

February 18, 1932 - Toni Morrison, novelist, essayist and the winner of the Nobel Prize for literature, was born on this day in Lorain, OH. Morrison is the first Black American ever to win and the second American woman honored as a Nobel Prize winner for literature. Starting with her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, published in 1970 to her latest novel, *Paradise*, published in 1998, Toni Morrison has examined what it means to be either a slave or a descendant of slaves in a country dominated by Whites. In 1988, she won the Pulitzer Prize for her work *Beloved*. She was named the 1996 Jefferson Lecturer in the Humanities by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

February 18, 1965 - Gambia, the last British colony in West Africa, became an independent state on this day. In a speech at the independence ceremonies, Gambian Prime Minister David K. Jawara thanked the British for the atmosphere of harmony, friendliness and cooperation that prevailed in the transition to independence.

February 21, 1936 - Barbara Jordan, U.S. Congresswoman and scholar, was born on this day in Houston, TX. She made history November 17, 1972, when she became the first Black and first woman to be elected to Congress from Texas. In 1966, she became the first Black elected state senator in Texas. Barbara Jordan was known as an eloquent speaker. Jordan was the first Black woman to give a keynote address at the Democratic National Convention in 1976. Not wishing to seek re-election to Congress, she began to teach at the University of Texas in 1978. Jordan was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1994. She died in Austin, TX, in 1996 of leukemia.