

**For Immediate Release:**

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**BLACK HISTORY MONTH: MASSACHUSETTS CELEBRATES CULTURE AND DIVERSITY**  
*Statewide Events Recognize African-Americans Who Have Shaped History*

**January 23, 2008 (Massachusetts)** – From Frederick Douglass to Phyllis Wheatley to W.E.B. DuBois, Massachusetts has been home to many great African American activists and the site of incredible events that have shaped black history.

In celebration of Black History Month, organizations around the state will be hosting events, exhibits and festivities throughout February to commemorate those individuals who fought for freedom and influenced the diverse community we are today.

Below is a sampling of historic trails, exhibits and lectures across the state that will be recognizing Black History Month.

**Heritage Trails, Tours & more...**

- **The Black Heritage Trail, Boston**

A walking tour that explores the history of Boston's nineteenth century African American community that lived primarily on the north slope of Beacon Hill. The tour consists of 14 historic sites including the 54th Regiment Memorial and the African Meeting House. The Boston African American Historic Site offers guided tours and information for self-guided tours.

[www.afroammuseum.org/trail.htm](http://www.afroammuseum.org/trail.htm)

- **The Black History Trail, Nantucket**

Presented by the Museum of Afro-American History and the Friends of the African Meeting House on Nantucket, the Black History Trail features 10 sites that reveal the heritage of African Americans living on Nantucket, especially in the nineteenth century.

[www.afroammuseum.org/bhtn\\_intro.htm](http://www.afroammuseum.org/bhtn_intro.htm)

- **The African American Heritage Trail, Martha's Vineyard**

This trail is comprised of 16 sites and is dedicated to the formerly unrecognized contributions made by people of African descent to the history of the island. A significant landmark on the trail is the Shearer Cottage, an inn established in 1912 by Charles Shearer, the son of a slave and slave owner. The Shearer Cottage catered to African Americans who were not welcome as guests at other Island establishments.

[www.mvheritagetrail.org](http://www.mvheritagetrail.org)

- **The Cambridge African American Heritage Trail, Cambridge**  
 This self-guided walking tour of Cambridge highlights 20 historic sites throughout the city. These sites serve as important reminders of the history that surrounds the social, political and economic development of Cambridge. African Americans honored along the trail include W.E.B. Du Bois, founder of the NAACP; William H. Lewis, the first African American to serve as assistant attorney general of the United States; and Bishop George A. McGuire, founder of the African Orthodox denomination.  
[www.cambridgema.gov/~Historic/aahtail.html](http://www.cambridgema.gov/~Historic/aahtail.html)
- **The Upper Housatonic Valley African American Heritage Trail, Great Barrington**  
 This trail consists of 48 sites across the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area and celebrates African Americans in the region who played pivotal roles in key national and international events. African Americans honored along the trail include Elizabeth "Mumbet" Freeman, who pioneered the fight against slavery in Massachusetts; James Weldon Johnson, composer of the "Negro National Anthem;" Frank Grant of the Negro Baseball League; and W.E.B. Du Bois, the father of the modern civil rights movement.  
[www.uhvafamtrail.org](http://www.uhvafamtrail.org)
- **The Parting Ways Story, Plymouth**  
 The *Parting Ways* story reopens the history books to tell a tale of four former slaves who were the first African American veterans in America. *Parting Ways* Township in Plymouth, founded by these men, was one of the very first African American settlements in North America. Today this small acreage is in the process of being redeveloped into a place of beauty and education.  
[www.partingwaysplymouth.org](http://www.partingwaysplymouth.org)
- **Black Heritage Trail, New Bedford**  
 The trail commemorates significant landmarks of African American history in New Bedford. When Massachusetts abolished slavery in 1780, New Bedford became an important stop on the "underground railway," a network of people who hid runaway slaves in homes and churches. Frederick Douglass is one African American who found refuge in New Bedford before becoming a renowned abolitionist, orator, politician and writer.  
[www.whalingmuseum.org/kendall/old\\_nb/old\\_nb\\_african.html](http://www.whalingmuseum.org/kendall/old_nb/old_nb_african.html)

### **Museums & Cultural Centers**

- **Museum of African American History, Boston & Nantucket**  
 The Museum of African American History is New England's largest African American history museum with four national historic sites dating back to the early 1800s. The Museum preserves the remarkable and vivid history of free African Americans and white abolitionists whose efforts changed a nation.  
[www.afroammuseum.org](http://www.afroammuseum.org)
- **The National Center of Afro-American Artists (NCAAA), Boston**  
 Throughout February, the NCAAA will feature photographs by Robert L. Haggins in *Malcolm X: In Action*. Robert L. Haggins was a photojournalist who closely documented the life and work of Malcolm X. His images have appeared in many books and magazines. A portrait of Malcolm X commissioned by the Malcolm X/Ella L. Little-Collins Family Foundation will also be featured.  
[www.ncaaa.org/exhibitions.html](http://www.ncaaa.org/exhibitions.html)

- **Worcester African Cultural Center, Worcester**  
The permanent exhibit, "Discover African Art," features items from all areas of the African continent. Exhibit items include ceremonial masks, divination sculptures, decorative arts, musical instruments, jewelry, furniture and everyday objects.  
[www.african-museum.com/Exhibitions.htm](http://www.african-museum.com/Exhibitions.htm)
- **The Martha's Vineyard Museum, Martha's Vineyard**  
The Martha's Vineyard Museum will feature two exhibits to celebrate Black History Month. One exhibit will celebrate the Island Heritage Trail, a collection of plaques commemorating significant Island events in African American History. The other exhibit, Vineyard Voices – African American and Civil Rights Voices, will feature photographic portraits and excerpts from oral history interviews.  
[www.mvmuseum.org](http://www.mvmuseum.org)

### Readings & Lectures

- **W.E.B. Du Bois Annual Birthday Celebration - February 24, 2:30 pm**  
In celebration of W.E.B. Du Bois' birthday, several area historians will participate in a moderated discussion of "Free Blacks in Berkshire County," which will cover the period from Mum Bett's successful suit for liberty through the twentieth century.  
Clinton A. M. E. Zion Church  
9 Elm Court, Great Barrington  
[www.africanamericantrail.org/Events.html](http://www.africanamericantrail.org/Events.html)
- **Actor Portrayal of Frederick Douglas - February 6, 10:00 am**  
Guy Peartree will appear in full costume as the famous abolitionist and author, Frederick Douglas. Listen to the fascinating story of what it was like to be a slave, to gain freedom and overcome obstacles.  
Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, Springfield  
[www.hoophall.com/events/bhof-events-feb08.html](http://www.hoophall.com/events/bhof-events-feb08.html)
- **9<sup>th</sup> Annual Frederick Douglass Read-A-Thon - February 10, 2:00-6:00 pm**  
The New Bedford Historical Society invites the public to read and listen to excerpts from Frederick Douglass' narratives, speeches, essays and letters. New Bedford was a major stop on the Underground Railroad for those seeking freedom. Frederick Douglass escaped his masters in Maryland and settled in New Bedford from 1838 until 1841.  
Friends Meeting House, 83 Spring Street, New Bedford  
[www.nbhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.nbhistoricalsociety.org)
- **The 8th Annual Boston African Film Festival - February 1-29**  
This event showcases highlights from the New York African Film Festival and new releases from the California Newsreel, including dramatic features, compelling documentaries, and smart, short films. Thirteen new films, making their Boston premieres, are from nations throughout the continent including Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Nigeria, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston  
[www.mfa.org/calendar/sub.asp?key=12&subkey=54](http://www.mfa.org/calendar/sub.asp?key=12&subkey=54)

*The Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism (MOTT) is the state agency dedicated to promoting Massachusetts as a leisure-travel destination in order to stimulate the Massachusetts economy by generating state and local tax revenues, creating jobs, and supporting the growth of travel-related businesses. MOTT serves as a leader in the tourism industry, bringing together the public and private sectors to promote Massachusetts as a leisure travel destination. Tourism is an integral part of the state's economy, generating more than \$887.2 million in state and local taxes and \$14.2 billion in travel related expenditures. The industry supports 125,800 in-state jobs.*

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