



BLK History Month

By: [Nikki Giovanni](#)

If Black History Month is not
viable then wind does not
carry the seeds and drop them
on fertile ground
rain does not
dampen the land
and encourage the seeds
to root
sun does not
warm the earth
and kiss the seedlings
and tell them plain:
You're as Good as Anybody Else
You've Got a Place Here, Too

The Library of Congress documents that National Black History Month originated in 1915, when historian and author Dr. Carter G. Woodson founded the organization now known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History External. The intention of Dr. Woodson's recognition of Black History Month was never to dictate or limit the exploration of the Black experience, but to bring the public's attention to important developments that merit emphasis using different themes for the celebration.

This year's theme for Black History Month is "**Black Resistance: Building Bridges and Navigating Barriers.**" Our resistance to historical oppression is evidenced by the success that Black people have achieved in all arenas since Jim Crow laws of 1875 were abolished and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 legislation was achieved. When one thinks about Black resistance one may think of marches, protests, riots, and boycotts. One may think of well-known African Americans that continue to render powerful speeches at the "Home-Going Services" of those that have died at the hands of brutal policing. One may think of organizations like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, (BPP) and the Black Lives Matter Movement

(BLM), whose members and activists have committed their time, resources, and even their lives to fighting overt racial injustices.

One may not understand that fighting for the enactment of legislation that actually allows me to unapologetically wear my afro without it being considered offensive and unprofessional in predominantly White places of employment is a form of resistance.¹ Persevering for 67 years after Emmett Till was murdered to get an anti-lynching bill that was not unanimously passed in March of 2022 is a prime example of resisting those that block the same personal safety afforded to most Americans.² All these things have happened, and continue to happen. However, the greatest acts of resistance are lived out every day in the lives of African Americans as we navigate discriminatory barriers and racial microaggressions that have led psychologists to refer to these indignities as “death by a thousand cuts.” Congressman John Lewis awakened us with the reality that “...our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month, or a year, it is the struggle of a lifetime.”³

We continue to resist barriers that reduce our quality of life and stifle our talent, creativity, perseverance, authenticity, and resilience. Our persistent resistance has resulted in gains not only for African Americans, but for many other citizens that hold racial and marginalized identities. Our keynote speaker at the upcoming 2023 Montessori Experience and Refresher Course, Professor Nikki Giovanni once said, “No matter what we think about this country that we now call America, it couldn’t be diddly-squat without black people having come and given it the language that we have.”⁴

RESISTANCE is ACTIVISM. Guiding children to understand how to demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions is a core goal of anti-bias education.⁵ This is the work toward building bridges.

Colleagues, during this month as you present lessons and engage in projects regarding African American history, the children will get a glimpse of past unfairness and injustice. It will serve them even more if we offer current day truth in age-appropriate language. That truth is that racial bias and injustice is still very real. Educate for peace and emphasize peacebuilding. This can happen when we intentionally acknowledge the intersection between peace, diversity, equity, justice, inclusion and belonging. “Preventing conflicts is the work of politics: establishing peace is the work of education.”⁶

Resources

Sharing books, art, and music are great ways to share Black history and cultural stories. Buying from Black-owned bookstores supports the Kwanzaa principle, Ujamaa, to build and maintain our own businesses

¹ Watson-Coleman. (2022, December) Senate Republicans Block Passage of Crown Act.

Retrieved from:

<https://watsoncoleman.house.gov/newsroom/press-releases/senate-republicans-block-passage-of-crown-act/>, February 2, 2023

² Wright Edelman. (April, 2022) The Emmett Till Antilynching Act: Remedy at Last

Retrieved from:

<https://www.childrensdefense.org/child-watch-columns/health/2022/the-emmett-till-antilynching-act/>, February 2, 2023

³ Allred, C. (2020, July) Allred Statement on the Passing of Congressman John Lewis

Retrieved from:

<https://allred.house.gov/media/press-releases/allred-statement-passing-congressman-john-lewis>, February 2, 2022

⁴ Grave, L. (March 2018) Giovanni delivers ode to historical resilience

Retrieved from: <https://flathatnews.com/2018/03/20/giovanni-delivers-ode-to-historical-resilience/>

<https://www.childre>, February 2, 2023

⁵ Derman-Sparks, L. (2019, November). Understanding Anti-Bias Education: Bringing the Four Core Goals to Every Facet of Your Curriculum. Retrieved from:

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/nov2019/understanding-anti-bias>, February 2, 2022

⁶ Montessori, M. (1992). Education and Peace. Oxford: Clio Press. p. 24.

and to spend our dollars within the community to profit from them together. Buying from Black businesses is a form of activism and allyship.

<https://www.oprahdaily.com/entertainment/books/a33497812/black-owned-bookstores/>

National Museum of African American History and Culture.(2017, November) The Seven Principles of Kwanzaa. Retrieved from:

<https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/seven-principles-kwanzaa>, February 4, 2023

Use the link below to access resources and programs to celebrate, learn, and teach about Black culture and history. <https://mountainlake.org/culture-history-allyship-for-black-history-month-and-beyond/>

Black History Month poems

<https://www.weareteachers.com/black-history-month-poems>

This article was written and organized by Sheri L Bishop, M.Ed., Human Rights & Social Justice Advisor to AMI/USA.

