

Origins of Black History Month

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 number of people who identified as black, either alone or in combination with one or more other races, in the 2010 Census was 42 million. They made up 13.6 percent of the total U.S. population. The black population grew by 15.4 percent from 2000 to 2010.

The projected black population of the United States (including those of more than one race) for July 1, 2050, is 65.7 million. On that date, according to the projection, blacks would constitute 15 percent of the nation's total population.

The black population in New York, which led all states in 2010, is 3.3 million. The other nine states in the top 10 were Florida, Texas, Georgia, California, North Carolina, Illinois, Maryland, Virginia and Ohio.