

THE TACKLE BOX

AWARENESS MONTH & DAYS

- [Intersectionality Awareness Month](#)
- August 7 – [Purple Heart Day](#)
- August 9 – [International Day of the World's Indigenous People](#)
- August 13 – [Left-Handers Day](#)
- August 19 – [World Humanitarian Day](#)
 - [2024 Aid Worker Security Report](#)
 - [Doctors without Borders – Remembering our colleagues killed in Gaza](#)
- August 21 – [Senior Citizens Day](#)
- August 26 – [Women's Equality Day](#)
- August 31 – [International Day of People of African Descent](#)



Above: Luke Swinson's illustration titled "Maang-Loon" shows a stylized loon gliding over a calm water

What is the African Diaspora

The African diaspora refers to the global spread of African peoples, primarily due to the transatlantic slave trade, but it also includes voluntary migration. As a result of both forced displacement and voluntary immigration, people of African descent are now present on every inhabitable continent. Beyond demographics, the African diaspora has profoundly enriched cultural traditions and helped shape global society. Across the world, people of African descent have made lasting contributions to music, literature, religion, cuisine and other cultural expressions. The diaspora has also played a pivotal role in advancing civil rights and decolonization movements around the world. Economically, members of the African diaspora contribute significantly to the global economy, including through remittances to both their host countries and ancestral homelands. The African diaspora has been—and continues to be—a driving force in cultural development, economic growth, and social progress worldwide.

INVENTING AGAINST THE ODDS: AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN INNOVATORS

August is not only Intersectionality Awareness Month, but also includes both Women's Equality Day and the International Day of People of African Descent—making it the perfect occasion to highlight African American women inventors. The inventions created by these and other African American women throughout U.S. history have influenced our lives in both subtle and profound ways. In addition to the challenges of innovation, these women faced significant barriers related to both gender and race, underscoring the impact of identity intersectionality. For example, both Judy Reed and Sarah Boone were born into slavery, while companies refused to produce Mary Kenner's invention because of her race. Some of the women listed below used only their initials when applying for patents to conceal their gender. Despite the obstacles they faced, these inventors believed in the value of their work—and through persistence, they created innovations that continue to shape modern life.



Judy W. Reed (ca. 1826-?)

Judy is considered to be the first African American woman to receive a U.S. patent for her improvements to the Dough Kneader and Roller. Her design was patented on September 23rd, 1884, and helped dough to mix more evenly while it was kept covered and protected.



Sarah E. Goode (c.1855?-1905)

Sarah invented a roll-top desk that converted into a bed, laying the foundation for modern hide-away beds. She received a patent for her invention in 1885, making her one of the first African American women to obtain a patent in U.S. history.



Marjorie Stewart Joyner (1896-1994)

Marjorie was an entrepreneur, educator, activist, and inventor of the Permanent Wave Machine. She contributed to Illinois's first cosmetology laws and established beauty schools and organizations to elevate professional standards for beauticians. Eleanor Roosevelt appointed her to a women's leadership position, where she advised New Deal Agencies. In her efforts to aid African American women, she helped found the National Council of Negro Women in 1935.



Marie Van Brittan Brown (1922-1999)

Marie was the inventor of the first home security system and a pioneer in closed-circuit television. In 1969, she and her husband Albert received a patent for their "Home Security System Utilizing Television Surveillance." Her innovations established the groundwork for modern security systems, including video monitoring, remote door locks, alarm triggers, instant messaging to authorities, and two-way voice communication.



Dr. Valerie Thomas (1943-)

Valerie was a pioneer of 3D technology, inventing and patenting the first illusion transmitter. Her study of mathematics and physics led her to develop the digital media formats that image processing systems used in NASA's Landsat program.



Dr. Marian R. Croak (1955-)

Maria is a prolific inventor with over 200 patents in the voice and data communication fields. She is renowned for developing Voice Over Internet Protocols (VoIP), which convert voice into digital signals for calls to and from computers or other digital devices.



Sarah Boone (1832-1904)

Sarah was one of the earliest African American women to receive a U.S. patent for her improvements to the ironing board. Her narrow, curved, padded, and collapsing board revolutionized ironing and provided the foundation for modern designs.



Alice Augusta Ball (1892-1916)

Besides being both the first African American and the first woman to graduate with a Master of Science from the University of Hawaii, Alice's work with chaulmoogra oil revolutionized the treatment of Hansen disease (aka leprosy). The injectable ethyl ester derivatives of chaulmoogra oil she developed saved the lives of millions and was used until the late '90s.



Mary Kenner (1912-2006)

Mary invented numerous products used commonly in daily life and holds the most patents of any African American woman. Best known for inventing the sanitary belt, she also holds patents for wheelchair accessories and a toilet paper holder.



Dr. Patricia Bath (1942-2019)

Patricia was a humanitarian, ophthalmologist, innovative researcher and laser scientist. She was the first African American woman to receive a patent for a medical invention. In addition to inventing laserphaco, a device and technique to remove cataracts, she also pioneered community programs to provide preventive care to underserved populations.



Dr. Shirley Ann Jackson (1946-)

Shirley's research in theoretical physics has led to significant advances in telecommunication, including the invention of the touch-tone telephone, portable fax machine, caller ID, call waiting, and fiber optic cables. She is a woman of firsts, being the first Black woman to earn a Ph.D. from M.I.T.; to be elected president and then chairman of the board of the American Association for the Advancement of Science; and to be president of a major research university. She was also both the first African American and the first woman to chair the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

INDIGENOUS YOUTH RETURN TO THE KLAMATH RIVER



Young representatives from Tribal Nations in the Klamath River basin gather with their kayaks for the inaugural Paddle Tribal Waters program. They display a banner for Rios to Rivers, an environmental justice nonprofit working with Indigenous youth to protect river basins worldwide.

Indigenous people in Southern Oregon and Northern California are celebrating what has been described as “the world’s largest dam removal effort” by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Four dams have been removed on the Klamath River, allowing the river to continue its historic path uninterrupted. Before the construction of the dams, the Klamath River was once the third-largest salmon-producing river, but the dams have created barriers, preventing these fishes from returning to the river to spawn. For many decades, members of the Karuk and Yurok tribes, as well as other local Tribal entities, have fought for the removal of the dams, but it wasn’t until 2002 that resource managers began listening. After a low-water event that resulted in a massive fish-kill, the future of the dams was determined, and plans for their removal began.



Participants in the Paddle Tribal Waters program stand laughing outside a van loaded with kayaks.



A kayaker works their way through whitewater rapids against a backdrop of steep cliffs.

The dams have also created a cultural barrier for the Native peoples who once traveled, fished, and learned from the river. Ruby Williams, a member of the Karuk Tribe, describes her Tribe’s historic relationship with the Klamath, “it’s our greatest teacher, our family member... We revolve ceremonies around it, like when the salmon start running, we know it’s time to start a family.” To celebrate the destruction of the dams, a group of Indigenous People are reclaiming the river by embarking on a 310-mile-long kayak journey starting at the river’s headwaters in Oregon and finishing in Northern California, where the river meets the Pacific Ocean. They will be the first people to complete this journey since the re-opening of the river. Keeya Wiki, a member of the Yurok Tribe, proclaimed, “We are getting justice, and making sure that my people and all the people on the Klamath River can live how we’re supposed to.” As these young people are completing this journey through the entire stretch of the river for the first time since the first dam creation in 1918, so are the salmon that once navigated rivers to spawn. In a matter of weeks, the first Chinook salmon were seen running the rivers, a sign of conservation success at the result of dam removal.

The kayak journey through the Klamath River was a month-long journey that reconnected Native children to their ancient river. In other areas of the country, however, many Tribal communities are still fighting to reclaim the lands and waters that have been important to their people for generations. To quote Wiki, “we are celebrating, but there is still so much work to be done in the United States and also globally around dams and dam removal.”

IDLEWILD, THE BLACK EDEN



Lake County is built for outdoor recreation. Public land is abundant, 146 lakes are within the county, and 47 designated trout streams run through it. Baldwin, arguably the most well-known city within the county, is home to the first ever stocked brown trout in the United States and has a giant statue to show for it. Lake County even passed a law to allow for ORV-use on all roads and boasts numerous trails for recreational users. While Lake County is largely known now for outdoor recreation, there is also a deep history that spans the area. Lake County, despite being the poorest county in Michigan, is home to Idlewild, which was once a booming area attracting some of the most famous Black Americans.

Established in 1912, Idlewild served as a rural retreat for African Americans seeking refuge from their deeply segregated cities. According to an article written by Ronald Stephens, the potential name of the village may have come from having idle men and wild women. Four white developers and their wives established the Idlewild Resort Company (IRC), with the recognition that Northwest Michigan may serve as a great space for African Americans to attempt to escape the perils they faced in urban centers.

IRC worked to attract people from many Midwest Cities like Detroit and Chicago (among many others), organizing excursions to bring people. Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, the first African American to successfully perform open-heart surgery, was one of the first prominent Black Americans to settle in Idlewild, bringing many of his family and associates to the area and investing heavily there.

Much of the 2,700 acres in the IRC was sold and the developers gifted the island to Dr. Dan (Williams), Louis B. Anderson, Robert Riffe, and William Green whom formed the Idlewild Improvement Association (IIA). The IIA continued to sell land to other prominent African Americans such as Madam C. Walker (cosmetic entrepreneur), Dr. W.E.B DeBois (NAACP co-founder), LeMuel L. Foster (president, Fisk University), and Charles Waddell Chesnutt (author). IIA also worked to attract others in the middle-class families and community leaders establishing a level of racial pride and community events.

For the next several decades, Idlewild thrived hosting intellectual-centered events such as the Idlewild Chautaugua and artists at the Flamingo and Paradise Clubs. Arthur Braggs (owner of the Paradise Club) and Phil Giles Enterprise attracted famous Black entertainers, including: Della Reese, T. Bone Walker, The Four Tops, Roy Hamilton, Jackie Wilson, and The Harlem Brothers (to name a few) that otherwise would have to subject to segregation practices in other areas. Idlewild was even referred to as the Summer Apollo bringing Black arts and entertainment to Lake County.



A photograph of a large gathering at Idlewild Club House, celebrating community, culture, and Black excellence during the early 20th century

As the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964, effectively ending segregation, many rebellions followed along with the Vietnam War and recession in the 1970s, Idlewild started to lose its competitive edge with other vacation outlets throughout the state and country. Idlewild suffered both economic and social loss, and families moved to find employment opportunities, transitioning to a quieter retirement community. Left in its prime time, a lot of vacant homes, cars, and property were left in the area, causing significant blight. While Idlewild has yet to transform back to the Black Eden it once was, there have been several investments into its community, including a Transformation Initiative established in 2008. This led largely to nearly \$100,000 in state and federal grants brought to Idlewild and helped establish Yates township, which now provides zoning and other vital local government services to the area.

While Idlewild currently sits as a quiet retirement community, you can still find pieces of its rich history throughout the area by visiting the museums below, or you can even find many photos of Idlewild's past plastered on the walls of Jones' Ice Cream in Baldwin. To date, Idlewild continues to work on its revitalization efforts and continues to have a lot to offer all of those looking for peace and tranquility

Resources

[Wikipedia](#)

[Idlewild Historic and Cultural Center](#) open Saturdays (Memorial Weekend to Labor Day Weekend) 10am – 5pm; cost is free though donations are appreciated

[Lake County Historical Museum](#) open Wednesday-Saturday 12pm-4pm; cost is free



Black and white photo of W.E.B. Du Bois (left) and unnamed companions in Idlewild c. 1920



A photograph showing a yellow and green historical marker standing in front of the now-closed Flamingo Club explaining the building's significance.



Arthur Bragg's 1960 Idlewild Revue

Black and white photograph showing eleven female and two male dancers in sparkling costume performing at Arthur Bragg's in 1960

Featured Artis:

Luke Swinson

Drawing inspiration from his family, nature, and the Anishinaabemowin language, [Luke Swinson](#) creates striking, bold-colored designs rooted in Anishinaabe cultural influence. Luke is a member of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation and currently lives and works in Kitchener, Ontario. In addition to illustrations, Luke is known for his murals, which brighten the walls and playgrounds of Kitchener. His work focuses on reclaiming, preserving, and promoting Indigenous culture.

It wasn't until adulthood that Luke connected with his Indigenous roots, and he hopes his work improves representation—making it easier for younger generations



Luke's adaptation of the Raptors logo for the 2025 Indigenous heritage game. The logo features flowing red, orange, and brown natural elements, with two stylized people playing basketball in the center.



An illustration of a blue heron standing among cattails titled "Zhashagi"

to connect with and embrace their cultural heritage. Recently, Luke partnered with the NBA's Raptors to create the 2025 Indigenous Heritage Game logo. Of this collaboration, he said, "Growing up, seeing this kind of representation would have filled me with such pride and inspiration, and I hope to share that feeling with Indigenous youth of today." Luke's work also includes a collaboration with Indigenous author [Aimée Craft](#) on the children's [Treaty Words: For As Long As the Rivers Flow](#). Luke's journey is a reminder that reconnecting with one's roots can inspire change on both personal and collective levels.



An illustration of a bear titled Ziigwan

ALLY CORNER:

STAND IN PRIDE

Founded in 2024 by advocate Daniel Blevins, Stand In Pride is a nonprofit organization dedicated to connecting LGBTQ+ community members with chosen family, friends, and support. Unfortunately, approximately 46% of young LGBTQ+ adults are estranged from at least one family member, and 31% are unsure whether their parents will accept them. This is where Stand In Pride steps in. The organization connects



Three smiling people embrace in a demonstration of love and support.

individuals with community members and allies who are willing to offer support—especially during significant life events and decisions—for those who may not have the backing of their biological families.

Stand In Pride believes deeply in the power of an accepting family, particularly for individuals taking the brave step of coming out. Their mission is to “match LGBTQ+ individuals without family support. They provide a safe space for LGBTQ+ individuals to find a chosen family...” With over 250,000 members globally, the organization offers unconditional, loving support—including physically showing up for special occasions, such as weddings and graduations. Their diverse community of problem-solvers is committed to stepping up and standing in, offering different perspectives and taking bold steps to face today’s challenges.



Always remember that you belong to a caring community, and you are never alone. The DEIJB Committee is dedicated to nurturing an inclusive atmosphere that guarantees the MI AFS is a welcoming space for all.

Get Involved!

If you're interested in participating, sharing resources, or simply connecting, we invite you to reach out! Your voice and involvement are greatly appreciated. You can contact us at mifishcastafs@gmail.com or submit items anonymously anonymously.

Warm Wishes -

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)



Luke Swinson illustration of a bear called “Makade Makwa”