



## **Black and African American Community Holidays and Observances**

An awareness of holidays in the Black and African American cultures can help to facilitate a positive engagement with the communities all year round and that if appropriate, you can also recognize and participate in with your members celebrating the many cultural contributions, and rich histories of the Black and African American communities in the U.S.

**January 1: Emancipation Proclamation anniversary.** On this date in 1863, President Abraham Lincoln signed this document proclaiming that all slaves living within rebelling Confederate states “are, and henceforth shall be, free.”

**January 17: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s Birthday (MLK Day)** holiday is an official day of service and celebrates the civil rights leader’s life and legacy. It is observed on the third Monday of January each year.

**May 19: Malcolm X’s Birthday,** Malcolm X was an African American Muslim minister and human rights activist who was a popular figure during the civil rights movement. A spokesman for the Nation of Islam until 1964, he was a vocal advocate for Black empowerment and the promotion of Islam within the Black community.

**June 19: Juneteenth,** is a federal holiday in the United States commemorating the emancipation of African American slaves. It is also often observed for celebrating African American culture. Originating in Galveston, Texas, it has been celebrated annually on June 19 in various parts of the United States since 1865.

**August 3: Black Women’s Equal Pay Day** is the approximate day a Black woman must work into the new year to make what white non-Hispanic man made at the end of the previous year. Based on ACS Census data, the 2021 wage gap for Black women compared to non-Hispanic white men is \$0.63 (cents).

**October 17: Black Poetry Day** honors past and present black poets. The day also commemorates the birth of the first published black poet in the United States. Jupiter Hammon was born in Long Island, New York, on October 17th, 1711. The day celebrates the importance of black heritage and literacy. It also recognizes the contributions made by black poets and shows appreciation to black authors.

**December 1: Rosa Park’s Day,** Rosa Parks Day is a holiday in honor of the civil rights leader Rosa Parks, celebrated in the U.S. states of California and Missouri on her birthday, February 4, and in Ohio and Oregon on the day she was arrested, December 1.

**December 26 to January 1: Kwanzaa,** a holiday established in 1996 by Maulana Karenga as a time for African Americans to “discover and bring forth the best of our culture, both ancient and current, and use it as a foundation to bring into being models of human excellence and possibilities to enrich and expand our lives.”