

Black History Month Statement  
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In 1926, noted historian and author **Carter G. Woodson** established “**Negro History Week**”, which later became **Black History Month**. Because of his dedication and academic work in this area, Woodson became known as the “**Father of Black History**”.

He created the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, which had a goal of encouraging “people of all ethnic and social backgrounds to discuss the Black experience.”

The first celebration was held the second week of February and aligned with the birthdays of two persons who significantly impacted to lives of the African American community....**Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass**. This special month of February now honors the achievements and accomplishments of African Americans, both past, present, and future.

From those early beginnings, the celebration of Black History Month has evolved into a period to celebrate accomplishments, pride, self-discovery, education, innovation, business, political advancements, medicine, science, entertainment and more.

During Black History Month, our nation is reminded of the reality of a systematically oppressed people who have endured generations of injustice, violence, prejudice, and separate treatment all because of their race. But thankfully, changes have occurred to improve the lives of African Americans in America. Significant and important progress has been made on many fronts, yet many challenges remain.

This year’s theme is “**Black Health and Wellness**”. How fitting that theme is because we know that the COVID pandemic highlighted the racial disparities in healthcare. Early on we saw the staggering impact of COVID cases and deaths in communities of color.

Harvard professor **Dr. David R. Williams** noted, “The coronavirus did not create racial inequities in health. It has just uncovered and revealed them.” We also understand that there are certain conditions that cause higher rates of death among African Americans including heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, kidney disease, hypertension, homicide and more.

Another critical healthcare issue that needs more attention is **Black Maternal Health**. Research shows that Black women are three to four times more likely to die from childbirth than their White counterparts. This continues to be an alarming statistic that needs more attention from our nation. We must work to elevate and amplify the conversation to raise awareness and take action to address Black maternal health in all communities. Unfortunately, legislative action on this issue has been slow, but efforts must continue at the local, state and federal level so that we can close this gap.

In this **2022 Black History Month**, let us continue to understand how important it is to **identify** and **celebrate** our progress, and to note where more efforts are needed. In the words of **James Weldon Johnson**, the great writer and author of the Negro National Anthem, Lift Every Voice and Sing... “**Facing the rising sun, of our new day begun, Let us march on till victory is won**”. Thank you!