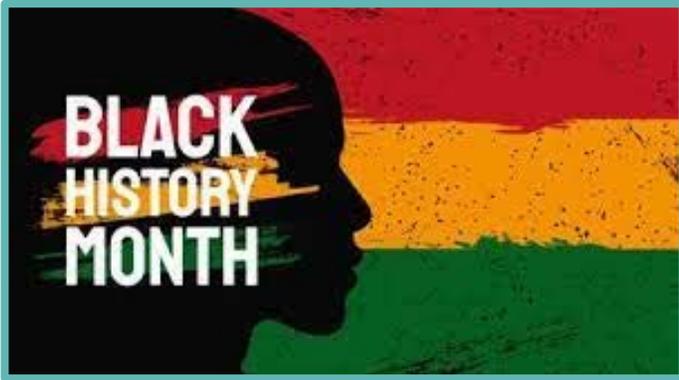


## Black History Month

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### What is Black History Month?

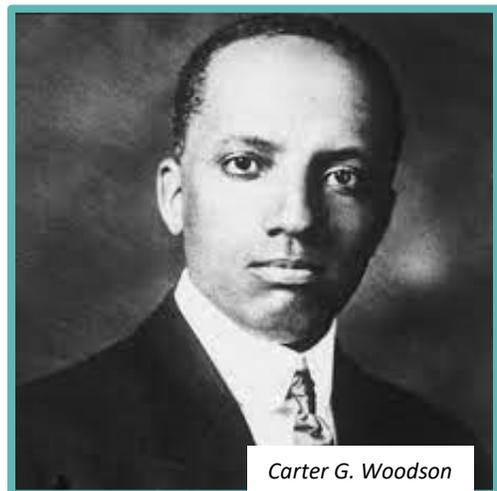
Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by African Americans and a time for recognizing their central role in U.S. History. Also known as African American History Month, the event grew out of “Negro History Week,” the brainchild of noted historian Carter G. Woodson and



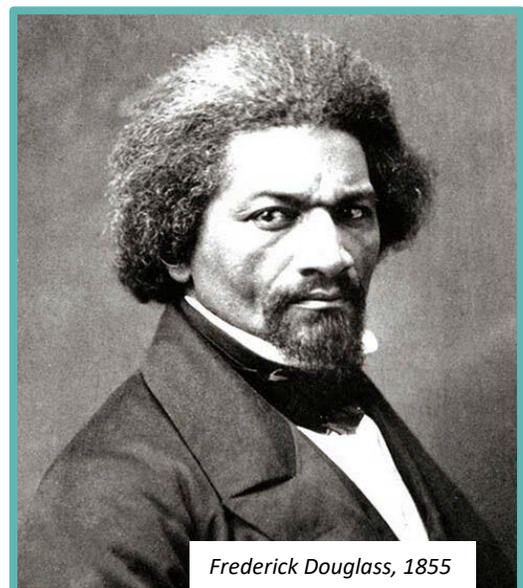
other prominent African Americans. The story of Black History Month begins in 1915, half a century after the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in the United States. Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month. Other countries around the world, including Canada and the United Kingdom, also devote a month to celebrating Black history.

### Why is Black History Month in February?

February was chosen by Woodson for the week-long observance as it coincides with the birthdays of both former U.S. President Abraham Lincoln and social reformer Frederick Douglass. Both men played a significant role in helping to end slavery. President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, as the nation approached its third year of a brutal civil war. The proclamation declared “that all persons held as slaves” within the rebellious states “are, and henceforward shall be free.” Frederick Douglass was an escaped slave who became a prominent activist, author and public speaker. He became a leader in the abolitionist movement, which sought to end the practice of slavery, before and during the Civil War. After that conflict and the Emancipation Proclamation, he continued to push for equality and human rights until his death in 1895. [Click here](#) to learn more about the history of Black History Month.



Carter G. Woodson



Frederick Douglass, 1855

### Why is Black History Month important?

For many modern Black Americans, the month-long celebration offers an opportunity to reimagine what possibilities lie ahead. But for many, the forces that drove Woodson nearly a century ago are more relevant than ever. The Director of the Smithsonian Institution Lonnie G. Bunch said at the opening of Washington D.C.’s

National Museum of African American History and Culture in 2016, “There is no more powerful force than a people steeped in their history. And there is no higher cause than honoring our struggle and ancestors by remembering”.

### **Black History Theme for 2022**

The 2022 Black History Month theme is “Black Health and Wellness.” This acknowledges the work of Black scholars and medical practitioners, as well as focuses on how the American healthcare



system has often underserved the African American community. As the COVID-19 pandemic has recently shown, a widespread disparity in access to quality healthcare negatively impacts the outcomes for Blacks and other marginalized groups in the United States.

Throughout the month of February, look for daily emails from our Black History Month team (Dorian Gilliam, Andi Crockett, Steven White and Staci Wright), highlighting the contributions of Black individuals to society, and for opportunities to deepen your learning of the Black American experience throughout the month.