

African American History Month: Celebrating Two Landmark Anniversaries in American History

Every February, we celebrate and reflect on the great contributions African-Americans have made to our country. This year, African American History Month celebrates two landmark anniversaries in American history, with the theme, “At the Crossroads of Freedom and Equality: The Emancipation Proclamation and the March on Washington.”

On January 1st, we observed the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, and this August will mark 50 years since the 1963 March on Washington and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s ‘I Have a Dream’ speech. We will spend the month of February highlighting these monumental moments and honoring the causes of freedom and equality that inspired them.

In 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation was issued by President Abraham Lincoln, adding momentum to signal the beginning of the end of slavery in America. One hundred years later, Americans from all corners of the country, representing every race and religion, came together under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to peacefully march through the streets of our capital and call for equality under the law for all citizens.

These moments in history were made possible by the hard work and incredible courage of everyday Americans who marched and sacrificed to make a more perfect union, and to give all Americans the opportunities and rights they deserve. These two events have continued to help define the path of freedom, justice, and equality for millions of Americans in the past two centuries.

Still, honoring past achievements is just one part of this month. We will also look toward the future by raising awareness around education, HIV/AIDS, and economic development in the African- American community. And we will recognize our next generation of leaders, who continue the legacy of making sure all Americans have the tools and opportunities for success.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2013/02/01/african-american-history-month-celebrating-two-landmark-anniversaries-american-histo>