

# Tackle Box



## Black History Month: African Americans and Labor

Throughout the U.S., Africa, and the Diaspora (i.e., the global distribution of Africans and their descendants due to voluntary and involuntary movement) the work of Black people has been transformative, which is why the theme of this year's Black History Month is African Americans and Labor (1). Black History Month offers the opportunity to reflect on the role that Black and African American people have had on shaping our nation, and undoubtedly their labor, be it paid or forced, has been a fundamental component (1,2). The forced labor of Black people, during slavery, is unarguably one of the darkest periods in U.S. history, and unfortunately still echoes in our Nation's culture, government policies, and economy. The consideration of Black people's work and experiences with labor offers a platform to examine their life and culture through time and space. As part of this consideration, we need to not only reflect on compensated labor (e.g., employment in the private sector, military and government agencies) but also the unpaid components of work, such as community building, social justice activism, and institution building (1). If we examine U.S. history, we not only see that work has been central to both Black survival and empowerment, but also that their efforts have been key to the advancement of the

## Awareness Month & Days

- Black History Month
- American Heart Month
- National Freedom Day - Feb 1
- Rosa Parks Day - Feb 4
- Safer Internet Day - Feb 6
- Chinese New Year - Feb 10
  - Year of the Snake
- International Day of Women and Girls in Science - Feb 11
- International Epilepsy Day - Feb 12
- International Childhood Cancer Day - Feb 15
- World Day of Social Justice - Feb 20



U.S. labor and civil right movements (3,4). During the period of enslavement, all Black People, including the few that were quasi-free and labored for themselves, operated within a country that did not value Black life. While Reconstruction after the Civil War offered a brief period of hope and social progress it was short lived. The ratification of Jim Crow and other segregation laws halted progress and again reinforced the idea that Black lives were of lesser value (3). To combat superexploitation, which included wage and employment discrimination based on race, sex, and gender, Black people from all vocations and trades organized to call for better working conditions and compensation. Black leaders,



such as Dorothy Bolden, A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin and many others, advanced the U.S. labor movement by fighting for and winning improvements in working conditions, job security, and wage increases. Although the battles won by these and other labor and civil rights leaders brought improvements, Black people still face discrepancies in employment today (2). For example, nationwide Black people make 76 cents to white people's dollar, with Black women making on average less than Black men (5, 2). Furthermore, Black Americans have long struggled to gain equal opportunity and inclusion in the labor force. At all levels of employment, Black people are less likely to be called for an interview or be offered a position than White applicants, even if they have the same credentials (6). This discrepancy in employment echoes through all aspects of Black life, causing members of the Black community to step up and advocate for change. As the theme of Black History Month demonstrates so much of the work for equality has been done by Black Labor leaders but moving forward, we all need to take an active role in supporting policies, at all levels of government, that support equality. Working together we can create a country where there truly is liberty and justice for all.

## References and Resources

- 1) 2025 Black History Theme Executive Summary – African Americans and Labor. Association for the Study of African American Life and History (2025)
- 2) Honoring Black Labor Leaders. The Center for Law and Social Policy (2023)
- 3) A Brief History of Labor, Race and Solidarity. Labor Commission on Racial and Economic Justices (2014)
- 4) Black History Month. Montgomery County Pennsylvania (2025)
- 5) The Racial Pay Gap Starts as Early as 16 for Black Workers—Here's Why. Make It – CNBC (2024)
- 6) The Growing Income Gap for Black workers. Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis (2024)
  - African Americans and the American Labor Movement. National Archives (1997)

# Influential Black Leaders in the Labor Movement

Racial justice and economic justice are fundamentally connected. Yet, throughout much of our nation's history, those who profit from the current system have exploited race and class to create divisions among us. These Black leaders played a crucial role in enhancing both the labor and civil rights movements by challenging discrimination within industries and unions by fostering strong coalitions for the benefit of everyone.

## **Isaac Myers (1835-1891)**

Key early Black labor leader, served as president of the Baltimore Colored Caulkers' Trade Union Society and helped found the Colored National Labor Union.



## **A. Philip Randolph (1889-1979)**

Organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in 1925, the first Black union chartered by the American Federation of Labor.



## **Bayard Rustin (1912-1987)**

In 1965 he founded and led the A. Philip Randolph Institute, a black trade union dedicated to racial and economic justice.



## **Hattie Canty (1933-2012)**

During her time leading the Culinary Workers Union, she pushed forward racial justice, including founding the Culinary Training Academy.



## **Maida Springer Kemp (1910-2005)**

Worked to improve labor standards for the garment industry, including liaising between American and African labor leaders of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations.



## **Mary Mcleod Bethune (1875-1955)**

Early civil rights leader. Founder of the National Council for Negro Women and advisor to FDR, as well as the first woman president of the American Teachers Association.



## **Velma Hopkins (1909-1996)**

Organized a walkout at the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, which galvanized 10,000+ people to picket and pushed the boundaries of economic, racial and gender equality.



## **Dorothy Lee Bolden (1923-2005)**

Instrumental in connecting the civil rights movement to the domestic workforce. In 1968, she founded and was the first president of the National Domestic Workers Union of America.



## **Curt Flood (1938-1997)**

Challenged the Major League Baseball's reserve clause in 1975 in the U.S. Supreme Court, which was pivotal to expanding the labor rights of professional athletes.



## **Christian Smalls (1988- )**

Widely regarded as a leader of today's labor movement. He is founder and president of the Amazon Labor Union and advocated for essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.



More information about these and other Black labor leaders can be found at [8 Black Women Labor Leaders You Should Know](#); [Honoring Black Labor Leaders](#); and [5 Black Leaders that Shaped the Labor Movement](#)





The Michigan Chapter of the American Fisheries Society invites you to join the

# MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

## What's MI AFS?

- MI AFS is a professional organization interested in maintaining high standards for the fisheries profession and ensuring conservation of Michigan's aquatic resources.
- Activities of the Michigan Chapter revolve around annual meetings, continuing education workshops, newsletters, and committees.

## Mentorship Program:

- Participants will be paired with individuals in different stages of their career to foster a sense of belonging and provide mutual learning opportunities
- People of all experience levels and backgrounds are welcome
- AFS Membership is not required

To register, scan QR Code or email [mifishcastafs@gmail.com](mailto:mifishcastafs@gmail.com)  
[michigan.fisheries.org](http://michigan.fisheries.org)





# EQUIPMENT FUNDRAISER

## WE FIXIN TO FISH

We Fixin to Fish is a non-profit organization focused on teaching kids and adults the ins and outs of fishing. They run free events on Belle Isle and have reached over 3,000 people in Michigan so far. The group aims to create an environment where Detroit children feel comfortable with and inspired by nature, as well as learn a safe and educational hobby. The programs this organization runs are donation-based. Below is their wish list, but any new or gently used equipment would be much appreciated.

### Rods

- Zebco spinning rod combos
- Closed faced fishing rod combo
- Fly Rods
- Ice fishing rods

### Tackle

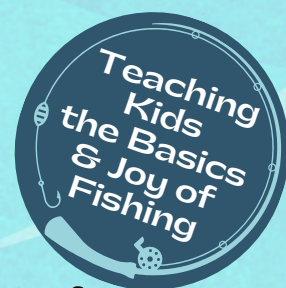
- Tackle Boxes & Bags
- Hooks (All sizes, especially #6 & #8 )
- Casting Sinkers (3/4 - 2)
- Split Shots (All sizes)
- Fishing Line (10lb -15lb)
- Flies

### PPE and Clothing

- S/M/L Life Jackets (10 of each)
- Winter Dress gear (Striker suits, boots, gloves, hats or anything to keep you warm!)
- Hand warmers

### Equipment

- Wire pliers
- Hook remover
- Clippers
- Large buckets
- Electric fish cutting knife
- Fish cutting table
- Fishing Shelter/Shanty ( 4-6 people )
- Electric auger
- Sled
- Fish finder
- Heater
- Spuds
- Rolling carts to transport
- Large Coolers with wheels
- Small cooler with wheels



Items will be collected at the Annual MI AFS Meeting (Feb 19th - 21st )



## Featured Artist: Tahj Williams



This year marks the first time the Super Bowl logo was created by a local artist, with the NFL's choice of New Orleans Mardi Gras Indian queen Tahj Williams. Tahj is the first Black woman to be chosen to handcraft both the logo and theme art for a Super Bowl, which is a powerful recognition of Black cultural traditions. The beaded logo she created embodies the age-old art of masking, often referred to as Black Indian Masking, which draws from the historical connection between African and Native American heritage in New Orleans.

Tahj, 26, is known for her spectacularly detailed bead and feather suits she designs, decorates and wears when she competes with the Golden Eagles against other "tribes" during Mardi Gras and other celebrations. The history and culture of Mardi Gras Indians and Black Indian Masking is complex and can trace its roots back to the late 1800's. Tahj describes her Super Bowl logo, which will be found on everything from hotel exteriors to the game ball, as a "love letter to New Orleans." Learn more about Tahj and Black Indian Masking in her interview with NOLA.



## Ally Coner: Better Allies



Allyship goes beyond mere support; it requires actively advocating for and standing alongside marginalized groups, amplifying their voices, and ensuring they have equal opportunities to succeed. By embracing allyship, we can create an environment where everyone feels valued and empowered to contribute to their fullest potential. The 5 Ally Action newsletter provides guidance on how to support

individuals from diverse backgrounds and provides tips for minimizing barriers they may face. This weekly email is written by Karen Catlin, who is a highly acclaimed author and speaker on inclusive workplaces. In 5 Ally Actions, Karen suggests how to advocate for equitable hiring practices, promote diverse representation in leadership roles, and create safe spaces for open conversations about identity and inclusivity. Allyship is not a one-time act but a continuous commitment to learning and growing, which requires self-reflection, humility, and the willingness to listen and learn from the experiences of others. This short weekly email can help you on your journey, which is why we encourage you to join the 5 Ally Action mailing list.

We know things have been turbulent lately and there is a lot of uncertainty. Right now, it's easy to feel overwhelmed, which is why selfcare and turning to our support networks is so important. Remember you are not alone!

As always, please contact us if you would like to become involved or if you come across items that you would like to have shared. You can reach us at [mifishcastafs@gmail.com](mailto:mifishcastafs@gmail.com) (or you may contact us anonymously).

### Warm Wishes -

Kyle Brumm (he/him), Dana Castle (she/her), Lydia Doerr (she/her), Tracy Galarowicz (she/her), Kynzie House (she/her), Maggie Haite (they/them), Taylor Skiles (she/her), Kathleen Quebedeaux (she/her)