



LEFT Guest speaker Ruth Steele, founder and CEO of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Museum and Cultural Center in Pueblo, Colo., speaks to the audience about what life was like before Brown vs. the Board of education changed the school system. RIGHT LTC Timothy Cassibry, Executive Officer, 1st Space Brigade, delivered opening remarks at the event. Cassibry expanded on this year's National Black History month theme, "African-Americans in the Civil War," noting that more than 200,000 African American Soldiers served in the war
Photos by Craig Denton, 21 Space Wing.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH



USASMDC / ARSTRAT Building 3

Robert Howard, USASMDC/ARSTRAT Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, explains to the crowd how the chairs are set up to reflect "separate but equal".

By Rachel L. Griffith, USASMDC/ARSTRAT

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — February is recognized as Black History Month in the United States, and this year's theme was "African-Americans and the Civil War," honoring people of African descent who worked to destroy slavery and begin their freedom in the United States.

In recognition, the USASMDC/ARSTRAT Special Emphasis Committee held an event to enlighten members of the command. It focused on the historical court case of Brown vs. the board of Education of Topeka, Kan.

"We have you seated together, in two rows of nine seats, with a column down the middle," said Robert Howard, USASMDC/ARSTRAT Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, "Why did we do this? Separate but equal." Howard was referring to the court's declaration that separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.

The theme 'separate but equal' was carried on by the guest speaker, Ruth Steele, founder and CEO of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Museum and Cultural Center in Pueblo, Colo.

"The white schools used to send us their books. We'd open them up, to have no pages! But, they forgot they had an index," said Steele, "Our teachers were so well-prepared, they could write a whole lesson, just based off the index. That was our 'separate but equal'."

Steele's remarks continued to touch on ways the case changed history, noting even though the attendees were seated separately, they were still integrated.

"You guys, you couldn't be sitting there," noted Steele, motioning to African-American members of the audience, "not when I was a kid. No way."

Steele continued to point how the world today is a far different place from the one she grew up in, and reminded the audience to be thankful for events like Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat, and historical figures like Martin Luther King, Jr., both of whom helped to clear the path of the civil rights movement.

Black History month began as "Negro History Week" in 1926 as an effort by historian Carter G. Woodson to educate the American public about the African-American culture. It was celebrated during the second week of February, to coincide with the birthdays of both Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglas. Negro History Week grew to become Black History Month, sometimes known as African-American History Month, in 1976 under President Gerald R. Ford.