

# A Reluctant Look At Black History Month

By Ron Edwards



Ever since I learned about Black History Month when I was in elementary school, I often wondered to myself, why don't they include the great achievements of black Americans in the general American story? I also felt it would have been more intelligent to force the mainstream inclusion of positive black American historical figures into the American fabric of history. When I first read about a young man named Lewis Latimer, who perfected the light bulb filament making Thomas Edison's light bulb illuminate the night for more than just a few moments, I wondered why that was not more broadly recognized. The magnificent story of Madame C. J. Walker still blows my mind. There you have a young woman who, like many great black American historical figures such as Mr. Latimer, was purposefully ignored despite monumental achievements.

Lewis Howard Latimer was a black American inventor of great reputation. He was born in 1848 September fourth to George and Rebecca Latimer, who had previously been slaves in Virginia. Although the couple managed to escape, George was later recaptured and brought to trial. In a famous case of abolition, with the help of Frederick Douglas and William Lloyd Garrison, funds were raised to buy George's freedom from his owner. Because of the difficulties that beset Lewis

Latimer's family, he helped to support his family at in early 1864 he enlisted in the U.S. Navy at the age of 16 (probably having lied to gain admission) and was honorably discharged after two years of service. Upon his return home, Latimer sought and received employment at the Crosby and Gould patent law office, for a whopping \$3 a week.

There he learned mechanical drawing and drafting. A short time later his employer soon realized his skills and promoted him to head draftsman and increased his salary to \$20 per week. In 1873, Latimer married Mary Wilson Lewis. The happy couple was blessed with two daughters named Emma and Jeanette. In 1884 he was hired by "The Edison Electric Light Company" in New York City as an expert draftsman. In addition, Mr. Latimer was a key witness in patent litigation that Edison was facing.

He was the only black American member of the 24 engineers in the engineering division of the Edison Company. In 1890, Latimer published a book and continued to work with the company, even after it became "General Electric Lighting" in 1892. In 1911, Latimer began working as a patent consultant for the law firms. Latimer was inducted into the "National Inventors hall of Fame" for his work, which resulted in the perfection of light bulb filaments. His work enabled Thomas Edison's light bulb to be developed into a reliable source of light for American households, churches and businesses.

Latimer was actively involved in the Unitarian Church and supported Civil War Veterans. Apart from his tremendous body of successful work, he took an active interest in music and was an accomplished flutist. Lewis Latimer wrote plays and worked with immigrants to teach them English and drawing. Mr. Latimer left this life at the age of 80, to reside in eternity on December 11, 1928. Expressed in the title of this column is a reluctant look at Black History Month. Not because I do not appreciate such history, but rather because it has been treated like something that can only be paid attention to

during the allotted month of February. In my opinion, Black History Month as it is currently utilized is counter productive. The truth is, great black Americans, especially the men are routinely not taught about in schools like they used to be long before Black American History was enacted.

I am convinced that if American students were properly instructed on American history in totality, including black American achievers there would be no ANTIFA. The Democrat party would never have been able to maintain a destructive firm grip over the black community for six decades. More ministers would have a greater concern with God's will than that of the Illuminati. Such luminaries like Lewis Latimer, Frederick Douglas and Madame C. J. Walker could have been utilized via knowledge about them, to inspire young Americans to never give up their goals of success, no matter the odds. I am reluctant to focus on Black History month. Because I pray that the teaching of the complete history of our achievers will one day be the rule rather than the annual February fake inclusion that few give a damn about. Don't miss the Ron Edwards American Experience talk show Fridays @ 1:00 PM EST, 1:00 PM PT emanating from flagship station KCKQ AM 1180 Reno, Nevada and rebroadcast on numerous radio outlets during weekends including our newest affiliate FM 101.7 WCET Columbia South Carolina. Also, worldwide via [americamatters.us](http://americamatters.us) and America Matters Media Facebook.

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