



July 18, 2024



International Nelson Mandela Day



"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it... The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear."

-Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela Day, celebrated annually on July 18th, honors Nelson Mandela, South Africa's first black president and a global advocate for human rights. Mandela helped end apartheid through peaceful protests and armed resistance, becoming a symbol of the anti-apartheid movement. Imprisoned for nearly three decades, he was released in 1990 and became South Africa's first Black president in 1994. He remained a champion for peace and social justice until his death in 2013.



He received more than 695 awards, including the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize. More than 25 schools, universities and educational institutions have been named after Nelson Mandela. At least 19 scholarships and foundations bear his name. He was awarded 115 honorary degrees and more than 95 sculptures, statues, or pieces of art have been made of him or dedicated to him.

Mandela's legacy extends globally, symbolizing the struggle for freedom, justice, and human dignity—values resonating deeply with the U.S. military community. Celebrating Nelson Mandela Day encourages actions that reflect these values, positively impacting America and our armed forces by promoting equality, resilience, and integrity. On behalf of the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, we honor this day and Mandela's vision of a compassionate, equal, and respectful world.

July 28, 2024

National Buffalo Soldiers Day



Buffalo Soldiers Day, observed annually on July 28th, honors the legacy of the Buffalo Soldiers, African American regiments formed in 1866. These courageous men were the first Black soldiers to serve in the U.S. Army during peacetime, originally in the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments. Nicknamed "Buffalo Soldiers" by Native American tribes, they symbolized fierce fighting spirit and resilience.

The Buffalo Soldiers protected settlers, built infrastructure, and fought in numerous military campaigns across the western frontier. They were also among the first Black park rangers, overseeing the construction of park infrastructure, including the first trail to the top of Mount Whitney and the first wagon road into Sequoia National Park's Giant Forest.



The shoulder patch that belonged to the 92nd Infantry Division during World War I.

Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. Learn more, [here](#).



Image courtesy of [U.S. Army, Cathay Williams](#) - She posed as a man and became the first black woman to enlist, historically becoming the only female Buffalo Soldier.

They served in multiple conflicts, including American Indian wars, battles at the US-Mexican border, the Spanish-American War, and the Philippine-American War. Their efforts contributed to the westward expansion of the U.S., helping it become a sizeable continent and world power. Despite facing extreme discrimination, deadly violence, and repressive Jim Crow laws, their remarkable courage and dedication to duty continue to inspire us today.

On behalf of the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, we honor and celebrate the Buffalo Soldiers' invaluable contributions to our nation's history and military heritage.