



Blanchard House Museum

of African American History and Culture
of Charlotte County

Blanchardhousemuseum.org

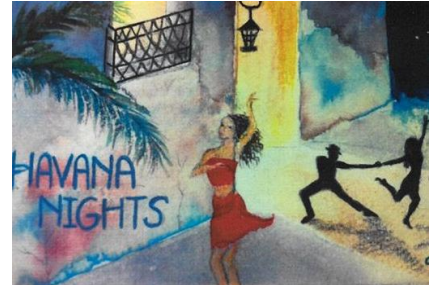
406 Dr. MLK Blvd – Punta Gorda, FL – 33950 – (941) 575-7518 **Winter Newsletter**

A thank you to all of our members, sponsors, and volunteers. We appreciate your gifts of money, time, and dedication to the Blanchard House mission.

Hope you didn't miss two great events this season:

Havana Nights . . . November 20, 2015

Sponsored in collaboration with the Renaissance Center, Herald Court, Punta Gorda. Great Cuban food, drink, dancing and fun had by all.



Conspiracy Tea . . . December 2, 2015

Chaired by Mrs. Libby Schaeffer gave us a head start at planning for the last season of Downton Abbey. The elegant event was a sell-out.



Check us out on Facebook



Spotlight on African American History

Most of us have heard of the Watch Night Services that are celebrated in African American communities on New Year's Eve. But do you know the origin of this celebration?

The Watch Night service can be traced back to gatherings also known as "Freedom's Eve." On that night, Black slaves and free blacks came together in churches and private homes all across the nation awaiting news that the Emancipation Proclamation actually had become law. At the stroke of midnight, it was January 1, 1863; all slaves in the Confederate States were declared legally free. When the news was received, there were prayers, shouts and songs of joy as many people fell to their knees and thanked God.

Blacks have gathered in churches annually on New Year's Eve ever since, praising God for bringing us safely through another year. It's been over a century since the first Freedom's Eve and tradition still brings us together at this time every year to celebrate "how we got over." This celebration takes many African American descendants of slaves into a new year with praise and worship. The service usually begins anywhere from 7 p.m. To 10 p.m. and ends at midnight with the entrance of the New Year. Some people come to church first, before going out to celebrate, for others, church is the only New Year's Eve event.



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Mark your calendar

Upcoming Events:

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Breakfast will be held on Saturday, January 16, 8-10:30 at the Punta Gorda Middle School on Carmelita in Punta Gorda. Breakfast will be served from 8-9:00; the program will begin at 9:00. Special guest is former Punta Gorda Chief of Police Albert "Butch" Arenal, who will receive the George Brown Humanitarian Award. Tickets are \$12.50 for adults and \$6.00 for students under 12 years.

Tickets are available on line at BlanchardHouseMuseum.org or at the Museum, Tuesday-Friday, 10:00-4:00 PM. Call (941)575-7518 to reserve tickets.

African American History Month: February, 2016

The following classes will be held at the Renaissance Center in Herald Court, Punta Gorda.

- **Mary Elizabeth Bowser, Union Spy in the Jefferson Davis Confederate White House:** Martha Bireda does a re-enactment of Mary Bowser, then a short lecture on African American Conspiracy during the Civil War. Course will be held on Monday, February 15, 10-12 Noon.
- **Conversations on Race IV:** Martha Bireda leads a two class discussion on the perception of race by the author of the National Book Award winner *Between the World and Me*, by Tahinisi Coates. The course will be held on February 4th and 10th, 10-12 Noon.

Member Event: February 23, 6-8 PM

- Blanchard House Museum members and sponsors are invited to view the film ***Slavery by another Name***, the Official Selection of the 2012 Sundance Film Festival.
- The film challenges the American belief that slavery in the country ended with the Emancipation Proclamation. The film tells how even as chattel slavery came to an end in the South in 1865, thousands of African Americans were pulled back into forced labor with shocking force and brutality. It was a system in which men guilty of no crime at all, were arrested, compelled to work without pay, repeatedly bought and sold, and coerced to do the bidding of masters. This system of forced labor, tolerated by both the North and the South, lasted well into the 20th century. Fill will be shown at the Blanchard House Museum.
- You truly want to watch and discuss this film, refreshments served. General admission \$5.

Other News:

Executive Director the Blanchard House Museum, Dr. Martha Bireda was awarded a 2016 Interpretation Workshop Scholarship to complete a 32-hour course in the theory and practice of historical interpretation. The Course is sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution-National Museum of African American History and Culture.

We couldn't do what we have for the past 10 years without our friends and sponsors.

Consider becoming a member of the Blanchard House Museum:

Individual Membership- \$30; Family Membership- \$45