National African American History Month
Speech Resources: Fact Sheet

Updated January 28, 2022
National African American History Month Speech Resources: Fact Sheet

This fact sheet links to authoritative information resources related to National African American History Month, which is also referred to as African American History Month and Black History Month. It is designed to assist congressional offices with work related to National African American History Month by providing links to legislation, CRS reports, sample speeches and remarks from the Congressional Record, and presidential proclamations and remarks. It also links to additional government resources and selected advocacy, educational, cultural, and military organizations.
Contents

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 1
History .................................................................................................................................................. 1
Legislation .......................................................................................................................................... 1
Related CRS Reports ....................................................................................................................... 1
Sample Speeches and Recognitions ................................................................................................. 2
Presidential Proclamations and Remarks ......................................................................................... 2
Government Resources ..................................................................................................................... 3
Nongovernment Resources ............................................................................................................... 3

Contacts

Author Information .............................................................................................................................. 4
Introduction

National African American History Month, also referred to as African American History Month and popularly as Black History Month, is observed annually in February, in celebration of the achievements of Black Americans. National African American History Month recognizes the central role of African Americans in U.S. history.

This fact sheet is designed to assist congressional offices with work related to National African American History Month. It provides authoritative information resources on National African American History Month, including links to legislation, CRS reports, sample speeches and remarks from the Congressional Record, and presidential proclamations and remarks. It also links to additional government resources and selected advocacy, educational, cultural, and military organizations.

History

The origins of National African American History Month date back to 1926, when Dr. Carter G. Woodson, a noted scholar of Black history, set aside time in February to recognize the heritage, achievements, and contributions of African Americans. Since 1976, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), the organization founded by Dr. Woodson, has expanded the observance of Black History Week into a month-long celebration.¹

Presidents Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and George H.W. Bush’s messages on the observance were calls to celebrate “National Afro-American (Black) History Month.”² In 1992, George H.W. Bush recognized February as “National African American (Black) History Month,”³ and every President since Bill Clinton in 1996 has proclaimed February as “National African American History Month.”⁴

Each year the national theme for the National African American History Month celebration is chosen by ASALH. The theme for 2022 is “Black Health and Wellness.”⁵

Legislation

P.L. 99-244—In 1986, Congress officially recognized the month of February as Black (Afro-American) History Month.

Related CRS Reports

The Congressional Research Service has prepared numerous reports that relate to African Americans. Some of these include the following:


² For more information, see The American Presidency Project, at https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/advanced-search?field-keywords=%22National+Afro-American+%28Black%29+History+Month%22.


⁴ For more information, see The American Presidency Project, at https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/advanced-search?field-keywords=%22National+Afro-American+History+Month%22.

⁵ For more information on this year’s theme and past themes, see Association for the Study of African American Life and History, “Black History Themes,” at https://asalh.org/black-history-themes.
Sample Speeches and Recognitions

Elected officials often deliver speeches, make floor statements, issue press releases, or enter Extensions of Remarks into the Congressional Record to recognize federal holidays and observances. The following are some recent examples:


Presidential Proclamations and Remarks

One of the many uses of a presidential proclamation is to ceremoniously honor a group or call attention to certain issues or events. Some recent National African American History Month proclamations, from the White House website and the Compilation of Presidential Documents, include the following:

Presidential Proclamations—Joseph R. Biden, Jr. (2021)
Presidential Proclamations—Donald J. Trump (2017-2020)
Presidential Proclamations—Barack H. Obama (2009-2016)

Presidential proclamations and remarks from 1993 to the present are available through the govinfo service on the Government Publishing Office website. Earlier remarks (including
selected audio and video clips) are available through The American Presidency Project, established by the University of California, Santa Barbara.

**Government Resources**

African American History Month is a joint effort by the Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Gallery of Art, National Park Service, Smithsonian Institution, and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and contains an extensive guide to the events, exhibits, collections, audiovisual resources, and research and teaching guides on African American history and culture from their institutions.

African American Heritage Research (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration) provides guides and online access to archival records relating to African American history. These records include manuscripts, videos, and photographs from the National Archives and presidential libraries.

Facts for Features: National African-American (Black) History Month, February 2022 (U.S. Census Bureau) contains collections of statistics from the Census Bureau’s demographic and economic subject areas related to African Americans.


Black Americans in Congress (History, Art & Archives, U.S. House of Representatives) contains “biographical profiles of former African-American Members of Congress, links to information about current black Members, essays on institutional and national events that shaped successive generations of African Americans in Congress, and images of each individual Member, supplemented by other historical photos.” This website is based on the book *Black Americans in Congress, 1870-2007*.

The National Museum of African American History and Culture was established as part of the Smithsonian Institution on December 16, 2003, by the African American History and Culture Act (P.L. 108-184). A competition was held to determine the design of the building and the groundbreaking ceremony for the museum was on February 20, 2012. The purpose of the museum is to provide for the establishment of programs relating to African American life, art, and culture encompassing the periods of slavery; reconstruction; the Harlem renaissance; the civil rights movement; and other periods of African American history.

African American History Month and African American Heritage (National Park Service) highlight historic places that preserve African American history, including information about properties recognized by the National Register of Historic Places that “exemplify the contributions of African American culture and achievement.”

**Nongovernment Resources**

The Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), Founders of Black History Month (in 1926, originally Negro History Week), carries forth the work of its founder, Dr. Carter G. Woodson. ASALH’s mission is “to promote, research, preserve, interpret and disseminate information about Black life, history and culture to the global community.”
The Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University (DC) has one of the world’s largest and most comprehensive repositories for the documentation of the history and culture of people of African descent in Africa, the Americas, and other parts of the world.

Archives of African American Music and Culture (AAAMC) is one of the foremost research centers for the study of Black music is Indiana University (Bloomington, IN). The AAAMC houses African American collections and history of religious, classical, blues, gospel, R&B, and hip hop music.

Author Information

Valerie S. Cervantes
Senior Knowledge Services Librarian

Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS’s institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.