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

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Indian Diaspora Council Observance of Black History Month 2025 in USA

The **Indian Diaspora Council International** (**IDC**), in collaboration with its global membership and affiliates, is pleased to join with other organizations, associations, agencies, and individuals in observance of the 49th anniversary of Black History Month in the USA, honoring the contributions of African Americans to U.S. history.

The celebration of Black History Month began as "**Negro History Week**," 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** (born February 1818) and President Abraham Lincoln (born February 12, 1809).

In 1870, the African American population in the USA was 4.8 million. By 2022, this number had grown to 50.1 million, including individuals of more than one race, making up 15% of the total U.S. population of 333.3 million (Black Demographics). The origins of African American culture are deeply rooted in slavery. From the earliest years of the American colonies until the end of the Civil War in 1865, nearly all Africans brought to the United States were enslaved. Despite enduring harsh living conditions, African Americans and their descendants made significant musical contributions to American culture as they began to integrate after the Civil War. Their music, literature, athletics, media, civil rights efforts, political skills, and other achievements profoundly influenced mainstream American culture and society. For example, the *banjo* is based on an African stringed instrument, while the blues combines African and European music themes. Another example is food: *yams* and *okra* came from Africa and remain popular in African American cuisine, or *'soul food.'*

Examples of pioneering high achievers among African Americans are numerous. In 1968, **Shirley Chisholm** became the first African American woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. In 1972, she broke new ground as the first major party African American candidate and the first female candidate for President of the United States. **Thurgood Marshall**, the grandson of a slave, served as the first African American Supreme Court Justice from October 1967 until October 1991. Nobel Prize-winning civil rights leader **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.** followed *Mahatma Gandhi's* practice of non-violent struggle for civil rights and the end of segregation. Other stalwarts and pioneers in various segments of society include Rosa Parks, Muhammad 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, John Lewis, Colin Powell, Jackie Robinson, Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, Kamala Harris, former US Vice President, Ketanji Brown Jackson, Supreme Court Justice, Hakeem Jeffries, Democratic Leader in the U.S. House of Representatives, and many others. **Barack Obama** became the first African American President in U.S. history and served for two consecutive terms from 2009 to 2017.

Civil rights activist John Lewis emphasized the important role African American figures have played, and continue to play, in promoting true religious freedom and church-state separation. He continues to build on his legacy of promoting equality and fairness through his activism and career. World record-setting Olympic athlete Jesse Owens once 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.*" The IDC honors the significant contributions of African Americans to U.S. history, celebrating their enduring impact on culture, society, and civil rights.

-Dr. Nicole Bissessar, Director of Community Cultural Affairs, Indian Diaspora Council

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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.