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## Texas Institute for the Preservation of History and Culture Newsletter - January 2024

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## Texas Black History and Culture Highlights

# January 2024



**January 1, 1905**, The cornerstone was laid to commence building the Avenue L Baptist Church, one of the oldest Black churches in Texas. The church grew from the slave membership of the First Baptist Church of Galveston. The congregation was organized under the name Colored Baptist Church in 1840. By the early 1850s, many left First Baptist to worship in a separate building, known as the Africa Baptist Church. In 1855 First Baptist trustees purchased land from the Galveston City Company for the congregation. After the Civil War, the property was formally transferred to the members, who were reorganized as the First Regular Missionary Baptist Church in 1867. In the years following the Civil War, membership grew from 47 to 500. The powerful hurricane of 1900 devastated Galveston Island decimating the church and killing many congregants. The church's current name, Avenue L Baptist Church, was adopted around 1903 as

the church began to reorganize and rebuild itself. More about the Avenue L Baptist Church can be read [here](#).

**January 4, 1929**, Cowboy Bose Ikard died in Weatherford, Texas. Bose Ikard was born into slavery in Summerville, Mississippi, in 1843. He lived with the plantation owner's family prior to the Civil War, becoming a ranch hand and cowboy as he grew up in Texas after the Ikard family moved from Mississippi to Parker County, Texas. On the postwar cattle drives, Ikard served as a tracker, cowboy, and as the famous rancher, Charles Goodnight's *de facto* banker. Ikard often carried thousands of dollars in cash for Goodnight until the money could be deposited. After his last cattle drive in 1869, Ikard settled in Parker County, became a farmer, and raised a family with his wife Angeline. He participated in the pioneering cattle drives that became known as the Goodnight–Loving Trail, after the American Civil War and through 1869. Aspects of Ikard's life inspired the fictional character Joshua Deets, the African American cowboy in Larry McMurtry's novel *Lonesome Dove*. More about Bose Ikard can be read [here](#).



**January 8, 1903**, Theodore Roosevelt Youngblood, Sr. was born in Central Texas' Limestone County. Youngblood was a civic leader and head waiter at two Austin hotels, the Driskill Hotel, and the Stephen F. Austin Hotel. He received a BA in history in 1927 from Samuel Huston College (now Huston-Tillotson University). Upon exiting college with limited employment options, he served hotel guests from the 1930s until retiring in 1968. As head waiter Youngblood accommodated politicians, businessmen, and cattlemen including Texas Governors Dolph Briscoe and John Connally as well as President Lyndon B. Johnson. He served as chairman of the Negro Chamber

of Commerce from 1935 to 1940 and president of the Huston College alumni association. His civic engagement positioned him to host many celebrity civil rights leaders like Thurgood Marshall. Youngblood died on February 9, 1993, at age 90. More about Theodore Roosevelt Youngblood, Sr. can be read [here](#).

**January 10, 1949**, Former professional boxer, entrepreneur, minister, and author George Edward Foreman was born in Marshall, Texas. He grew up in Houston's Fifth Ward and dropped out of school at age fifteen. At age sixteen, he earned his GED. Foreman took up amateur boxing and won a gold medal in the heavyweight division at the 1968 Summer Olympics. He turned professional in 1969 and won the world heavyweight title by knocking out then-undefeated Joe Frazier in 1973. He suffered his first professional loss to Muhammad Ali in the iconic "Rumble in the Jungle" in 1974 and retired in 1977. In 1980, Foreman became an ordained Christian minister. Upon exiting retirement, he won the heavyweight championship title in 1994 at age forty-five by knocking out 26-year-old Michael Moorer. He attributed his success to eating healthy and became the spokesperson for a fat-reducing grill. As of 2009, the George Foreman Grill has sold over 100 million units. More about George Foreman can be read [here](#).



**January 12, 1920**, Civil rights leader James Leonard Farmer, Jr. was born in Marshall, Texas. The child of a college professor, James graduated high school and entered Wiley College at age fourteen. There, Farmer became a member of the 1935 award winning debate team. His debate team is the subject of the 2007 film, *The Great Debaters*. Farmer's non-violent activist logic developed while studying theology and *Mahatma Gandhi* at Howard University. In 1941 his religious aspirations shifted to confronting Jim Crow segregation in the Methodist church, thus compelling Farmer to establish the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in 1942. More about James Farmer, Jr can be read [here](#).

**January 16, 1950**, Celebrity Debbie Kaye Allen was born in Houston, Texas. A product of Third Ward's Jack Yates High School, Debbie Allen is an award winning actress, dancer, choreographer, director, singer and songwriter. From 1982-87 she starred in the musical-drama TV series *Fame* and also worked as the show's principal choreographer. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including a Golden Globe, Tony and multiple Emmy Awards. In 1991 she received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. She is the founder of the Debbie Allen Dance Academy in Los Angeles and in 2001 was appointed to the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities by President George W. Bush. More about Debbie Allen can be read [here](#).



**January 17, 1881**, Tillotson Collegiate and Normal Institute opened in Austin, Texas. The school was chartered by the American Missionary Society of Congregational Churches and George Jeffrey Tillotson, a minister from Connecticut. Tillotson Collegiate and Normal Institute has had twelve presidents. J. T. Hodges was the first African American president (1924-29). Tillotson College temporarily ceased being coeducational to strictly serve women from 1926-1935. Samuel Huston College also evolved in Austin from the 1876 Methodist Episcopal conference and Freedman's Aid Society. The two institutions merged in 1952 to form what today is Huston-Tillotson College. More about Huston-Tillotson can be read [here](#).



**January 21, 1888,** Blues singer Lead Belly was born Huddie William Ledbetter on a plantation near Mooringsport, Louisiana. When Huddie was five years old, the family settled in Bowie County, Texas. As a young man, Huddie Ledbetter mastered the 12 string guitar, which sounded in his hands like a small orchestra. He became known as "King of the 12 String Guitar". In 1918, he fought and killed a man in Dallas and was sentenced to thirty years to be served in the state prison in Huntsville, Texas. In 1925, he wrote a song asking Governor Pat Neff for a pardon. Neff, who had promised at his election never to pardon a prisoner, broke his promise and set Huddie Ledbetter free. He was discovered by folklorists John and Alan Lomax, who were recording prison songs for the Library of Congress. The Lomaxes brought him to New York, where he became popular. He recorded songs for the Library of Congress, as well as for commercial record labels. Lead Belly's songs are forerunners of rock and roll. More about Lead Belly can be read [here](#).



**January 22, 1968,** Houston based mogul, Hobart Taylor, Jr. resigned as director of the US Export-Import Bank after having been appointed to the federal government's official export credit agency in 1965. Born into wealth in Texarkana, Texas, Hobart Taylor, Jr. was an attorney, civil servant and the Executive Vice Chairman of the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunities under President John F. Kennedy in 1962. Taylor is credited with coining the phrase "affirmative action" while leading this initiative. He attended Prairie View Normal and Industrial College in 1939 and received his J.D. degree from the University of Michigan in 1943. More can be read about Hobart Taylor, Jr. [here](#).

**January 26, 1892,** Bessie Coleman, was born in Atlanta, Texas. Coleman is the first African-American woman to hold a pilot's license. While opportunities to study aviation for African-Americans and women were nil in 1920, the determined Coleman pursued a scholarship to study in France. Nicknamed *Queen Bess*, Coleman became a high-profile stunt-flying pilot in air shows organized throughout the United States. Bessie Coleman died in 1926, at the age of 34 in a plane crash in Jacksonville, Florida. An entrepreneur, she aspired to open an aviation school before her untimely death, but her accomplishments continue to inspire generations of aviators world-wide. More about Bessie Coleman can be read [here](#).



**January 31, 1934,** Philanthropist, stage and screen star, Etta Moten Barnett sang for President and Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt at a White House dinner. Etta Moten was born in Weimar, Texas in 1901. As a classical opera singer, she paved the way for African-American female performers. Moten studied music and drama at Western University in Kansas. She moved to New York City in 1931, where she was casted in multiple Broadway musical and film productions. In 1934 Moten became the first African-American woman to perform at the White House in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. More about Etta Moten can be read [here](#).