**The Man Who Carried Jesus’ Cross**

(Matthew 27:32 KJV)

*And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.*

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lack History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by Black Americans and a time for recognizing the central role of African Americans in U.S. history. The event grew out of “Negro History Week,” the brainchild of noted historian Carter G. Woodson and other prominent African Americans. Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month. Other countries around the world, including Canada and the United Kingdom, also devote a month to celebrating Black History. So, I would like to take a moment to commemorate the African Americans National Heritage.

There’s a story often told about Jackie Robinson the first African American to play major league baseball. He faced jeering crowds in every stadium. While playing one day in his home stadium in Brooklyn, he committed an error. The fans began to ridicule him. During a delay in the game Robinson stood at second base, humiliated, his head down and began to sob.

The fans jeered and threw things at him. But about that time, Brooklyn’s shortstop Pee Wee Reese, came over and stood next to him. He put his arm around Jackie Robinson and faced the crowd. And as they stood there; the fans grew quiet. Robinson later said, “That arm around my shoulder saved my career.” Today I want to look at the story of a man mentioned briefly in the gospels: Simon of Cyrene. He also comes and puts an arm around Jesus.

When my mind ponders upon the thought of Black History; I think of this biblical character named Simon. Simon was a fascinating man. He was a Jewish pilgrim coming into Jerusalem from out of the country. He was a good old fashion countryman, and not a city slicker. He was a foreigner from Cyrene, a region in Libya (Acts 2:10) of North Africa. In fact, this particular region of West and North Africa is where Africans, were captured like wild animals, labeled as black gold on the market, transported like sardines over bodies of waters into a strange land. And at the same time beaten to death to learn our country’s custom.

Africans as slaves, twenty of them landed in Virginia in 1619 during a storm. In 1641, slavery was legalized as a white collared occupation. In 1862, they experienced the Emancipation Proclamation. TheEmancipation **Proclamation,** was Abraham Lincoln’s declaration, that all slaves in all states which had seceded from the Union, and which had not returned to Federal control by 1863 January 1, would be emancipated.

In the text Simon of Cyrene was not a slave, but Simon was a man of color, who was forced to carry the cross of Jesus. Although he was not able to opt out; he discovered that the real pilgrimage was not at Jerusalem, but Golgotha. And at Golgotha is where many would be emancipated of their sins. It was a single act, and not a yearly Passover affair, and the sacrifice was the Precious Lamb of God. This pilgrimage is for everybody.