

24 JANUARY - ROBERT L. JOHNSON

Robert L. Johnson is an African American businessman and entrepreneur who founded the company Black Entertainment Television (BET).

Launched in January 1980, BET showed a mix of music videos featuring Black recording artists and Black comedy programmes. Over the years it added other programmes including news, a talk show and reality TV.

When Johnson sold BET in 2001 he became America's first Black billionaire. In 2002 he bought the basketball team the Charlotte Bobcats, becoming the first African American owner of an American major sports league team. Johnson is also a philanthropist who has raised funds for causes such as hurricane relief in the Bahamas and the charity Malaria No More.

Graphic designer Cheryl D. Miller designed the original BET logo. An award-winning pioneer of the decolonization of graphic design, her work includes NASA's 1992 poster of Dr Mae Jemison, the first Black female astronaut (see 20 September).

DID YOU KNOW?

25 JANUARY - HUE AND CRY ADVERTISEMENTS

In recent years, newspapers from the past have been digitally scanned and made available to read online. In these digitized sources historians have found hundreds of advertisements in the newspapers of Georgian Britain for the sale of enslaved African people.

They have also found 'hue and cry' advertisements for the capture and return of 'runaway slaves'. In British law, a 'hue and cry' is an appeal for bystanders to help capture someone who has broken the law, so these advertisements show us that enslaved African people who attempted to leave their owners were being treated as criminals.

ELOPED from Mr. SAMUEL DELPRATT, Merchant, at Bristol, and come to London, A NEGRO MAN, about 17 or 18 Years old, Five Feet Five or Six Inches high, had on when he left Bristol, a brown Livery Coat lined with Red, red Button Holes and Collar, red Waistcoat, a Pair of old Leather Breeches pleeced at the Knee, a black Leather Cap, and a Pair of black ribbed Stockings, answers to the Name of JOHN; if he should offer to ship himself as a free Man, on Board any Ship, by directing a Line to the Jamaica Coffee House, for Capt. William Tomlinson, or to Mr. Joseph Malpas, Jeweller, in Wood Street, Cheapside, whatever Expence in stopping the said Negro shall be repaid with Thanks, and Six Guineas Reward.

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Hue and cry advertisement for return of enslaved person – Joshua Steele
Covent Garden Journal, London, 25 January 1752, p.4

This example, published in the *Covent Garden Journal* on 25 January 1752 is a 'hue and cry' advertisement for the return of an enslaved man named Joshua Steele.



2 FEBRUARY - THE GREENSBORO FOUR

On 1 February 1960, in the town of Greensboro, North Carolina, four African American students – David Richmond, Franklin McCain, Jibreel Khazan (Ezell Blair Jr.) and Joseph McNeil – walked into an F. W. Woolworth store. They bought items they needed and then headed to the shop's lunch counter. In the southern United States at that time, segregation policies meant that sitting and being served food at the lunch counter was reserved for white people only.

The four students had decided to make a stand. Once they reached the lunch counter they sat down and each asked the server for a coffee and a doughnut. As expected, they were refused service. A Black Woolworth's employee advised them to move, as did the store manager. The police were called and when they arrived an officer came up to the four young men. He got out his nightstick (a metal weapon carried by American



Granger Historical Picture Library/Alamy

(From left) Joseph McNeil and Franklin McCain, two of the Greensboro Four who the day before had sat at the 'whites only' counter of a Woolworth store, came back on 2 February, 1960, with two others – Billy Smith and Clarence Henderson. Jack Moebes/*Greensboro News & Record*

1 FEBRUARY - LANGSTON HUGHES

The African American writer, poet and political activist Langston Hughes was born on 1 February 1901 in Joplin, Missouri. In the 1920s and 30s he became one of the leaders of a vibrant intellectual and cultural movement known as the Harlem Renaissance.

Hughes began writing poetry as a child and wrote his most famous poem, 'The Negro Speaks of Rivers', the summer after he finished high school. At the heart of Hughes's writing was a focus on racial pride and valuing Black culture. As well as being a poet, Hughes was a correspondent for several African American newspapers, and he wrote plays and books for both adults and children. Some of his work also featured on jazz poetry albums. On his 1958 album *Weary Blues* Hughes recited his poetry with musical accompaniment from jazz musicians Charles Mingus and Leonard Feather.

Hughes died in 1967 and his ashes were laid to rest underneath the floor in the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem.



I been scared and battered.
My hopes the wind done scattered.
Snow has friz me,
Sun has baked me,

Looks like between 'em they done
Tried to make me

Stop laughin', stop lovin', stop livin'—
But I don't care!
I'm still here!

Langston Hughes, 'Still Here'



13 APRIL - KATHERINE JOHNSON

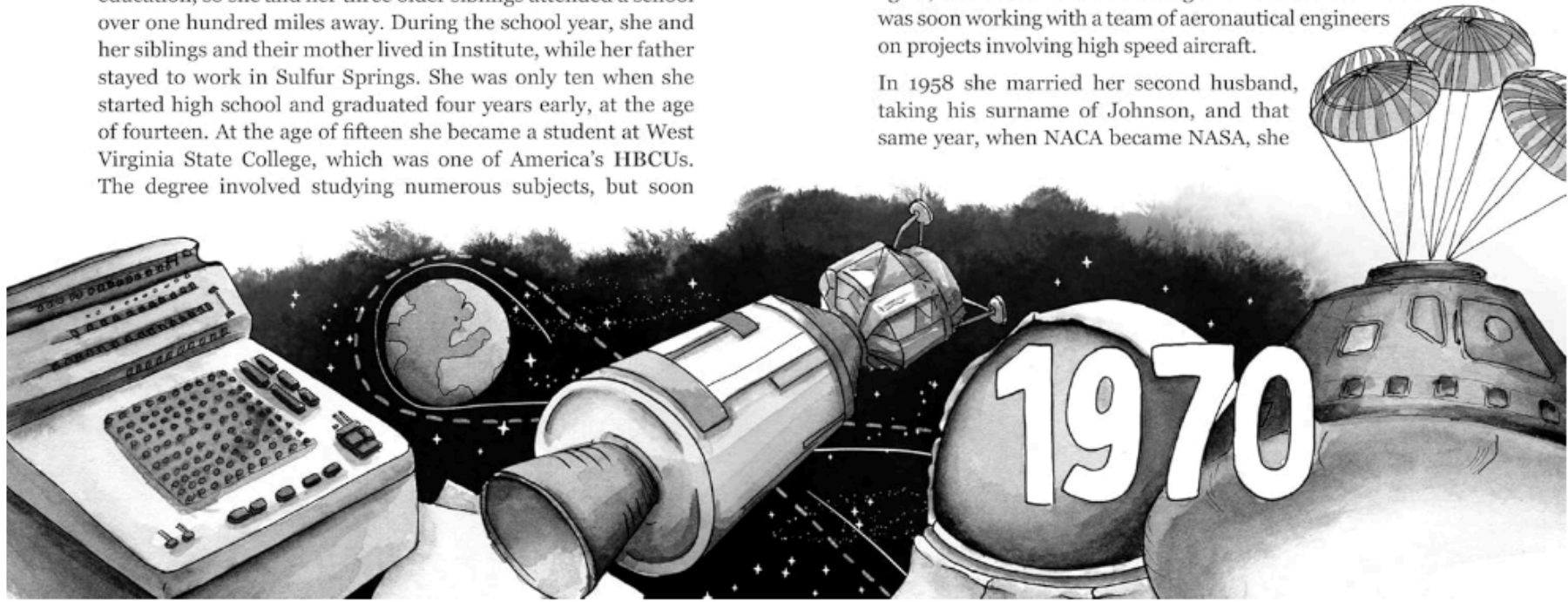
We are surrounded by computers – devices that store and process data, and can perform complicated calculations in a blink of an eye. So it is perhaps a bit surprising to learn that in 1953 a gifted mathematician called Katherine Johnson was about to start a job as a ‘computer’. Her new job was with NACA, which would soon change its name to NASA. The complex mathematical work she would do in the coming years would play a vital role in making space exploration possible.

Katherine Johnson was born Creola Katherine Coleman in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia in 1918. From an early age she loved learning and was especially fascinated by numbers. The county the Coleman family lived in did not provide high school education for its Black students, but her parents were willing to do everything they could to support their children’s education, so she and her three older siblings attended a school over one hundred miles away. During the school year, she and her siblings and their mother lived in Institute, while her father stayed to work in Sulphur Springs. She was only ten when she started high school and graduated four years early, at the age of fourteen. At the age of fifteen she became a student at West Virginia State College, which was one of America’s HBCUs. The degree involved studying numerous subjects, but soon

her talent for mathematics was clear and she completed every mathematics course in the college. She graduated **summa cum laude** with a degree in French and mathematics in 1937.

Despite her high grades she was not able to go straight into graduate study. At that time the graduate colleges in West Virginia did not accept Black students, so instead she became a teacher. Two years later, in 1939, she married her first husband, James Goble. That same year West Virginia decided to open its graduate colleges to Black students and she and two male graduates were selected for places at West Virginia University. After attending her first class, however, she decided to leave and devote her time to raising a family. Thirteen years later her husband became ill, and so she went back to work as a teacher. Then, at a family party, a relative told her about the new jobs being advertised at NACA and that they were open to Black women. She applied and began work as a computer in 1953. Once again, her mathematical talent got her noticed and she was soon working with a team of aeronautical engineers on projects involving high speed aircraft.

In 1958 she married her second husband, taking his surname of Johnson, and that same year, when NACA became NASA, she





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