



## From The Desk of Mayor Don Ryan

Week of January 28, 2019

Fresh on the heels of celebrating the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., February marks the start of Black History Month. The concept of Black History Month was first conceived by Carter G. Woodson in 1929. Mr. Woodson was born to slave parents in 1875 and neither could read or write. To help his family, Carter worked to earn money and as a result, did not begin school until later than most children.

But a late start did not deter this ambitious young man. He continued with his education and became a high school teacher. Disappointed that none of his students went on to teach the history of black Americans, Mr. Woodson established the American Negro Academy to study the myriad of accomplishments that were achieved by black people. On February 19, 1929, Woodson established "Negro History Week", chosen because it included the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. In 1976, the month-long celebration was officially recognized by President Gerald Ford and thus was born Black History Month.

In nearly every walk of life there have been significant accomplishments by black men and women. From science to art to government to education to athletics, we have seen so many African Americans flourish in their fields of endeavor.

For example, Daniel Hale Williams performed the world's first successful open heart surgery without the use of anesthesia in 1893. In 1958 Alvin Ailey founded the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Company, which was the first modern dance troupe to perform in the Metropolitan Opera House. And who could forget Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald and countless others? These talented musicians brought a new light to jazz as we know it. Not to mention that Ms. Fitzgerald was the first African-American to win a Grammy music award.

In politics, Thurgood Marshall was the first African-American to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court from 1967 to 1991, and Shirley Chisholm was the first African-American woman to serve in the U.S. Congress from 1969 to 1982. And of course in 2009, Barack Obama became the first African-American president in U.S. History.

As far back as the 1800's in education, Charlotte E. Ray was the first black woman lawyer in the United States, as well as the first to argue before a District Supreme Court in Washington, D.C. John Mercer Langston was the first black man to become a lawyer when he passed the Ohio bar in 1854. Langston went on to serve as the Dean of Howard University, where he also founded the law department.

In athletics, Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in major league baseball in 1947, and in 1949 was the first black man to receive the National League's Most Valuable Player Award. And how could we mention athletics without mentioning the likes of Hank Aaron, Michael Jordan and our own local basketball legend "Dr. J" Julius Erving, just to name a few.

There are so many accomplishments that African-Americans have made in so many areas. And we have only touched the tip of the iceberg. I encourage all residents of Hempstead Village to pay tribute to Black History Month by educating yourselves about the numerous contributions that black men and women have made to American society. Better yet, take some time to participate in some of the activities that will be held in and around our Village in recognition of Black History Month. For more information visit the Village website at: [www.villageofhempstead.org](http://www.villageofhempstead.org).

## This Week's Best of Hempstead



Electra Nicholson receives this week's Best of Hempstead honors. Electra is a native of Long Island, was raised in Hempstead Village and currently resides here. She is a product of the Hempstead Public School system and besides achieving academic excellence, developed a love of poetry and a passion for fashion, both of which extend to this day. After graduating from Hempstead High School in 1996 and while attending Nassau Community College, Electra enrolled at the Long Island Beauty School and became a licensed cosmetologist, specializing in pin-ups. For over two decades she served the residents of Hempstead Village and the surrounding areas lending her expertise as a hair stylist.

Still having the desire to excel in education, Electra returned to Nassau Community College and received an Associate's Degree in Liberal Arts. Upon completion, she returned to her roots and became employed at the Hempstead Public Schools as a teaching assistant, a position she has held at Prospect School for the past six years. She continued her education at SUNY Old Westbury, where she graduated "cum laude" with her B.S. in Childhood Education. She is currently certified by NY State to teach grades 1-6 and is attending Touro College for her M.S. Degree in Early Childhood Education and Special Education (Birth-Grade 2), a degree she expects to complete in 2020. Her ultimate goal is to become a full-time teacher.

Electra's love of poetry never left her and she has used that talent as part of her stream of social consciousness that has helped her fight for the causes of others. Over the years, the poems and readings she has performed have won her many awards and citations. Electra delivered an inspiring message focusing on carrying on the dream at the recent Martin Luther King Celebration.

She credits God for providing her the gift of the written word. She regularly attends Second Baptist Church in Baldwin and is a member of the Women's Day Ministry.

Electra, you enrich the lives of everyone you come across either by your words or your actions. We are blessed to have you as a member of our community and I am proud to recognize you as one of Hempstead's best. Congratulations.

Sincerely,

*Don*

Don Ryan  
Mayor of the Incorporated Village of Hempstead