

Why February for Black History Month?



Dr. Carter G. Woodson.

The idea to celebrate black history is attributed to American historian and author Carter G. Woodson, who was a Harvard graduate, was born in Virginia in 1875. Son of former slaves, he worked in the coal mines of West Virginia just to make a living, but education was his true calling. He graduated from Berea College, became a teacher, and continued his studies.

Woodson would go on to get degrees at the University of Chicago and Harvard University. In 1912 he became the second black man to obtain a Ph.D. from Harvard, W.E.B. DuBois being the only other to reach this educational achievement.

During the summer of 1915, Woodson participated in a national celebration of the 50th anniversary of the 13th Amendment. The event, which was held in Washington DC, highlighted the progress of Black Americans since the destruction of slavery. Inspired by the celebration, Woodson wanted to create an organization that would promote the scientific study of black life and history.

On September 9, 1915, Woodson and a few of his colleagues created the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. Woodson believed that history was the key to transforming race relations. If people understood the history of Blacks in America it would dispel widespread falsehoods about Black achievements in this country.

Negro History Week Becomes Black History Month

In 1916, Woodson published some of his findings in *The Journal of Negro History*. He hoped this would help popularize his ideas. In the years after, Woodson would work with Black organizations to help spread the word of his ideas on Black history. A graduate member of Omega Psi Phi, in 1924 he worked with his fraternity to create "Negro History and Literature Week," which was renamed "Negro Achievement Week." In 1926 Woodson would send out his first official press release announcing "Negro History Week" would be celebrated annually in February.

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