

CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY MONTH

By **JOAN GALLER**
Staff Writer

Black History Month in Mercer and Burlington counties offers a host of programs and events to commemorate the contributions of African-Americans from the colonial era to contemporary times.

All events are free unless otherwise noted.

Trenton is the venue for music and pageantry at noon Feb. 6 with a concert of organ works by African-American composers (whose works are based on Negro spirituals, plain chant, African tribal tunes, Jewish liturgical music, civil rights themes) at the First Presbyterian Church of Trenton, 120 E. State St.

Also in Trenton, on Feb. 21 the Black History program and honorees luncheon will be held at 12 noon at Galilee Baptist Church Fellowship Hall, 440 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Trenton (donation \$10 at the door); and Feb. 28, the Egun Omode Performing Arts Collective (West African dance and drum troupe) performs at the Trenton Public Library, 10:30 a.m. at Cadwalader Branch and 4 p.m. at Skelton Branch. (609) 392-7188.

On Feb. 28 at Old Barracks Museum, 101 Barrack St., Trenton: "Celebrate Black History" from noon to 4 p.m. highlights three centuries of Black soldiers' roles in our nation's wars. Meet the soldiers and learn about their experiences and war stories from the Revolutionary War, Civil War and World War II. Admission \$8 adults, \$6 for seniors and children.

In Bordentown on Feb. 8, Lesley Gist-Etheridge, author of "The Gist of Freedom Is Still Faith," talks about her family's story through slavery, emancipation and history at 2 p.m. at Bordentown Library, 18 E. Union St.

At National Guard Militia Museum of New Jersey, 151 Eggert Crossing Road, Lawrenceville: an exhibit honors the "First Separate Battalion: New Jersey's African-American National Guard Soldiers 1930-1940" from Feb. 5-March 4; hours 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Tuesdays-Thursdays, and 10 a.m.-3 p.m. first and second weekends of each month. (732) 974-5966.

Any time in February at the Willingboro Public Library, kids can enter African-American History Month reading contest by reading any book by an African-American author or on black history or culture. Submit child's name for prize drawing in children's room. www.willingboro.org.

In Burlington City's historic district, take a walking tour of Underground Railroad sites, including the last residence of Oliver Cromwell, a decorated African-American Revolutionary War soldier, one of 5,000 who served. He crossed the Delaware on Dec. 25, 1776,

with George Washington, who signed his discharge papers. www.tourburlington.org.

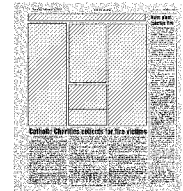
Events at Burlington County Library, 5 Pioneer Blvd., Westampton: Feb. 13 at 7 p.m. multimedia "Freedom Stairways" by singer-songwriter David "Briz" Conard; a series of documentaries that recreated the slave narratives; Feb. 15 at 2 p.m. "Parallel Communities: The Underground Railroad in South Jersey" with author Dennis Rizzo; Feb. 29 from 7 to 9 p.m. "African American Inventions from Soup to Nuts," interactive family event using old recipes to create fun foods; Feb. 27 at 7 p.m. singer-songwriter David "Briz" Conard presents "Freedom's Glory"; Feb. 28 at 3 p.m. Riverline Players "Celebrate the Journey," song, dance, poetry, spoken word, drama. All free. (609) 267-9660 ext. 3072.

Mercer County College has programs based on a "Unity" theme at its two campuses: James Kerney Campus, corner of North Broad and Academy Streets, Trenton, and at the West Windsor Campus, 1200 Old Trenton Road, West Windsor.

At Kerney campus: Feb. 4 at noon, Sidney Taylor, a descendent of Harriet Tubman, speaks on "The Underground Railroad: What Has It Got to Do With Us" at Kerney Hall; and Feb. 5 at 6 p.m., a panel discusses "Homecoming: The Reentry to Society," ways to effectively reform prisoners and decrease recidivism.

At West Windsor Campus in the Communications Building: Feb. 10 at 12 noon in Room 109, civil rights activist Jesse Epps shares his perspectives on "Civil Rights Then and Now: Where Do We Go from Here?"; on Feb. 17 poetry contest starts 12 noon in The Gallery, second floor of Communications Building. Participants will have their work judged by MCCC faculty; and Feb. 19 at 12 noon in Room 110, Rev. Michelle Bazin, pastor of New Horizon Baptist Church in Groveville, presents "The Role of the Church from Slavery to Today."

Princeton Theological Seminary hosts the following: worship service on Feb. 5 at 7 p.m. at Miller Chapel; on Feb. 13 at 7 p.m. open-microphone night, "The Ebony Cafe," with singers, poets, dancers, artists in other media in the main lounge at the Mackay Campus Center; Feb. 17 at 7 p.m. "The Kitchen Table" forum reflects on race, religion, politics, sexuality, gender and family at Clarke Lounge of the Erdman Center of Continuing Education; and Feb. 26 at 7 p.m. a closing panel discusses "The Role of Religion in Contemporary U.S. Politics" at McCormick Hall Room 101 on the Princeton University campus.



For those who don't know, Black History Month has its origins in the scholarship of Dr. Carter G. Woodson, an African-American who earned his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1913.

Woodson went on to establish the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (now the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History) in 1915, and he founded the Journal of Negro History in 1916.

Woodson initiated the celebration of "Negro History Week" in 1926 to bring national attention to the contributions of Black people throughout American history.

He chose the second week of February to honor the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. February also marks the birth of W.E.B. DuBois, the death of Malcolm X, and the adoption of the 15th Amendment, giving Black Americans the right to vote.

(Source: Princeton Theological Seminary)