The Olympic Winter Games – Vancouver 2010

Vancouver and Whistler will host the XXI Olympic Winter Games from 12 to 28 February 2010 and the 2010 Paralympic Winter Games from 12 to 21 March 2010. Up to 450,000 participants and spectators are expected to attend these games, with more than 45 percent of those visitors traveling from outside B.C. (British Columbia, Canada).

Winter Games History: The first modern Olympic Games were held in the summer of 1896. The organizers added skating to the Summer Games in 1908 (ice rinks could be kept cold even in the hottest weather) – but eventually decided that winter sports were perhaps best left to the winter. The first Olympic Winter Games were held in 1924, in Chamonix, France.

Olympics represent a celebration of humanity and our pursuit of excellence: “Every two years when the world’s nations join together in either the Winter or Summer Olympics, the event spotlights national aspirations and international causes. […] The Games remind us of certain universal human values – the need for persistence and tenacity in the pursuit of excellence, acceptance and dignity in the face of failure. As the Olympic Games approach, some nations and competitors will raise their hopes for victories, and a drumbeat will pound for those coveted medals. Perhaps [we will remember] that the true meaning of the Olympic Games is not the medals, but our shared human struggle for excellence and our devotion to pursue purpose in life.” America.gov

Did you know? Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the Modern Olympic Games, regarded himself first and foremost as an educator. As he saw it, sport should form part of every young person’s education, in the same way as science, literature and art. His aim was thereby to offer a harmonious education of the body and mind. The Olympic Games enabled Coubertin to give his educational concept the international visibility and scope it needed. The IOC has acknowledged its particular responsibility in terms of promoting culture and Olympic education, and regards culture as the second dimension of Olympism, alongside sport.

Meet the Olympic Team of the United States: On February 1st, the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) announced its team members for competition at the 2010 Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver. Team USA consists of 216 athletes, including 123 men and 93 women. Highlighting the list are three Olympians heading to their fifth Winter Games. Luge athlete Mark Grimmette and Nordic combined skier Todd Lodwick have been named to five consecutive U.S. Olympic Teams (1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010). Casey Puckett competed in four straight Winter Games as an alpine skier (1992, 1994, 1998, 2002). He retired from the U.S. Alpine Ski Team in 2002 before returning to the slopes to try out ski cross, which makes its Olympic debut in Vancouver. They join former bobsledder and current men’s bobsled head coach Brian Shimer as the only five-time U.S. Olympians to compete in a Winter Games in history.

Athletes: Lindsey Vonn (Alpine Skiing) * Shaun White (Snowboard) * Bode Miller (Alpine Skiing) * Tim Burke (Biathlon) * MORE

The heart of the Olympics is a celebration of individual excellence.
Black (African American) History Month

Each February, Black History Month honors the struggles and triumphs of millions of American citizens over the most devastating obstacles — slavery, prejudice, poverty — as well as their contributions to the nation's cultural and political life. To commemorate and celebrate the contributions made by people of African descent, American historian Carter G. Woodson established Black History Week. The first celebration occurred on Feb. 12, 1926. For many years, the second week of February was set aside for this celebration to coincide with the birthdays of abolitionist/editor Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. In 1976, as part of the nation's bicentennial, the week was expanded into Black History Month. Each year, U.S. presidents proclaim February as National African-American History Month. Presidential Proclamation by President Barack Obama: National African American History Month

America.gov: People & Places website featuring Black History Month materials - The page explores the topic of "talking openly about race and ethnicity" and notions of cultural and ethnic identity in a dynamic, pluralistic society like the U.S. It employs first-person narratives, photo galleries and interactive elements to show how communities are fighting stereotypes and promoting open and honest discussions about race, ethnicity and identity.

Links
- Library of Congress: African American History Month
- NAACP – National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- Smithsonian: African American History and Culture
- History.com: Black History
- America.gov: Beyond Dr. King – Notable African Americans
- Black Economic Empowerment in America.gov: A teaching tool to assist educators in addressing race and human variation.

The Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) designates the annual theme for U.S. Black History Month. The theme for 2010, "The History of Black Economic Empowerment," recognizes the lives of successful black men and women. This year ASALH is celebrating the centennial of the National Urban League, which was founded in New York City in 1910 by a group of dedicated reformers, both black and white, who wanted to address the needs of African Americans as they migrated northward to escape economic, social and political oppression in the South. America.gov

The late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed an unprecedented degree of racial solidarity and organization. In 1910, a group of dedicated reformers, black and white, gathered to create an organization to address the needs of African Americans as they migrated to the cities of the United States. The organization that they created a century ago became what we all know as the National Urban League. For a century, they have struggled to open the doors of opportunity for successive generations, engaging the challenges of each age. ASALH celebrates the centennial of the National Urban League by exploring racial uplift and black economic development in the twentieth century. MORE

The National Urban League - Its mission is to enable African Americans to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power and civil rights.

Publications
- The book "Free at Last: The U.S. Civil Rights Movement"
- The book "Abraham Lincoln: A Legacy of Freedom"
- The book "Justice for All: The Legacy of Thurgood Marshall"
- eJournal USA: "Multicultural Literature in the United States Today" (Feb. 2009) This publication focuses on the ethnic diversity of American writers and the richness various cultures bring to U.S. society and the arts.

America.gov Photo Galleries
- African Athletes Shine in American Football
- Black Economic Empowerment in America

Facts for Features
African American History Month: February 2010
- 41.1 Million - As of July 1, 2008, the estimated population of black residents in the U.S., including those of more than one race. They made up 13.5 % of the total U.S. population.
- 30% - The proportion of the black population younger than 18 as of July 1, 2008. At the other end of the spectrum, 8 % of the black population was 65 and older.

Did you know?
- In 1870, Hiram Revels of Mississippi became the first African American senator. Blanche K. Bruce of Mississippi took the oath of office five years later. In 1967, a century later, Edward Brooke of Massachusetts followed. In 1993, Carol Moseley-Braun became the first African American female U.S. senator. In 2005, Senator Barack Obama of Illinois took the oath of office and became the fifth African American to serve and the third to be popularly elected.
- In 1967, Thurgood Marshall became the first African American to sit on the Supreme Court.

Opinion Poll: PEW Research: Blacks Upbeat about Black Progress, Prospects - Despite the bad economy, blacks' assessments about the state of black progress in America have improved more dramatically during the past two years than at any time in the past quarter century.
**Literature**

**Push** by Sapphire

A courageous teacher inspires Claireece Precious Jones, the victim of father-daughter incest and other violence, to learn to read and then to write her story. In finding her voice, Precious is empowered to create a new life.

Claireece is sixteen years old. She should be a junior in high school, but is only in ninth grade. She was held back in second grade because she couldn’t read and peed on herself. When she was twelve, she left school to give birth to her daughter, who was born with Down’s Syndrome. The baby is her father’s. Precious says he has been raping her since she was in second grade. More on Bookrags.com

Push won the Book-of-the-Month Club Stephen Crane award for First Fiction and the Black Caucus of the American Library Association’s First Novelist Award. Push was named by the Village Voice and Time Out New York as one of the top ten books of 1996. More

**Study Guides**

- Barnes&Noble: Reading Group Guide
- Bookrags: Push Study Guide

**Teaching Material**

"Using fiction in the classroom can dramatize public policy issues, therefore making them more real and relevant to students. Sapphire's 1996 novel "Push" puts a face on welfare, rape, incest, child abuse, educational inequalities, homophobia, and AIDS. The main character, Precious Jones, is the original child left behind. Because Precious is a poor African American illiterate incest victim, her character also illustrates the theory of target populations, especially how "deviant" members of society do not receive benefits. Students who read the book feel this injustice keenly and thus better understand the theory because they come to love Precious so much. This presentation details how "Push" can be used to teach not only units on public policy, but also federalism and bureaucracy, two fields that are sometimes difficult to personalize for students.” Source: Pappas, Christine. ""You Hafta Push": Using Sapphire’s Novel to Teach Introduction to American Government"

**About the Author**

Push is Sapphire’s first novel. She was born in 1950 and grew up on army bases in California, Pennsylvania, and Texas. She was graduated from City College in New York, received an MFA from Brooklyn College, and taught reading and writing to teenagers and adults in Harlem and the Bronx for eight years. Sapphire is a performance poet and the author of American Dreams. She lives in New York City. Sapphire's work has appeared in The New Yorker, The New York Times Magazine, The New York Times Book Review, The Black Scholar, Spin, and Bomb. In February of 2007 Arizona State University presented PUSHing Boundaries, PUSHing Art: A Symposium on the Works of Sapphire. Sapphire's work has been translated into eleven languages and has been adapted for stage in the United States and Europe.

**Links**

- The African American Literature Book Club: Sapphire
- GoodReads.com: Push

**Precious, the Film Adaption**

Precious, the film adaption of Push, won the Grand Jury Prize and the Audience Awards in the U.S. dramatic competition at Sundance (2009). Sidibe (Precious) made her screen debut in "Precious," earning an Oscar nomination for her first professional acting job. Watch the trailer on the official movie site at www.weareallprecious.com

- NPR: Sapphire’s Story: How ‘Push’ Became ‘Precious’
- New York Times: Movie Review – Precious

Announcement by the National Education Association: “NEA recognizes and applauds this powerful film that explores so many brutal but urgent issues facing students and teachers every day,” said NEA President Dennis Van Roekel. “Precious is one of the most celebrated films of the year—a vibrant, honest and resoundingly hopeful film about the human capacity to grow and overcome even the most seemingly insurmountable circumstances. [...] As Precious discovers her own potential and worth, she is able to break the chains of her circumstances, and pursue her vision of a better future, for herself and for her children.

This is the voice of Precious Jones, a viciously abused Harlem girl. Her life seems set to repeat the self-destructive pattern of her mother’s, until her principal sends her to an alternative reading class where, with the help of a dedicated teacher and fellow students who have undergone experiences as harrowing as her own, she begins an intoxicating discovery of words, friendship, and, in the process, herself. Precious’s voice—stark and crude yet filled with raw intelligence and even humor—demands to be heard and, once heard, will prove unforgettable.

**Interview:** Charlie Rose: A conversation with performance artist Sapphire Watch
After the Supreme Court’s decision outlawing segregation on city buses, Rosa Parks was able to sit at the front of the bus. © America.gov/AP Photo

In Focus – Ambassador Murphy’s Heroes
Rosa Parks, Civil Rights Leader (1913-2005)

Our Ambassador Philip Murphy has introduced his heroes to the audiences during his town hall meetings. In this month’s edition we will focus on Rosa McCauley Parks, who is known today as the “mother of the civil rights movement” because her arrest for refusing to give up her bus seat sparked the pivotal Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott. She didn’t set out to make history when she left her job as a seamstress to board a bus on the afternoon of December 1, 1955. She was tired, and she just wanted to go home. Still, when the bus driver asked her to move toward the back of the bus so that a white man could sit, she couldn’t bring herself to do it. “I didn’t get on the bus with the intention of being arrested,” she said later. “I got on the bus with the intention of going home.”

While she did not know her act would set in motion a 381-day bus boycott, she knew one thing. Her own personal bus boycott began that day. “I knew that as far as I was concerned, I would never ride on a segregated bus again.”

The arrest and brief jailing of Rosa Parks, a woman highly respected in the black community, and the boycott that followed led to a U.S. Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation on city buses. The boycott also raised to national prominence a youthful, little-known minister named Martin Luther King Jr. Under his leadership, the boycott set a pattern for nonviolent, community-based protest that became a successful strategy in the civil rights movement. Read more [Article is excerpted from the book Free At Last: The U.S. Civil Rights Movement, Dep. of State, Bureau of International Information Programs]

Links & Teaching Resources
• Library of Congress: A Guide to materials for Rosa Parks
• PBS: Remembering Rosa Parks

Did you know? Claudette Colvin: The First to Keep Her Seat - Teenager arrested in March 1955 for refusing to yield seat to a white rider. America.gov article (Jan. 29, 2010)

EducationUSA Corner
LEHRAUSTAUSCH
Um als Lehrer in den USA arbeiten zu können, müssen zwei Hürden genommen werden: die Zertifizierung (oder Zulassung) als Lehrer in einem bestimmten Bundesstaat und der Erhalt der Arbeitserlaubnis. Beide Schritte sind nicht einfach zu bewältigen, deshalb ziehen es viele Lehrer vor, an Lehraustauschprogrammen teilzunehmen. INFOBLATT
Programme
• German American Partnership Program (GAPP) Austauschprogramm für Schulklassen
• Lehreinsatz an US-Highschools in Zusammenarbeit mit Fulbright und PAD
• Internationaler Austausch von LehrerInnen nur für Lehrer aus NRW

usa.usembassy.de
About the USA is a digital collection of background resources on American society, culture, and political processes. In addition to featuring selected websites, it provides access to documents in full text format (E-Texts) on topics ranging from the history of German-American relations, government and politics to travel, holidays and sports.

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