

Still We Rise Materials Packet

TIMELINES

“Still We Rise: El Paso’s Black Experience” Timeline



Black Text = Local Events



Red Text = National Events

1534 - Moroccan-born Mostafa Al-Azemmouri, also known as Estevanico, becomes the first known person of African descent to travel through the Southwest region. Due to his talent with languages, Al-Azemmouri was enslaved by the Spanish empire to serve as an interpreter to Indigenous tribes during Spain’s colonization of the Americas.

1860 - El Paso County participates in the Texas census for the first time and records 15 enslaved Black and Mulatto individuals as well as 14 free Black individuals living in El Paso.

1865 - Union troops arrive in Galveston Bay, TX to announce that the more than 250,000 enslaved Black people in Texas are free by executive decree. The date (June 19) comes to be known as “Juneteenth.”

1866 - The U.S. establishes six regiments of African Americans, eventually known as Buffalo Soldiers, who serve on the western frontier, particularly in the American Frontier Wars. From 1866-1901, several Buffalo Soldier regiments are garrisoned at Fort Bliss.

1884 - Second Baptist Church, one of El Paso’s oldest Black churches, is established in a rented adobe on South Stanton between San Antonio and Overland Avenue. The brick edifice of its current home is erected between 1903 and 1907 at 2nd Avenue and Virginia Street.

1891 - Black families organize to open Douglass Grammar School. Within the decade, the school expands to include a high school. In 1920, the school moves to its current location on Eucalyptus Street. In addition to its educational mission, the school is a social center for Black families until its desegregation in 1956.

1910 - The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) forms a chapter in El Paso, one year after the NAACP is established as a national organization. El Paso's is the first chapter in Texas.

1911 - African American socialite, cattle rancher, and philanthropist Florida J. Wolfe, also known as "Lady Flo," files a suit over her right to the estate of her late husband, Lord Delaval James Beresford, a white Irish rancher. At the end of the court battle, she receives \$15,000 and a few hundred cattle.

1912 - Second Lieutenant Henry Ossian Flipper becomes the first African American graduate of the United States Military Academy West Point.

1915 - El Paso-native Zephyr Chisom Carter graduates from Douglass High School and enrolls at Howard University in Washington, D.C. She is among the first African American women in El Paso to graduate from college and goes on to found the Delta Sigma Theta sorority.

1918 - The Harlem Renaissance emerges as a cross-disciplinary artistic movement, uplifting the culture, creativity, and contributions of African Americans.

1918 - Maude Sampson Williams, a teacher at the Douglass School, writes to the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and the Texas Equal Suffrage Association (TESA) to request membership for the El Paso Negro Woman's Civic and Equal Franchise League, which she organized. The year prior, NAWSA had amended its constitution to prohibit African American leagues from associating with their activities. Williams's application is denied, but the El Paso organization continues to work locally in the suffrage movement until ratification.

1920s - Marshall McCall is hired as one of the first African American mail carriers for the U.S. Postal Service, and William Calhoun Parish becomes one of the first African American letter carriers in El Paso.

1923 - A Texas passes a law prohibiting African Americans from voting in Democratic primaries.

1924 - Dr. Lawrence Aaron Nixon, a prominent African American physician, heads a committee to petition El Paso officials for an African American swimming pool at Washington Park. Mayor Richard Dudley refuses.

1924 - In coordination with the NAACP, Dr. Nixon attempts to vote in the all-white Democratic primary in El Paso, leading to a legal challenge that eventually escalates to the Supreme Court. Despite a favorable ruling at the Supreme Court level, legal loopholes allow Texas to continue to deny primary voting rights to Black Texans. Dr. Nixon and his wife are not able to vote until 1944.

1925 - With the encouragement of her teachers, Douglass High School graduate Bernice Love Wiggins self-publishes *Tuneful Tales*, a collection of her poetry.

1937 - Olalee McCall becomes principal of Douglass School and the first woman high school principal in the El Paso Independent School District.

1943 - During World War II, a 'race riot' breaks out in Downtown El Paso after Black soldiers stationed at Fort Bliss rebel against segregation and denial of public services. An estimated 300 soldiers are involved, and two people (one Black, one white) are killed.

1945 - Activist Leona Ford Washington graduates from Douglass School. Washington would go on to compose the song "The City of El Paso," which was adopted as the city's official song in the 1980s.

1946 - Native El Pasoan Mildred Parish Massey, mother of Congresswoman Barbara Lee and daughter of William Calhoun Parish, is hired as the first Black clerical worker at Fort Bliss in the Postal Locator.

1948 - President Harry S. Truman signs Executive Order 9981 banning segregation in the U.S. Armed Forces. Approximately 1.2 million Black men served during World War II and faced frequent discrimination.

1954 - Douglass High School valedictorian Thelma White is denied admission to Texas Western College (now the University of Texas at El Paso). Her rejection eventually leads to the desegregation of the school.

1954 - The Supreme Court rules on the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kans.*, unanimously agreeing that segregation in public schools is unconstitutional. The ruling paves the way for large-scale desegregation.

1955 - Fourteen-year-old Emmett Till is kidnapped, brutally beaten, shot, and dumped in Mississippi for allegedly whistling at a white woman. Two white men are arrested for the murder and acquitted by an all-white jury. They later boast about committing the murder in a magazine interview.

1955 - As part of an organized resistance effort, NAACP member Rosa Parks refuses to yield her bus seat to a white passenger. Her subsequent arrest launches a yearlong bus boycott.

1955 - The first Black students enroll at Texas Western College, and El Paso begins integrating its public schools. El Paso is the first city in Texas to do so. The first African American students to enroll at Texas Western College are Joe Atkins, Bernice Bell, Mabel Butler, Sandra Campbell, John English, Marcellus Fullmore, Silverlene Hamilton, Margaret Jackson, Leonard McNeece, William Milner, Clarence Stevens, and Mildred Parrish Tutt (Massey).

1956 - COINTELPRO, a counterintelligence program run by the FBI, begins to operate, seeking to discredit, suppress, and destabilize political organizations. During their 15-year reign, they frequently employ illegal and unconstitutional methods. Targets of their work include organizers and activists of the Civil Rights Movement like Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

1956 - The Highway Act (also known as the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act) passes, providing funding for and mandating the construction of I-10. Despite a proposal to route the highway around downtown, I-10 is constructed through the heart of El Paso's Black neighborhood.

1957 - Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. helps establish the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

1961 - The Freedom Riders begin their rides through the South to protest segregated buses.

1962 - Activist and music educator Drusilla Elizabeth Tandy Nixon, wife of physician Dr. Lawrence Nixon, becomes the first Black woman to serve on the board of the El Paso YWCA.

1962 - After a veto by the mayor, the El Paso City Council passes an ordinance for integration in public spaces in response to public pressure from El Paso's Black community. El Paso is the first city in any former Confederate state to do so.

1962 - El Paso entrepreneur, educator, and community leader Ms. Estine Davis takes over her godfather's barbershop and becomes the new owner of Estine Eastside Barbershop.

1962 - Theta Delta Lambda Chapter, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. is chartered.

1963 - Dr. Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. delivers his famous "I Have a Dream" speech during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

1963 - Four young girls (Denise McNair, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, and Addie Mae Collins) attending Sunday school are killed when a bomb explodes at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, a popular location for civil rights meetings.

1964 - President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, religion, or national origin. The law also provides the federal government with the power to enforce desegregation.

1965 - Malcolm X, Black nationalist and founder of the Organization of Afro-American Unity, is assassinated.

1965 - Congress passes the Voting Rights Act of 1965, making it easier for Black people living in the South to register to vote.

1965 - President Lyndon B. Johnson issues Executive Order 11246 to implement affirmative action.

1966 - Texas Western College wins the NCAA basketball championship with an all-Black starting five, the first team with five African American starters to win. The same year, the college hires its first Black faculty member.

1966 - The Black Panthers are founded by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale in Oakland, CA.

1967 - Black football players at Texas Western College stage a sit-in to protest a university policy prohibiting interracial dating.

1968 - Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is assassinated as he stands on the balcony outside his hotel room.

1968 - President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1968, prohibiting discrimination in housing sales, rental, and financing.

1969 - The Stonewall Uprising takes place in response to a police raid of the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York. In its wake, Marsha P. Johnson, a Black trans woman, leads gay liberation efforts and protests against police brutality.

1970s - Ms. Estine Davis and Leona Ford Washington begin holding the Miss Black El Paso Southwest Scholarship Pageant. The tradition is still celebrated today.

1970s - The El Paso chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha sponsors El Paso's Ebony Fashion Show, taking place downtown at the Civic Center.

1970s - Bob Snead, an El Paso artist, actor, and decorated war veteran, relocates to El Paso with his family to serve in air defense at Fort Bliss. He gains prominence in his post-military career as a celebrated historian of the Buffalo Soldiers and artist highlighting Black individuals in the military.

1971 - El Pasoan and Black Klansman author Ron Stallworth graduates from Austin High School, where he was both a member of the student council and a district-wide advisory board; he was also voted "most popular."

1977 - The El Paso (Tx) Chapter, The Links, Incorporated, is chartered on September 17th by twenty African American women.

1983 - The McCall Neighborhood Center opens to serve, promote, and celebrate El Paso's Black community. It is located in the historic home of Marshall and Olalee McCall.

1987 – Jethro Hills becomes the first African American elected to El Paso City Council.

1988 – Overriding President Ronald Reagan's veto, Congress passes the Civil Rights Restoration Act, which expands the reach of nondiscrimination laws within private institutions receiving federal funds.

1991 – After two years of debates, vetoes, and threatened vetoes, President George H. W. Bush reverses himself and signs the Civil Rights Act of 1991, strengthening existing civil rights laws.

1992 – Riots erupt in south-central Los Angeles after a jury acquits four white police officers for the videotaped beating of Rodney King.

1995 – The Million Man March takes place in Washington, D.C. to pressure Congress into protecting funding for social services like education and housing, combat negative stereotypes of Black men, and encourage voter registration.

1996 – Dr. Maceo Crenshaw Dailey Jr. becomes the first director of the University of Texas at El Paso's African American Studies Department.

1998 – El Paso-native Congresswoman Barbara Lee is elected to represent California's 12th District (formerly 13th). She is the highest-ranking African American woman appointed to Democratic Leadership, serving as Co-Chair of the Policy and Steering Committee.

2008 – Greg Allen becomes El Paso's first Black El Paso Police Chief. He holds the position until his passing in 2023.

2008 – Barack Obama is elected the first African American President of the United States.

2013 – In a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court votes to strike down part of the Voting Rights Act, enabling states to enact new voter ID laws and other discriminatory restrictions.

2020 – Breonna Taylor, age 26, is fatally shot in her apartment by the police after they enter with a no-knock warrant in the middle of the night.

2020 – George Perry Floyd Jr., age 46, is killed after a police officer kneels on his neck for over nine minutes while Floyd is handcuffed. His murder and the

murder of Breonna Taylor lead to worldwide protests against police brutality, systemic racism in the police force, and a lack of police accountability.

2020 - In response to the deaths of George Floyd and other African Americans killed in police custody, marches and protests are organized across El Paso. One of the marches ends with police tear-gassing the crowd. Robert E. Lee Elementary, located in El Paso's Northeast, is renamed Sunrise Mountain Elementary in response to public pressure, and Robert E. Lee Road is renamed Buffalo Soldier Road.

1500s - 1920s



1950s - 1960s



1950s - 1960s



1970s - 1980s



1970s - 1980s



1990s - 2000s



Buffalo Soldiers



The Buffalo Soldiers were originally known as the 10th Cavalry Regiment of the United States Army. They were formed in 1866 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The term 'Buffalo Soldiers' was given to the regiment by Native Americans as they fought in the Indian Wars. This term eventually took over all African American regiments which included the 9th Cavalry, 24th Cavalry, 25th Cavalry, and the Second 38th Infantry Regiment. Engagements many of the soldiers participated in spanned from the American Indian Wars up to World War II. Many Buffalo Soldier regiments were stationed at Fort Bliss and assisted with ongoing conflicts of the border.