

## Historical Facts of Tucson's African American Community Prepared January 2010

The following African American history facts were taken from the mural titled "1539 to 2004: African Americans in Southern Arizona." The mural was displayed at the Tucson Convention Center until 2009 when it was removed to allow for the remodeling of the west entrance to the convention center. The mural is now at The Dunbar Pavilion at 325 W. Second St.

Members of the Tucson Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Sorority, Inc., and Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, in partnership with KXCI-91.3 FM Community Radio, pre-recorded these facts for African American History Month. KXCI will play three facts on Tucson's African American history each day during February.

1. Explorer Estevanico from Morocco, North Africa, explored Arizona in 1539. Estevan Park at 1000 N. Main Ave., in the Dunbar/Spring Neighborhood, is named after the explorer.
2. African Americans moved West for the same reasons as other ethnic groups – quality of life; railroad employment; military service; health concerns; joining family members; and homesteading. Native Tucsonan Cressworth C. Lander's family homesteaded land in east Tucson near what is now East Speedway Boulevard and North Pantano Road. The family was forced to move back into town when baby Lander got sick and needed medical attention.
3. Following the Civil War, African Americans in the military were organized into the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Calvary and the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry of the U.S. Army. The soldiers protected settlers from outlaws, bandits, and Native Americans who were at war against the United States government. The soldiers became known as Buffalo Soldiers because Native Americans compared them to the buffalo herds because of their appearance as they horseback.
4. The 9<sup>th</sup> Calvary and the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry of the U.S. Army came to Fort Huachuca, which is southwest of Tucson in Sierra Vista, in 1889. The 10<sup>th</sup> Calvary and the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry came to the area in 1918.
5. The Buffalo Soldiers maintained order in the sparsely settled West, often traveling over long, desolate areas that were fraught with danger. The Buffalo Soldiers were encamped at Steven D. Little Camp in Nogales, AZ; in 1918; Camp Harry J. Jones at Douglas, AZ, in 1926; and Fort Huachuca at Fry, which is now known as Sierra Vista.
6. The Buffalo Soldiers regularly visited Tucson during their free time, and their bands performed concerts for locals. As they retired many moved to Tucson and

- made permanent homes here, raising families and contributing to economic growth of the community.
7. The 10 years between 1890 and 1900 marked a period when the African American community in Tucson began to coalesce. People came together because of shared interests and concerns, and common religious beliefs.
  8. Mr. Edmond Robertson arrived in Tucson from Austin, Texas, circa 1902. He homesteaded 160 acres at the present site of the Palo Verde Overpass, which is south of South Alvernon Way and East 29<sup>th</sup> Street. Robertson and his wife, Amanda, had five children. Their daughter, Hattie Mable, married Robert Preston. Hattie and Robert had two sons, Theodore R. Preston and Norman Preston. Several members of the Preston family still reside in Tucson, including Cass Preston, a musician and retired educator.
  9. The African American church has been important in the African American community since the days of slavery. The early church allowed African Americans to nurture some aspects of their African culture in the context of their worship services. Tucson's Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church was founded in 1900 and is the oldest African American church in Arizona. There are approximately 50 churches serving predominantly African American congregations listed on the Web site of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Tucson and Vicinity. Included on the list are Rising Star Baptist Church at 2800 E. 36<sup>th</sup> St.; Friendship Missionary Baptist Church at 850 N. 11<sup>th</sup> Ave.; Gideon Missionary Baptist Church at 3085 S. Campbell Ave.; Living Waters Ministries at 4343 E. 22<sup>nd</sup> St.; Grace Temple Baptist Church at 1031 E. 31<sup>st</sup> St.; and Christ Kingdom Fellowship Church, which holds its worship services at Sharon Seventh Day Adventist Church at 955 N. 10<sup>th</sup> Ave.
  10. Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, founded in 1900, worshipped in various locations until 1920-1921 when its first edifice was built at North 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and West Fourth Street, in the Dunbar/Spring Neighborhood. The congregation worshipped there for more than 30 years. To support the growth of the congregation, a new building was erected during 1955 and 1956 on the southeast corner of North Sixth Avenue and East Lester Street. Mount Calvary's approximately 400 members still worship at the church at 226 E. Lester St. The church is celebrating its 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.
  11. Prince Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1905. Services were initially held in an abandoned building near the Stone Avenue Underpass. In 1908, the first church edifice was constructed at South Convent Avenue and West 17<sup>th</sup> Street. In 1920, the congregation purchased property for \$5,000 a few blocks east on the northwest corner of South Stone Avenue and West 17<sup>th</sup> Street. This is the site of the present church, whose address is 602 S. Stone Ave. The church has approximately 115 members. The Rev. Robert L. Ned was appointed pastor of Prince Chapel in November 2009.

12. Phillips Chapel C.M.E. Church is at 122 W. Fourth St., in the Dunbar/Spring Neighborhood. When the church was organized in 1913, pastors traveled from El Paso, Texas, to lead worship services. Unfortunately the travel distance and the limited number of available ministers forced the church to deactivate. However, in 1926, ministerial leadership came from Phoenix and the church reactivated, holding services in the Mexican Methodist Church at West Fifth Street and North Ninth Avenue.
13. In 1931, the members of Phillips Chapel C.M.E. Church built a basement at 122 W. Fourth St., where the church resides today. In 1956, the C.M.E. Church changed its name from Colored Methodist Episcopal Church to Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Today, Tucson's Phillip's Chapel C.M.E. Church has approximately 40 members; the Rev. Amanda Goodson is the pastor.
14. Greater Mount Olive Church of God in Christ was founded in 1923. It is the Mother Church of all Churches of God in Christ churches in Tucson. Its first church was a basement on North 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the Dunbar/Spring Neighborhood. In 1970, after a fire, the congregation remodeled property at East Lee Street and North Fourth Avenue, where services are held today – the address is 403 E. Lee St.
15. Members of Tucson's African American community always have valued education as a means to improve the quality of life for the family. In territorial days, African American students attended the same schools as other children in the community. When Arizona became a state in 1912, the Arizona Constitution included a mandate to segregate Anglo students from African American students in schools. Tucson's "Colored School," established in 1913 at 215 E. Sixth St., was for all grades – first through high school. Cicero Simmons was employed as principal, janitor and teacher for all grades.
16. In 1918, Dunbar School was constructed at South 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue and West Second Street for Tucson's African American students. The two-room school in the Dunbar/Spring Neighborhood was named for the African American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar. In 1951, Arizona's Legislature outlawed segregation in the state's public schools. Dunbar was renamed John Spring Junior High and enrolled all neighborhood kids for the 1951-1952 school year.
17. Additions to the original two-room Dunbar School in the Dunbar/Spring Neighborhood were made over several years. More classrooms, bathrooms, a library, gymnasium and an auditorium were added before the school became John Spring Junior High. When John Spring was closed in 1978 because of a desegregation order against what is now Tucson Unified School District, the school had more than 51,000 square feet.

18. Dunbar School, the school for Tucson's African American students, was separate but not equal in quality to other schools in what is now Tucson Unified School District. Dunbar had little involvement in the school district and Tucson community until 1940 when Morgan Maxwell Sr. was named principal of Dunbar Elementary and Junior High School. He asked the Governing Board and the superintendent for furnishings and curriculum materials of the same quality that was provided to other schools. Maxwell established standards for improved student performance and achievement, and he charged teachers with the responsibility of making it happen.
19. Morgan Maxwell Sr., principal of what was Dunbar Elementary and Junior High School in the 1940s, focused on all aspects of the educational experience:
  - Well-educated, motivated teachers;
  - Families that sent their children to school ready to learn;
  - Equipment, materials and resources that contributed to good instruction;
  - An attractive environment with trees, paved walkways and a ramada on the playground;
  - Involvement in cultural, artistic and academic activities; and,
  - Exposure to the broader community.
20. Morgan Maxwell Sr., principal of what was Dunbar Elementary and Junior High School in the 1940s, was from Kansas and he recruited other educators from out of state to come to Tucson and teach at Dunbar. Some of the teachers recruited to Tucson and Dunbar were music teacher Sidney Dawson, Etta Mae Dawson, Irene George, Evelyn Franks and Charles Todd. Each of these educators retired from Tucson Unified School District after giving many years of service to the children of Tucson.
21. Morgan Maxwell Sr. was principal of what was Dunbar Elementary and Junior High School in the 1940s. Under his leadership a Drum and Bugle Corps was organized at Dunbar. Student members strutted and performed proudly in all Tucson parades. Student choral groups also were organized and they performed throughout the community. Today's Maxwell Middle School in Tucson Unified School District is named after Morgan Maxwell Sr.
22. World famous contralto Marian Anderson sang at Dunbar Elementary and Junior High School during the 1940s. She sang in the hallway because at that time the school did not have an auditorium. She challenged the students to, "Have a star and try to reach its heights."
23. The motto of Dunbar Elementary and Junior High School was "Be the Best." Teacher Etta Mae Dawson, who eventually retired from Tucson Unified School District as a librarian, suggested this slogan. Dawson still resides in Tucson.
24. Tucsonans were active in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, marching to end segregation in Tucson. There was gradual support from the

- general community to make changes that would open doors to all and bring equality in housing, education, and access to public facilities, and job opportunities. Some of Civil Rights leaders in Tucson during this era were Roy Cooksey, Robert Horn, Nathaniel Russell, Maceo Wells, Cress Lander, Willie Thomas, Quincie Douglas, Yancy Gaston, Grover Banks and Morgan Maxwell Jr.
25. Fred Snowden became the first African American head basketball coach at the NCAA Division I level when The University of Arizona hired him to lead the Wildcats in 1972.
  26. Eight women interested in self-improvement and community service organized the Eureka Club in Tucson on Aug. 1, 1932. The charter members were Ethel Barnes, Helen Bell, Nona Chandler, Margaret Carter, Hassie Daughy, Zada Downs, Willie Thompson, and Adah Washington. The club motto, "Hear, See, Speak No Evil," is reflected in all activities of club members. The club continues to function in Tucson with approximately 30 members.
  27. The Beau Brummel Club is a social organization that was founded in Tucson in 1936 by successful African American businessmen who were refused entrance into Anglo social clubs of that era. It was a private club with membership limited to 15 men. The group supported education and social services in the African American community, as do current members. Today's club members support athletics at The University of Arizona, and host a tailgate party on the UA mall at each home football game. Bob Gaston is the club president.
  28. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Major League Baseball began to integrate and the Cleveland Indians had African American players on their roster. The Indians did spring training in Tucson and the team's headquarters was the Pioneer Hotel, which had a "whites only" policy. The owner of the Cleveland Indians sought help from Beau Brummel Club members. He asked them to provide a place for African American professional baseball players to eat and socialize. With the team owner's assistance, the restaurant owned by Beau Brummel member Duke Shaw became the headquarters for the Cleveland Indians' African American players. The restaurant, just north of West Speedway Boulevard and North Oracle Road, was expanded to include a motel and lounge. Additionally, Chester Willis, a Beau Brummel member, and his wife Lucille, opened their home to African American baseball players when the Cleveland Indians were in town. African American Cleveland Indian baseball players included Larry Doby, Satchel Paige and Harry "Suitcase" Simpson. The Beau Brummel Club still is active in Tucson; Bob Gaston is the president.
  29. The Eta Epsilon Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority was chartered Dec. 13, 1958, in Tucson; Iota Tau Chapter was chartered May 7, 1975, on The University of Arizona campus. The sorority of African American, college educated women celebrated its centennial in 2008. It is one of the world's leading service organizations. Members serve mankind through national programs and

- community service events, such as scholarships to high school and college students; their IVY AKAdemy and reading programs; and awards to community leaders. Community Pearl recipients in Tucson include Cressworth C. Lander, Rubin Salter and Morgan Maxwell, Jr. The president of Eta Epsilon Omega Chapter is Tanisha Price-Johnson.
30. The Tucson Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., was chartered on June 24, 1967, with 14 African American women – Gladys Ahmad, Tonie J. Anderson Brown, Evelyn Franks, Joyce Holsey, Beverly Middleton Johnson, Anita Lipscombe-Robottom, Daisy Lipscombe, Shirley McPherson, Yvonne Hill Payton, Ann T. Perry, Martha Preston, Maxine H. Taylor, Willie Thompson, and Mauvolene F. Thomas, who led the effort. Tucson Alumnae sponsored the chartering of Mu Eta Chapter on The University of Arizona campus on May 15, 1975. Delta Sigma Theta is a public service sorority with approximately 250,000 members throughout the world. It was founded in 1913 in Washington, D.C. Tucson Alumnae is celebrating its 43<sup>rd</sup> year. Chapter members offer programs in educational development, economic development, health and wellness, social action and political awareness, and international development. Rosanne Russell Neal is the chapter president.
  31. The Tucson Branch of the NAACP was founded in 1918 to address discrimination in education, housing, employment, law enforcement, media coverage, voter registration, and public accommodations. During the 1960s, Tucson Branch members marched and demonstrated in front of Tucson City Hall, The University of Arizona, and other public establishments to protest bias and inequality toward African Americans. Creed Taylor was a founding member of the Tucson Branch of the NAACP. Presidents of the Tucson Branch have included Cliff Lander, Nat Russell, Dr. Laura Banks Reid, Grover Banks, Harold Sanders and Clarence Boykins. Donna Liggins is the current president.
  32. The Tucson Urban League was founded in 1971 as the 97<sup>th</sup> affiliate of the National Urban League, Inc. The mission of the Urban League movement is to enable African Americans to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power and civil rights. The Tucson league is an outgrowth of a committee formed by the Tucson Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce to address problems related to minority employment. The Tucson Urban League offers a variety of programs to low-income Tucsonans, including job training, homeownership counseling, day care services, and assistance in paying utility bills. Jonathan Peck, from Chicago, is the new president and CEO; he started in December.
  33. Several publications are helping or have helped African Americans in Tucson stay abreast of news in their community. The Arizona Informant is a weekly newspaper that covers Arizona's African American communities. Since 1971, The Informant has published information that mainstream newspapers neglected to report. Based in Phoenix, The Arizona Informant was started by brothers Clovis C. Campbell, Sr. and Dr. Charles R. Campbell. The Chocolate Voice is a

- 2-year-old monthly magazine serving Tucson whose editor and publisher is Gwen Pierce. The Vanguard, a monthly newspaper, was started by the Tucson-Southern Arizona Black Chamber of Commerce in October 2009. The Arizona Register published in the 1940s; The Arizona Call published in the 1930s.
34. Cressworth C. Lander, a native Tucsonan and member of a Tucson pioneer family, worked in Tucson city government as a department head running federal community development and affordable housing programs. He retired from the city of Tucson in 1992. Lander is president of The Dunbar Coalition Inc., which is leading the effort to renovate Dunbar School and turn it into a museum and cultural center. Dunbar is at 325 W. Second St. Lander attended Dunbar Elementary and Junior High School.
  35. Dr. Charles “Chuck” Ford is the only African American elected to the Tucson City Council. He served two four-year terms during the 1980s. During his time on the council he also served as vice mayor of Tucson. Ford retired from Tucson Unified School District as an elementary school principal.
  36. In 1933, Elgie Mike Batteau was the first African American woman to graduate from The University of Arizona. She had an illustrious career as an educator and civic leader. She taught special education at Pueblo High School in what is now Tucson Unified School District. She was on the Steward Board at Prince Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church; she was a charter member of the Eta Epsilon Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha; and she served on the Pima Community College Board of Governors.
  37. Dr. Anna Jolivet, a retired assistant superintendent with Tucson Unified School District, was named the 1996 “Woman of the Year” by the Tucson Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce. Jolivet attended Dunbar Elementary and Junior High School and she did her student teaching at Dunbar. Jolivet is a member of Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church; and she was a charter member of the Eta Epsilon Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, and the Tucson Chapter of The Links, Inc.
  38. Mr. Edward R. “Turk” Thomas was The University of Arizona Athletic Department Equipment Manager for 34 years. He worked for the university from 1951 to 1985. In his personal life Thomas proudly served three times as Grand Master for the Prince Hall Masons of Arizona. During his tenure as Worshipful Master of Tucson’s Prince Hall Masons, a lodge hall was constructed near South Park Avenue and East 24<sup>th</sup> Street. Thomas was a 33<sup>rd</sup> Degree Mason, the highest rank one can achieve in Masonry.
  39. Businessman Morgan Maxwell Jr. attended Dunbar Elementary and Junior High School, Tucson High, and The University of Arizona from where he graduated in 1949 with a degree in business and finance. He later earned an M.B.A. from The University of Southern California. Maxwell made his living as a real estate

appraiser and builder of affordable homes for African Americans. He served as treasurer of The Dunbar Coalition Inc. for a number of years.

40. When President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863, which freed slaves in the Confederate States, news of the signing did not make it West until some time in June. Some say news reached the West in June 1863, others say the news did not arrive until some time in June two years later. Regardless, when the news reached African Americans in Texas, Juneteenth was born! Juneteenth is celebrated in Tucson at Kennedy Park on the Saturday closest to June 19. The annual celebration includes crafts and food booths, and performances by church choirs, dance groups, orators, and historians. Tucson educator Burney Starks is president of the Juneteenth Festival Committee.