

Woodson: Father Of Black History

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"If man has no history, if he has no worthwhile tradition, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and stands in danger of being exterminated."

Those words, spoken by Carter G. Woodson, who is often referred to as the father of Black History, evolved into what is now celebrated as Black History Month.

Since 1926 a certain span of time has been set aside annually to recognize the achievements and achievers of Black America. That first celebration which was known as Negro History Week, was expanded during the sixties and became Black History Month.

The impact of such an event then and now remains tremendous. As far as its founder was concerned it was undoubtedly his proudest accomplishment. Referring to the event Woodson said, "No other single thing has done so much to dramatize the achievements of persons of African blood."

More credits are given Woodson than for creating Black History Month. It has been said "that the systematic study of Black History began with Woodson." He was also the founder of the Association for the Study of Negro Life

and History (now the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History and the "Journal of Negro History."

Who was Carter Woodson? He was a man who had a vision. What he accomplished he did without the assistance of white philanthropy. He was a man who sacrificed his personal life and dedicated all of his time to ensuring that blacks did not become a "negligible factor in world thought."

Woodson was the son of former slaves James Henry and Anna Eliza Woodson.

Although his skills were in constant demand on the farm, those around Woodson somehow sensed that his life would extend far beyond the farm. His first taste of education was given to him by his two uncles. His brother assisted his efforts to attend high school.

Between working in the mines and studying Latin and Greek, Woodson, at 22, attended Berea College. He then went on to receive his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Chicago. He received his doctorate in history from Howard University. After such an arduous education, Woodson dedicated his entire being to the cause of black people. It is because of his tireless efforts that black

Americans have something to celebrate in February.

Analyzing Woodson and his work, W.E.B. DuBois, perhaps, said it best: "He literally made this country, which has the slightest respect for people of color, recognize and celebrate each year, a week in which it studied the effect which the American Negro has

upon life, thought and action in the United States. I know of no one man who in a lifetime has, unaided, built up such a national celebration."

Reference: Bennett, Lerone, "Chronicles of Black Courage," EBONY, XXXVIII, No. 4 (February, 1983), 32-34.

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