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A Rich African-American History Awaits Visitors to the Daytona Beach Area

Daytona Beach, Fla. -- The Daytona Beach area is rich with an African-American history that encompasses several of the twentieth century's most prolific leaders. These pioneers lead advancements in education, government, athletics and the Civil Rights movement. Two of those leaders -- Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune and Dr. Howard Thurman -- called Daytona Beach home.

A pioneer in the equal rights movement, Bethune played a major role in developing the national desegregation movement and became the highest-ranking appointee to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Negro Cabinet.

Beginning with just \$1.50 and five young pupils, Bethune, a daughter of freed slaves from South Carolina, opened the doors to the Daytona Literary and Industrial School for Training Negro Girls in 1904. The school later merged with Jacksonville's Cookman Institute to become Bethune-Cookman College in the mid-1920s. During, and after her lifetime, the college experienced rapid growth from its humble beginnings as a one-room rudimentary school for girls. Now called Bethune-Cookman University, the school boasts more than 33 buildings situated on 60 acres. Eight of these buildings have been designated or nominated for listing as National Historic Landmarks.

The campus' most popular landmark is Bethune's home. Bethune often hosted dignitaries at her home including her close friend, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Upon her death in 1955, Bethune was laid to rest in a simple gravesite behind her home, which now serves as headquarters for the Mary McLeod Bethune Foundation. Visitors can discover Bethune's legacy through the numerous citations, plaques, artifacts and photographs displayed throughout the home. The Bethune Foundation and gravesite is open for tours year round. Contact the Bethune Foundation at (386) 481-2122 for tour times and information.

In 2003, B-CU unveiled its \$23 million Mary McLeod Bethune Performing Arts Center. The center, which hosts concerts year-round, features a presidential garden that includes a statue of Bethune and pays tribute to the university's other presidents.

Daytona Beach is also the birthplace of famed theologian, Dr. Howard Thurman, who created, taught and wrote of a climate of action-oriented nonviolence that was later inherited and institutionalized by the Civil Rights Movement. Thurman was born in his family's Daytona Beach home in 1900. He became a teacher and Dean of Chapel at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia and later a mentor to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He also served as Dean of Chapel at Howard University in Washington, D.C. and Boston University.

Constructed in 1899, the Thurman home, located at 614 Whitehall Street, is situated in one of

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Daytona Beach's oldest residential sections. In 1990, it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is included in the Florida Black Heritage Trail. For more information, please call (386) 822-7598 or (386) 258-7514.

In recent years, Daytona Beach has become recognized as the site of the first racially integrated baseball game in modern major league baseball history. This historic spring training game featured the Brooklyn Dodgers and the Montreal Royals -- the Dodger's farm team. On March 17, 1946, Hall of Fame legend Jackie Robinson, then a player for the Montreal Royals, was able to play in Daytona Beach after being unable to in neighboring Florida cities because of rigid segregation laws. Due to the combined efforts of Dr. Bethune, the publisher of the local newspaper, and the Dodger's general manager, Robinson played in Daytona Beach and his historic achievement on that spring day led to the decimation of the "color barrier" in major league baseball. Robinson's success is viewed as a milestone in the history of professional sports and civil rights. Call (386)257-3172 for tour information or a game season schedule.

The ballpark in which Robinson made history was re-named Jackie Robinson Ballpark in his honor. Its entrance features a bronze statue of Robinson with two children that was dedicated by his wife, Rachel, on September 15, 1990. Located in the heart of Daytona Beach's historic downtown waterfront area, the ballpark is home to the Florida State League Daytona Beach Cubs -- a minor league affiliate of the Chicago Cubs. The park also features an outdoor museum that highlights Robinson's career milestones and the achievements of other black athletes who broke racial barriers in sports.

Another historical and cultural point of interest in Daytona Beach is the Museum of Arts and Sciences. The museum is home to one of the finest African art collections in the southeastern United States. The collection features masks, sculpted figures, ceremonial and everyday objects from a number of African ethnic groups. Carved commemorative staffs, ritual ornaments, fetishes and 130 pieces of rare Ashante gold are also highlighted in the collection. For more information, please call (386) 255-0285.

The Black Heritage Museum is located just south of the Daytona Beach area in New Smyrna Beach. Built in 1899, this building was formerly home to the black parish, St. Rita's Catholic Mission. Re-opened in 1999 as the Black Heritage Museum, the building now houses an extensive collection of more than 70 replicas of African-American inventions. Call (386) 478-1934 for details.

Visitors to the Daytona Beach area also won't want to miss the African American Museum of the Arts in nearby DeLand. Established in 1994, this museum features more than 150 pieces of art from Nigeria, Haiti, South America, Zimbabwe, Senegal, Ethiopia and Kenya. For more information call (386) 736-4004.

To receive a free copy of *Share the Heritage: A Guide to the Daytona Beach Area's African-American Historical and Cultural Sites*, along with a complete *Visitors Guide*, please contact the Daytona Beach Area Convention and Visitors Bureau at 1-800-854-1234 (U.S. and Canada only), 386-255-0415 or visit www.DaytonaBeach.com.