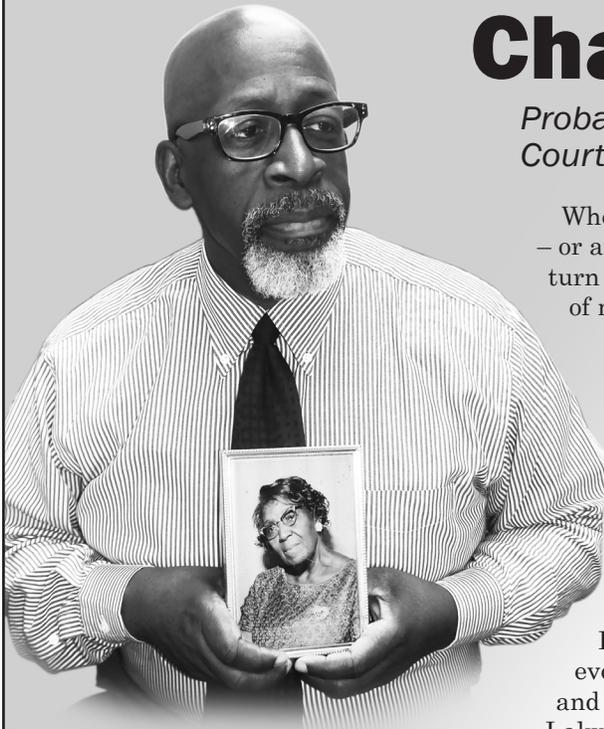




# Black History Month

## Charles Durant

*Probation Officer  
Court Service Unit 13 – Richmond*



Whenever I need inspiration during Black History Month – or any other month of the year, for that matter – I just turn to the bookshelf in my office to look at a framed photo of my great-grandmother.

I sat at her knees a lot when I was growing up and learned a great deal. She came from South Carolina, and always seemed prepared for everything. She was very unusual for her day: she not only earned a bachelor's degree, but went on to get a master's degree and a doctorate in education. For us, that meant that college was a no-brainer.

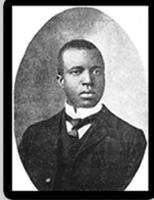
I grew up in the Jackson Ward section of Richmond, where a lot of the kids we deal with every day in DJJ come from. Through all the trials and tribulations of growing up as an African American, I always remember that the community instilled HOPE in us. We must commit to the nation and the world to

achieve the same kind of hope. In my career, I found myself being able to touch young people in a way I really enjoy. I walked the same streets they are walking now, and they know it. They know me not as a probation officer, but as a member of their community. I can give them hope.

Black History Month is a time for rejoicing: To thank those who have gone before and given us hope. It's also a time to reach out to the next generation – not to remember just all the things that were bad, but about integrity, leadership and determination. It's about showing your true character.

And finally, it's a time to recommit: To show the world that we are equal, have the same rights, and can achieve at the same level.

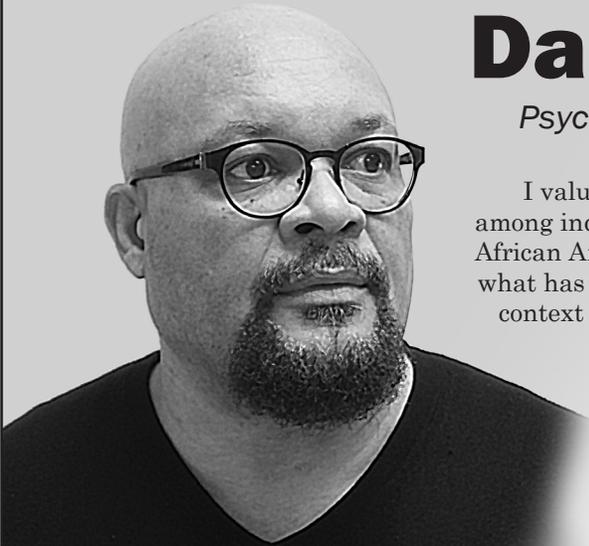




# Black History Month

## Dallas Lee

*Psychologist Associate Senior, Bon Air JCC*



I value Black History Month because it raises awareness among individuals, regardless of race or ethnicity, about the African American's journey, contributions, and struggles within what has been, and in many ways continues to be, a social context of unfavorable conditions.

If you truly take advantage of this opportunity, your perception of African American significance can become a tangible and rewarding daily experience. Stopping at a traffic signal, using something as routine as a pencil sharpener or touch-tone phone, appreciating jazz, the blues or hip-hop, are but a few of the realities we experience because of the historical black presence, which for me often promotes a cognitive "wow" response.

But there is also an emotional reaction one cannot escape. To understand African American history, if we are to grapple with it in earnest, it must also bring about a considerable array of sentiments ranging from personal and/or shared elation, to personal and/or shared mourning. Many authors past and present have been instrumental in helping me mentally process, and emotionally grow from, the accomplishments and the appalling hardships found within the black experience. James Baldwin, Claude Brown, Ralph Ellison, Chancellor Williams, Isabel Wilkerson, Michael Eric Dyson, and Mirimba Ani to name a few all have, at times, become my processing guides.

Working and closely interacting with the staff and youth at Bon Air JCC and DJJ allows for appreciating others' journeys as we all have relevant stories of which we share glimpses in various ways. When I work with our youth, I make the intentional effort each day to be a consistent model of healthy behavior, and purposely expose them to prosocial and self-enlightening literature, as well as other beneficial perspectives including media sources, as a part of my approach to offender and mental health interventions. It is always gratifying when I begin to see the illumination of real self-worth, regardless of the depth of one's emotional and/or trauma issues, begin to turn on in their thinking.

For me, when we use the wealth of human relevance inherent in the Black Journey, our contributions, and struggles, it actually becomes more than just "Black History." It is "Our Story," living and constantly evolving.





# Black History Month

## The Black Man Is Free

By Michael Morton, Eastern Region Program Manager

Inspired by the young black men in Bon Air and Beaumont JCC (November 2016)

I'm in the land, the land of the free  
I have potential, but have yet to be  
I am black; I am strong; I am a man  
My destiny is part of a mysterious plan

I'm feared, mocked, stunningly admired  
I'm passed over, still first to be fired  
I am the hope of a people despised  
I am a promise overdue, it's time to rise

I'm reminded and entrapped by wealth  
I have aspirations but unpredictable health  
I am a black man with a soul to treasure  
I'm punished far beyond good measure

Look at me carefully and you will see  
I am full of spirit but I long to be  
My eyes tell a story not easy to hear  
I defy the odds but my future's unclear

Where is my mentor to be my guide  
I want help and I need to confide  
I wish to tell you all about my pain  
But my wounds are deep so I have to refrain

My present condition is just temporary  
I'm going to triumph so mama don't worry  
I no longer want what I used to embrace  
I'm weary of systems and in need of grace

But listen young brothers to an infallible plan  
Just grab hold to God's unchanging hand  
Your future is what you make it to be  
Have not you heard "the black man is free"

The black man is free to pursue his dream  
You have been the silt but you are the cream  
So keep your head up and don't lose sight  
Your future is precious like dawn is to night

So break the shackles that keep you bound  
A black man may fall but he never stays down  
Success is yours but you have to believe  
Free your mind and body so you can achieve





# Black History Month

## Hey, Shady!

*By Joyce Holmon, Deputy Director for Residential Services*



Hey, Shady!

I heard you've been talking about me...

Soooooo, I hear you've been wondering; well you can stop.

Let me give you the answers:

You've been wondering when will I fail; I **WON'T!**

You've been wondering when will I give up; **NEVER!**

You've been wondering if I'll stop; I **CAN'T!**

You've been wondering where I'm going; **THE TOP!**

You've been wondering why I keep smiling; **INNER PEACE!**

You've been wondering why I keep pushing; **MY FAM!**

You've been wondering where my strength comes from; **GOD!**

You've been wondering if I'm truly happy; **INDEED!**

You've been wondering if I get tired of you haters; **SOMETIMES!**

You've been wondering if on this path I get lonely; **RARELY!**

You've been wondering if I'm loved; **DEEPLY!**

You've been wondering if I think I'm all that; **YES I DO!**

You've been wondering if I'm worth it; **AND SOME!**

Well, I've been wondering why you mad; cause I **SLAY ALL DAY!**

I've been wondering when you're going to worry about you.

Let me-be-me and you-do-you.

My advice to you: Fall back and grow up.

Watch while I shine and glow up.

Catch a li'l bit of this glitter. I'm bout to throw up.

Bye, Shady!

