

**WILLISTON RACIAL EQUITY  
PARTNERSHIP  
BLACK HISTORY MONTH  
THIS IS OUR STORY**

*Our past was slavery. We cannot recur to it with any sense of complacency or composure. The history of it is a record of stripes, a revelation of agony. It is written in blood. Its breath is a sigh, its voice a groan, and we turn from it with shudder. The duty of to-day is to meet the questions that confront us with intelligence and courage.*

Frederick Douglass

**The Williston Racial Equity Partnership** - The Williston Racial Equity Partnership (WREP) works to promote equal opportunity and fair treatment for BIPOC (black, indigenous, and people of color) members of the Williston Community by identifying and addressing systematic oppression in town systems; engaging white allies in racial equity education; and promoting equitable practices in town governance. The WREP formed following the murder of George Floyd in May of 2020 to explore how to improve our community.

One first step of the WREP was to request that the town fly the Black Lives Matter flag at the Town Hall. The flag communicates that our community is willing to acknowledge that racism and white supremacy have oppressed African Americans for centuries. Also, the Black Lives Matter flag flying at the seat of our local government sends a signal that we, as a community, are committed to combating racism and racial injustice.

Some WREP initiatives beyond the Black Lives Matter flag include coordinating trainings for partnership members and members of the community, championing a new goal for affordable housing in Williston, supporting a variety of other justice discussions and efforts in Williston, and examining data bases so decisions can be informed.

**Black History Month** - Black History Month is an annual observance originating in the United States, and has received official recognition for the governments of the United States and Canada, and more recently observed in Ireland and the United Kingdom. The month strives to educate about the importance of African Americans in US history, create opportunities to understand Black histories beyond racism and slavery, and to create a reminder that systemic racism persists.

The observance of Black History Month dates back to 1915, when Carter Woodson created the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. Mr. Woodson launched these efforts in February to honor the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln.

This is the link to the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) Black History Month Virtual Festival. The schedule is for the entire month.

<https://asalh.org/festival/> Some events are free and some are not.

Some history of Black History Month can be found at <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/black-history-month>

**What Can I Do To Educate Myself** There are so many ways to educate yourself about Black History in America. The importance is that you challenge yourself and take the time to learn with an open mind. There are books. There are podcasts. There are television shows. There are movies. One needs to find the right step forward and pursue new information or a refresher of old knowledge that has been forgotten.

Some suggestions include –

Books –

**Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria**, by Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum

**Race Matters**, by Dr. Cornel West

**Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man**, by Emmanuel Acho

**The Hate You Give**, by Angie Thomas

**How The Word Is Passed**, by Clint Smith

**The Souls of Black Folk**, by W.E.B. Du Bois

**Discovering Black Vermont**, by Elise A. Guyette – A must read by Vermonters

Television

For Black History Month use these links to stream impactful, uplifting movies and TV shows

<https://www.cnet.com/news/mark-black-history-month-with-these-impactful-uplifting-movies-and-tv-shows/>

<https://www.tvguide.com/news/15-essential-black-shows-and-movies-to-watch-for-black-history-month/>

Movies & Documentaries

**The Color Purple** - A touching and lovingly-made film from Steven Spielberg that captures the life of Southern black women in the years 1909 through 1949.

**The Loving Story** - A love story of an interracial couple in 1960s Virginia who fought a long battle against the state's prohibition of mixed marriage.

**Moonlight** - A young African-American man grapples with his identity and sexuality while experiencing the everyday struggles of childhood & adolescence.

**DA 5 Bloods** – A 2020 American war drama co-written, directed and produced by Spike Lee.

**I Am Not Your Negro** – A 2016 documentary film and social critique based on James Baldwin’s unfinished manuscript ‘Remember This House.’

**Selma** – Historical drama based on the 1965 Selma to Montgomery voting rights marches.

**King in the Wilderness** – An American documentary film about Martin Luther King Jr.

**Eyes on the Prize** – Tells the story about the civil rights movement.

**13th** - Points out how much harm can be caused by slavery.

### **Podcasts**

Brave Little State is a podcast all Vermonters must listen to. It’s about black families in Vermont, and whites who discovered that they have black ancestors.

<https://www.vpr.org/programs/2020-06-19/remembering-vermonts-19th-century-black-communities>

Take some time off and assimilate NPR’s Code Switch fearless conversations about race.

<https://www.npr.org/podcasts/510312/codeswitch>

## **What is Ahead**

Visit our website each week to learn more about black history during Black History Month

**Wednesday 2** – Read Mark Bushnell’s column how slavery was conducted in Vermont and other New England States **[Slavery once stained these Green Mountains - Rutland Herald](#)**

Listen to VPR 40.18 minutes podcast or read the article about “The History of Slaver in Vermont.” **[The History of Slavery in Vermont, Across New England](#)**

Watch this informative video about the “Psychology of racism in Jim Crow America.”

**[The Psychology of Racism in Jim Crow America - YouTube](#)**

**Wednesday 9** – Learn from the Washington Post about Congressional members who were enslavers. **[Who owned slaves in Congress? A list of 1,700 enslavers in ...](#)**

Understand the psychology of racism through the lenses of Race & Identity and Mental Health. **[The Psychology of Racism – Very-well Mind](#)**

**Wednesday 16** – Discover the lives and work of African American champions, like Thurgood Marshall, Katherine Johnson, John Lewis, Shirley Chisholm and many more...

**[African American Heroes - National Geographic Kids](#)**

**Wednesday 23** – View images of slaves been traded, working in the cotton fields, whipped, shackled & living in squalor. The purpose is meant to enlighten not to terrify.

**[Slaves High Resolution Stock Photography and Images - Alamy](#)**