

Jamaicans Contribution to Black History

When Carter G. Woodson established Negro History Week in 1926, it was to ensure American history included the accomplishments of Black Americans beyond the discriminatory ideas that were popular at the time.

Woodson and others who participated in this celebration knew that praising these accomplishments would not only help to overcome negative stereotypes but also inspire black Americans. Since then, we've learned about the achievements of Jackie Robinson, Hattie McDaniel, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcom X and numerous others who have significantly contributed to American history. Their stories have traveled the world and inspired people of color throughout the diaspora. But there are so many more untold stories and what some may not realize is the contributions of Jamaica's son and daughters to Black American history.

Marcus Garvey: Widely considered one of the leaders of the Pan-Africanism movement, Marcus Garvey was born in St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica. The self-educated political leader, publisher, entrepreneur and civil rights activist founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League. His teachings, which today is referred to as Garveyism, aimed to uplift people of African descent and called for economic, social, and political empowerment.

Colin Powell: Son of Jamaica via his parents, Colin Powell is a retired four-star general and served as the 65th United States Secretary of State from 2001-2005 serving under President George W. Bush. To date, he is also the only African American to serve on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Angella Reid: In October of 2011, Angella Reid was named the chief usher of the White House. Born in the St. Thomas parish of Jamaica, Angella became the first woman and the ninth person to hold the position. With 25 years of hotel management experience, Angella began her career at The Half Moon Club in Jamaica and was the general manager at The Ritz-Carlton, Pentagon City, Arlington, Virginia prior to this appointment.

Lester Holt: Son of Jamaica via his grandparents, Lester Holt became the lead anchor of NBC Nightly News, the most-watched evening newscast in America, in 2015. With this appointment, he became the first African American to be the lead on a broadcast network's weekday nightly newscast. In the summer of 2012, Lester took a trip to the island of Jamaica where he traced his ancestral roots to the island and reconnected with family that live in Jamaica today.

Maurice Ashley: Born in Kingston Jamaica in 1966, Maurice Ashley is the first African American to be crowned International Grandmaster in Chess. After moving to the U.S. at age 12, he began playing chess at the age of 14. In 1986 he earned the title of national master.