



ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LIFE AND HISTORY

301 RHODE ISLAND AVENUE, NW | SUITE 2204 | WASHINGTON, DC 20001
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Black Resistance: The Black History Month Theme for 2023

Let your motto be resistance! resistance! RESISTANCE! No oppressed people have ever secured their liberty without resistance. What kind of resistance you had better make, you must decide by the circumstances that surround you, and according to the suggestion of expediency.
Henry Highland Garnet, An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America (1843)

This year's theme for Black History Month captures the ongoing necessity of African Americans to resist oppression, subjugation, second class citizenship and racial violence. Since 1619, while the methods and means of Black Resistance have varied, Resistance has always been a part of the African American experience.

African Americans resisted enslavement. They engaged in work slowdowns, destroyed crops and livestock. They feigned illnesses and imposed their own African-based work routines on western agricultural production. They ran away from their enslavement. They poisoned, fought and killed their so-called owners.

African Americans resisted white supremacy. They used African culture, folkways and religion to assert their identity. They used music, dance, poetry and other examples of creative production to challenge the false notion that they were a people without a history and culture. Their conscious resistance to an imposed whiteness led them to create the foundation of "American culture" in the arts and popular culture.

African Americans have resisted oppression by forming their own independent organizations. They formed organizations such as the Free African Society in Philadelphia and the African Educational Society in Pittsburgh as self- help and mutual aid organizations to support their communities and to educate their children. They formed organizations such as the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), the NAACP, SCLC and SNCC not only to resist segregation and discrimination, but also to challenge second class citizenship and white supremacy.

Black Resistance has also meant fighting back against white terrorism and violence. African Americans have fought the Ku Klux Klan, the White Citizens Councils and other white terrorist groups that have sought to attack and destroy the African American community. In some cases, Black Resistance has also meant fighting the police and the nation's law enforcement agencies—especially when those agencies sided with and supported white attacks on the African American community.

In summary, no matter what form Black Resistance has taken, it has always been a part of the African American experience in these United States. We celebrate Black Resistance not just as a theme for Black History Month, but also as ongoing actions that have supported the survival of African Americans in an often hostile and violent environment.

ASALH MISSION

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



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Today, we have to take on and challenge the state legislatures in Alabama, Texas, Florida and in other states that want to restrict the teaching of Black History. Resisting the efforts to suppress the teaching of our history is probably the biggest challenge that ASALH has had since 1960s when many of us took on school boards and college and university administrations to demand the inclusion of our history in the curricula of those institutions. Given our history of Resistance, I know that we can meet the current challenge. But we need all members of ASALH to join us in taking it on.

I invite you to join the members of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History as we continue to educate the public about our history and how Black Resistance has been a vital and important part of all of it. We need all members of ASALH to purchase tickets for the Black History Month Festival. We especially need you to purchase tickets for the Conversation with Dr. Lonnie Bunch and Professor Gloria Browne-Marshall on February 22nd and the play, "Campaign 1972," on February 25th. Please see ASALH's website for a listing of all of the programs related to the theme of "Black Resistance." Please purchase tickets and assist ASALH in the fight to continue teaching our children and others about the African American experience.

Sincerely,

W. Marvin Dulaney
President
Association for the Study of African American Life and History

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