

# Celebrating with a history of Black History Month

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Upperware, credit cards, the teleprompter, automatic sliding doors, Ziplock bags, the moon landing, the personal computer, and email were all achieved before Black History Month was officially recognized by President Gerald Ford in 1976. Crazy, right? But 1976 is not where this story begins...

The story of Black History Month begins in Chicago during the summer of 1915. Carter G. Woodson, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, traveled from Washington D.C to participate in a national celebration of the 50th anniversary of emancipation sponsored by the state of Illinois called the Lincoln Jubilee. During this 3-week celebration, thousands of African Americans made the journey across the country to see exhibits highlighting the progress their people had made since the abolishing of slavery, including a black history display exhibited by Carter G. Woodson. After the success of this event, Woodson was inspired to form an organization to promote scientific study of black life and history called the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH). In 1916, Woodson and other black intellectuals published *The Journal of Negro History*, and by 1920 black civic organizations were promoting the achievements that researchers were uncovering.

In February 1926, Woodson sent out a press release for the first Negro History Week. He chose the month of February to encompass the birthdays of two great Americans who played a prominent role in shaping black history, Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. More importantly, he chose them for reasons of tradition. Since Lincoln's assassination in 1865, and Douglass' death in 1895, black communities across the country had been celebrating these men. Well aware of the pre-existing celebrations, Woodson wanted the public to extend their study of black history, not to create a new tradition. Woodson did not believe in celebrating the lives of only two men, but the black community "should focus on the countless black men and women who had contributed to the advance of human civilization."

The 1920s was the decade of the New Negro, a name given to the Post-WWI generation because of its rising racial pride and consciousness. Urbanization and industrialization had brought over a million African Americans from the rural South into big cities of the nation, and the expanding black middle class became participants in and consumers of black literature and culture. Black history clubs



Carter G. Woodson



The Evansville Argus, 1940

sprang up, teachers demanded materials to instruct their students and progressive whites stepped up and endorsed the efforts.

During the 1940s the study of black history expanded. In the South, black history was often taught to supplement U.S. history in schools. The Negro History movement was an intellectual uprising that was part of every larger effort to transform race relations.

By the time of Woodson's death in 1950, Negro History Week had become a central part of African American life and substantial progress had been made in bringing more Americans to appreciate the celebration. At mid-century, mayors of cities nationwide issued proclamations noting Negro History Week. The Black Awakening of the 1960s dramatically expanded the importance of black history, and the Civil Rights movement focused Americans of all colors on the contributions of African Americans to their history and culture. And in 1976, President Gerald Ford extended the recognition to a month-long celebration to "honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history." Black History Month has been celebrated in the United States every February since.

Now that you know the history behind Black History Month, you're likely wondering how you can celebrate, right?

**Here are a few Black History Month celebrations and activities that you can attend in our region:**

## University of Southern Indiana

### **FEBRUARY 15 @ 6 PM**

Black History Month:  
Ms. Shirval Moore  
University Center West,  
Carter Hall D

### **FEBRUARY 24 @ 3 PM**

Mandela Social Justice Day:  
Simon Tam

Zoom ID# 936 7493 4388

**Learn more:** [www.usi.edu/multiculturalcenter/events/black-history-month/](http://www.usi.edu/multiculturalcenter/events/black-history-month/)

## Henderson County Public Library

### **FEBRUARY 7 @ 6 PM**

### **FEBRUARY 26 @ 3 PM**

Join the Henderson County Public Library for storytime, a craft and fun activities to honor and celebrate the stories and contributions of black people in our community and world. This event is for all ages and is open to the public. Also, check out the book displays showcasing black authors and stories and bookmarks recognizing national and local influential African Americans and authors.

## Evansville African American Museum

### **FEBRUARY 14**

EAAM is partnering with "and how are the children" for NAAPID (National African American Parent Involvement Day) event. This will be a drive-thru dinner with activities for families at Zion Missionary Baptist Church located at 1800 S. Governor St. and will last until all dinners are passed out.

### **FEBRUARY 19 @ 11 AM**

Annual Rev. J.M. Caldwell Lecture Series at the Browning Room at Central Library. There will be a special guest speaker.

## Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library

### **MOVIE SERIES:**

### **FEBRUARY 12 @ NOON**

Chadwick Boseman Tribute Day  
EVPL Oaklyn

### **FEBRUARY 18 @ 4 PM**

Queen of Katwe  
EVPL McCollough

### **FEBRUARY 21 @ 2 PM**

The Princess and the Frog  
EVPL McCollough

### **FEBRUARY 22 @ 3:30 PM**

Disney Pixar's Soul  
EVPL Central

## **BOOK DISCUSSIONS & TALKS:**

### **FEBRUARY 16 @ 6 PM**

Fright Club: Book Discussion "Dread Nation"  
EVPL North Park

### **FEBRUARY 22 @ 2 PM**

Rather Be Reading Book Discussion: "Homegoing" by Yaa Gyasi  
EVPL North Park

### **FEBRUARY 1 @ 6:30 PM**

True Crime on Tap: "Black Klansman: race, hate, and the undercover investigation of a lifetime" by Ron Stallworth  
Myriad Brewing Company

## **OTHER PROGRAMS:**

### **FEBRUARY 21 @ 4 PM**

Teen Trivia: Black History Month - EVPL Central

### **FEBRUARY 24 @ 3 PM**

African American Read-In. Stories, crafts, songs featuring African American authors - EVPL Central

### **FEBRUARY 2 & 23**

### **@ 4:30 PM**

Steam Spirit: BHM Spotlight: Children's STEAM activities will celebrate prominent black figures in the world of STEAM - EVPL McCollough

## Lyles Station Historic School & Museum

### **FEBRUARY 18 @ 6 PM**

screening of the film "An Eagle on his Button"

### **FEBRUARY 19 @ 1 PM**

Guest speaker Eunice Trotter & screening of film "An Eagle on his Button"