

To: Dr. Isabel Nuñez, AERA Vice President for Division B: Curriculum Studies

From: The 2021 Division B Lifetime Achievement Award Committee

Date: March 10, 2021

This year, the Division B Lifetime Achievement Award Committee has elected to present the Division B Lifetime Achievement Award to Dr. Carter G. Woodson (1875-1950). Among many other accomplishments, Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, now known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), in 1915. Woodson served as director of the association from 1922 until 1950, the year that he died (retrieved Jan. 22, 2021; <https://asalh.org/project/woodson-home/>). Today, ASALH continues to carry forward his work and legacy. The Committee notes that its decision to honor Dr. Woodson in this way represents the first time that the Lifetime Achievement Award will be given posthumously. We leave it up to future committees to decide the merits of future posthumous lifetime achievement awards.

We have chosen Dr. Woodson because we believe that the time for recognizing his contributions to the curriculum field are long overdue. Although Woodson did not identify himself as a curriculum scholar per se, few in the contemporary curriculum field can argue that his scholarship and advocacy for including African American history in the official curriculum has not had a profound and lasting impact on curriculum studies. Woodson clearly recognized the detrimental impact the exclusion of African American history from the school curriculum (what contemporary curriculum scholars refer to as the “null” curriculum) had on learning. In *The Miseducation of the Negro* (1933), Woodson stated, “In history, of course, the Negro had no place in [the official] curriculum.... You might study the history as it was offered in our system from the elementary school throughout the university, and you would never hear Africa mentioned except in the negative” (p. 21).

Despite the fact that Woodson founded the *Journal of Negro History* in 1916, his interest in including African American history in the school curriculum received little recognition from the white, mainstream curriculum scholars of the time. In 1926 Woodson established Negro History Week (the precursor to Black History Month), and he was actively writing on curriculum matters when the National Society for the Study of Education published its Twenty-Sixth Yearbook on *The Foundations of Curriculum-Making* in 1926. Woodson’s chosen theme for Negro History Week in 1929 was “Possibility of Putting Negro History in the Curriculum” (retrieved on January 22, 2021, <https://asalh.org/black-history-themes/>).

Here we address each of the criteria for awarding the Division B Lifetime Achievement Award.

- 1) Has published influential works exploring curriculum, curriculum theory and/or curriculum inquiry.

According to King, Crowley, and Brown (2010), Woodson “authored or edited twenty books about African and African American subjects” between 1915 and 1942 (p. 212). Woodson’s

desire to publish curriculum texts despite the obstacles posed by racism in the publishing industry led him to establish Associated Publishers in 1922. That year he published his first college-level textbook, *The Negro in Our History*. In 1928 he published the elementary school textbook *Negro Makers of History*, and in 1935, he published *The Story of the Negro Retold*, a high-school text. As King, Crowley, and Brown note, “Woodson’s textbooks also contributed to the creation of a more inclusive social studies curriculum by illuminating new understandings of Africa and of African American citizens” (p. 213).

Woodson was also the founder of the *Journal of Negro History* and the *Negro History Bulletin*, two publications that would have a tremendous influence on curriculum thinking. At the suggestion of educator Mary McLeod Bethune, Woodson founded the *Negro History Bulletin* to serve “as a guide for black teachers, students, parents, and lay persons who had little knowledge about black history to help them teach elementary and secondary students more effectively” (King, Crowley, and Brown, 2010, p. 212). Furthermore, “teachers utilized the *NHB* by sharing classroom experiences and by having discussions about the various ways to infuse black history in the existing curriculum” (p. 212). The *Negro History Bulletin* “was directly related to Woodson’s ideology that African American history should be infused into the ‘official’ curriculum” (p. 213).

2) Has mentored students’ and newer colleagues’ induction into academia.

King, Crowley, and Brown note that Woodson “mentored young scholars who would later assist him in creating African and African American educational resources for teachers, students, and the mass public (Dagbovie 2007)” (p. 212). Furthermore, the influence Woodson’s scholarship has had on countless emerging and established scholars in the curriculum field cannot be overstated.

3) Has provided leadership and service to the field and/or communities through professional associations, community-university partnerships.

Woodson founded the Association for the Study of African American Life and History in 1915. Over a hundred years later, ASALH continues to have a major impact on public and educator awareness of African American history and its rightful place in school curricula. Through its publications, curriculum guides, awards, public programming, partnerships, and journal, ASALH serves as a resource for professional development, community awareness, curriculum development, and curriculum advocacy.

4) Has a national/international reputation in curriculum studies.

Here we simply note a few of the many indicators of Dr. Woodson’s well-known legacy:

- The Carter G. Woodson Book Awards, National Council for the Social Studies
- Carter G. Woodson Memorial Award, National Education Association (co-sponsor with ASALH)
- The Carter Godwin Woodson Service Award, The National Association for Multicultural Education

- The Carter G. Woodson Institute for African-American and African Studies at the University of Virginia
- Carter G. Woodson Center at Berea College
- Carter G. Woodson Fellowship, Northern Illinois University
- Carter G. Woodson Home National Historic Site, National Park Service
- The Carter G. Woodson Lyceum at Marshall University
- Dr. Carter G. Woodson African American Museum, St. Petersburg, FL
- The Carter G. Woodson Award, College of the Holy Cross

Given Woodson's achievements and legacy, the Division B Lifetime Achievement Award Committee believes that stepping away from precedent is in this case justified. Although his own life ended over seventy years ago, his dedication to curriculum critique, understanding, and development continues to exert a major influence on the curriculum field. He spent a lifetime working tirelessly to confront the racism inherent to school curricula that excluded the history and contributions of African Americans. Here in the 21st century, Woodson's efforts are no less felt, no less imperative, than they were in his own day. For these reasons, the 2021 Division B Lifetime Achievement Award Committee recognizes Dr. Carter G. Woodson for his extraordinary and transformative lifetime contributions to Curriculum Studies.

Sincerely,

The 2021 Division B Lifetime Achievement Award Committee

References

Association for the Study of African American Life and History. (<https://asalh.org/>).

King, L. J., Crowley, R. M., & Brown, A. L. (2010). The Forgotten Legacy of Carter G. Woodson: Contributions to Multicultural Social Studies and African American History. *The Social Studies*, 101, pp. 211–215.

Woodson, C. G. (1990). *The mis-education of the Negro*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press. Originally published in 1933 by the Associated Press.