

Mia Kawamitsu  
Copy Editor

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

In 1926, the second week of February was declared as “Negro History Week.” It was developed to write Black Americans into the nation’s history. Carter G. Woodson, who was considered a pioneer in the study of African-American history, is given much of the credit for the creation of the event. Woodson chose the month of February because it marks the birthdays of two individuals who greatly influenced the Black American population: President Abraham Lincoln who abolished slavery, born on Feb. 14, and Frederick Douglass, who was a civil rights leader, born on Feb. 12.

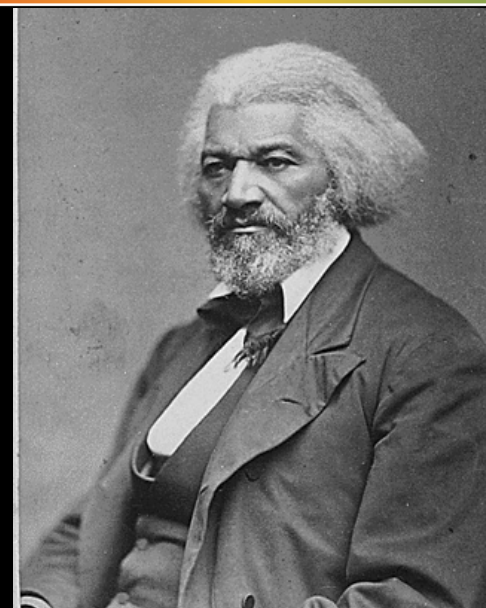
On Sept. 4, 1957, nine African-American students attempted to enter Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas to integrate the all-white high school. Arkansas governor Orval Faubus was against the desegregation of the schools and placed the National Guard to prevent the nine students from entering. President Dwight D. Eisenhower became involved in the conflict and ordered the National Guard to leave Little Rock. He then ordered the 101 Airborne Division troops to go to Little Rock to uphold the law and protect the Little Rock Nine. With U.S. soldiers providing security, the Little Rock Nine marched up the steps of Central for their first day of school on September 25, 1957.

In June 1958, Richard Loving, a white man and Mildred Jeter, a woman with a mix of African-American and Native American ancestry, were married in Washington D.C., where interracial marriage was legal. After returning home to Virginia, they were both arrested and charged of violating Virginia’s law that deemed interracial marriage a felony. In 1967, Supreme Court case Loving v. Virginia ruled “anti-miscegenation” unconstitutional under the 14th Amendment, overruling state laws banning interracial marriage in the United States.

Jim Crow laws of “separate but equal” were being challenged by lawsuits across the south. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) attorneys, including Thurgood Marshall, led the cry for equality to the Supreme Court. Marshall was successful at pointing out that segregation was violating the 14th Amendment that guaranteed that “no state shall deny to any person...equal protection of the law.” On May 17, 1954 the court declared that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional in the landmark case known as Brown v. Board of Education.

On Aug. 28, 1963, 250,000 Americans united at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. for the March on Washington to bring attention to the challenges and inequalities African-Americans were still facing. The event was a massive protest march for civil and economic rights for African Americans. The March on Washington was successful in that it resulted in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which guaranteed equal voting rights. This is also where the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech took place.

Negro History Week expanded into “Black History Month” after many college campuses and mayors of cities began to take part in the growing of the civil rights movement and awareness of African-Americans. It was officially recognized by President Ford in 1976. The month is celebrated in the United States along with Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, and the Netherlands.



“If there is no struggle, there is no progress.”  
—Frederick Douglass



“The time is always right to do what is right.”  
—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



“No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in.”  
—Rosa Parks

