

BLACK

HISTORY

MONTH

THE ORIGINS, CELEBRATIONS, IMPORTANCE, AND REPRESENTATION AT ROOSEVELT.

BY MAIA KISSELL AND STAFF

February, a month of wintery weather, valentine’s day cliches, and 28 days. However, most importantly it is a month dedicated to the celebration of African Americans and their essential roles in U.S. history, otherwise known as Black History Month.

“(Black History Month is) A celebration of the contributions of Blacks on our society. It helps raise awareness and celebrate a community often underrepresented, acknowledged, and supported in our country,” Roosevelt’s Principal Steven Schappaugh said.

“We need to be mindful of opportunities to celebrate and teach around Black excellence, resilience, joy, and history throughout the entire year” said Schappaugh.

Black History Month was first introduced in 1915 following the creation of the Thirteenth Amendment which abolished slavery in the United States. That September, Carter G. Woodson, a historian, and Jesse E. Moorland, a minister, founded the Association for the Study of African American

Life and History (ASALH). This organization allowed for the creation of Black History week in 1926, which occurred the second week of February (this way it would fall in the same week as the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, both

influential people to the Black community).

This began conversations in schools and communities all over the world regarding the celebration of the successes of African Americans.

As the week had been celebrated nationwide, city leaders and members extended the celebration from a week to a month, and thus became the tradition of a Black History Month.

“The importance of Black History month is acknowledging the contribution of Black people to

our country and to educate people about Black history,” Global Black History teacher Alex Dunbar said.

“I think Black History Month is important to me because it really sheds light on the importance of Black History. I really think it should be every month of the year, but it does help,” Senior Mary Kitundu said.

During Black History Month, the history of influential Black individuals is highlighted and celebrated. Some well-known black figures include Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King Jr., Ida B. Wells, Barack Obama, Rosa Parks, and so many more.

When asked about influential that should be recognized, Mr. Schappaugh responded with, “There are so many. Frederick Douglass, George Washington Carver, Maya Angelou, Jackie Robinson, Mary Jane McLeod Bethune, Shirley Chisolm, and even locally folks like Mel Green Sr who was a trailblazer for Black coaches



Sparking creativity. Pictured above is a mural created to honor Black History Month in the community. It is painted by Lucretia Torva and Jennifer White in downtown Phoenix, Arizona. The representation of Black History Month through art is both a creative and important way to give recognition the month and its importance. Photo Creds: Hope O'Brian/Cronkite News

in DMPS”.

“I think Black History needs to be discussed in school because it’s our history. People who want to ban our history invalidates the trauma and everything Black people have to endure” said Kitundu.

Many schools around the world have begun to include Black History in their curriculum and have begun to celebrate the month with their students. This allows teachers and students to learn more about the history behind this month, as well as its connection to events occurring today. Especially with the Black Lives Matter movement, black representation around the world is crucial.

So how can one educate themselves and honor the importance of Black History Month? According to salesfore.org, some of the best ways to honor Black History Month include supporting Black-owned businesses, learning

about black figures and their contributions, donating to anti-racism foundations/organizations, and supporting Black women in the community.

At Roosevelt, students are using their voices to bring attention to the importance of Black History Month in schools.

“Our Brothers 2 Brothers chapter is doing weekly announcements. Additionally, our Black Student Union is planning a Culture Night in the month of March, but the planning is happening now. We have some displays throughout the building as well,” said Schappaugh.

In Des Moines, some events surrounding Black History Month that people can attend include the Black History Month Scavenger Hunt at Forest Avenue Library all day from February 7-12. Des Moines residents can also see Step Afrika!, taking place at the Des Moines Civic Center. Friday and

Sunday tours of the Jordan House, a West Des Moines Museum that was once a stop on the Underground Railroad, will take place at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. throughout this month. Lastly, the Des Moines Art Center will be celebrating the arts of Black History Month on Friday, February 18th, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Black Owend Businesses-

LOCAL RESTAURANTS:

- LOLA'S FINE KITCHEN
- T'S SWEETS
- MUSTANG GRILL

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES:

- CC PAINTING
- LEWIS LAWN AND LABOR
- FORWARD CONSULTING

RETAIL:

- NIK STAR BOUTIQUE
- BLACK IN IOWA ZUMI
- DIVINE TREASURES

HEALTH WELLNESS AND BEAUTY:

- PERFECT 10 NAILS
- PLATINUM SIGNATURE BARBERSHOP
- STYLES BY TASHA