

# OREGON



## COMMISSION ON BLACK AFFAIRS

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## About African American History Month

African American History Month encompasses an entire population of people that possess a unique heritage and remarkable perception of the world. History has not always been kind to African Americans and, as with other minority groups, has left out important contributions made by its members. As so eloquently stated in the State of Oregon African American History Month Proclamation, "African Americans have played central, vital roles in some of the most triumphant and courageous moments of our Nation's history and for generations have strengthened our Nation with countless inventions, medical breakthroughs, and technological and ecological advancements".

### *The History of Black History Month*

African American History Month, also called Black history month, began largely due to one man, Dr. Carter G. Woodson. Dr. Woodson found that history books lacked any mention of the accomplishments or contributions black people had made throughout their long history as Americans. In fact, the only person recognized as having contributed to the

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## Commissioner Jennifer Doncan Awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award

On January 18, 2010, the World Arts Foundation, Inc. awarded Commissioner Jennifer Doncan (Oregon Commission on Black Affairs) with a Lifetime Achievement Award. The award ceremony took place at Highland Church in Portland at the 25th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Program.

The award was given to Commissioner Doncan for founding and coordinating the Jefferson High School Annual Multicultural Film Festival, which is in its 9<sup>th</sup> year of presenting documentaries that celebrate "centripetal multiculturalism" eight months of each school year from October through May. The North Portland Neighborhood Library (512 N. Killingsworth St.) is the community partner for the film festival and the location where documentaries are presented.

The World Arts Foundation also acknowledged Commissioner Doncan's position as Striving Readers Instructional Coach at Jefferson High School. The intent of Striving Readers' Instructional Coaches is to support efforts and the direction of teacher's who are interested in professional improvement through a Strategic Instructional Model and Content Enhancement Routines.

Commissioner Doncan also founded the Senior CommUnity Quilt, which places pictures of the entire class onto a themed quilt and hangs for a year in the main hall of Jefferson High School. Each quilt is auctioned at the first reunion of each senior class. The money is awarded to those high school students (a young lady and a young man), who receive the Crossing Borders Award. Both, the Quilt Project and the Crossing Borders Award programs were founded five years ago. If you are interested in receiving additional information about Commissioner Doncan's programs, please contact her at [jdoncanp@pps.k12.or.us](mailto:jdoncanp@pps.k12.or.us).

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### *Mission*

*To strengthen and unify the Black and African American Community by providing a medium for addressing important issues as well as disseminating useful information.*

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## Attitude

*Attitude is more important than facts.*

*It is more important than the past, than education,  
than money, than circumstances, than failures, than  
success, than what other people think or say or do.*

*It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill.*

*It will make or break a company...  
a home...a relationship.*

*The remarkable thing is we have a choice, every day  
regarding the **attitude** we will embrace for the day.*

*We cannot change our past.*

*We cannot change the fact that other people will act in  
a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable.*

*The only thing we can do is play on the one string we  
have and that is our **attitude**.*

*I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me  
and 90 % how I react to it.*

*By, Charles Swindall*

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culture of the United States was George Washington Carver.

Dr. Woodson began writing black history and inserting it into the relevant pages of history. He founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, since changed to the Study of Afro-American Life and History. In 1926, Dr. Woodson initiated Negro History Week as a way to highlight the accomplishments of black people in American history.

So when is Black History Month? At first it was celebrated the second week of February to correlate with the birthdays of two men that loom large in the history of African Americans: President Abraham Lincoln and abolitionist Frederick Douglass. The bicentennial of the United States in 1976 motivated the legislature to designate the entire month of February as a time for celebrating black history.

A timeline of history reveals more reasons to celebrate black history in February. A few of the dates follow:

\* February 3, 1870, was the date that the 15th amendment passed. This amendment gave black men the right to vote.

\* February 12, 1908, saw the NAACP formed by black and white citizens of New York City.

\* February 1, 1960, was the date that four black college students staged a sit-in at a Woolworth's segregated lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina.

## High Blood Pressure and African Americans

### *What is High Blood Pressure?*

Blood pressure normally rises and falls. When the blood pressure is elevated over time, it is called high blood pressure. Any person can develop hypertension, which is the technical term for high blood pressure. Blood pressure measures the force of the blood flowing through your blood vessels when the heart contracts to pump blood and when the heart rests between beats. In people with hypertension, the tension within the blood vessels is greater, which makes the heart work harder.

Hypertension has been called the "silent killer" because it can cause damage to many body organs without any symptoms. Uncontrolled high blood pressure can cause a heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, vision problems and even death.

### *Statistics*

African Americans and people of African descent in the United Kingdom have among the highest rates of hypertension of any race or ethnic type in the world.<sup>1</sup>

- 35% of African Americans have hypertension, which accounts for 20% of the African American deaths in the United States - twice the percentage of deaths among whites from hypertension.<sup>1</sup>
- Compared with whites, hypertension develops earlier in life and average blood pressures are much higher in African Americans.<sup>2</sup>
- African Americans with high blood pressure have an 80% higher chance of dying from a stroke than in the general population.<sup>2</sup>
- African Americans with high blood pressure have a 20% higher chance of developing heart disease than in the general population.<sup>2</sup>
- African Americans with high blood pressure have a 4 times greater risk of developing hypertension related end stage kidney disease than the general population.<sup>2</sup>

### *How Can You Control Your Blood Pressure?*

- **Know your number.** Having your blood pressure checked is easy and painless. Besides your doctor's office, you may be able to get your blood pressure checked at a neighborhood clinic, health fair or at a shopping mall. The current guidelines of the International Society on Hypertension in Blacks recommend a treatment goal of 130/80 mm Hg (millimeters of mercury) or lower for African American patients.
- **Visit your healthcare provider.** If you do not have high blood pressure, be sure to be checked at least once per year. If you do have high blood pressure, it should be checked more often, as your healthcare provider recommends.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Choose foods lower in fat and calories. Eat more fresh fruits and vegetables. Cook foods by broiling, grilling or boiling rather than frying. Eat less salt in both foods you cook and prepared foods you buy. If you plan to lose weight, try to lose it slowly, about one half to one pound per week.
- **Be physically active.** Begin a moderate level of activity such as 30 minutes of brisk walking, bicycling, dancing or gardening. It is best to do this activity every day, but you can divide the 30 minutes into 10 minutes segments throughout the day. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Get off the bus one or two stops early. Be sure to check with your doctor before beginning any new exercise or activity.
- **Cut back or don't drink alcoholic beverages.** Drinking too much alcohol raises blood pressure. It also adds calories that may make losing weight harder. If you drink, it should be a moderate amount. If you don't drink, don't start.
- **Stop smoking.** Smoking makes the heart work harder. Kicking the smoking habit is hard, but the payoff is reduced chances of high blood pressure and other diseases, and an improved quality of life.
- **Use botanical or prescribed medicine.** Botanicals are a low-cost and effective way to reduce high blood pressure. Research shows that many botanical medicines offer health benefits, often without some of the risks or side effects of pharmaceutical drugs. If taking prescription medicine, it is important to take the right medication at the right time, in the right amount. Talk to your doctor if you are having bad side effects or worries about the cost. Do not stop taking the medicine without letting your doctor know.

### *Remember the Saying:*

**“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”.**

## Community Resource Links

### Job Training and Educational Opportunities

Studies have shown individuals with more education and training have more secure jobs and higher wages.

Federal Pell grants help cover education and training expenses. Nearly all universities and community colleges and many trade and technical schools accept these grants. Even if you do not qualify for a Pell grant, you may be eligible for other financial aid.

It is not difficult to find training or apply for financial aid. The U.S. Departments of Education and Labor created a web site, [www.opportunity.gov](http://www.opportunity.gov) where information is available.

If you want to pursue these opportunities, take the steps below:

- Decide what type of training best meets your needs. You can visit [www.careeronestop.org](http://www.careeronestop.org) or your local community college or WorkSource Oregon Center for help identifying potential education and training opportunities. To locate the nearest WorkSource Oregon Center, call toll free 1-877-872-5627 or visit [www.worksourceoregon.org](http://www.worksourceoregon.org).
- Colleges or WorkSource Oregon Centers can help you apply for Pell Grants and other financial aid. Applications are also available by calling 1-800-4FEDAID, or online at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov). The web page allows you to “Fill Out Your FAFSA” and submit it electronically, which has a much faster turnaround time than mailed applications. You will need your prior year’s tax return and documentation of other income in order to complete the application. Once your FAFSA has been sent to the college(s) of your choice, you can request a “Professional Judgment “from the college(s) to consider your current income. You need to report last year’s income when applying, but your school may adjust your eligibility to reflect your current income. Check with your chosen school(s) to find out the timeliness and policies for income adjustments. You are subject to all rules regarding any loans or grants you receive for school.

Just remember that both, age and capacity are a “State of Mind” and that you’re never too old to learn.

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#### OCBA Commissioners

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Jennifer Doncan   Carlos Richard   Mariahm Stephenson

Willie Woolfolk   Senator Rob Monroe

Joy Howard, Executive Assistant - OACO

#### OCBA Public Meeting Dates

<http://www.oregon.gov/OCBA/meetings.shtml>