



Black History Month

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Black History is Everyone's History

Our history as Americans is a story that should include every group of people that has lived or is living in our great country. However, the story of our collective history is not always told fully.

While Black Americans are offered opportunities to celebrate the achievements of many Americans all year, February provides an opportunity for each of us, regardless of our race or ethnicity, to focus specifically on, and celebrate, the achievements of African Americans. After all, Black History is everyone's history; it is our shared history as Americans.

Black History Month doesn't just allow teachers the opportunity to help students know the historical timeline of African Americans. It also allows them to see within that timeline the great and mighty struggle of generations of Black Americans to move from enslavement to citizenship.

The use of the term "enslaved" in this article is intentional. "Enslaved" implies something done to a group of people, whereas "slave" implies something a group of people are. People of color were not born to be slaves; they were enslaved.

Though we have been taught the United State of America is a "Nation of Immigrants," not all Americans are the descendants of immigrants. It is not the factual story for Indigenous people who were already in the land that came to be called America and who are still right here, in this land.

In much the same way, "Nation of Immigrants" does not describe Black people who were enslaved, uprooted, and deposited as laborers against their will in the Americas. Thus, we must use care; assigning students to trace their ancestry in a "Nation of Immigrants Unit" in class may work well for one group of students and not work well at all for other groups.

In addition to an accurate and factual history of African Americans, February provides focused time to recognize and honor the accomplishments of Black Americans in arts, music, STEM, politics, social sciences, and social justice movements. Just one factual lesson, one good book with a strong BIPOC character, just one poster of a great African American composer or scientist or leader is a significant acknowledgement that we see our shared history. To be accurate, our collective U.S. history must include the history of Black people. Black history is everyone's history.

