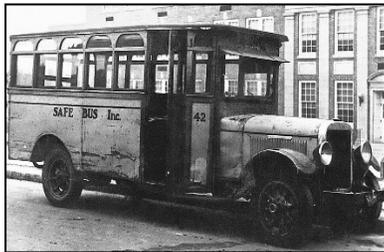


BLACK HISTORY

Salute to Black History from STCREC States

Contributions of African Americans to the Transportation Industry:

The Safe Bus Company operated in the city of Winston-Salem, North Carolina from 1926 to 1972. The



company was originally formed to provide transportation to the city's underserved black neighborhoods. The company was created by 21 jitney operators. These operators transported black workers to their employment in the city's tobacco factories. These jitney operators came together and formed their own transportation company for the city's black residents. The company was sold in 1972, to the Winston-Salem Transit Authority.

Elbert R. Robinson

Elbert refined the electric railway trolley. In 1839, he received a patent for his invention. Robinson's invention focused on the trolley's wheels and it improved the way trolleys took turns.

Granville T. Woods

Invented the Induction Telegraph System. This allowed trains to communicate with one another and prevented them from colliding into each other.

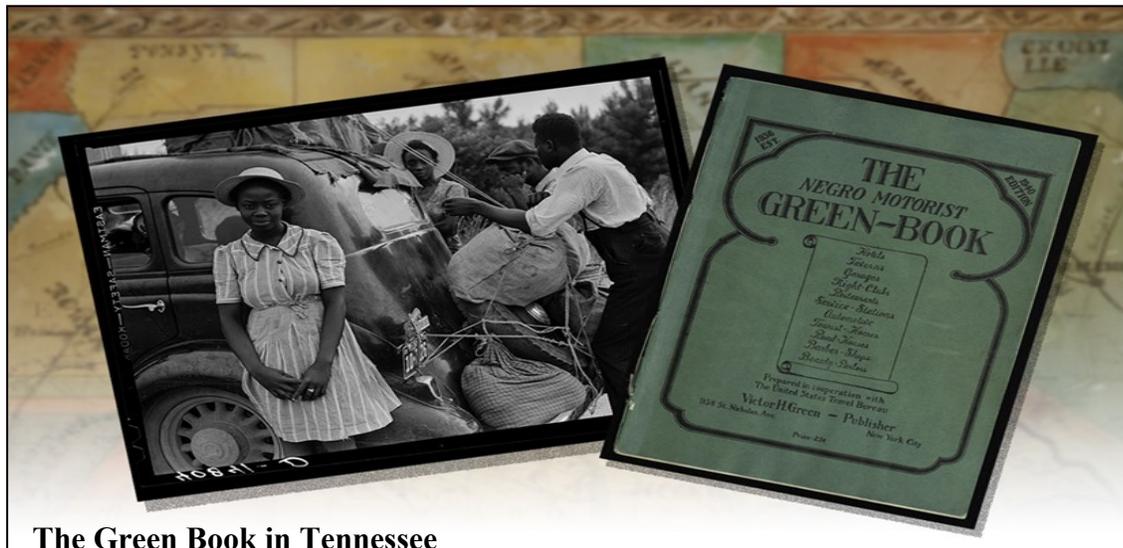
Global Black History Facts

- Europe, Canada, Japan & The Netherlands also celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr Day during different months each year
- Black History month is celebrated in United Kingdom (1987), Canada (1995) and the Republic of Ireland (2010)
- W.E.B Dubois was the first African American to receive a Ph. D. from Harvard
- Black History Month first began as 'Negro History Week' in 1926 and was started by Carter G. Woodson, a notable Historian
- Phillis Wheatley was the first published African American female author. She was a servant who published her first poem at the young age of 12 in the mid-1700s
- Madam C.J. Walker was the first self-made African American female millionaire
- Hattie McDaniel was not allowed to attend the national premiere of *Gone with the Wind*, because of the color of her skin

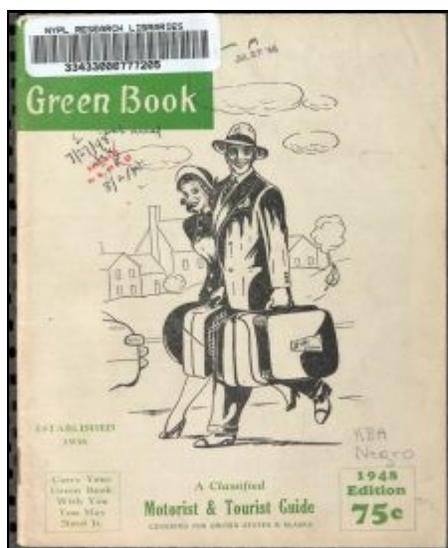
TN Transportation Black History:



Recognizing **Geraldetta Dozier** as the first Black woman to operate a bus in Knoxville in 1976. This venture started as way to help a single mother support her family but led to breaking down barriers and helping more Black women enter the workforce in America. Her career would span 26 years driving the Knoxville Area Transit bus logging more than 2 million miles and winning several safe driving awards.



The Green Book in Tennessee



“The Negro Motorist Green Book,” an exhibition developed by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) in collaboration with award-winning author, photographer and cultural documentarian, Candacy Taylor, began its three-year national tour June 13, 2020, at the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee. It was on view at the Smithsonian Affiliate through Sept. 13, 2020.

The exhibition highlighted the history of “The Green Book,” an annual guide created in 1936 by Harlem postman Victor Green that helped African Americans travel the country with dignity by listing facilities that accepted blacks during the era of Jim Crow laws and segregation. “The Negro Motorist Green Book” is made possible through the generous support of Exxon Mobil Corporation.

“Bringing ‘The Negro Motorist Green Book’ to the National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel was a natural fit as the

historic motel is not only a business listed in ‘The Green Book,’ but also a memorial location that honors the legacy of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.,” said Myriam Springuel, director of SITES and Smithsonian Affiliations. “The exhibition celebrated Victor Green and his publication and highlighted the success of many African American-owned businesses, like the Lorraine Motel, that made these journeys possible.”

“The Negro Motorist Green Book” offered an immersive look at the reality of travel for African Americans in mid-century America and how the annual guide served as an indispensable resource for the nation’s rising African American middle class. The exhibition included artifacts from business signs and match books to historic footage and images, artwork and firsthand accounts to convey not only the apprehension felt by African American travelers, but also the resilience, innovation and elegance of people choosing to live a full American existence. It brought focus to a vibrant parallel world of African American businesses, the rise of the black leisure class in the United States and the important role “The Green Book” played in facilitating the second wave of the Great Migration.

MEMPHIS**HOTELS**

Clarke—144 Beale Ave.
Travelers—347 Vance
Mitchells—160 Hernando St.
Marquette—406 Mulberry St.

RESTAURANTS

The Parkview—516 N. 3rd St.
Scott's—368 Vance Ave.
Davidson's—345 S. 4th St.
Bessie's—338 Vance Ave.
Moonlight—900 S. Landerdale

BEAUTY PARLORS

Chiles—341 Beale Ave.

BEAUTY SCHOOLS

Burchitts—201 Hernando St.
Superior—1550 Florida Ave.
Johnson—316 S. 4th St.

TAILORS

Parks—697 Landerdale

DRUG STORES

So. Memphis—907 Florida Ave.
Pantaze—Main & Beale

MURFREESBORO**TOURIST HOMES**

Mrs. M. E. Howland—439 E. State
R. Moore—University & State St.

NASHVILLE**HOTELS**

Carver—1122 Charlotte Ave.
Y. M. C. A.—4th & Charlotte Aves.
Carver Courts—White's Creek Pike
Y. W. C. A.—436 5th Ave. N.
Bryant—500 8th Ave. S.
Y. M. C. A.—436-5th Ave., N.
Fred Douglas—501 4th Ave. N.
Brown's—1610 Jefferson St., North

TOURIST HOMES

Mrs. C. James—1902 18th St. N.
Mrs. Moore—1702 Jefferson St., North

BEAUTY PARLORS

Queen of Sheba—1503 14th Ave. N.
Estelle's—1311 3rd Ave., S.
Myrtles—2423 Eden St.

BEAUTY SCHOOLS

Bowman's—409 4th Ave., N.

RESTAURANTS

Dew Drop Inn—2514 Booker St.
Black Hawk—1124 Cedar St.
Martha's—303 Cedar St.
Peacock Inn—Jefferson and 18th Ave.
Ann's Tea Room—Jefferson and 18th Ave.

TAILORS

Comet—1103 Charlotte Ave.

BARBER SHOPS

'Y'—34 4th Ave. N.

TEXAS**ABILENE****TAVERNS**

Hammond Cafe—620 Plum St.

AMARILLO**HOTELS**

Mayfair—119 Van Buren St.
Watley—112 Van Buren St.
Tennessee—206 Van Buren St.
Watley House—1205 N. Hughes St.

RESTAURANTS

Tom's Place—322 W. Third St.
New Harlem—114 Harrison St.
Blue Bonnet—400 W. Third St.

BARBER SHOPS

Foster's—204 Harrison St.

BEAUTY PARLORS

Helen's—105 N. Hughes St.
Mal-Ber—1006 N. Hughes St.
Unique—312 W. Third St.

ROAD HOUSES

Working Man's Club—202 Harrison

TAVERNS

Williams—113 Van Buren St.
Green Parrot—510 W. Third St.
Carter Bros.—323 W. Third St.

NIGHT CLUBS

Grand Terrace—N. Hughes & 3rd St.

SERVICE STATIONS

Carter Bros.—W. Third St.

GARAGES

M. & M.—7th & Van Buren St.

TAILORS

Spot Cash—512 W. Third St.
Mitchell's—314 W. Second St.

RECREATION CLUBS

Blue Moon—107 Harrison St.
Watley—202 Harrison St.

DRUG STORES

G. & M.—204A Harrison St.
Knighton—422 W. Third St.
Corner—118 Harrison St.

ATLANTA**TOURIST HOMES**

Mrs. Lizzie Simon—308 N. Howe St.

AUSTIN**TOURIST HOMES**

Mrs. J. W. Frazier—810 E. 13th St.
Mrs. J. W. Duncan—1214 E. 7th St.
Mrs. W. M. Tears—1203 E. 12th St.
Porter's—1315 E. 12th St.

BEAUMONT**TOURIST HOMES**

Mrs. B. Rivers—730 Forsythe St.

RESTAURANTS

Long Bar-B-Q—539 Forsythe St.

"The Green Book" was published in 1936 and distributed nationwide until 1967, providing African American travelers with information on restaurants, gas stations, department stores and other businesses that welcomed black travelers. In an era of Jim Crow laws and "sundown towns"—communities that explicitly prohibited African Americans from staying overnight; The Green Book" offered critical, life-saving information and sanctuary.

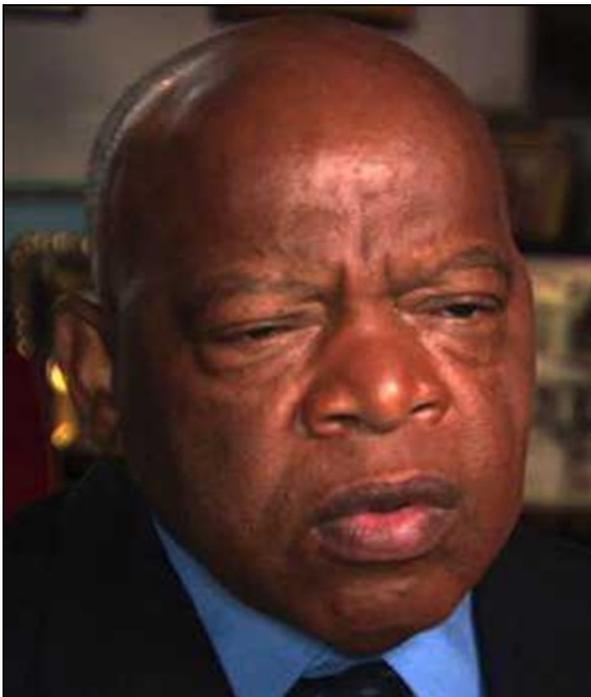
The National Civil Rights Museum, a Smithsonian Affiliate, located at the historic Lorraine Motel where civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, gives a comprehensive overview of the American Civil Rights Movement from slavery to the present. For more information, visit www.civilrights museum.org.

Freedom Riders of the Civil Rights Movement



Part of the May 28 wave of Freedom Riders from the Nashville Student Movement, Pauline Knight-Ofusu escaped the violence of the earlier rides. Pauline Knight was a 20-year-old Tennessee State student when she was arrested in Jackson, MS. After being transferred to Hinds County Jail, she led a brief hunger strike among the female Riders.

"I got up one morning in May and I said to my folks at home, 'I won't be back today because I am a Freedom Rider,'" said Knight-Ofusu in her interview for *Freedom Riders*. "It was like a wave or a wind, and you didn't know where it was coming from but you knew you were supposed to be there. Nobody asked me, nobody told me."



By the time 19-year-old John Lewis joined the 1961 CORE Freedom ride, he already had five arrests under his belt as a veteran of the Nashville Student Movement. The son of hardscrabble tenant farmers from Pike County, AL, he attended American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville, TN where he was deeply influenced by Rev. Kelly Miller Smith and Rev. James Lawson.

On May 10, several days before the Riders crossed into Alabama, Lewis had left the CORE Ride to interview for a fellowship. By chance, he was in Nashville on May 14 when the news broke of the violent bus burning in Anniston, AL and the riot at the Birmingham Trailways Bus Station. Lewis helped to convince his friends and mentors from the Nashville Student Movement to get involved. He rode to Birmingham with the Nashville cohort, endured the angry mob in Montgomery, and was arrested in Jackson and served jail time at Mississippi's Parchman State Prison Farm.

Lewis would become the best-known among the youthful Freedom Riders, serving as chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), speaking at the 1963 March on Washington, and playing a pivotal role in the 1965 Selma — Montgomery March. In 1986, John Lewis was elected to represent Georgia in the U.S. House of Representatives where he served at least 12 terms.



By 1961, Diane Nash had emerged as one of the most respected student leaders of the sit-in movement in Nashville, TN. Raised in middle-class Catholic family in Chicago, Nash attended Howard University before transferring to Nashville's Fisk University in the fall of 1959. Shocked by the extent of segregation she encountered in Tennessee, she was a founding member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in April 1960. In February 1961 she served jail time in solidarity with the "Rock Hill Nine" — nine students imprisoned after a lunch counter sit-in. When the students learned of the bus burning in Anniston, AL and the riot in Birmingham, AL, Nash argued that it was their duty to continue.

"It was clear to me that if we allowed the Freedom Ride to stop at that point, just after so much violence had been inflicted, the message would have been sent that all you have to do to stop a nonviolent campaign is inflict massive violence," says Nash in *Freedom Riders*.

Elected coordinator of the Nashville Student Movement Ride, Nash monitored the progress of the Ride from Nashville, Tennessee, recruiting new Riders, speaking to the press, and working to gain the support of national Movement leaders and the federal government.

Assistant to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy John Seigenthaler recalls a phone conversation with Nash where he tried to dissuade the Nashville Freedom Riders from going to Alabama, warning of the violence ahead. Nash replied that the Riders had signed their last wills and testaments prior to departure. In his interview for *Freedom Riders*, Seigenthaler recalls, "She in a very quiet but strong way gave me a lecture."

Nash played a key role in bringing Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. to Montgomery, AL on May 21 in support of the Riders. She herself was present for the violent siege of First Baptist Church.

National Museum of African American Music



The National Museum of African American Music is open to the general public in Nashville, Tennessee, opening Labor Day weekend in 2020. During the month of February, Wednesdays are free to the public sponsored in part by Nissan North America. Plan your visit and learn about the many great musicians that have helped to shape not only the music in Tennessee but the world.

Please visit their website to plan your next visit:

www.nmaam.org

The Southern Transportation Civil Rights Executive Council (STCREC) Celebrating Black History Month

From ensuring equity in transportation decades ago in the state of Florida

It all began on May 27, 1956 when two Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University boarded a local city bus. When Wilhelmina Jakes and Carrie Patterson boarded the bus, they sat in the only two seats available that happened to be in the whites-only section. They were asked to stand or leave the bus without a refund. When they refused, they were jailed for inciting a riot and released on bond later that same day. These events led to a boycott of the buses in the Tallahassee community. Gradually, the Tallahassee Bus Boycott and its organizers began to see some of their demands met with African Americans being hired as bus drivers. The boycott ended on December 22, 1956 and the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that segregation on city buses was unconstitutional.

Chicago Manual of Style

Florida Memory. "The Tallahassee Bus Boycott." *Floridiana*, 2022. <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/259734>.

MLA

Florida Memory. "The Tallahassee Bus Boycott." *Floridiana*, 2022, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/259734>. Accessed January 31, 2022.

APA

Florida Memory. (2022). The Tallahassee Bus Boycott. *Floridiana*. Retrieved from <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/259734>

To ensuring equity in transportation most recently in the state of Georgia . . .

The I-75 corridor runs the length of the State of Georgia. It is, without question, a primary roadway through, to and within our State. Given its level of importance, maintenance, redesign and reconstruction must occur. When such design and construction activity is considered, the communities in and around the Interstate must be considered too. The Pleasant Hill community in Macon, Georgia is one such community. For nearly fifteen (15) years there had been discussion about the work that needed to happen at Interstates 16 and 75 in and around Macon. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) understood that it needed to enlist the assistance of its internal departments as well as the external Macon community, to ensure that any work done was done in a manner that respected both the geographic and cultural environment of this historically black community that was once the childhood home of Little Richard.

In keeping with its mission of Creating a Culture of Collaboration and Innovation, the GDOT was both collaborative and innovative in making necessary improvements to the Interstate and the community it serves. GDOT recognized and made good on its duty to go beyond “doing no harm” to making a positive investment in the community.

To recognizing African-American contributions to transportation in the states of . . .

Alabama

Recognizing ***Mae C. Jemison of Decatur, AL*** as the first black woman selected to be an astronaut by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). On September 12, 1992, over five years after joining NASA, Jemison became the first African-American female to go into space. She served an eight-day voyage upon the Space Shuttle Endeavour.

Kentucky

Recognizing ***Garrett Morgan of Kentucky*** who some transportation leaders call “The Father of Transportation Technology” as the inventor of the traffic light. Morgan first tested his traffic light in Cleveland in 1922. Morgan’s hand-cranked semaphore traffic management device was in use throughout North America. It was eventually upgraded with the automatic red-green-yellow-and green-light traffic signals currently used around the world. In 1963, the United States Government awarded Morgan a commendation for his traffic signal.

Mississippi

Recognizing **Jessie L. Brown of Hattiesburg, MS** as the first African American naval aviator in the United States Navy in 1948. Ensign Jesse L. Brown was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his Korean War combat service.

South Carolina

Recognizing South Carolina native, astronaut **Dr. Ronald E. McNair**, a native of Lake City, SC who was one of the first African American astronauts at NASA. Dr. McNair “earned his Ph.D. from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1976 at the age of 26. In addition to academic achievements he received three honorary degrees, as well as numerous fellowships and commendations. ... he was an attentive husband, loving father, a 6th degree black belt in karate, and an accomplished jazz saxophonist. ... Selected as an astronaut candidate by NASA in 1978, he completed a one-year training and evaluation period in 1979, qualifying him for assignment as a mission specialist astronaut on future space shuttle crew flights.” In 1984, he successfully completed his first mission which brought his total hours in space to 191!

Dr. McNair was subsequently assigned to the space shuttle Challenger; in January of 1986 he died when it tragically exploded.

<https://www.kent.edu/mcnair/life-ronald-e-mcnair>

For more information about Dr. Ronald McNair:

<https://www.biography.com/astronaut/ronald-mcnair>

Tennessee Department of Transportation

The Civil Rights Division is celebrating Black History month by spotlighting employees whose exemplary work fosters the mission of the department.

Employee Spotlight: John Nichols



TDOT Environmental Compliance Supervisor , HQ Environmental
Compliance Office

He enjoys fishing, hunting, playing golf, and doing home improvement projects.

His favorite quote is , *Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere....*” - Dr. Martin L. King, Jr.

Joined TDOT Family October 2006

Tell us about a moment in Black History that influenced or shaped your career and life.

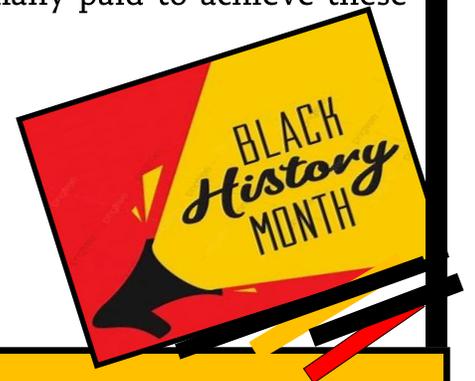
The Dr. Martin Luther King “I Have a Dream Speech” is a moment in Black History that shaped and influenced my life. This speech gave hope to many African Americans that a positive change was coming and that we needed to prepare ourselves to embrace that change.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) resonates with you and give an example.

All these are admirable values to have and work toward but, to me Integrity resonates the most. An example is, that through my life I have always learned that if you establish trust and integrity with someone you will also gain their respect.

Why is celebrating Black History Month important?

Celebrating Black History Month is important to me because of all the accomplishments that African Americans have achieved and the costly price many paid to achieve these rights and accomplishments.



Tennessee Department of Transportation

The Civil Rights Division is celebrating Black History month by spotlighting employees whose exemplary work fosters the mission of the department.



Employee Spotlight: Dequisha Sherles

Administrative Services Assistant II, District 17 Admin-Johnson City

She likes singing with her siblings, playing basketball, reading books, and spending time with her family.

Favorite diversity quote is *“We must never forget that Black history is American history. The achievements of African Americans have contributed to our nation’s greatness.”* – Yvette Clarke

Joined TDOT Family October 2018

Tell us about a moment in Black History that influenced or shaped your career and life.

A moment in Black History that shaped my life and career was when President Barack Obama was elected as the first black president of the United States.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) resonates with you and give an example.

I would say integrity. I feel that integrity plays a huge factor in the relationship that I have with my work family. I try to be as honest as possible so that a healthy and positive work relationship is maintained. I believe that integrity is required before the other values can take place.

Why is celebrating Black History Month important?

Black History is American history, so it is just as valuable as all of the other parts of history that we celebrate throughout the year. Still, Black History Month is the only month that Black History is recognized, acknowledged, and celebrated.



Tennessee Department of Transportation

The Civil Rights Division is celebrating Black History month by spotlighting employees whose exemplary work fosters the mission of the department.



Employee Spotlight: Barbara A. Bynum

TDOT Technician Supervisor, Region 2– Admin Business Development/Final Records

She loves spending time with her grandkids and cooking.

Her favorite quote is, *“Laundry is the only thing that should be separated by color.”*

- Adriana Macotella

Joined TDOT Family June 1994

Tell us about a moment in Black History that influenced or shaped your career and life.

I was born into a pivotable time in Black History. My family was highly influenced by the Civil Rights Movement, giving way to the sense of community and purpose that was at the forefront of my adolescence. Even though life was not easy-going for them, I am grateful to be a biproduct of the persevering and loving nature of my elders. Annually, my family upholds the traditions they created which includes our family reunion. Over the years our family has developed a strong bond as we learn to support each other even during the hardest of times. I believe this is the basis of my confidence and strength today.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) resonates with you and give an example.

The TDOT values that resonates with me would be collaboration and family. Whether we are inside or outside of TDOT we still need to work together as a family. We are all different in many ways but when we pull together there are so many things that we can accomplish.

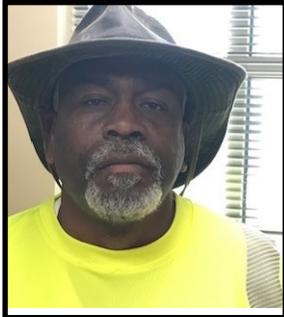
Why is celebrating Black History Month important?

Black History month is important because it celebrates and promotes diversity. It is a part of American History and should be recognized and celebrated. It celebrates the accomplishments of our ancestors and reminds us of the struggles we have overcome and the struggles that we are still facing.



Tennessee Department of Transportation

The Civil Rights Division is celebrating Black History month by spotlighting employees whose exemplary work fosters the mission of the department.



Employee Spotlight: Mathew Boddie

Railroad Safety Inspector, HQ Freight Railroad Safety Office

His hobbies are football, basketball, volleyball, and tennis.

His favorite quote is, "Say that I was a drum major for justice."

- Dr. Martin L. King, Jr.

Joined TDOT Family November 1984

Tell us about a moment in Black History that influenced or shaped your career and life.

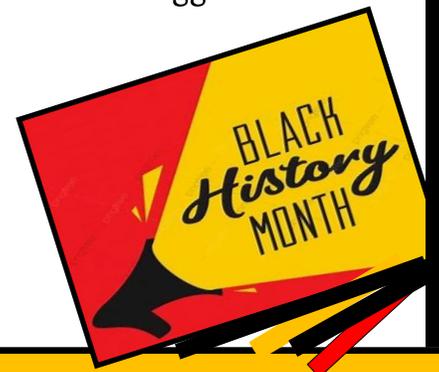
The assassination of Dr. King shaped my career and life. I was nine at the time and very turbulent times followed. Blacks were afraid to go places. My mother would not allow me to attend school, which affected my perfect attendance that I was very proud of having. I eventually convinced her that the Black schools were safe and I was finally allowed to return.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) resonates with you and give an example.

The Safety value resonates the most with me because as a Railroad Inspector, it is a very important aspect of the job.

Why is celebrating Black History Month important?

Black History Month is important to me because of the "First of a kind" that we still see today. I was the 1st Black Railroad Inspector in the State of TN. I was also the 1st Black Federal/State Railroad Inspector in the United States. The younger generation can't imagine the hardships we endured so they can enjoy a normal work place. The struggle is not over, but it has gotten better.



Tennessee Department of Transportation

The Civil Rights Division is celebrating Black History Month by spotlighting employees whose exemplary work fosters the mission of the department.



Employee Spotlight: Chasity Bell

Transportation Manager 1
HQ Local Program Development Office

She loves being Logan's mom, hanging around family and friends, sports (ROLL TIDE), traveling especially to the beach, playing softball, and working out.

Diversity quote, "Diversity is not about how we differ. Diversity is about embracing one another's uniqueness." Ola Joseph

Joined TDOT Family August 2010

Tell us about a moment in Black History that influenced or shaped your career and life.

There are many moments in Black History that have influenced my life. One that I hold special and dear to me is in 2000 when my mother became the first Black woman to be the recipient for the Woman of the Year Award for the City of Enterprise. This is an award given to someone who has influenced their communities through change, and has made a difference in the city for the better. This truly influenced me because it showed me that we all can make a difference in our communities, on our jobs, and in our lives, if we just have the heart to serve others regardless of their race, religion, or gender. We make it better by working together! My mom is a Superhero and to know that her winning this award opened the door for other Black women to become recipients of the Enterprise Woman of the Year Award. My mom's leadership, spirit, and hard work has truly shaped me into the woman I am today.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) resonates with you and give an example.

If I had to pick, I would say Family. Family has always been important to me. I am a firm believer that family doesn't always mean blood related. My office is a close group and I consider us to be a family. It makes me smile to know that I am working with a group of individuals who are administering projects that help ensure the safety of families all across the State of Tennessee.

Why is celebrating Black History Month important?

Black History is achieved every day. Black History Month is important because it is an opportunity to understand our rich culture, and to celebrate and spotlight Black achievements. It's also a time to understand that our history goes beyond the stories of racism and slavery, but is filled with tenacity, resiliency, and perseverance. Black History Month is important because it displays how our history has been so impactful.



Tennessee Department of Transportation

The Civil Rights Division is celebrating Black History Month by spotlighting employees whose exemplary work fosters the mission of the department.



Employee Spotlight: Joseph C. Webb

TDOT Operations Technician Supervisor
Region 2–District 29 Admin–Chattanooga

He enjoys fishing, hunting, playing golf, and doing home improvement projects.

Diversity quote, *“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere....”* - Dr. Martin L. King, Jr.

Joined TDOT Family October 2005

Tell us about a moment in Black History that influenced or shaped your career and life.

A moment in Black History that influenced or shaped my career/life was the “I Have A Dream Speech,” by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. To hear this speech as an African American male gave me and others hope to know that a positive change could happen, but we must prepare ourselves for that change.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) resonates with you and give an example.

All the TDOT Values carry a lot of importance, but Integrity is what we all should strive to have in our character. For example, a person’s integrity will show their trustworthiness.

Why is celebrating Black History Month important?

Celebrating Black History is important to me because it is an opportunity to learn about African Americans’ struggles, accomplishments, and resilience.



Tennessee Department of Transportation

The Civil Rights Division is celebrating Black History Month by spotlighting employees whose exemplary work fosters the mission of the department.



Employee Spotlight: Bobby Johnson

Transportation Program Monitor 2
HQ Program Operations Office

He is an active church member, a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., and a member of a local Masonic Lodge.

Joined TDOT Family March 1970

Tell us about a moment in Black History that influenced or shaped your career and life.

I would have never thought that in my life time, I would have witnessed the election of a Black President. Even though I knew we (as a Black race) had the qualifications to hold this office, it never cross my mind much that it would occur during my lifetime. So, to see the election of Barack Obama to the office of President of the United States was a moment in history that influenced my life and my career. It influenced my life and career by reconfirming what I already knew, that our work as a Black race has never been in vain, and it made me smile bigger to see someone like me in this office.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) resonates with you and give an example.

The TDOT value that resonates most with me is, Family. Since I was a young man, my parents instilled the importance of family and staying connected which has definitely made a big difference these last two years with the world changing so much. So, I take this value to work with me daily as I make a point to be connected by communicating with everyone I come in contact with throughout the day. I feel that people working together towards a goal is like a family working together to better themselves to make a better environment.

Why is celebrating Black History Month important?

It's important for young Black people to know their history, which is no longer taught in schools. Our future generation should know the footprints that were left in the sand for them to follow and add more for the next generations to come. If our youth don't know what great sacrifices their ancestors made and the great things Black people have contributed to this nation, they will never see themselves as the next president, supreme court judge, senator, doctor, lawyer, inventor, or entrepreneur. I feel that celebrating Black History is a way to take a moment to encourage Blacks to push for more and for others to celebrate with us on what we have accomplished.



Tennessee Department of Transportation

The Civil Rights Division is celebrating Black History Month by spotlighting employees whose exemplary work fosters the mission of the department.



Employee Spotlight: LaTonja A. Coates

Transportation Manager 1
HQ Environment Division/Outdoor Advertising

She enjoys reading, listening to music, creating unique floral arrangements, cooking, and baking. Most of all, she enjoys spending time with her husband, Carl, Sr., and children, Brandi and Carl, Jr.

Diversity quote, "We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color." – Maya Angelou

Joined TDOT Family September 1987

Tell us about a moment in Black History that influenced or shaped your career and life.

My life has been influenced and shaped by many strong Black Women (family and non-family) who have inspired me and have molded me into the strong Black Woman I am today. However, if I had to tell of a moment in Black History that has further influenced me, it would be the presence of our former First Lady, Mrs. Michelle Obama. Her quiet strength and dignity continues to remind me that, despite any obstacles, I should not be afraid to step into what is for me, with confidence and not arrogance, while at the same time inspiring others, especially those that look like me to do the same. Staying focused and being true to who I am and those I represent as a Black Woman have always been a part of the goals, I have for myself. These are some characteristics I have seen displayed in Mrs. Michelle Obama that continues to inspire me personally and professionally.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) resonates with you and give an example.

Integrity and family are two of the TDOT Values that resonate strongly with me. I consistently keep in mind the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "*THE TIME IS ALWAYS RIGHT, TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT.*" As an employee with TDOT for nearly 35 years, I have learned that with any position held, integrity is a must. You must be willing to do what is right, even when no one is looking. Integrity says a lot about an individual's character and should encourage others to do the same. I appreciate that TDOT values family and this value is reflected in the concern and care for others displayed throughout the organization. As a manager, I always try to ensure that the office atmosphere reflects these values. I make it my goal to embody TDOT's Family value by being respectful to everyone I encounter, internal and external, ensuring that both of these values are in line with and promoted by TDOT.

Why is celebrating Black History Month important?

I believe celebrating Black History should extend beyond the twenty-eight days set aside during February. Celebrating the struggles and accomplishments of African Americans from our past is important because acknowledgment is given to those that are sometimes overlooked, who have made valuable contributions that have helped build and shape America.

