



# News Release

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## Numerous community events scheduled at NMCC to celebrate Black History month

**Aroostook County** - Public presentations, a film festival, exhibits and a read-in are all scheduled over the next month at Northern Maine Community College to celebrate Black History Month. College officials are extending an invitation to local community members to join in the many events that are designed to chronicle the African American experience over the past several decades.

Activities got underway before February, which is set aside as Black History Month, to mark the historic Inauguration of President Barack Obama as the country's first African American Commander in Chief on January 20. The public viewing party, which included a luncheon featuring the favorite foods of U.S. Presidents dating back to John F. Kennedy, drew a crowd of more than 200, including dozens of community members.

Inauguration Day also marked the opening day of an exhibit in the E. Perrin Edmunds Library at NMCC that portrays different influential African Americans throughout history. It features several photos with short biographies of the individuals and examples of their contributions to American culture and society. The exhibit also features an extensive collection of books and other materials representing and depicting many African American icons and literary figures. The displays created by students Candice Rivera of Bridgewater and Joane MainGrette of Presque Isle, who worked collaboratively with Gail Roy, NMCC's assistant dean of learning resources, will be up through the end of February.

"We decided to start off with President Obama and to exhibit a different person every day with a continuous theme of quotes from Martin Luther King, Jr.," said MainGrette, a liberal studies student. "It is important to acknowledge the accomplishments of African-American's today and from the earliest days of the United States of America."

MainGrette, Rivera and Roy are also coordinating a film festival, which extends through late February and features weekly showings of movies on a large screen in the Edmunds Conference Center. The movie showings begin on Monday, January 26, at 3:00 p.m. with *Night John*. The film *Lackawanna Blues* will be shown on Tuesday, February 3, at 3:00 p.m. *A Raisin in the Sun* will be shown on Wednesday, February 11, at 3:00 p.m., and Spike Lee's *Crooklyn* will be shown at 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 26, after the College's February break.

On Tuesday, February 3, at 1:00 p.m. in the Edmunds Conference Center, Shawn Cunningham will deliver a presentation on the multi-generational experience of Black America from her perspective and that of her parents and grandparents. Cunningham serves as the anchor/producer for WAGM-TV's 10:00 p.m. newscast, "Newsource 8 at Ten" and the 11:00 p.m. "Late Edition". She also covers several station beats including education, health/medical reporter for "Medical Mondays" and "ConsumerAlert".

"My parents are a civil rights couple; they are in their mid 60's and were very much involved in the civil rights movement. My mother grew up in segregated South Carolina and my father grew up in segregated Cleveland, Ohio and neither one of them ever thought they would live to see the day an African American would be elected President," said Cunningham. "My 90 year old grandfather, who lives in South Carolina, rallied together elderly people and spent the entire day picking them up and driving them to the polls."

Since joining WAGM, she has received several awards including a 2005 Maine Association of Broadcasters second place award for reporting on "Mean Girls", two 2003 Aegis Media Awards, a Maine Association of Broadcasters award for continuing coverage and two Telly Awards. In 2008 Shawn received her third MAB award.

Cunningham is a past state president for the Maine Federation of Business and Professional Women and has been the recipient of the Maine Young Career Woman of the Year/Young Careerist Award in both 2003 and 2005.

The week following Cunningham's talk, NMCC will host a second public presentation focusing on Abraham Lincoln – and specifically the role religion played in Lincoln's life both in and out of the White House. The presentation will be led by David Raymond, NMCC humanities instructor and president of the faculty senate, and will appropriately be held on the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lincoln's birth – Thursday, February 12, at 12:00 noon in the E. Perrin Edmunds Library at NMCC.

"In his speeches and writings Lincoln reveals himself as a profound thinker about God and spiritual matters, but in his daily life he did not practice his faith in a conventional way," said Raymond. "The purpose of my research and talk is to better understand the profoundly deep faith of this pivotal figure in American history."

Raymond has been a humanities instructor at NMCC since 1990. During that time he has taught courses in history, literature, and ethics. He holds masters degrees in history from the University of Maine at Orono and in the humanities with a concentration in literature from California State University, Dominguez Hills.

He has published articles and reviews in the Community College Humanities Review, Business Ethics Quarterly, and The Journal of the Early Republic as well as a number of articles in a variety of specialized encyclopedias. He was the 2000 recipient of the (then) Northern Maine Technical Education Foundation's Eagle Award for outstanding service to the foundation, 2002 recipient of the President's Award for outstanding service to NMCC and co-recipient of the 2003 Instructor of the Year Award.

On Friday, February 27, beginning at 11:30 a.m., English instructor Jennifer Graham will host an African American Read-In. The event, which will feature NMCC students reading pieces from various African-American writers, is part of a national read-in coordinated by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).

“The Read-In will give the NMCC community an opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of African Americans to American literature. Literature is a record of the first-hand experiences of these writers, whether it be in the form of slave narratives, autobiographies, poems, or fiction. The selected readings will highlight important aspects of African American history and culture, and draw to a poignant close the month of events hosted by NMCC during Black History Month,” said Graham.

The project coordinator plans to select excerpts from authors that span history, starting with slave narratives and ending with more contemporary works. Presentations will be delivered in chronological order.

Black History Month was first launched in 1926 as Black History week. It was established by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, who founded the Journal of Negro Life and History in 1915. The commemoration was held during the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of President Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. In 1976, the bicentennial of America, it began to be celebrated as Black History month.

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*Shawn Cunningham*



*David Raymond*