

Background Information on the 2015 Black History Month Theme: *A Century of Black Life, History, and Culture*

In 1915, Carter G. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, now the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH).

When he founded the Association, he labored under the belief that historical truth would crush falsehoods and usher in a new era of equality, opportunity, and racial democracy, and it has been its charge for a century. It has been 100 years of continuing to build upon this work and in honor of this milestone, "A Century of Black Life, History, and Culture" has been selected as the 2015 National Black History theme.

Over the past century, African American life, history, and culture have become major forces in the United States and the world. In 1915, few could have imagined that African Americans in music, art, and literature would become appreciated by the global community. Fewer still could have predicted the prominence achieved by African Americans, as well as other people of African descent, in shaping world politics, war, and diplomacy. Indeed, it was nearly universally believed that Africans and people of African descent had played no role in the unfolding of history and were a threat to American civilization itself. A century later, few can deny the centrality of African Americans in the making of American history.

This transformation is the result of effort, not chance. Confident that their struggles mattered in human history, black scholars, artists, athletes, and leaders self-consciously used their talents to change how the world viewed African Americans. The New Negro of the post-World War I era made modernity their own and gave the world a cornucopia of cultural gifts, including jazz, poetry based on the black vernacular, and an appreciation of African art. African American athletes dominated individual and team sports transforming baseball, track-and-field, football, boxing, and basketball. In a wave of social movements, African American activism transformed race relations, challenged American foreign policy, and became the American conscience on human rights.

While the spotlight often shines on individuals, this movement is the product of organization, of institutions and institution-builders who gave direction to effort. The National Urban League promoted the Harlem Renaissance. The preservation of the black past became the mission of Arturo Schomburg and Jesse Moorland, leading to the rise of the Schomburg Research Center in Black Culture and Howard University's Moorland-Spingarn Research Center. The vision of Margaret Bouroughs and others led to the African American museum movement, leading to the creation of black museums throughout the nation, culminating with the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. Student activism of the 1960s resulted in the Black Studies Movement and the creation of black professional associations, including the

National Council of Black Studies, and a host of doctoral programs at major American universities.

At the dawn of these strivings and at all points along the road, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, now the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) has played a vital role. When he founded the Association in 1915, Carter G. Woodson labored under the belief that historical truth would crush falsehoods and usher in a new era of equality, opportunity, and racial democracy, and it has been its charge for a century. In honor of this milestone, ASALH has selected “A Century of Black Life, History, and Culture” as the 2015 National Black History theme.

PARTNERING FOR THE FUTURE
2015 BLACK HISTORY MONTH CHALLENGE

A Century of Black Life, History, and Culture

CHALLENGE GUIDELINES – ESSAY/POETRY/SHORT STORY

- Essay, short story, or poem must be written based on the theme **A Century of Black Life, History, and Culture (1915-2015): The Legacy I Stand Upon; What Does It Mean to Me?**
- Essay, short story, or poem submission must be solely the student's original work.
- The essay, short story, or poem clearly reflects the student's point of view (e.g., an essay should not simply be a report of historical facts).
- Essay, short story, or poem must not include any offensive or derogatory language.
- Essay or short story must be a *minimum of 1,000 words* and not exceed three (3) typed pages (double spaced) on 8-1/2 X 11 in font size 12.
- Poem should not exceed two (2) typed pages (double spaced) on 8-1/2 X 11 in font size 12. No minimum number of words.
- Submission must include the student's name and grade.
- Must be accompanied by a submission form.
- Submissions that do not adhere to all of the challenge guidelines will not be eligible.
- **All entries must be received by 5 p.m. Friday, February 13, 2015 to qualify. No late submissions will be accepted.**

PARTNERING FOR THE FUTURE
2015 BLACK HISTORY MONTH CHALLENGE

A Century of Black Life, History, and Culture

CHALLENGE GUIDELINES – MUSIC

- Music must be original and representative of the theme: **A Century of Black Life, History, and Culture (1915-2015): The Legacy I Stand Upon; What Does It Mean to Me?**
-
- Music submission must be solely student's original work.
- Music submission must not include any offensive or derogatory language.
- Music submission should be a minimum of one (1) minute in length and not more than four (4) minutes.
- Music should be submitted as an MP3 file or as a video file and must include the typed lyrics.
- Music submissions must include an explanation or description of how the music relates to the theme. Explanation/description must be typed and double-spaced and include the student's name and grade.
- Entry must be accompanied by a submission form.
- Submissions that do not adhere to all of the challenge guidelines will not be eligible.
- **All entries must be received by 5 p.m. Friday, February 13, 2015 to qualify. No late submissions will be accepted.**

PARTNERING FOR THE FUTURE
2015 BLACK HISTORY MONTH CHALLENGE

A Century of Black Life, History, and Culture

CHALLENGE GUIDELINES – ART/PHOTOGRAPHY

Art/photography must be representative of the theme: **A Century of Black Life, History, and Culture (1915-2015): The Legacy I Stand Upon; What Does It Mean to Me?**

- Art/photography work must be solely the student's original work.
- Art/photography may be drawings (color pencils, crayons, charcoal, markers, etc.), paintings (oil, acrylic, watercolor), paper collages and/or photographs.
- Art/photography must be no larger than 24" x 36" and must be mounted on foam poster board or other rigid surface.
- Art/photography must not include any offensive or derogatory language or images.
- Artistic submissions must include an explanation or description of the work and its connection to the theme. Explanation/description should be typed on an 8 1/2" x 11" sheet of paper and include the student's name and grade.
- Must be accompanied by a submission form.
- Submissions that do not adhere to all of the challenge guidelines will not be eligible.
- **All entries must be received by 5 p.m. Friday, February 13, 2015 to qualify. No late submissions will be accepted.**

PARTNERING FOR THE FUTURE
2015 BLACK HISTORY MONTH CHALLENGE

A Century of Black Life, History, and Culture

CHALLENGE GUIDELINES – VIDEO

Video must be representative of the theme: **A Century of Black Life, History, and Culture (1915-2015): The Legacy I Stand Upon; What Does It Mean to Me?**

- Video must be solely the student's original work.
- Video must be no longer than 5 minutes.
- Video must not include any offensive or derogatory language or images.
- Videos may be submitted with a web link to an accessible video website such as YouTube or Vimeo.
- Video submissions must include an explanation or description of the work and its connection to the theme. Explanation/description should be typed on an 8 1/2" x 11" sheet of paper and include the student's name and grade.
- Must be accompanied by a submission form.
- Submissions that do not adhere to all of the challenge guidelines will not be eligible.
- **All entries must be received by 5 p.m. Friday, February 13, 2015 to qualify. No late submissions will be accepted.**