

TODAY IN

BLACK HISTORY

1884

**JOHN R. LYNCH: 1ST AFRICAN AMERICAN TO CHAIR A NATIONAL CONVENTION**

Born into slavery in Louisiana in 1847 to an Irish immigrant and a mixed-race slave, at 26, John Roy Lynch became the youngest member of the 43rd Congress



*John R. Lynch*

and became the only Black representative from Mississippi for over a century. He was instrumental in passing the Civil Rights Bill of 1875. Lynch began his rapid rise in politics, largely thanks to Reconstruction.

Lynch was instrumental in passing the Civil Rights Bill of 1875. He emphasized his rights as an American citizen on the House Floor. "It is certainly known by southern as well as northern men that the colored people of this country are thoroughly American," he declared. "Born and raised upon American soil and under the influence of American institutions; not American citizens by adoption, but by birth."

After losing his congressional seat, Lynch remained active in politics. In 1884, Lynch became the first African American to chair a political party's national convention and he subsequently became the only African American — until 1968 — to deliver a national political party keynote address. He continued to serve as a member of the Republican National Committee for Mississippi until 1889.

1968

**RESURRECTION CITY SHUT DOWN**

Resurrection City, home to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's Poor People's Campaign, stood for 41 days. From May 15 to June 24, 1968, a veritable tent city symbolizing peaceful protest, solidarity and attention to American poverty rose up on the grounds of the National Mall in Washington, D.C. It had a barber shop, city hall, mess tent, day care, and was even granted its own zip code. It was an attempt to create a coalition among Black, Native American, Latino and white people from across the country to help bring attention to pervasive and systemic poverty issues. At its height, the city housed nearly 2,700 people.



In December 1967, just four short months before his death, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. had announced a Poor People's Campaign march and encampment set to last weeks to months. Ralph Abernathy oversaw King's plans and on May 13, 1968, the proper permits were secured. On June 23, despite heavy rains making the National Mall a field of mud and water, an onrush of police forces wielding tear gas drove out the lingering Resurrection City occupants. Their permits had expired, and no allowances for the weather were given. SCLC had negotiated exit strategies with local and federal authorities but none were honored. Over 100 residents were arrested for refusing to leave. Resurrection City was no more.

1979

**RICKEY HENDERSON'S MLB DEBUT**

Inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 2009 (his first appearance on the ballot), Rickey Henderson still holds the MLB record for stolen bases with over 1,405 verified steals. He played for the San Diego Padres from 1996–1997 and again in 2001.



Born on Christmas Day of 1958, Rickey Nelson Henley Henderson was naturally left handed but developed the ability to bat right handed, making him a rare player. He graduated from Oakland Technical High School in 1976, where he played baseball, basketball, and football and ran track. He dreamed of playing football for the Oakland Raiders, and even received a dozen football scholarships. His mother advised him against a football career, so he focused on baseball. He started in the Minor Leagues in 1976. In 1979, he made his major league debut with Oakland Athletics.

In the first game of a doubleheader against the Texas Rangers, he nabbed second base, the first stolen in his major league career. Though the Rangers eventually won the game 5-1, Henderson got 2 of 6 hits for the A's, marking a high-point for fans in a challenging season. During his career, Henderson played for nine teams. He spent 14 of his 25 years with Oakland in three different stints, and won World Series titles with the A's in 1989 and the Blue Jays in 1993. Over a quarter century, Henderson also set all-time marks in runs (2,295), career leadoff homers (81), caught-stealing attempts (335), and unintentional walks (2,139).

