

Proclamation

February is National Black History Month, which originated in 1926 when Dr. Carter G. Woodson, a Harvard-trained historian and son of former slaves, established Black History Week to ensure that the profound, and often overlooked, achievements of Black Americans would be enshrined in American culture. In 1986, Congress passed a law designating February as “National Black History Month.”

The 2026 theme, “A Century of Black History Commemorations,” recognizes that collective remembrance is both an act of resistance and a pathway to advancing equality.

In Alameda, we celebrate the transformational leadership of national Black leaders like former President Barack Obama, and our own local champions: U.S. Congresswoman Lateefah Simon, State Assemblymember Mia Bonta, former Alameda Mayor Marie Gilmore, and former Alameda City Councilmember Al DeWitt.

We are enlightened by the pioneering work of Black scientists, including Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, and Dr. Christine Darden. These “Hidden Figures” broke gender and racial barriers in STEM at NASA, played a critical role in the Apollo moon landing, and were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in recognition of their scientific brilliance.

In Alameda, we honored legendary athlete, Major League Baseball Hall of Famer, and Encinal High graduate Willie Stargell by naming local monuments and a street after him. Across the Bay, Bill Russell played college basketball for the USF Dons before being drafted by the NBA where he secured 11 NBA championships and later broke barriers as the first Black head coach in NBA history.

Our community is enriched by the artistry and mentorship of Alameda educator and illustrator Constance Moore whose work, including *Brown, The Many Shades of Love*, teaches children to see and embrace the beauty of diversity.

As we approach the 250th anniversary of America’s independence, we must acknowledge that our nation’s story is incomplete unless it is inclusive, and accurate. By acknowledging the profound, and often overlooked, achievements of Black Americans, we help tell our nation’s story more accurately. In the words of the inspirational poet and author Maya Angelou, one must, “Do the best you can until you know better. Then, when you know better, do better.”

Now, therefore, I, Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft, Mayor of the City of Alameda, hereby proclaim February 2026 as

Black History Month

in the City of Alameda and encourage all residents to learn more about Black History in America by exploring the rich cultural programming available at the Alameda Free Library, including:

- Thursday, February 12, 4 pm at the Main Library – Hear JaNay Brown-Wood discuss her newest children’s book, *This Hair Belongs*.
- Friday, February 27, 1 pm at the Main Library – Discover Black music history and enjoy a performance from Hannah Mayree of the Black Banjo Reclamation Project.

- Saturday, February 28, 1 pm at the Bay Farm Island Library – Join a Fabric Collage workshop led by illustrator Constance Moore, inspired by her upcoming book *A Language of Stitches: The Radical Quilts of Rosie Lee Tomkins*.
- Saturday, February 28, 3 pm at the West End Library – Enjoy a creative afternoon for children ages 5 and up, centered on the work of children’s author and illustrator Vanessa Brantley-Newton.