

PROCLAMATION

There is no American history without Black History, and we take time each February to commemorate that truth. We use this month, and beyond, to reflect on the heroes who persevere in the face of unconscionable discrimination.

Black History Month grew out of “Negro History Week,” first proposed by scholar Carter G. Woodson in 1926, who chose the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. Black History Month seeks to recenter the efforts of African Americans to tell a fuller story of America.

This year, the theme of Black History Month is “The Black Family: Representation, Identity and Diversity.” Families are the foundation of African American life and a key to understanding the community’s history and culture. This theme also encourages us to celebrate the contributions of African Americans who have fought for a country that lives up to its ideals. The Declaration of Independence states that “all men are created equal,” but, when written, it applied only to white, land-owning men. Equality and freedom were denied from the beginning to African Americans, who have fought throughout our nation’s history for our founding documents to live up to their true meaning.

This struggle is embodied by the national reckoning on race and systemic injustice launched this summer following the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers. The COVID-19 pandemic brought to light even further inequality, with Black and brown communities disproportionately impacted by the virus and resulting economic recession. California strives to lead with equity and to focus our efforts on righting historic wrongs, to prove that Black lives matter, and to work towards fairness in every aspect of life – health care, housing, education, criminal justice and more.

This Black History Month, let us draw inspiration and courage from the heroes who came before us, as we continue the work toward full equality and representation. And let us be reminded by the words of Nikole Hannah-Jones, that “[without] the idealistic, strenuous and patriotic efforts of black Americans, our democracy today would most likely look very different – it might not be a democracy at all.”

NOW THEREFORE I, GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor of the State of California, do hereby proclaim February 2021, as “Black History Month.”

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of California to be affixed this 5th day of February 2021.

GAVIN NEWSOM
Governor of California

ATTEST:

SHIRLEY N. WEBER, Ph.D.
Secretary of State