

Black History Month's 35-year Legacy

To commemorate and celebrate the contributions to the United States made by people of African descent, American historian Carter G. Woodson established Black History Week. The first celebration occurred on Feb. 12, 1926.

For many years, the second week of February was set aside for this celebration to coincide with the birthdays of abolitionist/editor Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. In 1976, as part of the nation's bicentennial, the week was expanded into Black History Month.

Each year, U.S. presidents proclaim February as National African-American History Month.

The population figures shown here are based on various sources but not on the 2010 Census. The 2010 figures for the black population and other races will be released by April.

As of July 1, 2009, the estimated population of black residents in the United States, including those of more than one race, was 41.8 million, or 13.6 percent of the total U.S. population. This figure represents an increase of more than a half-million residents from one year earlier.

California is one of 18 states with an estimated black population on July 1, 2009, of at least 1 million. New York, with 3.5 million, led the way. The other states on the list were Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.