



**While the contributions African-Americans have made to the United States—and the unbearable hardships they faced—should be noted all year round, Black History Month is the perfect time for your company to educate your employees. For Black History Month, we are giving you this valuable tool showcasing a historic Timeline, Facts & Figures demonstrating the increasing importance of Blacks in the United States, and our “Things NOT to Say” to Blacks, which is a valuable cultural-competence training tool. This information should be distributed to your entire workforce and also should be used by your Black resource group and diversity councils all year round.**

# **Black History Month**

*For All Employees*



## 1 HISTORIC TIMELINE

We recommend you start your employees' cultural competence lesson by using this historic Timeline. The unique history of Blacks in the United States is the clearest indication of evolving human-rights values and represents a moral and economic battle that split this nation. The remarkable progress of African-Americans is a testament to the power of democracy, culminating in the nation's first Black President, Barack Obama. The Timeline shown here illustrates significant dates in U.S. Black history and major historic figures.



### Discussion Questions for Employees

#### **Black History Month started in 1926. Is it still relevant to have a monthly celebration?**

Your guided discussion should focus on the many contributions Blacks have made to U.S. history (see <http://www.history.com/topics/black-history-month>) and the continued debate about whether one month is sufficient. Beverly Robinson, President of the National Civil Rights Museum, notes: "Instead of Black history being recognized one month out of the year, it's something that needs to be recognized throughout the year. And I think [Black history museums] are particularly significant because you must remember that so much African-American history, so much history about the civil-rights movement and the accomplishments of African-Americans, is not studied in our schools."

#### **What instances of racism have you seen in your life and in the workplace?**

Ask the employees, both Black and non-Black, how they felt when they heard/saw racist comments or incidents. What repercussions and actions, if any, occurred?

#### **Why are “firsts” important to note? What other barrier breakers have you witnessed in your lifetime?**

This is a personal discussion designed to help the employee note other barrier breakers historically (cite Barack Obama and Black CEOs in Fortune 500 companies, available at <http://www.diversityinc.com/fortune-500-ceos/>). This discussion can be further explored after the Facts & Figures section below is discussed.



## 2 FACTS & FIGURES

Review available data and understand areas where Blacks are making significant progress in the United States and where major opportunities remain.

The data we have chosen to present here represents information of relevance to corporate America, such as education (available labor pool) and progress in gaining executive and management positions. Where applicable, national data is compared against DiversityInc Top 50 data, to show what progress the leading companies are making.

### Discussion Questions for Employees

**What does it take to move into the senior-executive pipeline at your company? Do you think it's important for younger managers to have role models who look like them?**

Discuss the role of resource groups and cross-cultural mentoring in developing and retaining talent, and what employees see as the best ways to increase the pipeline.

**The Black community represents an increasing share of the consumer marketplace. Whether your company is B-to-B or B-to-C, what efforts are you undertaking to reach Black consumers or clients?**

Discuss how critical it is to have client/customer-facing staff members who mirror the communities. How active are your resource groups in community, marketplace and client outreach?



## 3 THINGS NOT TO SAY TO BLACKS

Our popular "Things NOT to Say" series includes these interviews with Black executives from different generations about offensive phrases they've heard on the job and how best to respond to them to further cultural-competence education.

### Discussion Questions for Employees

**What other phrases have you heard addressed to Blacks and others from underrepresented groups?**

Discuss why these phrases and stereotypes impact office morale and productivity. For more information on this topic, go to <http://www.diversityinc.com/atwg-oxford-dictionary/> and <http://www.diversityinc.com/atwg-black-friends/>

**What role do you think the company should play when offensive comments occur?**

Have the employees talk about under what circumstances they would report offensive comments and what they believe the company should do. Get advice from at <http://www.diversityinc.com/atwg-offensive-language/>

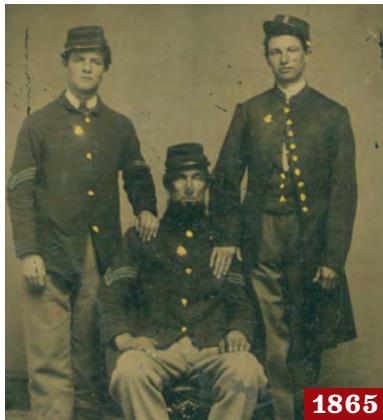
**After today's lesson, what would you do if you overheard a colleague make one of these comments?**

Continue the discussion with each employee having a plan of action on how to address offensive language.



## NEXT MONTH

Women's History Month for all employees; Mentoring and Sponsorship for diversity departments, resource groups, HR staff, diversity councils



1865



1947

## HISTORIC TIMELINE

- 1619** Dutch ship brings 20 Africans to Jamestown, Va., the first enslaved Africans in the U.S.
- 
- 1793** Eli Whitney's new cotton gin increases demand for slaves
- 
- 1793** Congress passes Fugitive Slave Act, making it a federal crime to assist a slave trying to escape
- 
- 1808** Congress bans importation of slaves
- 
- 1820** Missouri Compromise bans slavery above the southern border of the state
- 
- 1831** Nat Turner leads largest slave rebellion prior to Civil War
- 
- 1849** Harriet Tubman escapes to Philadelphia and subsequently helps about 300 enslaved people to freedom via the Underground Railroad
- 
- 1857** In *Dred Scott v. Sanford*, U.S. Supreme Court declares that Blacks are not citizens of the U.S. and that Congress cannot prohibit slavery
- 
- 1859** John Brown leads raid of U.S. Armory and Arsenal at Harper's Ferry, W.Va.
- 
- 1861** South secedes from Union and Civil War begins
- 
- 1863** President Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring "all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free"
- 
- 1865** Civil War ends
- 
- 1865** Thirteenth Amendment is ratified, prohibiting slavery
- 
- 1868** Fourteenth Amendment is ratified, allowing Blacks to become citizens
- 
- 1870** Fifteenth Amendment guarantees that right to vote cannot be denied because of race, color or previous condition of servitude
- 
- 1870** Hiram Revels becomes first Black member of Congress
- 
- 1896** U.S. Supreme Court rules in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that segregation doesn't violate the 14th Amendment's equal-protection clause as long as conditions provided are "separate but equal"
- 
- 1900** William H. Carney becomes first Black to be awarded Medal of Honor
- 
- 1909** NAACP is founded
- 
- 1940** Hattie McDaniel becomes first Black to win an Academy Award
- 
- 1947** Jackie Robinson becomes first Black to play Major League Baseball
- 
- 1950** Ralph J. Bunche becomes first Black to win the Nobel Peace Prize
- 
- 1953** Willie Thrower becomes first Black to play quarterback in the National Football League
- 
- 1954** In *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka*, U.S. Supreme Court rules that racial segregation in public schools violates the 14th Amendment



1950

**1955** Two white men who confessed to murdering a 14-year-old Black boy, Emmett Till, for allegedly whistling at a white woman are acquitted by an all-white jury



1955

**1955** Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat on a bus to a white man in Montgomery, Ala., leading to the Montgomery Bus Boycott



1967

**1957** Little Rock Nine integrate Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas

**1967** Thurgood Marshall becomes first Black U.S. Supreme Court justice

**1960** Four Black students stage famous sit-in at a whites-only Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, N.C.

**1967** In *Loving v. Virginia*, Supreme Court declares law prohibiting interracial marriages to be unconstitutional

**1961** Freedom rides begin from Washington, D.C.

**1968** Dr. King is assassinated

**1962** James Meredith becomes first Black student to enroll at the University of Mississippi. Violence prompts President Kennedy to send in 5,000 federal troops

**1968** President Johnson signs Civil Rights Act of 1968, which prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental and financing of housing

**1963** More than 200,000 people march on Washington, D.C., in the largest civil-rights demonstration in U.S. history; Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gives his "I Have a Dream" speech

**1972** Shirley Chisholm becomes first major-party Black candidate to run for President

**1963** Four young Black girls are killed in the bombing of a Birmingham, Ala., church

**1983** Vanessa Williams becomes first Black Miss America

**1964** President Johnson signs Civil Rights Act of 1964, giving the government more power to protect citizens against race, religion, sex or national-origin discrimination

**1984** Reverend Jesse Jackson becomes first Black to make serious bid for Presidency



1972

**1965** Malcolm X, former minister in the Nation of Islam and civil-rights activist, is assassinated

**1986** First observation of Dr. King's birthday as a national holiday

**1965** Thousands participate in three protest marches from Selma to Montgomery, Ala., for Black voting rights

**1990** Douglas Wilder of Virginia becomes first Black to be elected governor

**1965** President Johnson signs Voting Rights Act of 1965

**1991** President George H.W. Bush signs Civil Rights Act of 1991, which strengthened laws on employment discrimination



2009

**1993** Dr. Joycelyn Elders becomes first Black Surgeon General

**2001** General Colin Powell becomes first Black Secretary of State

**2009** Barack Obama becomes first Black President

## Facts & Figures

### DEMOGRAPHICS

#### Black U.S. Population

**2012** **41.2 million** (13.1% of total population)

**2060** **61.8 million** (14.7% of total population)

### BUSINESS

#### Blacks CEOs in Fortune 500



**Kenneth C. Frazier,**  
Merck & Co.  
(No. 12 in the  
DiversityInc Top 50)



**Roger Ferguson,**  
TIAA-CREF (No. 41)



**Kenneth I. Chenault,**  
American Express



**Don Thompson,**  
McDonald's



**Ursula M. Burns,**  
Xerox



**Clarence Otis Jr.,**  
Darden Restaurants

#### Blacks in Management (2013)

DiversityInc Top 50

**7.1%**  
U.S.  
 **6.3%**

#### Blacks in Senior Management (2013)

DiversityInc Top 50

**6.4%**  
U.S.  
 **2.9%**

#### Blacks on Boards of Directors (2013)

DiversityInc Top 50

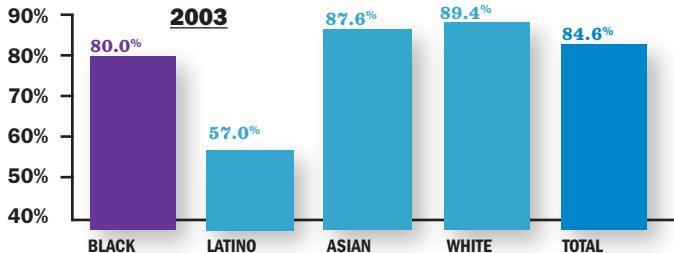
**12.8%**  
Fortune 500  
 **7.4%**

### DiversityInc Top 10 Companies for Blacks

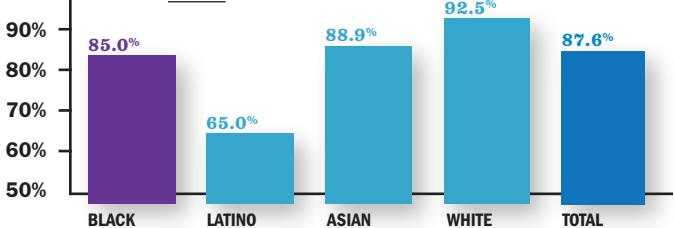
1. Sodexo
2. The Coca-Cola Company
3. Kaiser Permanente
4. Cox Communications
5. AT&T
6. Southern Company
7. Northrop Grumman
8. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan
9. Verizon Communications
10. Altria Group

### EDUCATION

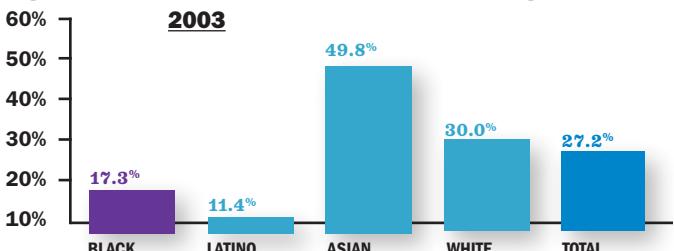
#### Age 25 and Up With at Least a High-School Diploma



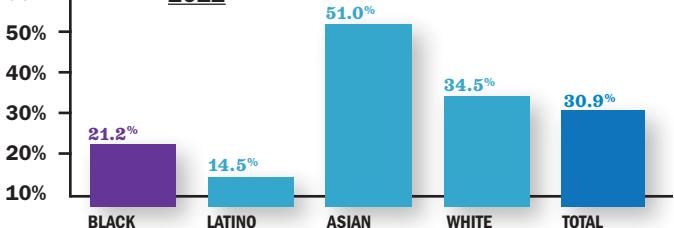
#### 2012



#### Age 25 and Up With at Least a Bachelor's Degree (2012)



#### 2012



### HEALTH DISPARITIES

#### Life Expectancy (2010)



Sources: Alliance for Board Diversity, Centers for Disease Control, DiversityInc, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Fortune, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau

## “Why Don’t You Wear Your Hair Natural?”

### and Other Things NOT to Say to Blacks

By **Carolynn Johnson**

**Y**ou don’t seem Black,” “You speak so well” and “You just lost your Black card” are all things that, unfortunately, are said to me on a regular basis. Can you believe that these comments are made in professional settings? Believe it—and the sad fact of the matter is there’s more.

I interviewed three people for this article—two Black women who chose to remain anonymous because they did not want to risk losing their jobs for sharing their experience about feeling like outsiders at work, and David Casey, Vice President, Workforce Strategies and Chief Diversity Officer for CVS Caremark, one of [DiversityInc's 25 Noteworthy Companies](#). One of the women is a 46-year-old Ph.D. who attended an HBCU (Historically Black College and University). She is married with two children. The second woman has an Ivy League education, worked at one of the world’s most prominent financial institutions, and currently works at an Ivy League school.

What follows is a combination of things people who are not Black shouldn’t say to Blacks AND things Blacks shouldn’t say to other Blacks.

#### COMMENTS

##### **1 “You are the HNIC [Head N-Word in Charge].” (Meant affectionately—usually said by one Black person to another.)**

First, I don’t care who you are—do not call me the N-word. Second, it is not a term of endearment by any stretch of the imagination and does not belong in our lexicon. There is no room for [reappropriation](#) with this word. NONE.

##### **2 “Why don’t you wear your hair natural?”**

First, please don’t think that how [Black women wear their hair](#) reflects the acceptance or rejection of their Blackness. There are other reasons: financial, medical or just personal choice.

It is not always an attempt to assimilate to white standards of beauty. Psychological tests show people most trust people who look like them. If that means wearing my hair a certain way in order to continue to provide for my family, there is no contest. I will march into a pharmacy or beauty-supply store and proudly ask, “Relaxers are down which aisle?”

Dr. Ella Edmondson Bell, author of *Career GPS* and Associate Professor of Business Administration at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College, calls this [“bicultural stress.”](#)

As a 33-year-old Black woman who is 4’10”, I would love to “go natural,” but I know I can’t. I know and accept that, before I open my mouth, the deck is already stacked against me. I cannot



Johnson



Casey

change my skin color, age, gender or height. In the spirit of control what you can control, I choose to relax my hair. Real change happens from the inside out. You have to fit in to get in.

## 3 "When I see you I don't see a Black person, I just see a man or a professional."

"While the comment might be innocent, I don't mind if you see me as a Black person," says Casey. "Just don't make assumptions on what you think that means. That's who I see every morning when I wake up and look in the mirror. I don't have the option or the luxury of seeing myself differently and I'm OK with that." Nothing more needs to be said here.

## 4 "Are you from [fill in inner city here]?"

All Black people are not from the hood or ghetto nearest you. I grew up in an affluent New Jersey suburb and still live in one today. Please understand the implications of asking these questions. In his popular Ask the White Guy column, DiversityInc CEO Luke Visconti [answers a very similar question](#) from a reader and provides advice on how to handle situations like this.

## 5 "How did you get into that school—athletic scholarship, right?"

"Don't assume that because I am 6'3" and Black, I can play basketball," explains Casey. "I didn't go to college to play sports. I was a full-time student." While this question might be intended as a compliment, it can be taken as an insult.

## BEHAVIORS

### 1 Don't assume I know every other Black person.

Just because we are the minority group in most corporate situations

doesn't mean we all know each other. And, while we are on that subject, stop calling Obama *my* President (he is *our* President)—and Oprah is not my hero.

### 2 No fist bumping, please!

"Please do not attempt any multicultural or complex six-step handshakes—I'm fine with a traditional handshake," says Casey. I couldn't agree more. Quite frankly, it's too much work and I'm not interested. Let's try to keep it as simple as possible."

### 3 Black folks, can we please greet one another?

It bothers me when I enter a room in a professional setting and there is unnecessary tension. Know that I am very excited to see you and am not out to get you. This is not *Highlander*—there can be more than one of us; no crabs in a barrel here. Let's at least say hello. Break the ice.

### 4 Don't assign me a certain level of Blackness or try to take my "Black card" because of the following:

- how I speak;
- what I do or don't eat;
- where I did or didn't go to school;
- whom I chose as my significant other;
- what company I work for;
- whom I voted for;
- where I live;
- who my friends are;
- what type of music I like.

### 5 Don't act too familiar with me just because we are both Black.

Calling each other "brotha" and "sistah" is not the best way to begin a professional relationship. Please don't speak Ebonics to me—half the time I have no idea what it means. We need to respect the fact that race does not provide an automatic green light to kinship.

## HOW TO HANDLE THESE COMMENTS AND BEHAVIORS

1. Give people the benefit of the doubt. Ask yourself if the comment is coming from a place of cultural incompetence or if the person is just being mean-spirited.
2. Everyone deserves one free pass. (To be clear, this excludes comments such as Don Imus' "[nappy-headed hos.](#)")
3. Take the opportunity to ask a few questions to try and figure out what the person is really saying.
4. Don't have a chip on your shoulder and automatically assume that someone is trying to be offensive. Try to take an approach that isn't all about you.
5. Take the opportunity to educate the person and help them understand why so they don't make that mistake again.
6. View these sometimes minor infractions as an opportunity to earn trust—for all parties involved.
7. Finally, choose your battles.