BLACK HISTORY MONTH
2021 PROGRAM GUIDE

The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song
Hosted by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
Premieres Tuesday, February 16 • 9 p.m.
WETA PBS & WETA Metro
This February, WETA celebrates Black History Month with a special TV programming lineup. Many of the programs can be streamed online on the free PBS Video App. Visit weta.org for additional airdates and information.

Weekdays, February 1-8 • 3 p.m. WETA PBS
AFRICAN AMERICANS: MANY RIVERS TO CROSS — Produced by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., the six-part series chronicles the full sweep of African American history - from the origins of slavery on the African continent through current times when America remains a nation deeply divided by race.

Monday, February 1 • 4 p.m. WETA PBS
AN EVENING WITH DIONNE WARWICK — This HistoryMakers program provides a rare look into the life and times of Dionne Warwick. Singer Warwick was interviewed in Chicago in front of a live audience by her friend, actress and entertainer Diahann Carroll.

Monday, February 1 • 8 p.m. WETA World
JOHN LEWIS: GET IN THE WAY — Follow the journey of civil rights hero, congressman, and human rights champion John Lewis. At the 1965 march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, Lewis came face-to-face with club-wielding troopers and launched a life and career of non-violent protest against racial injustice.

Monday, February 1 • 9 p.m. WETA World
LOCAL, USA: PANDEMIC19 — A documentary tells the story of three doctors in the United States fighting COVID-19, following each physician as the virus surged.

Monday, February 1 • 9:30 p.m. WETA World
STORIES FROM THE STAGE: GROWING UP BLACK — Ben Cunningham, Sue Schmidt, and Angie Chatman share their experiences growing up Black in America. Bullied by a group of kids, Ben finds out he is not alone; Sue shares the realities of raising kids of a different race; and Angie learns about how far we have come and how far we have to go in a chance encounter she will never forget.

Tuesday, February 2 • 4 p.m. WETA PBS
AN EVENING WITH HARRY BELAFONTE — This episode features an interview with entertainer and humanitarian Harry Belafonte, as interviewed by his friend and fellow actor Danny Glover.
Tuesday, February 2 • 7 p.m.  WETA World
REEL SOUTH: MOSSVILLE: WHEN GREAT TREES FALL, SEASON 5 — Episode 10. Environmental racism runs rampant in Morrisville, Louisiana as petrochemical plants contaminate the Black community. One man refuses to leave his historic town, having promised his dying parents to fight the chemical companies and their expansion.

Tuesday, February 2 • 8 p.m.  WETA World
AMERICA REFRAMED: VISION PORTRAITS — Acclaimed director Rodney Evans takes viewers on a personal journey as he ponders how the deterioration of his vision will impact his life and work as a filmmaker.

Tuesday, February 2 • 9 p.m.  WETA PBS & WETA Metro
THE JAZZ AMBASSADORS — The Cold War and civil rights collide in this remarkable story of music, diplomacy, and race. Beginning in 1955, when America asked its greatest jazz artists to travel the world as cultural ambassadors, they and their racially diverse band members faced a painful dilemma. How could they represent a country that still practiced Jim Crow segregation?

Wednesday, February 3 • 4 p.m.  WETA PBS
AN EVENING WITH B.B. KING — Musician and entertainer Isaac Hayes talks with B.B. King about his rich career and life. The episode also features a performance by King and the Ko Ko Taylor Band.

Thursday, February 4 • 4 p.m.  WETA PBS
AN EVENING WITH COLIN POWELL — This hour-long, one-on-one interview provides an insightful glimpse into the life and career of General Colin Powell, the first African American to serve as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and as U.S. Secretary of State.

Friday, February 5 • 4 p.m.  WETA PBS
AN EVENING WITH DELLA REESE — In this episode, former Any Day Now star Lorraine Toussaint interviews legendary actress, minister, and entertainer Della Reese about her success.

Friday, February 5 • 7 p.m.  WETA World
SINGULAR — Explore the career and success of jazz singer Cecile McLorin Salvant through interviews with fellow jazz musicians, her family, her bandmates, and Salvant herself.

Friday, February 5 • 8 p.m.  WETA World
WE KNEW WHAT WE HAD: THE GREATEST JAZZ STORY NEVER TOLD — This documentary features the talents of such international jazz masters as George Benson, Ahmad Jamal, Stanley Turrentine, Kenny Clarke, and Mary Lou Williams and explores the social conditions and historical events that conspired to make Pittsburgh one of the leading contributors to the legacy of jazz music in the world.

Saturday, February 6 • 7 p.m.  WETA PBS
CHARLEY PRIDE: AMERICAN MASTERS — The film traces the improbable journey of Charley Pride from his humble beginnings as a sharecropper’s son in segregated Sledge, Mississippi, to his career as a Negro American League baseball player, and ultimately to his meteoric rise as a trailblazing country music superstar. Repeats Thur 2/11, 9:30 p.m. WETA Metro

Saturday, February 6 • 7 p.m.  WETA World
THE GROVELAND FOUR — In 1949, four Black men were accused of raping a girl in rural Florida, leading to a race riot, torture, multiple murders, two trials, and a Supreme Court reversal.

Saturday, February 6 • 8 p.m.  WETA World
CENTRAL PARK FIVE — A WETA co-production, the film tells the heartbreaking story of the Central Park Five, a group of five Black and Latino boys who were wrongly convicted of raping a white woman in Central Park in 1989.

Saturday, February 6 • 9:30 p.m.  WETA PBS
AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: FREEDOM RIDERS — In 1961, a courageous band of civil rights activists called the Freedom Riders challenged segregation in the American South.

Sunday, February 7 • 4 p.m.  WETA PBS
VERNON JORDAN: MAKE IT PLAIN — The film spotlights the life of one of the most influential African American thought leaders.
Sunday, February 7 • 5 p.m.  WETA PBS
THE CHAVIS CHRONICLES — This weekly half-hour public affairs show features interviews with global leaders, politicians, doctors, scientists, and cultural leaders. Repeats Thursdays, 10 a.m. WETA Metro

Sunday, February 7 • 5:30 p.m.  WETA PBS
A SEAT AT THE TABLE — This weekly series is hosted by intelligent, outspoken, unapologetic African American women who share their perspectives through candid conversations about family, careers, health, finance, and more. Repeats Monday, 10 a.m. WETA Metro

Sunday, February 7 • 7 p.m.  WETA World
AFROPOP: THE ULTIMATE CULTURAL EXCHANGE: WHILE I BREATHE, I HOPE — The film follows Bakari Sellers on his unsuccessful 2014 bid for lieutenant governor of South Carolina, through the Charleston shootings in 2015, to the present as he fills a national role on CNN.

Monday, February 8 • 4 p.m.  WETA PBS
AN EVENING WITH DENYCE GRAVES — Actress Angela Bassett interviews mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves about her rise to fame.

Monday, February 8 • 8:30 p.m.  WETA World
P.O.V. SHORTS: THE CHANGING SAME — Marianna resident and poet L. Lamar Wilson runs a marathon in his Florida Panhandle town, following the same running route taken by the white men who abducted and lynched Claude Neal there in 1934.

Monday, February 8 • 9 p.m.  WETA PBS & WETA Metro
AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: GOIN’ BACK TO T-TOWN — Referred to as the “Black Wall Street,” Greenwood, a Black community in Tulsa, Oklahoma, was torn apart in 1921 by one of the worst racially-motivated massacres in the nation’s history. In this film, residents speak of the history and resilience of their town.

Weekdays, February 9-16 • 3 p.m.  WETA PBS
AFRICA’S GREAT CIVILIZATIONS — The six-hour series, hosted by Henry Louis Gates, Jr, chronicles the continent’s history from an African perspective.

Tuesday, February 9 • 4 p.m.  WETA PBS
AN EVENING WITH NIKKI GIOVANNI — Writer, novelist, and playwright Pearl Cleage interviews her former childhood babysitter, world-renowned poet and educator Nikki Giovanni. A focus on Giovanni’s childhood and career is woven together with performances by spoken word artists reciting Giovanni’s poems.

Tuesday, February 9 • 7 p.m.  WETA World
TALKING BLACK IN AMERICA — The program examines the roots of African American language, focusing on the imprint of African language systems, the influences of regional British and southern U.S. dialects, and the creativity and resilience of people living through oppression, segregation, and the fight for equality.

Tuesday, February 9 • 8 p.m.  WETA World
AMERICA REFRAMED: PAHOKEE — This episode, based in a small agricultural town in the Florida Everglades, follows four teens as they face heartbreak and celebrate the rituals of an extraordinary senior year.

Wednesday, February 10 • 4 p.m.  WETA PBS
AN EVENING WITH OSSIE DAVIS AND RUBY DEE — Activist and scholar Angela Davis interviews the actor couple Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee about their lives, relationship, and friendships with Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X.

Wednesday, February 10 • 7 p.m.  WETA World
KINDRED SPIRITS: ARTISTS HILDA WILKINSON BROWN AND LILIAN THOMAS BURWELL — The film explores the unique relationship between an African American aunt and niece who became accomplished artists and educators despite the hardships of the Great Depression and the inequities of racial segregation.

Friday, February 12 • 4 p.m.  WETA PBS
AN EVENING WITH ANDREW YOUNG — Journalist Charlayne Hunter-Gault interviews former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and former Atlanta mayor Andrew Young.
Friday, February 12 • 7 p.m.  WETA World
IN THEIR OWN WORDS: MUHAMMAD ALI — Ali recounts his journey to becoming a boxing success, his conversion to Islam, and his experiences with Parkinson’s disease.

Friday, February 12 • 8 p.m.  WETA World
KORLA — African American John Roland Redd migrated to Hollywood in 1939, reinventing himself as a turbaned musician from India, Korla Pandit. Fusing compositions from the east and west on the organ, he is credited with founding the genre known today as exotica music.

Friday, February 12 • 9 p.m.  WETA World
HOLLYWOOD’S ARCHITECT: THE PAUL R. WILLIAMS STORY — Learn about one of the most successful architects of the 1900s. His creations include the Beverly Hills Hotel, the original MCA Headquarters Building, and the LAX Airport.

Friday, February 12 • 10 p.m.  WETA PBS
DAVE CHAPPELLE: THE KENNEDY CENTER MARK TWAIN PRIZE — This special pays tribute to comedian, actor, writer, and producer Dave Chapelle. It features appearances by other stars, including Bradley Cooper, Morgan Freeman, Trevor Noah, and more. Repeats Sat 2/20, 10 p.m. WETA Metro

Saturday, February 13 • 7 p.m.  WETA World
THOMAS Sowell: COMMON SENSE IN A SENSELESS WORLD — The film traces Sowell’s life journey from Harlem to Stanford’s Hoover Institution as he became one of America’s most prolific authors on race, history, and economics.

Saturday, February 13 • 10 p.m.  WETA PBS & WETA Metro
WETA ARTS — WETA film critic Travis Hopson interviews Merawi Gerima about his film Residue, a reckoning with gentrification in DC; musician Kumera Zekarias discovers African roots in the music of Colombia; filmmaker Robin Hamilton’s film on dollhouses explores a history of segregation in Alexandria; and WETA Arts host Robert Aubry Davis introduces award-winning actor Felicia Curry as an advocate for local arts. Repeats throughout the month

Saturday, February 13 • 10 p.m.  WETA PBS
AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: THE MURDER OF EMMETT TILL — This documentary chronicles the 1955 murder in Mississippi of 14-year-old African American Emmett Till in a racist attack that shocked the nation and provided a catalyst for the emerging civil rights movement. Repeats Thur 2/18, 10 p.m. WETA Metro

Saturday, February 13 • 11 p.m.  WETA PBS
INDEPENDENT LENS: TELL THEM WE ARE RISING: THE STORY OF BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES — The film explores the pivotal role historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have played over the course of 150 years in American history, culture, and identity. Repeats Wed 2/17, 10:30 p.m. WETA World

Sunday, February 14 • 7 p.m.  WETA World
AFROPOP: THE ULTIMATE CULTURAL EXCHANGE: SHORT FILMS — In an eclectic selection of three short programs, filmmakers explore Black identity and belonging, a heartbreaking tragedy resulting from Hurricane Katrina, and a dying South African men’s dress-up tradition.

Sunday, February 14 • 10 p.m.  WETA World
FINDING YOUR ROOTS WITH HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR., SEASON 4 — Three African Americans, Bryant Gumble, Tonya Lewis-Lee, and Suzanne Malveaux, explore their family histories and discover a range of ancestors, including slaves, free people of color, Native Americans, and Europeans.

Sunday, February 14 • 11 p.m.  WETA PBS
INDEPENDENT LENS: COOKED: SURVIVAL BY ZIP CODE — A heat wave overwhelmed Chicago in July 1995, killing 739 residents, most of them poor, elderly, and African American. The heat wave revealed a long-term crisis of poverty, racism, and economic and social isolation in the city. Repeats Sun 2/14, 9 p.m. WETA World

Monday, February 15 • 4 p.m.  WETA PBS
AN EVENING WITH RICHARD PARSONS — Journalist Soledad O’Brien interviews businessman Richard Parsons as he discusses his childhood, the impact of his mentor Nelson Rockefeller, and his legal and business careers.
Monday, February 15 • 7 p.m.  WETA World
GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER: AN UNCOMMON LIFE — Be inspired by the story of George Washington Carver, a man born into slavery who persevered to become the most prominent Black scientist of the 20th century.

Monday, February 15 • 8 p.m.  WETA World
BEYOND BARBADOS: THE CAROLINA CONNECTION — The settlement of Charles Towne, which would grow into the colony of South Carolina and the city of Charleston, owes its origins and success to a tiny island in the West Indies almost two thousand miles across the sea.

Monday, February 15 • 10 p.m.  WETA PBS
AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: VOICE OF FREEDOM — This new documentary follows the life of singer Marian Anderson. Originally barred from performing at Constitution Hall because she was Black, Anderson performed at the Lincoln Memorial in what became a landmark moment in American history. Repeats Sat, 2/20, 10 p.m. WETA Metro

Tuesday, February 16 • 4 p.m.  WETA PBS
AN EVENING WITH EARL GRAVES — This episode, hosted by civil rights activist and politician Julian Bond, dives into the life and legacy of Earl Graves, the founder of Black Enterprise Magazine.

Tuesday, February 16 • 7 p.m.  WETA World
REEL SOUTH: ALL SKINFOLK AIN'T KINFOLK — News footage, campaign advertisements, and archival audio and video help detail the story of the 2017 mayoral runoff in New Orleans as it came down to two very different Black candidates — Desiree Charbonnet and LaToya Cantrell.

Tuesday, February 16 • 7:30 p.m.  WETA World
REEL SOUTH: UNMARKED — When African American gravesites and burial grounds disappear, their stories also vanish. Dig into these untold stories and the efforts underway to preserve them.

Tuesday, February 16 • 8 p.m.  WETA World
AMERICA REFRAMED: BADDDD SONIA SANCHEZ — This episode profiles poet and artist Sonia Sanchez, chronicling her work in the name of Black culture, civil rights, women’s liberation, and world peace.

Tuesday, February 16 • 9 p.m.  WETA PBS & WETA Metro
THE BLACK CHURCH: THIS IS OUR STORY, THIS IS OUR SONG, Part 1 — In this two-part WETA co-production, host Henry Louis Gates, Jr. explores the roots of African American religion, beginning with the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the extraordinary ways enslaved Africans preserved and adapted their faith practices under the brutal realities of human bondage. Repeats Sat 2/20, 8 p.m., WETA Metro; Sat 2/27, 8 p.m. & Sun 2/28, 3 p.m. WETA PBS

Wednesday, February 17 • 9 p.m.  WETA PBS & WETA Metro
THE BLACK CHURCH: THIS IS OUR STORY, THIS IS OUR SONG, Part 2 — The series continues with the Black church expanding its reach to address social inequality and minister to those in need, from the exodus out of the Jim Crow South during the Great Migration to the heroic phase of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and ‘60s. Repeats Sat 2/27, 8 p.m.  WETA Metro

Friday, February 19 • 7 p.m.  WETA World
BLACK BALLERINA — Alternating between the past and present, Black Ballerina tells the story of six Black women attempting to make a career for themselves in the predominantly white world of ballet.

Friday, February 19 • 9 p.m.  WETA PBS & WETA Metro
DRIVING WHILE BLACK: RACE, SPACE AND MOBILITY IN AMERICA — This film examines the history of African Americans on the road and how the invention of the car brought African Americans new freedom as well as dangers.

Saturday, February 20 • 7 p.m.  WETA World
FAT BOY: THE BILLY STEWART STORY — Narrated by former radio and television announcer Charlie Neal, this documentary follows the life of one of the most popular rhythm and blues singers of the 1960s.

Sunday, February 21 • 7 p.m.  WETA World
PRINCE AMONG SLAVES — This film relates the forgotten true story of an African prince who was enslaved in Mississippi for 40 years before finally achieving freedom and becoming one of the most famous men in America.
Monday, February 22 • 3 p.m.  WETA PBS  
RECONSTRUCTION: AMERICA AFTER THE CIVIL WAR — Narrated by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., this four-hour documentary explores the years following the American Civil War as the nation attempts to rebuild itself. Episode 1 of 2. As the country grapples with Reconstruction, a second American Revolution ensues.

Monday, February 22 • 7 p.m.  WETA World  

Monday, February 22 • 8 p.m.  WETA World  
AFROPOP: THE ULTIMATE CULTURAL EXCHANGE: GILDA BRASILEIRO: AGAINST OBLIVION — One woman fights to expose an illegal 19th century slave trading post in the Brazilian rainforest where hundreds of thousands of Africans were enslaved.

Monday, February 22 • 9 p.m.  WETA World  
LOCAL, USA: STAGES OF AMERICA: CONNECTION — This collection highlights stories about people from Maryland, Virginia, Maine, Nebraska, and Idaho, including a man helping the underserved in Baltimore after reinventing himself in prison, a quadriplegic law school student who finds ways to get around, an umbrella museum curator, a member of a punk rock band, and a fiddler.

Monday, February 22 • 10 p.m.  WETA PBS  
INDEPENDENT LENS: MR SOUL! — Premiering in 1968, SOUL! was the first nationally broadcast all-Black variety show on public television. Through participants’ recollections and archival footage, Mr. SOUL! profiles the program’s producer and host, Ellis Haizlip, and delves into this critical moment in television history. Repeats Sat 2/27, 10 p.m. WETA Metro

Tuesday, February 23 • 7 p.m.  WETA World  
THE LONG SHADOW — Former CNN senior producer, TED contributor, and Emmy-Award winning director Frances Causey traces her family’s legacy of white privilege, placing it in the context of the history of racism in the United States that began with slavery and continues to impact us today.

Tuesday, February 23 • 8 p.m.  WETA World  
AMERICA REFRAINED: WHERE THE PAVEMENT ENDS — Through recordings, photographs, and recollections, this documentary draws parallels between a 1960s dispute over a physical barricade erected between the Missouri towns of Kinloch and Ferguson and the 2014 shooting death by police of Michael Brown.

Tuesday, February 23 • 9:30 p.m.  WETA World  
JUSTICE IN CHESTER — During the 1990s, residents in Chester, Pennsylvania, a predominantly poor, African American community, organized a movement to stop the ongoing permitting of waste treatment facilities in their city. Their lawsuit and the case that followed highlight the power of grassroots efforts to bring about positive change.

Thursday, February 25 • 3 p.m.  WETA PBS  
FINDING YOUR ROOTS WITH HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR., SEASON 7 — Musician Pharrell Williams and filmmaker Kasi Lemmons uncover accounts of their enslaved ancestors.

Friday, February 26 • 7 p.m.  WETA World  
QUEEN OF SWING — This biography features the life of Norma Miller, a Harlem-born actress, dancer, and choreographer whose career spanned seven decades.

Friday, February 26 • 8 p.m.  WETA World  
DREAM LAND: LITTLE ROCK’S WEST 9TH STREET — West 9th Street in Little Rock, Arkansas was once a vibrant, African American business and entertainment district which drew such performers as Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Cab Calloway, Etta James, and many more. The documentary details the history of this district, the Black community in Little Rock, and race relations in the city.
Friday, February 26 • 9 p.m. WETA World
AFROPOP: THE ULTIMATE CULTURAL EXCHANGE: MAMA AFRICA: MIRIAM MAKEBA — Explore the life of Miriam Makeba, a South African singer and anti-apartheid activist who was the first African musician to become a true international star.

Saturday, February 27 • 7 p.m. WETA World
MARCHING FORWARD — In the segregated South, music inspires two marching band directors to cross color lines and give their students the opportunity of a lifetime.

Sunday, February 28 • 7 p.m. WETA World
AN EVENING WITH KEN CHENAULT — Sportscaster James Brown speaks with one of America’s most successful business leaders, Ken Chenault, former CEO and Chairman of American Express. This episode features appearances by Warren Buffett, Ursula Burns, Vernon Jordan, Oprah Winfrey, David Rubenstein, Dr. J, Magic Johnson, Ken Frazier, and more.

Sunday, February 28 • 10 p.m. WETA World
FINDING YOUR ROOTS WITH HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR., SEASON 6 — In this WETA co-production, actor Sterling K. Brown, comedian Sasheer Zamata, and musician Jon Batiste learn about the unexpected places their ancestors called home.

Photo Credits: