

Proclamation 8345 of February 2, 2009

National African American History Month, 2009

*By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation*

The history of African Americans is unique and rich, and one that has helped to define what it means to be an American. Arriving on ships on the shores of North America more than 300 years ago, recognized more as possessions than people, African Americans have come to know the freedoms fought for in establishing the United States and gained through the use of our founding principles of freedom of speech, freedom of the press, the right to assembly, and due process of law. The ideals of the Founders became more real and more true for every citizen as African Americans pressed us to realize our full potential as a Nation and to uphold those ideals for all who enter into our borders and embrace the notion that we are all endowed with certain unalienable rights.

Since Carter G. Woodson first sought to illuminate the African American experience, each February we pause to reflect on the contributions of this community to our national identity. The history is one of struggle for the recognition of each person's humanity as well as an influence on the broader American culture. African Americans designed our beautiful Capital City, gave us the melodic rhythms of New Orleans Jazz, issued new discoveries in science and medicine, and forced us to examine ourselves in the pages of classic literature. This legacy has only added luster to the brand of the United States, which has drawn immigrants to our shores for centuries.

This year's theme, "The Quest for Black Citizenship in the Americas," is a chance to examine the evolution of our country and how African Americans helped draw us ever closer to becoming a more perfect union.

The narrative of the African American pursuit of full citizenship with all of the rights and privileges afforded others in this country is also the story of a maturing young Nation. The voices and examples of the African American people worked collectively to remove the boulders of systemic racism and discrimination that pervaded our laws and our public consciousness for decades. Through the work of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman, Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver, Martin Luther King and Thurgood Marshall, the African American community has steadily made progress toward the dreams within its grasp and the promise of our Nation. Meanwhile, the belief that those dreams might one day be realized by all of our citizens gave African American men and women the same sense of duty and love of country that led them to shed blood in every war we have ever fought, to invest hard-earned resources in their communities with the hope of self empowerment, and to pass the ideals of this great land down to their children and grandchildren.

As we mark National African American History Month, we should take note of this special moment in our Nation's history and the actors who worked so diligently to deliver us to this place. One such organization is the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People—the NAACP—which this year will witness 100 years of service to the Nation

on February 12. Because of their work, including the contributions of those luminaries on the front lines and great advocates behind the scenes, we as a Nation were able to take the dramatic steps we have in recent history.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim February 2009 as National African American History Month. I call upon public officials, educators, librarians, and all the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs that raise awareness and appreciation of African American history.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this second day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-third.

BARACK OBAMA

Proclamation 8346 of February 27, 2009

American Red Cross Month, 2009

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Sixty-two years after its founding, the Red Cross was instrumental in what President Franklin D. Roosevelt called the “greatest single crusade of mercy in all of history.” In 1943, at the height of World War II, President Roosevelt called on the American people to support the troops by supporting the Red Cross, which provided food, blood, and supplies to American troops, allies, and civilians across the world. President Roosevelt asked Americans to donate funds to the Red Cross, setting a goal of \$125 million for 6 weeks of fundraising. The American people responded with characteristic generosity, opening their hearts and wallets. The Red Cross met this goal in less than 6 weeks. During that season of generosity and unity, President Roosevelt proclaimed March 1943 as the first Red Cross Month.

The Red Cross has continued to serve those suffering from large- and small-scale disasters. The organization is best known for its work helping communities deal with major disasters such as hurricanes, floods, and wildfires. These large-scale disasters represent a major part of the work of the American Red Cross. Just as important are the tens of thousands of small-scale disasters that occur every day in communities nationwide, and the volunteers who respond to them. These efforts include supporting our military and their families, collecting and distributing blood, helping the needy, delivering health and safety education, and providing aid abroad.

In every response, volunteers are the key to Red Cross efforts. Volunteers represent 96 percent of the Red Cross workforce. Without their giving spirit, disaster relief operations would fall short, blood donations would fail, and the mission of the Red Cross would go unfulfilled. Whether helping military families stay connected with service members around the world, teaching CPR and first aid, or supporting other members of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, volunteers are critical to