

Why Black History Month Every February

By Daryl Michael Scott

Editor's note: The Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) announced the theme of Black History Month 2023 as "Black Resistance" to acknowledge how African Americans have resisted historic and ongoing oppression in all forms. ASALH founded the annual commemoration of Black history in 1926. This article by the organization's former national president explains. Please visit their website for more details: <https://asalh.org/>

The story of Black History Month begins in Chicago during the summer of 1915. An alumnus of the University of Chicago with many friends in the city, Carter G. Woodson traveled from Washington, DC, to participate in a national celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of emancipation sponsored by the state of Illinois. Thousands of African Americans traveled from across the country to see exhibits highlighting the progress their people had made since the destruction of slavery. Awarded a doctorate from Harvard three years

earlier, Woodson joined the other exhibitors with a Black history display. Despite being held at the Coliseum, site of the 1912 Republican convention, an overflow crowd of six to twelve thousand waited outside for their turn to view the exhibits. Inspired by the three-week celebration, Woodson decided to form an organization to promote the scientific study of Black life and history before leaving town. 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).

He hoped that others would popularize the findings that he and other Black intellectuals would publish in *The Journal of Negro History*, which he established in 1916. As early as 1920, Woodson urged Black civic organizations to promote the achievements that researchers were uncovering. 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. Their outreach was significant, but Woodson desired greater impact.



He told an audience of Hampton Institute students, "We are going back to that beautiful history and it is going to inspire us to greater achievements." In 1925, he decided that the association had to shoulder the responsibility. Going forward, it would

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Selling to the Federal Government Webinar
Thursday, February 23, 2023, 12:00 pm–3:00 pm CST Online
Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration
Contact: George Tapia, 610-382-3086, george.tapia@sba.gov
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Getting Registered into the System for Awards Management (SAM.gov)
Tuesday, February 21, 2023, 10:00 am–11:00 am CST Online
Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration, West Virginia Women's Business Center
Contact: Melissa Loder, 304-623-7448, Melissa.Loder@sba.gov

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