



ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LIFE AND HISTORY, INC.

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Dear ASALH Members and Friends:

For Dr. Carter G. Woodson, the founder of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, the effort to set aside a special time period for the commemoration of Black History was “one of the most fortunate steps ever taken by the Association.” His words, while written in 1926, continue to ring true. As the Founders of Black History Month, ASALH pays special homage to the month of February, while simultaneously promoting the study of Black History all year long. And why February? The answer is because Woodson sought dates that include the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass—both men being great American symbols of freedom. Today Woodson would most likely marvel at the transformation of his Negro History Week into Black History Month, when every Presidential Administration since 1976, whether Democrat or Republican, has officially proclaimed the importance of citizens of African descent in shaping our nation’s life and culture.

Carter Woodson was especially fond of citing the historic participation of African Americans in the military as a reminder of their role in protecting the United States and in endeavoring to actualize the ideals of freedom and justice that our nation professes. It was through ASALH and the historians and teachers it inspired that children in southern Jim Crow schools learned the name and story of Crispus Attucks, the first to die in the Boston Massacre in 1770 and thus first martyr of the American Revolution. It was through Woodson’s Black History movement that those same children took pride in the bravery of black Union troops during the Civil War, which produced the first African American recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor. Woodson spoke of both wars, asserting: “We should not learn less of George Washington, but we should learn something also of the three thousand Negro soldiers of the American Revolution who helped to make this ‘Father of Our Country’ possible.” And similarly in regard to the Civil War, Woodson emphasized that “we should not cease to pay tribute to Abraham Lincoln, but we should ascribe praise to the 178,975 Negroes who had to be mustered into service of the Union before it could be preserved, and who by their heroism demonstrated that they were entitled to freedom and citizenship.”

ASALH’s 2018 theme, “African Americans in Times of War,” captures the spirit of Carter G. Woodson by identifying and honoring African Americans in the military. The theme commemorates the centennial of the end of the First World War, while using the anniversary of the Armistice of 1918 to consider many diverse stories about African American military and civilian life from the Revolutionary War period to the War on Terrorism in the twenty-first century. This is a theme inevitably filled with paradoxes—of valor and unrequited patriotism, of civil rights opportunities and setbacks, of freedom struggles abroad and at home, and of catastrophic loss of life and the righteous hope for peace.

Sincerely,

Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham
ASALH National President

ASALH MISSION

To promote, research, preserve, interpret, and disseminate information about Black life, history and culture to the global community