



Indian Diaspora Council International
Shared heritage, aspirations and interests
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PRESS RELEASE

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Observance of Black History Month 2018

The **Indian Diaspora Council International (IDC)**, in collaboration with its global membership and affiliates, is pleased to join with other organizations, associations, agencies, groups and individuals in observance of the 42nd anniversary of Black History Month in the USA. Black History Month honors the contributions of African Americans to U.S. history.

The celebration of Black History Month began as “Negro History Week,” which was created in 1926 by Carter G. Woodson, a noted African American historian, scholar, educator, and publisher. It became a month-long celebration in 1976. The month of February was chosen to coincide with the birthdays of abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass and President Abraham Lincoln.

The African Americans population of the United States in 1870 was 4.8 million; in 2016, the number of black residents of the United States, including those of more than one race, was 43.3 million (per US Census quick facts July 2016).

The origins of African American culture have their roots in slavery. Almost all Africans brought to the United States were treated as slaves, from the earliest years of the American colonies to the end of the Civil War in 1865. In spite of their harsh living conditions, African Americans, and later their children and grandchildren, made major musical contributions to American culture. As African Americans began to integrate after the end of the Civil War, the music, literature, athletics, media, civil rights pursuits, political skills and other accomplishments of African Americans greatly influenced mainstream American culture and society.

For example, the banjo is based on an African stringed instrument, while the blues combine themes from African and European music. Another example is food: yams and okra came from Africa and remain popular parts of African-American cuisine, or 'soul food.

Examples of pioneering high achievers among African Americans are many. In 1968, Shirley Chisholm was the first African American woman elected to US House of Representatives and in 1972 she broke ground again when she was the first major party African-American candidate and the first female candidate for president of USA. Thurgood Marshall, grandson of a slave, served as the first African American Supreme Court Justice (Oct. 1967 until Oct. 1991). Nobel Prize civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. followed Mahatma Gandhi’s practice of non-violent struggle for civil rights and end of segregation; other stalwarts and pioneers in various segments of society include Mohamed Ali, Michael Jackson, Nat King Cole, Langston Hughes, Oprah Winfrey, Arthur Ashe, Hank Aaron, Maya Angelou, Fats Domino, Duke Ellington, George Washington Carver, Jesse Jackson, Jesse Owens, Colin Powell, Jackie Robinson, Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, and so many others. Barack Obama became the first African-American president in U.S. history and served for two consecutive terms (from 2009 to 2017).

“We are highlighting the important role African-American figures have played, and continue to play, in promoting true religious freedom and church-state separation”, said civil rights activist John Lewis who continues to build on his legacy of promoting equality and fairness through his activism and career. Jesse Owens, world record-setting Olympic athlete, said, “We all have dreams. In order to make dreams come into reality, it takes an awful lot of determination, dedication, self-discipline and effort.”

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Indian Diaspora Council International (IDC), established in 1997, is an international non-profit organization with global affiliates and membership in 21 countries with the objective to embrace, engage, and enhance the shared heritage, aspirations, and interests of persons of Indian origin with optimum inclusivity.