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**WESTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA CELEBRATES BLACK
HISTORY MONTH IN SHREVEPORT AND LAFAYETTE OFFICES
AND AT COMMUNITY PROGRAMS**

Lafayette/Shreveport/Lake Charles/Alexandria/Monroe, La: The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Louisiana recognized Black History Month with programs in their Shreveport and Lafayette offices and other community events. These celebrations included recognizing the culture, social, scientific and political contributions of African-Americans. Black History Month grew out of "Negro History Week," the brainchild of noted historian Carter G. Woodson and other prominent African Americans. Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month.

The theme for the U.S. Attorney's Office programs was "At the Crossroads of Freedom and Equality: The Emancipation Proclamation and the March on Washington." This year's theme marks the sesquicentennial of the Emancipation Proclamation and the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington. The events provided a chance to look back on the crossroads of the country's journey, to reflect upon freedom and equality, and to recognize pivotal movements forged by extraordinary individuals in the struggle to dismantle institutions of slavery and segregation in America.

The 2013 Black History Month Committee for the U.S. Attorneys Office organized events held in Shreveport on Feb. 19, 2013 at the U.S. Federal Courthouse and in Lafayette on Feb. 21, 2013 at the John M. Shaw Federal Courthouse Building. Each program featured guest speakers, including U.S. District Judges, a U.S. Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit Chief Judge, attorneys, local pastors, professors, singers, storytellers and authors. Members of the local bar associations, community and federal agencies turned out for both programs to celebrate the month.

In Shreveport, the Honorable S. Maurice Hicks Jr., U.S. District Judge, Western District of Louisiana, welcomed the crowd and led the audience in the pledge of allegiance; the invocation was given by Rev. Antonio T. Dixon Sr., Pastor, Steeple Chase Baptist Church in Shreveport; and the occasion was recognized by the Honorable Carl Stewart, Chief Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit.

A dramatic performance about the life of Harriet Tubman was given by Thelma Harrison, a professional storyteller and actress. Courtney Joiner, an Assistant U.S. Attorney, introduced the keynote speaker, Dr. Harry Blake, Pastor, Mount Canaan Baptist Church in Shreveport, who shared his experience about growing up on a plantation as a young boy and his role as a civil rights activist on the staff of Martin Luther King, Jr. The program concluded with a vocal performance of "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" by playwright, producer and singer Vincent Williams.

The director of the Multicultural Center of the South, Janice Gatlin, provided an array of exhibits depicting the culture of black history. The Multicultural Center is located in Shreveport and is the only multicultural center in the State of Louisiana with over 2,000 cultural exhibits representing 26 cultures.

The Lafayette program included opening remarks from the Honorable Rebecca F. Doherty and reflections by the Honorable Richard T. Haik, U.S. District Judges for the Western District of Louisiana. Rev. Chester Arceneaux, Pastor of The Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist in Lafayette, gave the invocation, followed by Willie Leday, Chief Probation Officer for the U.S. District Court, Western District of Louisiana, who recognized the occasion.

Sherry T. Broussard, author and professional storyteller, told stories highlighting the achievements of various African Americans. Karen J. King, an Assistant U.S. Attorney, was the Mistress of Ceremonies for both the Shreveport and Lafayette events. Keynote speaker for the Lafayette celebration was Albert Samuels, Ph. D., professor and chair of the Department of Political Science and Geography at Southern University in Baton Rouge. The Lafayette program concluded with "His Eye Is on the Sparrow," being performed by Sa'Rah Hamm, singer and student at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. United States Attorney Stephanie A. Finley gave closing remarks for both programs.

On Sunday, Feb. 24, 2013, U.S. Attorney Finley was the guest speaker at the African American Black History Program held at the Redeemer Lutheran Church in Alexandria, La. The theme for the program was "Honoring The Past - Inspiring the Future." It was the first time the church had such a program. Ms. Finley spoke to the congregation about the importance of the role that we all play in embracing the diverse and rich history of our nation.

The congregation of Steeple Chase Baptist Church in Shreveport, La. was addressed by Assistant U.S. Attorney Earl M. Campbell, on Feb. 24, 2013, who spoke on the accomplishments and achievements of African Americans in the United States and how African American history is intertwined with American History. The programs's theme was "At the Crossroads of Freedom and Equality."

"Our programs saluted the extraordinary contributions that generations of African Americans have made in shaping, securing and strengthening the United States," Finley said. "Our goal was to commemorate the historic events and provide a glimpse of the past. I would like to thank all who participated and attended this year's programs and would like to commend the 2013 Black History Month Committee for putting together two informative and entertaining programs. This nation is a great and diverse country which has a rich history that includes people of all backgrounds, races and faith."

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