

Editorial

Black American's achievements, honors and contributions often are overlooked, even today when Americans pride themselves on being "open minded." If Americans are so open-minded, then why did it take so long to choose a black woman to be Miss America, or why did it take so long for a black man to be supported for the Democratic Party presidential candidacy?

Not that people don't care, maybe they just need to be reminded of blacks' significant role in the growth and development of this country.

Since 1976, the entire month of February traditionally has been set aside for just this purpose — to make American citizens, both white and black, aware of the history of blacks and their continuing influence in America's past, present and future.

To recognize these black achievements and honors — which include contributions in music, medicine, politics and much more — this week's At Ease is focusing on Black History Month.

Battalion Editorial Board

Gospel music is black tradition

By KARI FLUEGEL
Reporter

*Swing low sweet chariot;
Coming for to carry me home.*

An all black choir singing gospel music during church services has become a familiar Sunday morning sight and sound throughout the United States.

With the passage of time, it has become increasingly difficult to classify most American traditions as essentially black or white because they have become so intertwined. One exception, however, is music.

Gospel music is a tradition born among black Americans sometime between the first enslavement of the black Africans and the reconstruction period after the Civil War.

Modern gospel music has developed into a combination of singing and preaching familiar to black people of all ages.

Gospel music is represented at Texas A&M by The Voices of Praise. The choir is two years old and has 20 members.

Modern gospel music has developed into the combination of singing and preaching familiar to all ages of black people.

"I like the way it (gospel music) sounds," says choir president Tracey Howard. "It is a different form of worship instead of reading. I guess most people like gospel music because they were raised with it. It is a mellow type of music and it's easy to listen to."

But gospel music, though the most familiar black music, is not the only type of music that was

greatly influenced by black Americans.

Through the cross-pollination of marches, French quadrilles, Spanish rhythms and black dance music, jazz bloomed at the turn of the century and became a vital force in music.

When jazz emerged there were two strains: the light airy ragtime and the heavy emotional blues.

"Gospel is about religion, and blues is derived from gospel but it doesn't express religion," Howard says.

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Because musicians such as Duke Ellington, Eubie Blake and Stevie Wonder have carried on the tradition, jazz, blues and soul now are universally popular, having spread around the world from their origin 80 years ago in New Orleans. Pop and soul music, though basically different, have much more in common with jazz than with any other types of music.

"All types of music fit into soul, but now what people call soul is almost the same as pop music," Howard says. Soul music often is the label put on dance music.

"Soul is closer to pop than some things, but is really a combination of gospel and blues all together," she says. "Soul is centered deep inside you. It is a meaningful type of music sort of based on experience. It mostly comes from your feelings."

Injustices spark activity

By BONNIE LANGFORD
Staff Writer

Imagine always having to sit at the back of the bus, regardless of how full the bus is ... even when you're tired, you'll have to give up your seat time and time again ... because of your color.

After putting up with this for some time you might grow tired ... and you might decide you have as much right to that seat as anyone else.

Many black Americans can remember a time when a situation such as the one above didn't require imagination; it was real. They also can remember what Rosa Parks did on Dec. 1, 1955.

Parks, a black woman from Montgomery, Ala., rode the bus home from her job one day. As the bus filled, a white man demanded she give up her seat. Parks replied that she was tired and her feet hurt. She didn't move, even when the bus driver asked her to. Eventually she was arrested.

Incidents like this weren't uncommon in the south during Parks' time, and it might have gone unnoticed, but something was sparked. A young Baptist minister, Martin Luther King, started a bus boycott.

Life 30 years ago was not easy for southern blacks. They were

promised a "separate but equal" life, but only were given separation.

Blacks had separate water fountains, separate restrooms and separate waiting rooms in train stations. They also had separate dining rooms in restaurants, or were served from a walk-up window.

Blacks were also discriminated against by store-owners. For example, they weren't allowed to try on clothing at dry goods stores. If the clothes didn't fit, too bad.

Minority fellowships and scholarships have made Texas A&M an attainable goal for some students.

The 15th Amendment gave blacks the right to vote, but potential voters were hampered by poll taxes and voting requirements.

Black schools and churches evolved into a separate black subculture. They created their own world ... with their own teachers, preachers and shop owners.

As late as 1950, the Supreme Court condemned an attempt by the University of Texas to es-

tablish a special law school overnight — so the school could enroll a Negro applicant. This ruling forced the South to integrate at the graduate and professional level.

In 1954 in Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kan., the Supreme Court struck down racial discrimination saying "separate but equal" was unconstitutional. Federal troops were used to enforce the ruling.

The changes made didn't affect Texas A&M until 1960, when the first black students actually enrolled.

Both Texas A&M and Prairie View A&M University were established in 1876, the latter was the agriculture and mechanical school for blacks. Prairie View was the only Texas state university for blacks until 1947, when Texas State University was established.

Even today, not many minority students attend Texas A&M. As a matter of fact, so few minorities attend, that the University has been involved in battles with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and with affirmative action groups. The number of minority students has grown, however, since the Texas Edu-

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Prejudice still exists

By LAURI REESE
Staff Writer

If ever racism and prejudice are to be eliminated, it'll have to start with the churches, says Erma Jefferson, who works with the Democratic Party. The churches preach brotherly love, she says, but don't practice it.

Prejudice is everywhere, Jefferson says. It starts from birth and continues through death. Even cemeteries are segregated, she says. Black people have

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their own cemeteries, their own neighborhoods and their own churches.

Dr. Dan McCool, assistant professor of political science at Texas A&M, says that although segregation is no longer written into the law in plain English, it still exists because of racism and prejudice.

The Texas Poll, conducted in December, suggested that blacks are the only people clearly convinced that integra-

tion has been a good thing for their communities. The survey, which was reported in the Bryan Eagle, was said to have found that 71 percent of the blacks and 32 percent of the whites surveyed said integration had been a positive change.

McCool and Jefferson both say that recent steps in segregation and racism have been steps backward.

More blacks than ever before were hired in the past ten years, but now they're being laid off and are being replaced by white people, Jefferson says. It's becoming more and more difficult for blacks to enter college because of cutbacks in basic opportunity grants. Also, Ku Klux Klan activity has increased, she says.

Jefferson says the gap between whites and blacks is widening due to the governmental decisions to give tax deductions to students in private schools, to cut the food stamp program, and to cut Social Security.

McCool says civil rights violations and cases are not pursued by the justice department to the same extent they used to be. He says the Civil Rights Commission recently made a complete reversal from its earlier stand and came out against programs designed to compensate for the

negative effects of racism — like affirmative action, quotas and busing.

Affirmative action considers racism as a factor, usually when hiring or promoting someone, McCool says. Employers take into account that minorities had an additional hurdle to cross, having to fight racism and prejudice and work harder to get to the same point as the white people being considered for the job, he says.

Quotas are rigid require-

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ments in terms of numbers, McCool says. For example, a company may decide that 10 percent of the people hired must be minorities.

Critics say affirmative action and quotas encourage reverse discrimination, but Jefferson says these people are "blowing in the wind."

She says they don't understand because they've always had the opportunity to go to any school they want to and to become anything they want to become.