



February is Black History Month

How Did Black History Month Start?

In 1926 a historian named Dr. Carter G. Woodson proposed and launched the observance of “Negro History Week” which, in 1976, would become Black History Month.

Dr. Woodson was the son of former slaves. He earned his Ph.D. in History from Harvard University after working in coal mines to pay for his education beginning at age 20. Dr. Woodson is also an alumni of the University of Chicago where he earned a master’s degree. Dr. Woodson chose the month of February because February 12th is Abraham Lincoln’s birthday and February 14th is the accepted birthday of Fredrick Douglass. In his study of history, Dr. Woodson noticed a hole in the educational system. He realized that the public knew very little about the role of African Americans in American history and he made it his lifetime goal to remedy that problem. He believed that history was made by people, not simply or primarily by great men or women. His goal was to encourage the public to extend their study of black history, not create a new tradition. Black history is American history, however, there is still a need to center the knowledge of how Black people “influenced the development of civilization” in Dr. Woodson’s words.

Dr. Woodson founded the association known today as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History Inc. (ASALH) right here in Chicago at the Wabash YMCA. Now headquartered in Washington, D.C., the organization continues to inform the American public about the contributions of black Americans in the formation of the country, its history, and culture. This year’s theme is “The Black Family: Representation, Identity, and Diversity.” This theme encompasses both the idea of the nuclear Black family as well as the larger diaspora of African American descent.

Black History Month Events at Brook Park

To learn more about this year’s Black History Month celebration as well as for information on the online Black History Month festival, visit <https://asalh.org/>. To celebrate Black History Month, our newsletter will feature some Black Americans who are making history. Additionally, members of the diversity committee have chosen three books to read during the BPC Scholastic Book Fair on February 17th. The books we read can be found on the Scholastic website. Lastly, please check out our book drive to increase the diversity of literature available to students at Brook Park Library. We have selected two Black-owned bookstores, Rose Café and Afriware, to supply the books selected by Ms. Duffy and the diversity committee.

You can find more information on the BPC page <https://brookparkcouncil.org/>



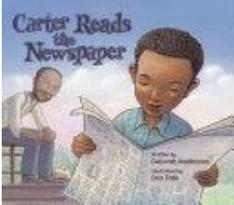
Kamala Devi Harris is America’s first female vice president and the first Vice President of color. She says “I may be the first, but I won’t be the last.” Vice President Harris’s mother immigrated from India and her father from Jamaica. Vice President Harris often comments that her mother raised herself and her sister as “strong black women.” She takes pride in being an alumna of Howard University, a Historically Black College and University (HBCU).

HBCUs are institutions of higher education that were founded before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with the intention of primarily serving the African American community because Black Americans were often shunned by other higher learning institutions. Vice President Harris is among a long line of Black leaders who are a product of an HBCU education including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Sr. There are still 107 HBCUs with a rich history.

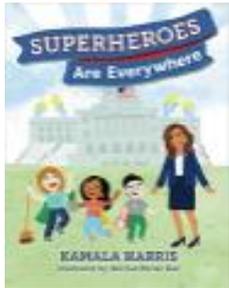


Amanda Gorman is the Youth Poet Laureate who recited her poem “The Hill we Climb” at the Inauguration of 46th president Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. At age 22 she was the youngest poet to address the nation at the Inauguration, however, she is no stranger to the spotlight. She has performed for many notable audiences, including the Obama White House, Malala Yousafzai, Lin-Manuel Miranda, and many others.

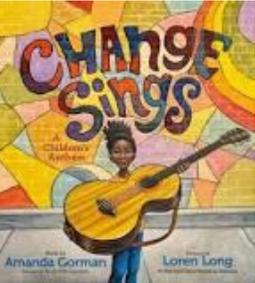
Resources To Get You Started!



“**Carter Reads the Newspaper**” by Deborah Hopkinson. “From an award-winning team of author Deborah Hopkinson and illustrator Don Tate, this first-ever picture book biography of Carter G. Woodson emphasizes the importance of pursuing curiosity and encouraging a hunger for knowledge of stories and histories that have not been told.”



“**Superheroes are Everywhere**” by Kamala Harris. “Before Kamala Harris was elected to the vice presidency, she was a little girl who loved superheroes. And when she looked around, she was amazed to find them everywhere! In her family, among her friends, even down the street--there were superheroes wherever she looked. And those superheroes showed her that all you need to do to be a superhero is to be the best that you can be.”



(Coming in September!) “**Change Sings, A Children’s Anthem**”, by Amanda Gorman. “As a young girl leads a cast of characters on a musical journey, they learn that they have the power to make changes—big or small—in the world, in their communities, and in most importantly, in themselves.”



The “Conscious Kid” <https://www.theconsciouskid.org/books> is an “education, research, and policy organization dedicated to equity and promoting healthy racial identity development in youth.” The Conscious Kid maintains a database of books curated to support conversations on race, racism, and resistance as well as resources for parents to discuss race with their children.

“Talking to Young Children about Race and Racism” <https://www.pbs.org/parents/talking-about-racism> This site includes a PBS Kids special presentation called “PBS KIDS Talk About: Race & Racism.” Hosted by Amanda Gorman: “The show features kids and their parents talking about race and racial justice-related topics in an age-appropriate way, such as noticing differences in race, understanding what racism can look like, and embracing the role we all have to play in standing up for ourselves and each other — offering viewers ideas to build on as they continue these important conversations at home.” This page has additional resources and tips for having meaningful conversations with young children about race, racism, and being anti-racist.

Questions? Do you have a topic you would like to see covered in the Diversity Spotlight? Would you like to contribute to the Diversity Spotlight?

Email Brenda Anderson at bka328@yahoo.com