Carter G. Woodson, an NAACP leader, educator and historian, established Black History Week to recognize the central role Blacks played in the development of the nation. The first celebration occurred on Feb. 12, 1926. The second week of February was set aside for this celebration to coincide with the birthdays of abolitionist Frederick Douglass and President Abraham Lincoln. In 1976, the week was expanded to Black History Month.

1619 Dutch ship brings 20 Africans to Jamestown, Va., the first enslaved Africans in the colonies

1773 Harriet Tubman escapes to Philadelphia and helps nearly 300 other enslaved people escape via the Underground Railroad

1849 Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat on a bus to a white man in Montgomery, Ala.

1857 In Dred Scott v. Sanford, U.S. Supreme Court declares all territories open to slavery

1861 Civil War ends

1865 John Brown leads Harpers Ferry slave revolt

1866 The 15th Amendment guarantees that the right to vote cannot be denied because of race, color or previous servitude

1867 U.S. Supreme Court rules in Plessy v. Ferguson that segregation doesn’t violate the 14th Amendment’s equal-protection clause as long as conditions provided are “separate but equal”

1868 Four young girls are killed in the bombing of a Birmingham, Ala., church

1869 More than 200,000 people march on Washington, D.C., in the largest civil-rights demonstration in the nation’s history; Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gives his “I Have a Dream” speech

1870 President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964

1963 Dr. King organizes protest marches from Selma to Montgomery, Ala., for Black voting rights. Police club and tear-gas protesters

1965 Malcolm X, former minister in the Nation of Islam and civil-rights activist, is murdered

1966 Congress passes Fugitive Slave Act, making it a federal crime to assist a slave trying to escape

1967 President Johnson signs Voting Rights Act of 1965, prohibiting racial discrimination in voting practices

1968 Dr. King is assassinated in Memphis, Tenn.

1972 Thurgood Marshall becomes the first Black U.S. Supreme Court justice

1973 Phyllis Wheatley’s “Poems on Various Subjects Religion and Moral” is the first book published by an African-American author

1977 Eli Whitney’s cotton-gin invention ramps up the need for slaves

1984 Rev. Jesse Jackson becomes first Black man to make serious bid for the U.S. presidency

1986 The first observation of Dr. King’s birthday as a national holiday

1987 Nat Turner leads slave uprising

1993 Dr. Joycelyn Elders becomes first Black woman surgeon general

2008 Barack Obama becomes the first Black president of the United States

2011 Barack Obama becomes the first Black president of the United States
You do not wipe away the scars of centuries by saying: ‘Now you are free to go where you want, and do as you desire, and choose the leaders you please.’

You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race, and then say, ‘You are free to compete with all the others,’ and still justly believe that you have been completely fair... This is the next and the more profound stage of the battle for civil rights. We seek not just freedom but opportunity.

We seek not just legal equity but human ability, not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result.

President Lyndon Johnson, speaking to the graduating class at Howard University, 1965
**Black History Month**

**Further Reading**

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**THE DIVERSITYINC TOP 10 COMPANIES FOR BLACKS**

The companies on this particular list show consistent progress in their recruitment, retention and promotion of Black employees, have active Black employee-resource groups, have higher-than-average procurement spend with minority-owned suppliers, and have strong cross-cultural mentoring programs.

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**CORPORATE BEST PRACTICES**

**Before MLK, None of My Accomplishments Would Have Been Possible**

DiversityInc’s senior vice president of consulting draws a parallel between Dr. King’s firsts and the firsts of Blacks as they live out Dr. King’s vision.

**Discover America’s Black History**

Take a virtual tour of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, where the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spent his last day, and view other exhibits that chronicle the key episodes of the civil-rights movement.

**The Stereotype Threat: Dr. Claude Steele Mesmerizes Audience**

Dr. Claude Steele, former provost of Columbia University and recognized leader in the field of social psychology, tells an audience at a DiversityInc event how negative stereotypes perpetuate the achievement gap between Blacks and whites and limit the workforce talent potential. View video excerpts of his talk.

**Where’s the Diversity in the Venture-Capital Industry?**

New research shows only minimal gains in this industry in gender and racial diversity.

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**HISTORY**

**Re-Centering the History in Black History**

Dr. Clement Price, founder of the Rutgers University Institute on Ethnicity, Culture and the Modern Experience, has dedicated his life to civil rights. Read his remarkable story.

**Lynching, Oppression, Lost Potential: Why Blacks Fled the South**

Blacks fled the South for the North to escape lynching, brutal working conditions and unfair labor. How did their migration change the U.S. as we know it? Pulitzer Prize–winning author Isabel Wilkerson discussed this at a DiversityInc event.

**Pulitzer Prize–Winning Author Taylor Branch: ‘The Civil-Rights Movement Is About Our Future’**

Taylor Branch told DiversityInc’s high-level audience at a learning event in Washington, D.C., that the civil-rights movement’s core values of diversity, self-government and the public trust are the keys to the nation’s future and not a vestige of the past.

**NBA Star John Amaechi: Hate Speech Goes Beyond N- and F-Words**

Former NBA star John Amaechi says the antidote to stereotypes and slurs rests in mindfully chosen words. Watch the full video of his presentation here.

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For more facts and figures: www.DiversityInc.com/diversity-facts