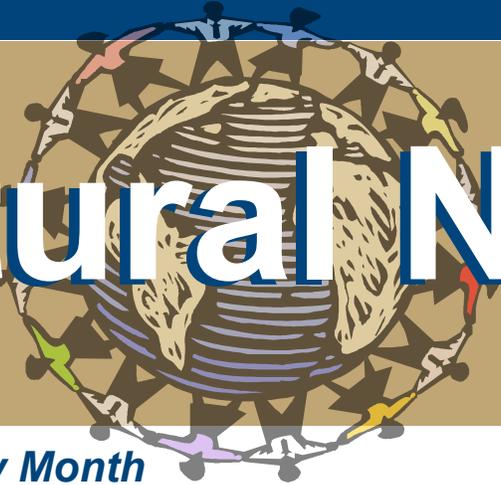


# Cultural News

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## Origins of Black History Month

Black History Month, or National African American History Month, is an annual celebration of achievements by black Americans and a time for recognizing the central role of African Americans in U.S. history. The event grew out of "Negro History Week," the brainchild of noted historian Carter G. Woodson and other prominent African Americans. Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month. Other countries around the world, including Canada and the United Kingdom, also devote a month to celebrating black history.

The story of Black History Month begins in 1915, half a century after the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in the United States. That September, the Harvard-trained historian Carter G. Woodson and the prominent minister Jesse E. Moorland founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), an organization dedicated to researching and promoting achievements by black Americans and other peoples of African descent. Known today as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), the group sponsored a national Negro History week in 1926, choosing the second week of February to

coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. The event inspired schools and communities nationwide to organize local celebrations, establish history clubs and host performances and lectures.

In the decades that followed, mayors of cities across the country began issuing yearly proclamations recognizing Negro History Week. By the late 1960s, thanks in part to the Civil Rights Movement and a growing awareness of black identity, Negro History Week had evolved into Black History Month on many college campuses. President Gerald R. Ford officially recognized Black History Month in 1976, calling upon the public to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history."

Since then, every American president has designated February as Black History Month and endorsed a specific theme. The 2013 theme, At the Crossroads of Freedom and Equality: The Emancipation Proclamation and the March on Washington, marks the 150th and 50th anniversaries of two pivotal events in African-American history.

<http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/black-history-month>



## Black History Month 2017 Theme: The Crisis in Black Education

The theme for 2017 focuses on the crucial role of education in the history of African Americans. ASALH's founder Carter G. Woodson once wrote that "if you teach the Negro that he has accomplished as much good as any other race he will aspire to equality and justice without regard to race." Woodson understood well the implications associated with the denial of access to knowledge, and he called attention to the crisis that resulted from persistently imposed racial barriers to equal education. The crisis in black education first began in the days of slavery when it was unlawful for slaves to learn to read and write. In pre-Civil War northern cities, free blacks were forced as children to walk long distances past white schools on their way to the one school relegated solely to them. Whether by laws, policies, or practices, racially separated schools remained the norm in America from the late nineteenth century well into our own time.

Throughout the last quarter of the twentieth century and continuing today, the crisis in black education has grown significantly in urban neighborhoods where public schools lack resources, endure overcrowding, exhibit a racial achievement gap, and confront policies that fail to deliver substantive opportunities. The touted benefits of education remain elusive to many blacks of all ages. Tragically, some poorly performing schools serve as pipelines to prison for youths.

Yet, African American history is rich in centuries-old efforts of resistance to this crisis: the slaves' surreptitious endeavors to learn; the rise of black colleges and universities after the Civil War; unrelenting battles in the courts; the black history movement; the freedom schools of the 1960s; and local community-based academic and mentorship programs that inspire a love of learning and thirst for achievement. Addressing the crisis in black education should be considered one of the most important goals in America's past, present, and future.

<https://asalh100.files.wordpress.com/2014/11/2017-black-history-theme.pdf>

**FEBRUARY 2017  
CALENDAR**

**AMERICAN HEART MONTH**  
**NATIONAL BLACK HISTORY MONTH**  
**NATIONAL PARENT LEADERSHIP MONTH**

- 1-5- African Heritage Week (US)
- 1- Vasant Panchami (Hindu)
- 3- Setsebun sai (Shinto)
- 5- Super Bowl 51 (US)
- 7-14- National Marriage Week (US)
- 11- Tu BiShva (Jewish)
- 12- Lincoln's Birthday (US)
- 14- Valentines Day (International)
- 15- Nirvana Day (Buddhist, Jain and Sikh)
- 18- Pluto Day (US)
- 19- Meatfare Sunday (Orthodox Christian)
- 20- President's Day (US)
- 26- March 1- Intercalary (Baha'i)
- 27- Anosomia Awareness Day (International)
- 28- Shrove Tuesday (Christian)



## Valentine's Day Celebrations Around the World: Asian Traditions

### India

Valentine's Day is relatively new to India, as television and radio influenced the culture with love-letter competitions in the 1990s. There continues to be some controversy around the holiday, as culturally Indians still consider love and marriage to be topics that involve the whole family, not just the couple themselves, and public displays of affection are frowned upon in many places. Nevertheless, Valentine's Day is becoming increasingly popular. Restaurants, discos, movie-theaters, and bars are busier than usual as couples celebrate the day together. People may express their love to friends and family, as well as loved ones, and even propose on this romantic day. Gifts exchanged include chocolates, fresh flowers, cards, soft toys and candies.

### Japan

In Japan on Valentine's Day it is customary for women to be the gift-givers, the most popular gift being chocolate. As you might expect in a culture in which all types of communication can be considered an art form, each variety of chocolate has a different meaning, depending on the nature of the relationship: "Giri-choco" literally means "obligation chocolate" and is given more as a courtesy with no romantic association to teachers, male co-workers, and even bosses. "Honmei-choco" means "favorite chocolate" and is reserved for a man for whom the giver has romantic feelings. "Tomo-choco" means "friendship chocolate" and is popularly given in schools by boys and girls to all their friends. Later, on March 14th, or "White Day," men return the favor by giving chocolate to women, with inexpensive chocolates given in a non-romantic situation and higher-quality given to loved ones. White chocolate is especially popular, yet flowers, candies and other gifts are also given.

### South Korea

In South Korea, the 14th day of every month of the year is celebrated as a certain "love day." The most popular is Valentine's Day on February 14th, when women give gifts of chocolate to men for whom they feel affection. During the next month, "White Day" is celebrated on March 14th. Men return gifts of chocolate, especially white chocolate, and hard candies, often around three times the value of the gift they received from their loved ones. Unique to South Korea, a third day, "Black Day" falling on April 14th, is dedicated to singles. People who did not receive Valentine's or White Day gifts gather in restaurants, often wearing black, to lament their lack of love. Jajangmyeon, a "comfort food" and national dish comprising noodles topped with thick, black soybean sauce, is a popular dish for this occasion.

Ever wonder how the "day of love" is celebrated around the world? Though not always celebrated on February 14th, many Eastern cultures dedicate a special day to expressing love and appreciation to loved ones, family, and friends. While some celebrations of love in Asian cultures are rooted in ancient traditional holidays, others involve adaptations of popular Western customs. Either way, the following represents a selection of unique and interesting ways people celebrate love, which is at the heart of much of the personal and professional relationship building that is so important in Asia:

### China

The holiday tradition of the Qixi Festival is considered the "Chinese Valentine's Day." It is celebrated on the 7th day of the 7th month of the Chinese calendar, falling this year on August 9, 2016. The festival originated from a legendary love story of the special day when separated lovers, a cowherd and weaver maid, could reunite for only one day a year. During the festival, young girls will pray for sewing skills and make wishes for happiness and love. Chocolates, flowers and gifts are sold in stores as well. The Western Valentine's Day celebrated on February 14th is also becoming more popular, especially with young people in the cities. Loved ones typically gift chocolates, flowers and fancy dinners to one another.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sharon-schweitzer/valentines-day-celebrations-asia\\_b\\_9211276.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sharon-schweitzer/valentines-day-celebrations-asia_b_9211276.html)

## Nirvana Day: Buddhist-Jain

Parinirvana — Nirvana Day — is observed primarily by Mahayana Buddhists, most commonly on February 15th. The day commemorates the death of the historical Buddha and his entry into Nirvana.

Nirvana Day is a time for contemplation of Buddha's teachings. Some monasteries and temples hold meditation retreats. Others open their doors to lay people, who bring gifts of money and household goods to support monks and nuns.

### About Nirvana

The word Nirvana means "to extinguish," such as extinguishing the flame of a candle. Some schools of Buddhism explain Nirvana as a state of bliss or peace, and this state may be experienced in life, or it may be entered into at death. The Buddha taught that Nirvana was beyond human imagination, and so speculation about what Nirvana is like is foolish.

### The Death of Buddha

Buddha died at the age of 80 in the company of his monks. As recorded in

the Parinibbana Sutta, Buddha knew his life was at an end, and he assured his monks that he had withheld no spiritual teaching from them. He urged them to maintain the teachings, so that they would continue to help people through the ages to come.

Finally he said, "All conditioned things are subject to decay. Strive for your liberation with diligence." Those were his last words.



<http://buddhism.about.com/od/buddhistholidays/a/nirvanaday.htm>