



living
**black
history**

how current events
connect with our heritage

**Special Keepsake
Inauguration Edition**

A
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Supplement
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making history right **NOW**

Every year during Black History Month, the nation celebrates the achievements of African Americans whose lives have made a difference.

Yet history is not just a celebration of events that took place in the nation's past. History is a living thing that is being rewritten every day by people winning new victories, breaking old rules, or setting new standards for leadership and excellence.

This is especially true this year, with the election of Barack Obama as the nation's first African American president.

But Obama's election did not take place in isolation. It was one of many breakthroughs that are happening for African Americans, as a result of people living their lives, doing their best and changing things every day.

That is why this special student section is called "Living Black History."

The events, issues and people it looks at are alive Right Now in our communities. And what people are achieving today proves that history is a living, breathing thing that is unfolding all around us.

That does not mean we should live entirely in the present and forget about the past.

Past events are the foundation for the achievements of today, just as today's achievements will be the foundation for the future.

As you read about the people featured in this section, the issues they are facing and the challenges they are taking on, look for links between today's achievements and events from the past.

Discuss how earlier achievers made it possible for people to succeed today. Talk about how obstacles overcome in the past opened doors for African Americans living now. Think how the things African Americans are doing now will open doors in the future.

At the end of this section, after you have read about Barack Obama and other African Americans making news in today's world, you will find a chart to help you make connections between today's events and events that came before in African American history.

Use this chart to remind yourself how history connects the past with the present. And use it to think how events of the present lead us into the future.

the news as history

Opportunities for African Americans were once very limited in the United States. But today's African Americans have come to succeed in all fields—and to influence all parts of American culture. Search today's newspaper to find African Americans influencing news and culture in different fields. See if you can find (1.) an African American politician, (2.) an African American athlete who led a team to victory, (3.) an African American woman who is a leader, (4.) a business owned by an African American, (5.) a TV show with an African American cast, (6.) an African American musician, and (7.) an African American newspaper writer or columnist.

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barack obama

First African American president writes a new chapter in history for the U.S. and the world



Let there be no mistake about this moment.

This year's Black History Month is like no other that has come before.

For the first time, as the nation celebrates the achievements and struggles of African Americans, an African American is president of the United States.

The election of Barack Obama has changed the course of the nation's history, removing the last great barrier to African Americans in politics and government.

It was an achievement both surprising and inspiring, unpredictable a year ago, unattainable a generation ago and unimaginable for generations before that.

It was achieved with the energy of young Americans, the resilience of old Americans, the work of black Americans and the effort of white Americans.

And it was achieved with a message — "Yes We Can!" — that could appeal to all Americans.

"If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time; who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer," Obama said on Election Night November 4. ...

"It's the answer spoken by young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black, white, Latino, Asian, Native American,

gay, straight, disabled and not disabled — Americans who sent a message to the world that we have never been a collection of Red States and Blue States: we are, and always will be, the United States. ...

"It's the answer that led those who have been told for so long by so many to be ... fearful and doubtful of what we can achieve to put their hands on the arc of history and bend it once more toward the hope of a better day."

Only in America

As he campaigned to become the nation's first African American president, Barack Obama said over and over that "in no other country on Earth" could someone of his background be running for the nation's highest office.

His father was a black student from Kenya, his mother a white woman from Kansas. They met at the University of Hawaii, and Obama was born on the Hawaiian island of Oahu. When his parents separated when he was two years old, his father returned to Kenya and Obama was raised by his mother and her parents.

When his mother remarried, he moved with her to the Southeast Asian country of Indonesia and lived there until he was 10. He then returned to Hawaii, where he was raised by his mother's parents, earned admission to college on the mainland United States and graduated from Columbia

University and Harvard Law School in the prestigious Ivy League.

He entered politics after working as a community organizer in Chicago, Illinois, winning election first to the state Senate in 1996 and then to the U.S. Senate in 2004.

In national office just three years, he stunned Democratic leaders by winning the first-in-the-nation Iowa caucuses last year, building a formidable national organization and rising to the top of a crowded field of candidates.

Ground-breaking tactics

Obama's ground-breaking use of the Internet and social networks like Facebook and MySpace gave him huge advantages over other candidates, both for raising money and reaching supporters.

He was so successful at raising money from the Internet and other sources that he became the first candidate in history to

decide not to take public financing for the general election in a presidential race.

As Obama tapped into the energy of new and young voters, he also tapped into the heritage of African Americans of all ages, winning more than 90 percent of the black vote.

Many who struggled for civil rights and fair treatment over their lifetimes strongly remembered how an African American like Obama could have been blocked from voting in some states 50 years ago, and how he could have been owned as a slave 100 years before that.

On Election Day, many African Americans carried pictures of their ancestors into the voting booth, honoring their civil rights struggles by casting votes for Obama.

In their 70s, 80s and even 90s, many thought they would never live to see the day they could vote for an African American for president.

the news as history

1. *The election of Barack Obama as president has written a new chapter in the history of the United States. He not only is the first African American elected to be president, but his campaign broke new ground in the way it reached and communicated with voters. As a class, talk about the kinds of change Obama could bring to the nation as president and which you think will be the most important. Then talk about the changes you would most like to see from the new president.*



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