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Texas Black History and Culture Highlights

September 2024



September 1988, Inventor and scientist Dr. Raul Cuero served his first fall semester at Prairie View A&M University, teaching microbiology and leading research on a natural compound to block cancer-causing ultraviolet radiation. Born in Buenaventura, Colombia, Dr. Cuero holds a PhD in Microbiology from Strathclyde University, UK, an MS in Plant Pathology from Ohio State University, USA, a BS from Heidelberg University, USA, and a Biology degree from Universidad del Valle, Colombia. He is a former distinguished professor and research scientist and was awarded as a Texas A&M University System Inventor. Dr. Cuero has received numerous scientific recognitions, such as the Hispanic Scientist of the Year 2013, USA, and he has received several honorary doctorate degrees from Colombia and South America. Dr Cuero taught at Prairie View from 1988-2012. More about Dr. Raul Cuero can be read [here](#).

September 2, 1850, College president E.H. Anderson was born in Memphis, TN. Upon graduating from Fisk University, he moved to Texas to oversee Prairie View Normal School (now known as Prairie View A&M University) 1879-1884. He was the second person to serve as the school's principal. With an enrollment of fifty-five, a number that signified overcrowding, Anderson worked to advance the educational offerings available. He experienced challenges while the Sixteenth and Seventeenth legislatures questioned the constitutionality of funding the school. Support for Prairie View during that time came from Black residents across the state. Anderson died at Prairie View on October 29, 1885. He was succeeded as principal by his brother, Laurine Cecil Anderson, who had served as his first assistant. More about E.H. Anderson can be read [here](#).



September 7, 2017, Marked the first fall meeting that Candace Valenzuela served students of the Carrollton-Farmers Branch Independent School District as a newly elected school board member. Born in El Paso, Texas, being elected to the school board launched Valenzuela's career as a civil servant. Valenzuela resigned from the school board in 2019 to become the first Afro-Latina to be elected the Democratic nominee representing Dallas, Fort Worth, and Texas' 24th congressional district in the 2020 elections. Her Republican contender defeated Valenzuela, but in March 2022, President Joe Biden appointed Valenzuela as the regional administrator for the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), overseeing Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Louisiana, and Arkansas. More about Candace Valenzuela can be read [here](#).

September 9, 1957

The Civil Rights Act of 1957 was signed into law by President Dwight W. Eisenhower. Originally proposed by Attorney General Herbert Brownell, the Act marked the first occasion since Reconstruction where the federal government undertook significant legislative action to protect civil rights. Although influential southern congressmen whittled down the bill's initial scope, it still included a number of essential provisions for the protection of voting rights. It established the Civil Rights Division in the Justice Department, and empowered federal officials to prosecute individuals that conspired to deny or abridge another citizen's right to vote. Moreover, it also created a six-member U.S. Civil Rights Commission charged with investigating allegations of voter infringement. But, perhaps most importantly, this moment signaled a growing federal commitment to the cause of civil rights. More about the Civil Rights Act of 1957 can be read [here](#).



September 12, 1977

Azie Taylor Morton was appointed to serve as the 36th Treasurer of the United States under President Jimmy Carter's administration. She oversaw the U.S. Treasury from 1977—1981. To this day, Morton is the only African American to have held this position. Her signature is on U.S. currency printed during her tenure. Born in Dale, Texas, she attended Huston-Tillotson College at age 16. Upon graduating cum laude in 1956 with a degree in commercial education,

she served on the Texas AFL-CIO, headquartered in Austin. In 1961 she was invited by President John F. Kennedy to work for the Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity. She represented the United States in various capacities with regard to foreign relations including Chair of the People to People Mission to the Soviet Union and China in 1986; and an Election Observer for Presidential elections in Haiti, Senegal and the Dominican Republic. Azie Taylor Morton died in 2003 at her home in Austin, Texas. More about Azie Taylor Morton can be read [here](#).

September 15, 1869

Slavery was abolished within the Republic of Mexico through a decree issued by President Vicente R. Guerrero. Vicente Ramón Guerrero was born in Southern Mexico in 1782 to a mother of African descent and a mestizo father and was an early advocate of Mexico's independence. Texans learned of the decree a month later. Still, Ramón Músqiz, the political chief of the Department of Texas, withheld this news because it violated colonization laws guaranteeing the settlers security for their persons and property. Though the decree was never acknowledged by Texans, it concretized Texas' desire to break away from the Mexican government. Between the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs from 1519 to 1521 through 1829, 200,000 enslaved Africans were taken to Mexico. An estimated 1.3 million Mexicans today identify as being of African descent, an invisible microcosm within the nation's population of 130 million. More about the abolition of slavery in Mexico can be read [here](#).





September 17, 1879, Rube Foster, the “Father of Black Baseball,” was born in Calvert, Texas. Foster was a pitcher, manager, and team owner who started his career at age 18 with the semi-pro Waco Yellow Jackets. Standing 6 feet 4 inches tall, the right-handed pitcher first made his mark on the game in 1902 pitching for the Giants in Chicago, then jumped to the Otsego, Mich., semi-pro white team and before heading to the Philadelphia Cuban X Giants. That season, Foster won 44 games in a row. His style as a manager (and a player) was bold. He was an innovative strategist, and his team was renowned for bunting and baserunning. In 1910, Foster acquired ownership of the Leland Giants and guided the squad to a 123–6 record. In 1920, Foster led the founding of baseball’s first successful all-black league, the Negro National League (NNL), headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri.

Foster was league president, manager, and pitcher for the Chicago American Giants. The NNL had teams in the South and Midwest. Some Texas teams affiliated with the NNL and other all-black baseball associations were the Fort Worth Black Panthers, Houston Eagles, and San Antonio Black Indians. Foster was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1981. More about Rube Foster can be read [here](#).

September 29, 1971, America's first racially integrated fine art exhibition, the *De Lux Show*, concluded a three month run. Opening on August 22, 1971, the Menil Foundation created an art exhibition in an abandoned movie theater, in Houston’s Fifth Ward community. The De Luxe Theater was a hub from the 1940s until closing in 1969 when movie theaters integrated. The *De Lux Show* was a response to social protest occurring nationally. In 1968, the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition was formed in New York City to expand platforms for showcasing Black visual artists. The Black Emergency Cultural Coalition's work was championed in Houston by the French husband and wife art patrons John and Dominique de Menil. Working with instructors from Rice, TSU, and politician Mickey Leland, the film center was remodeled to display abstract art by nineteen contemporary artists including Sam Gilliam, Larry Poons, and Virginia Jaramillo. More than 4,000 people attended the exhibition. Upon the show's conclusion in 1971, the theater remained an art gallery until 1976, displaying the de Menil’s African Art collection and housing the Black Art Center. More about the *De Luxe Show* can be read [here](#).



September 29, 1969, Brigance was born in Houston, Texas. Brigance attended Rice University as a three-year starter. He received a degree in managerial studies in 1992. Brigance began his career in the Canadian Football League (CFL), playing for the B.C. Lions in 1991. His best season was 1993, when he recorded 20 sacks and was a CFL West All-Star. Brigance then played for the Baltimore Stallions for two seasons, becoming a CFL All-Star in 1995, recording seven sacks and helping his team win the Grey Cup. In 1996, Brigance played for the Miami Dolphins as a free agent. The following year, he played for the Baltimore Ravens. Brigance played for the St. Louis Rams in 2001 and 2002 and a final game with the New England Patriots before retiring. He is currently the director of player development for the Ravens and was a member of the

2013 team that won Super Bowl XLVII. In 2007, Brigance was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease, a degenerative nerve disorder resulting in paralysis. He launched the Brigance Brigade Foundation to assist ALS research. Brigance's activism resulted in being honored with a 2016 NCAA Inspiration Award. More about O.J Brigance can be read [here](#).