

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF WEST VIRGINIA**

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**Southern District of West Virginia
Celebrates
African American Heritage
2017**

Black History Month, or National African American History Month, is an annual celebration of achievements by black Americans and a time for recognizing the central role of African Americans in U.S. history. Black History Month began as "Negro History Week," which was created in 1926 by Carter G. Woodson, a noted African American historian, scholar, educator, and publisher. It became a month-long celebration in 1976. The month of February was chosen to coincide with the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln.

In the Southern District of West Virginia, court employees Cassandra Staples, Genie Berger, Tamara Roach, Quitta Wilborne and Tony Riley spearheaded the celebration of African American Heritage on Wednesday, February 22, 2017.



Cassandra Staples



Genie Berger

Our celebration began with the singing of the Black National Anthem, “Lift Every Voice and Sing” performed by our very own Tamara Roach. “Lift Every Voice and Sing” is a song written as a poem by James Weldon Johnson in 1899 and set to music by his brother John Rosamond Johnson in 1905. It was first publicly performed as a poem as part of a celebration of Abraham Lincoln's birthday on February 12, 1900, by 500 school children at the segregated Stanton School in Jacksonville, Florida. Its principal, James Weldon Johnson, wrote the words to introduce its honored guest, Booker T. Washington.



Tamara Roach

Next, court employees played a game called “J-I-N-G-O”, hosted by Quitta Wilborne. Jingo is played like bingo, except players cover pictures of famous African Americans by answering trivia questions, instead of covering numbers.

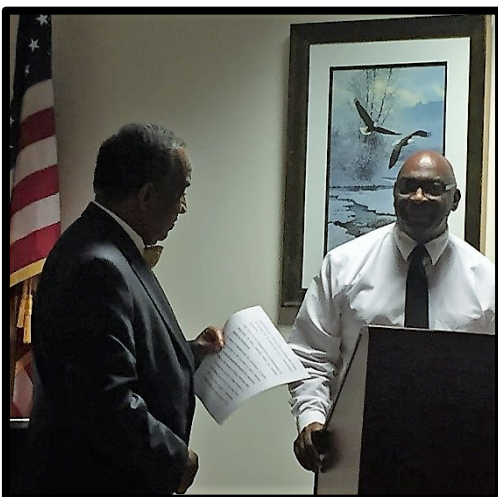


Marquitta "Quitta" Wilborne

Quitta also shared information regarding West Virginia African American Firsts.

- Elizabeth Harden Gilmore – the first West Virginia African American woman to sit on the Higher Education Board of Regents, in addition to being the first West Virginia African American to be licensed as a funeral director in Kanawha County;
- African Zion Baptist Church – the first African American church in West Virginia. It was formed in 1852, located in Malden, WV and was the church of Booker T. Washington; and
- Dr. William White, a native of Bluefield, WV, the first black student to graduate from George Washington University Law School.

Guest speaker for the celebration was Dr. William White, Executive Director of the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs. Dr. White spoke on African American Culture in West Virginia. His mission as Executive Director of the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs is to make West Virginia more inclusive so that all of our people have a fair shot at new job opportunities and quality of life and to keep our young talent here at home.



Dr. William White and Tony Riley



Dr. William White

Dr. White was appointed as the Executive Director of the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs by Governor Jim Justice on January 23, 2017. Dr. White was the founder and CEO of The Management Development Group, Inc., (MDG), a multi-million dollar California corporation that specialized in organization development consulting to Fortune 100 corporations. He was the Executive Producer for the world renowned video, "The Power of Diversity," which was used during the 1990's throughout the United States for diversity training with federal, state and local governments; the private sector; and nonprofit organizations. Before founding MDG, Dr. White was a Research Chemist, Supervisor and Quality Executive for Ciba-Geigy Chemical Corporation, Ardsley, NY; Alza Corporation, Palo Alto, CA; Abbott Laboratories, Los Angeles, CA; American Hospital Supply, Irwindale, CA; Stuart Pharmaceuticals, Pasadena, CA; and Bristol Myers-Unitex Corporation, Monrovia, CA.

Dr. White graduated from Bluefield State College in Bluefield, WV with a bachelor's of science degree in chemistry and mathematics. He completed a two-year business management course designed for scientists at the Alexander Hamilton Institute in Ramsey, NJ. He earned a Doctor of Education in Leadership and Change from Fielding Graduate University in Santa Barbara, CA; and a graduate certificate from the Harvard University School of Education in Management and Leadership Education.

Posters of prominent African Americans whose discoveries in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics have had worldwide positive effects were on display. They included Donna Auguste, Mark Dean, Ursula Burns, Gen. Hugh G. Robinson, Kate Okikiolu, Neil deGrasse Tyson, Mae Jemison, Shirley Jackson, Gerald Lawson, and J. Ernest Wilkins, Jr.

The room was beautifully decorated by Genie Berger, using the theme of pan-African colors (red, black and green). The red color represents the blood shed in the struggle for liberation; the black color represents the Black race; the green color represents the natural resources of Africa from where the Black race comes.



Finally, the participants enjoyed "soul food" to conclude the celebration.