

Presidential Documents

Proclamation 7067 of January 30, 1998

National African American History Month, 1998

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

African American history is one of the great human chronicles of all time. It is the story of men and women who, with extraordinary courage and faith, prevailed against centuries of slavery and discrimination to build lives for themselves and their families and to contribute immeasurably to the strength and character of our Nation. It is the story of millions of people who arrived on these shores in chains, yet who had the greatness of heart and spirit to love this country for its possibilities. It is the story of generations of heroes who with their labor, voices, vision, and blood sought to change the essence of our society—our laws, institutions, and attitudes—to reflect the fundamental American ideals of freedom, justice, and equality. African American history is ultimately the story of America's struggle to become a more perfect union.

Each year during the month of February, we focus on a particular aspect of African American history to broaden our knowledge and deepen our appreciation of the countless contributions African Americans have made to the life of our Nation. This year's theme, "African Americans in Business: The Path Towards Empowerment," presents an opportunity not only to celebrate these contributions, but also to build on them.

Our Nation's system of free enterprise has been a sure path to inclusion and independence for generations of Americans, and today African American entrepreneurs are reaping its many rewards. In every facet of American endeavor, in the fields of health care, law, government, and education; as artists, bankers, scientists, and computer programmers, African Americans are excelling and adding significantly to the strength of our economy. If current trends continue, African Americans will account for nearly 12 percent of the American labor force by the year 2000. And even more promising, according to the most recent data available from the U.S. Census, the number of businesses owned by African Americans has grown at an impressive annual rate and significantly faster than the number of new U.S. businesses overall. These statistics are a testament to the perseverance, hard work, and energy of African Americans and of their enduring faith in the American Dream.

As we celebrate National African American History Month, let us resolve to build on this record of success. We must ensure that every American shares equal access to a quality education—an education that will offer the knowledge and skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. We must strive to eradicate every trace of discrimination from our society and the American workplace. And we must work together—government, private industry, community organizations, and concerned citizens—to invest in all our people, providing them with the tools they need to succeed and widening the circle of opportunity.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim February 1998 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 thirtieth day of January, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William J. Clinton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "W" and "C".

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