

Wrapping up Black History Month

Wait, it was Black History Month? It sure was. And aside from some civil rights-themed shows on cable, I didn't really notice. Oh, and there were the posters of the usual icons of Black History Month at the local mall (Thurgood Marshall, Harriet Tubman, etc.)

When the month started, I had a conversation with some people about what kids learn in school about Black History Month. Apparently, not much has changed since I was in school. Same people, same facts, same everything. That's sad because it doesn't put students in a position to identify with historical figures. As a former teacher and history major, that's a huge problem.

Take for example, the wonderful actresses Nichelle Nichols and Eartha Kitt. Ask non-comic and sci-fi fans or those under a certain age, and you may just get a blank stare as the kids wonder who they are and why they are important.

And just in case you, dear reader, don't know either, I'll be honored to tell you! Nichelle Nichols is best known for her role as Lt. Uhura on the original Star Trek series. She was the only African American in the cast and, with William Shatner, had TV's first interracial kiss.

When asked if she was ever "ordered" to remain on the show, Ms. Nichols tells about how she met Martin Luther King, Jr., and he insisted she remain on the show. I'm glad she did.

Eartha Kitt is best known for her portrayal of Catwoman during the original run of "Batman" - the first African American woman to play the part. In my world, those are pretty cool things. And since we're talking sci-fi and comics, we can add Freema Agyeman to the list. Haven't heard of her? She was the companion to David Tennant's 10th doctor during the third season of the British serial "Doctor Who." I believe she as the first of African descent to play the main companion role (she is a British actress).

Sure, there are other people in recent history we can all relate to in some way, especially when you add in Catholic notables such as Mother Mary Lange and St. Martin de Porres. Whereever we are in our lives, it is important to realize history

doesn't happen in a vacuum. We are all apart of history and it is our responsibility to learn from the past. History can tell us wonderful and not so wonderful things about humanity and what we are willing to do to survive, further our beliefs, and ensure prosperity.

It's truly fascinating - more than simply memorizing names and dates. When we have a clearer picture of the past, the present becomes a little easier to understand and, maybe, this world doesn't seem too crazy after all. We can hope, right?!



(Freema Agyeman as Martha Jones on "Doctor Who.")

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