

# A Century of

## BLACK HISTORY COMMÉMORATIONS

### ANNUAL THEMES 2003-2026

2026: A Century of Black History Commemorations  
2025: African Americans and Labor  
2024: African Americans and the Arts  
2023: Black Resistance  
2022: Black Health and Wellness  
2021: The Black Family: Representation, Identity, and Diversity  
2020: African Americans and the Vote  
2019: Black Migrations  
2018: African Americans in Times of War  
2017: The Crisis in Black Education  
2016: Hallowed Grounds: Sites of African American Memories  
2015: A Century of Black Life, History, and Culture  
2014: Civil Rights in America  
2013: At the Crossroads of Freedom and Equality: The Emancipation Proclamation and the March on Washington  
2012: President Barack Obama National Black History Month Proclamation  
2012: Black Women in American Culture and History  
2011: African Americans and the Civil War  
2010: The History of Black Economic Empowerment  
2009: The Quest for Black Citizenship in the Americas  
2008: Carter G. Woodson and the Origins of Multiculturalism  
2007: From Slavery to Freedom: Africans in the Americas  
2006: Celebrating Community: A Tribute to Black Fraternal, Social, and Civil Institutions  
2005: The Niagara Movement: Black Protest Reborn, 1905-2005  
2004: Before Brown, Beyond Boundaries: Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education  
2003: The Souls of Black Folks: Centennial Reflections



### ANNUAL THEMES 1953-1977

1977: Heritage Days: The Black Perspective; the Third Century  
1976: America for All Americans  
1975: Fulfilling America's Promise: Black History Month  
1974: Helping America Understand  
1973: Biography Illuminates the Black Experience  
1972: African Art, Music, Literature, a Valuable Cultural Experience  
1971: African Civilization and Culture: A Worthy Historical Background  
1970: 15th Amendment and Black America in the Century (1870-1970)  
1969: Changing the Afro American Image through History  
1968: The Centennial of the Fourteenth Amendment Afro American History Week  
1967: Negro History in the Home, School, and the Community  
1966: Freedom from Racial Myths and Stereotypes Through Negro History  
1965: Negro History: Freedom's Foundation  
1964: Negro History: A Basis for the New Freedom  
1963: Negro History Evaluates Emancipation (1863-1963)  
1962: Negro History and a New Birth of Freedom  
1961: Freedom and Democracy for the Negro after 100 Years (1861-1961)  
1960: Strengthening America Through Education in Negro History and African Culture  
1959: Negro History: A Foundation for a Proud America  
1958: Negro History: A Factor in Nationalism and Internationalism  
1957: Negro History  
1956: Negro History in an Era of Changing Human Relations  
1955: Negro History: A Contribution to America's Intercultural Life  
1954: Negro History: A Foundation for Integration  
1953: Negro History and Human Relations

### ANNUAL THEMES 1978-2002

2002: The Color Line Revisited: Is Racism Dead?  
2001: Creating and Defining the African American Community: Family, Church Politics and Culture  
2000: Heritage and Horizons: The African American Legacy and the Challenges for the 21st Century  
1999: Legacy of African American Leadership for the Present and the Future  
1998: Black Business  
1997: African Americans and Civil Rights; a Reprisal  
1996: Black Women  
1995: Reflections on 1895: Douglass, DuBois & Washington  
1994: Empowering Black Americans  
1993: Afro-American Scholars: Leaders, Activists and Writers  
1992: African Roots Experience New Worlds, Pre-Columbus to Space Exploration  
1991: Educating America: Black Universities and Colleges, Strengths and Crisis  
1990: Seventy-Five Years of Scholarly Excellence: A Homage to Our Forebears  
1989: Afro Americans and Religion  
1988: Constitutional Status of Afro Americans in the 21st Century  
1987: Afro Americans and the Constitution from Colonial Times to the Present  
1986: Afro American Experience: International Connection  
1985: Afro American Family  
1984: Afro Americans and United States  
1983: Afro Americans in the United States  
1982: Afro American Survival  
1981: Black History: Role Model for Youth  
1980: Heritage for America  
1979: History: Torch for the future  
1978: Roots, Achievements and Projections

### ANNUAL THEMES 1928-1952

1952: Great Negro Educators (Teachers)  
1951: Eminent Negroes in World Affairs  
1950: Outstanding Moments in Negro History  
1949: The Use of Spirituals in the Classroom  
1948: The Whole Truth and Nothing but the Truth  
1947: Democracy Possible only Through Brotherhood  
1946: Let us Have Peace  
1945: The Negro and Reconversion  
1944: The Negro and the New Order  
1943: The Negro in the Modern World  
1942: The Negro in Democracy  
1941: The Career of Frederick Douglass  
1940: Negro Labor  
1939: Special Achievements of the Race: Religion, Education, Business, Architecture, Engineering, Innovation, Pioneering  
1938: Special Achievements of the Race: Oratory, Drama, Music, Painting, Sculpture, Science and Inventions  
1937: American Negro History from the Time of Importation from Africa up to the Present Day  
1936: African Background Outlined  
1935: The Negro Achievements in Africa  
1934: Contribution of the Negro in Poetry, in Painting, in Sculpture and in Science  
1933: Ethiopia Meets Error in Truth  
1932: What George Washington Bicentennial Commission Fail to Do  
1931: Neglected Aspects of Negro History  
1930: Significant Achievements of the Negro  
1929: Possibility of Putting Negro History in the Curriculum  
1928: Civilization: A World Achievement



[asalh.org/black-history-themes](http://asalh.org/black-history-themes)

"It is only through studying the quilted narrative of our historical journey that one can clearly see the silences, blind spots, hypocrisies and distortions of American history." – Dr. Karsonya Wise Whitehead, ASALH President

# A Century of BLACK HISTORY COMMEMORATIONS



## Black History Timeline

### ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LIFE AND HISTORY

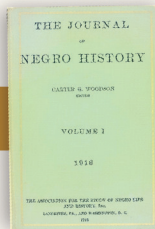


Carter G. Woodson

1915

#### A.S.N.L.H.

On September 9, Woodson met at the Wabash YMCA with A. L. Jackson and three others and formed the **Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH)**.



1916

Dr. Woodson publishes **The Journal of Negro History**.



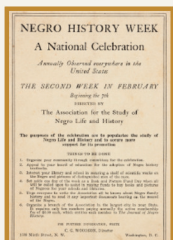
1924

A graduate member of **Omega Psi Phi**, he urged his fraternity brothers to take up the work. In 1924, they responded with the creation of **Negro History and Literature Week**, which they renamed **Negro Achievement Week**.



1926

Dr. Woodson sends out a press release announcing **Negro History Week** in February, 1926.



1937



In 1937, at the urging of **Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune**, Woodson established the **Negro History Bulletin**, which focused on the annual theme. As black populations grew, mayors issued **Negro History Week** proclamations, and in cities like Syracuse, progressive whites joined **Negro History Week** with **National Brotherhood Week**.



1930s

Like most ideas that resonate with the spirit of the times, **Negro History Week** proved to be more dynamic than Woodson or the Association could control. By the 1930s, Woodson complained about the intellectual charlatans, black and white, popping up everywhere seeking to take advantage of the public interest in black history. He warned teachers not to invite speakers who had less knowledge than the students themselves. Increasingly publishing houses that had previously ignored black topics and authors rushed to put books on the market and in the schools. Instant experts appeared everywhere, and non-scholarly works appeared from "mushroom presses." In America, nothing popular escapes either commercialization or eventual trivialization, and so Woodson, the constant reformer, had his hands full in promoting celebrations worthy of the people who had made the history.



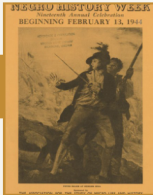
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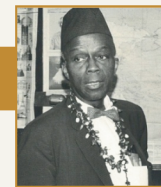


1940s



In the 1940s, efforts began slowly within the black community to expand the study of **black history in the schools** and **black history celebrations** before the public. In the South, black teachers often taught Negro History as a supplement to United States history. One early beneficiary of the movement reported that his teacher would hide Woodson's textbook beneath his desk to avoid drawing the wrath of the principal. During the Civil Rights Movement in the South, the Freedom Schools incorporated black history into the curriculum to advance social change. The Negro History movement was an intellectual insurgency that was part of every larger effort to transform race relations.

1960s



The 1960s had a dramatic effect on the study and celebration of black history. Before the decade was over, Negro History Week would be well on its way to becoming Black History Month. The shift to a month-long celebration began even before Dr. Woodson's death. As early as 1940s, blacks in West Virginia, a state where Woodson often spoke, began to celebrate February as Negro History Month. In Chicago, a now forgotten cultural activist, **Fredrick H. Hammaurabi**, started celebrating Negro History Month in the mid-1960s. Having taken an African name in the 1930s, Hammaurabi used his cultural center, the House of Knowledge, to fuse African consciousness with the study of the black past. By the late 1960s, as young blacks on college campuses became increasingly conscious of links with Africa, Black History Month replaced Negro History Week at a quickening pace. Within the Association, younger intellectuals, part of the awakening, prodded Woodson's organization to change with the times. They succeeded.

1976



In 1976, fifty years after the first celebration, the Association used its influence to institutionalize the shifts from a week to a month and from Negro history to black history. Since the mid-1970s, every American president, Democrat and Republican, has issued proclamations endorsing the Association's annual theme.

[asalh.org/about-us/our-history](http://asalh.org/about-us/our-history)

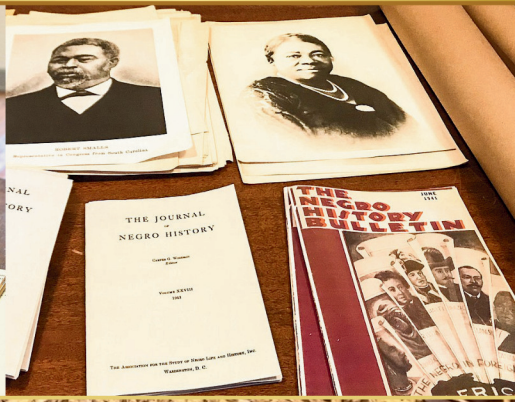


*"If a race has no history, it has no worthwhile tradition, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and it stands in danger of being exterminated."*

Dr. Carter G. Woodson, Father of Black History



# The Woodson HOME



[nps.gov/cawo](https://nps.gov/cawo)