

## ***DLLR to Celebrate Black History Month!***

***Black History Month*** is the remembrance of important people and events in the history of the African Diaspora. It is celebrated annually in the United States and Canada in the month of February, while in the UK it is held in the month of October.

The remembrance was originated in 1926 by historian Carter G. Woodson as "Negro History Week." Woodson chose the second week of February because it marked the birthdays of two Americans who greatly influenced the lives and social condition of African Americans: former President Abraham Lincoln and abolitionist Frederick Douglass. Woodson also founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, now the Association for the Study of African American Life and History.

When the tradition of Black History Month was started in the U.S., many in mainstream academia had barely begun to explore black history. At that point, most representation of blacks in history books was only in reference to the low social position they held as slaves and their descendants, with infrequent exceptions, such as that of George Washington Carver. Black History Month may also be referred to as African-American History Month, or African Heritage Month. W.E.B. Dubois' 1935 work "Black Reconstruction" was an early work in history that pointed to black contributions.

On **Friday, February 20, 2009**, DLLR will hold its annual Black History Month Celebration. This event will take place at City Temple Baptist Church directly across the street from DLLR (Eutaw St). Please come out and join the staff of the Office of Fair Practices and other special invited guests for this annual celebration.

Part of the aim of Black History Month is to recognize significant contributions to society made by black Americans and how their history is integral to mainstream narratives. It demonstrates how all people and races contribute to a culture.

Notable persons of African American Heritage are:

- Joycelyn Elders: Doctor, Educator and former U.S. Surgeon General (the first African American appointed to that post) was born in Schaal, Arkansas on August 13, 1933
- John Mercer Langston: Leader, educator and diplomat, who is believed to have been the first black ever elected to public office in the United States.
- Ray Charles: American Musician, Charles was credited with the early development of soul music, a style based on a melding of gospel, rhythm and blues, and jazz music.
- Jesse Owens: American track and field athlete who set a world record in the running broad jump that stood for 25 years, and won four gold medals at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin.
- Thurgood Marshall: Supreme Court justice, civil rights advocate. Born on July 2, 1908 in Baltimore, Maryland. He graduated as valedictorian from Howard University Law School and soon began to represent civil-rights activists.
- Barack Obama: The 44<sup>th</sup> and current President of the United States, he is the first African American in U.S. History to hold that office.



## *Jerks at Work*

Did you ever stop to wonder why the television sitcom *The Office*, which features a first-class office jerk -- the boss, no less -- is so popular? Simple. For starters, it's a theme to which so many of us can relate. If you've ever worked in an office, chances are you've encountered an office jerk -- that annoying co-worker whose ridiculous antics or downright inappropriate behavior wreaks havoc on the productivity and morale of every other office employee. It's also a lot easier to laugh at the office jerk whose cubicle is nowhere near yours.

It's an entirely different matter when you're stuck working with an office jerk day in and day out. When you're at the receiving end of the office jerk's bad behavior -- whether it's bullying, backstabbing, egotism, or just downright annoying behavior -- there's little humor in it, especially when you feel helpless about changing it.

But there is hope, say experts. Understanding why the office jerk continues unabated to get under co-workers' skin and learning how to confront the creep head on can make the work environment a whole lot more tolerable.

Like Michael Scott, the clueless boss on *The Office*, most office jerks have no idea that their behavior annoys co-workers, contributes to workplace stress, and disrupts the organization's productivity. Chances are, office jerks are surprised, even shocked, to learn how irksome co-workers find their behavior.

It may not seem fair, but often those of us on the receiving end of the office jerk's antics are partly to blame for the ongoing onslaught of insulting behavior. That's because most of us shy away from confronting the bully, belittler, cheater, backstabber, or other kind of office jerk who makes our work lives so miserable

Let's face it: Few of us enjoy confrontations. So as demoralizing as it can be to work with office jerks, most of us try to ignore them. Research bears this out. Surveying more than 900 people about their thoughts on "untouchable employees" defined as poor-performing, rude, and/or obnoxious co-workers.

Corporate consulting company VitalSmarts found that the office jerk, although ubiquitous, is rarely confronted. An overwhelming 94% of respondents said that the problems these "untouchables" create in the office are no secret to peers and even bosses, but about three-quarters of respondents admitted that they avoid confronting these problem-makers, choosing instead to complain to co-workers or attempting to work around them.

Experts insist that if more people would call office jerks on their bad behavior -- from actions as simple as poor office etiquette to those as serious as harassment -- then the workplace would run much more smoothly. If only it were that easy. Of those willing to muster the guts to confront an office jerk, few have a clue how to do it effectively. Such confrontations often have the opposite effect of what was intended, creating rifts instead of opening up honest and productive dialogue. But, say the experts, when done right, confronting the office jerk can work wonders.

To ensure all employees are invested in upholding departmental values, get everyone -- office jerks included -- involved in the process of developing behavior-oriented workplace standards.

**Avoid personal attacks.** When the target of a confrontation feels personally attacked -- as if other employees simply don't like that person because of his or her personality, for instance -- it's likely that communication will either deteriorate or shut down completely. But there are ways to avoid these pitfalls.

Some of the people we perceive as jerks may simply not know that what they do annoys others. In calm constructive way, let these people know:

1. What they're doing
2. How it affects you
3. What change you would like to see in their behavior

Then give them a chance to change. The only true jerks are those who refuse to receive input and remain jerks no matter how often or how well they're asked to change.

## *Jerks at Work (cont'd)...*

To help those who want to make a difference and eliminate the Jerks at Work, here is a list of 15 common behaviors and offenses that indicate that there is a real problem.

1. Takes credit for the achievements of others.
2. Repeats information learned in confidence.
3. Talks about others in terms of stereotypes.
4. Tells jokes that make others look stupid or unequal.
5. Is adverse to any perceived change.
6. Interrupts others while talking.
7. Micromanages subordinates.
8. Fails to keep commitments.
9. Never volunteers to help coworkers.
10. Gossips indiscriminately.
11. Constantly seeks approval from others.
12. Defensive in response to feedback.
13. Inflexible with requests by others.
14. Cannot be found when needed.
15. Places blame when unwarranted.

The Office of Fair Practices can provide training on Mutual Respect for your department in dealing with the office jerk. For more information Managers and Supervisors can contact Jennifer Dashiell Reed in the office of Fair practices at [jreed@dllr.state.md.us](mailto:jreed@dllr.state.md.us) or by telephone at 410-230-6329. Individuals wishing to discuss the office jerk can also contact the Office of Fair Practices.

### *Daffodil Days.....*



Once again, the Department of Labor Licensing and Regulation is participating in the American Cancer Society Daffodil Days Program. It is a great way to celebrate the coming Spring while helping the continuing fight to cure cancer and to assist the American Cancer Society in its many support programs. The daffodil is a symbol of hope in the fight against cancer. It represents the courage of cancer patients, the compassion of volunteers, donors and the commitment of research dedicated to conquering the disease.

Fresh cut daffodils are \$10.00 a bunch, a single pot of daffodil bulbs is \$10.00 and a teddy-bear and a bunch is \$25.00. All payments & orders must be received no later than Thursday, February 19, 2009. If paying by check or money orders, please make checks payable to the **American Cancer Society**.

Delivery dates for the Daffodils are Wednesday, March 18, 2009 or Thursday, March 19, 2009. Coordinators in various units throughout the Calvert and Eutaw Street buildings will soon contact you to place your orders. All other DLLR Offices should contact Tim Brown at [tbrown@dllr.state.md.us](mailto:tbrown@dllr.state.md.us) or by telephone at 410-230-6328 making the subject "Order Daffodils," to arrange for delivery in your department. Thank you for your continuous support!



### *Presidents Day*

Originally known as Washington's Birthday, Presidents' Day is a National Holiday celebrated on the third Monday of February. The federal holiday was originally implemented by the federal government in 1880 for government offices in the District of Columbia and expanded in 1885 to include all federal offices. As the first federal holiday to honor an American citizen, the holiday was celebrated on Washington's actual birthday, February 22. On January 1, 1971 the holiday was shifted to the third Monday in February by the Uniform Monday Holiday Act. A draft of the Uniform Holidays Bill of 1968 would have renamed the holiday to Presidents' Day to honor both Washington and Lincoln, but this proposal failed in committee and the bill was voted on and signed into law on June 28, 1968 to keep the name Washington's Birthday. Washington's Birthday is the official name designated to what many of us know as President's Day. During the month of February the birthday of two of our greatest President's takes place. Both George Washington who was born on Feb. 22nd and Abraham Lincoln born on Feb. 12th. However, the holiday was moved to fall between the two President's birthdays. Again in the 1980's there was a resurgence of the term with advertisers which solidified the holiday name in American culture. Today, few Americans prefer to call the holiday Washington's Birthday in lieu of President's Day.

