



## Perris News

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### Black History Month Parade Soars Beyond the Limits

More than 1,000 people took part in Perris' 8th annual Black History Month parade, an extravaganza that featured nearly 60 floats, marching bands, equestrian units, dancing groups along with City elected officials and religious leaders.

"Soaring Beyond the Limits" was the theme of the parade, which made its way Perris High School down Perris Boulevard to City Hall.

Under brilliant blue skies and Chamber-of-Commerce temperatures, revelers lined the roadway to take in the festivities, which after the parade featured an expo of African-American history, culture and cuisine.

"At this historical time, we need to celebrate black history," said Cheryl A. Love, who helped emcee the parade. "It's a beautiful day and we're going to have a beautiful time. Come on Perris, California, it's time to celebrate!"

Pastor Benjamin Briggs, a member of the Perris Valley African American History Month Committee which planned the event, thanked the City for its participation and support of Black History month activities. Several members of the Public Works Department, Administration and Community Services Department helped make the parade a success, performing duties like setting up the stage and announcing the entries as they marched past. The City donated use of its community stage for the event.

"Perris has always been a big supporter of our parade and we are thankful for that support," Briggs said. Briggs said the history month committee spent 10 months planning the 2009 parade. That was before Barack Obama became the nation's first black president, which made this year's event even more special.

"We are living in momentous times," Briggs said. "It was a lot of hard work but to see the community come together today makes it all worthwhile."

The parade featured motorcycle group revving their bikes as they made their way along the parade route. Precision-dance units strutted their stuff. Horses high-stepped under the command of their colorfully-dressed riders.

Groups like the St. James Grand Lodge of Masons from Mead Valley and the Perris-based Inland Empire Buffalo Soldier Heritage Association also came out to show their support for Black History Month activities. Seven members of the Masons lodge came out to Perris, including members who drove down from Victorville and Fontana. Each wore a black suit, white shirt and black tie. The group gives scholarships to deserving students, distributes food baskets to underprivileged families and holds a Spring Egg hunt for youngsters.

"We support the community in any way we can," said Deputy Grand Master Rudy Castro. Yolanda and Gilbert Williams led the contingent from the Buffalo Soldiers Association, which is raising money to build a monument at Riverside National Cemetery. Buffalo Soldiers were black cavalry troopers who, after the Civil War, helped settle the west by building roads and bridges, stringing telegraph wire and surveying vast tracks of uncharted territories.

The local group needs to raise \$1.7 million to complete the memorial.

"It's part of our history," Yolanda Williams said. "And we want it to be known."

Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers said Black History Month activities should remind all Americans of the contributions that have made the country great.

"We are here to recognize the achievements of African Americans and to celebrate the legacy of African-American leaders who have gone on before us," Rogers said.

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