

Black History; All of our History

Dear Hornet Family,

In February, we observe Black History Month, National Freedom Day (Feb. 1), World Cancer Day (Feb. 4), Valentine's Day (Feb. 14), and President's Day (Feb. 20, celebrating Abraham Lincoln's Feb. 12 birthday, and George Washington's Feb. 22 birthday). February, usually 28 days long, is the only month of the Julian calendar that has fewer than 30 days. Every four years, it has 29 days, the additional day accounting for earth's annual sun orbit of 365.24 days. The extra day means the fourth year of the orbit cycle – the next one in 2024 – is 366 days long and is called **Leap Year**.

It is therefore appropriate that this unique and most distinct month is designated for the observation, celebration, and elevation of the self-determination, sacrifice, and survival of Black people in America. Black history belongs to all of us and is inextricably tied to every aspect of the human experience.

Keeping with this year's focus on justice, connectivity and interdependence, Black Americans' quest for civil rights paved the way for all other groups to enjoy the civil liberties, ethical research standards, and freedoms we have today.

This is why National Freedom Day commemorates the Jan. 1, 1863, reluctant signing of the **Emancipation Proclamation** by President Lincoln. On Jan. 31, 1865 the **13th Amendment**; effectively put an end to the institution of slavery in the United States. Enslaved African people in Galveston, Texas, gained full knowledge of their freedom on June 19, 1865, which became a celebration known as Juneteenth. In 2021, Congress passed legislation to recognize Juneteenth and make it federal holiday enjoyed by many.

World Cancer Day is connected to Black History Month because, in 1951 at John Hopkins University, [Henrietta Lacks](#), a Black woman whose cancer cells were extracted and harvested for research without her knowledge or permission, became the source of the first immortalized human cell line, called the HeLa cell. Her cells have been used trillions of times in the development of vaccines, including for polio, as well as development of cancer and HIV/AIDS treatments, arthritis research, HPV and COVID-19 vaccines, and more.

Though we all benefit from the medical discoveries garnered from Henrietta's cells, they were taken and used without her consent. Henrietta's surviving descendants still fight for justice and reparations. Her story and those of many other unethical experiments on Black and Native American people gave rise to independent ethics committees and independent review boards that ensure consent and privacy rights, and reduce exploitation of human subjects.

James Baldwin, a Black and gay author, stated, "I love America more than any other country in the world, and, exactly for this reason, I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually. ...All theories are suspect, and the finest principles may have to be modified, or even pulverized by the demand of life."

In this month of love, do you love Sacramento State enough to join our movement to make our campus antiracism, inclusive and anti-oppression, a place where all belong? If so, please join us in the multiple celebrations on campus in reverence and respect for Black History Month, our American history month.

In partnership,

Dr. Mia Settles-Tidwell
Vice President for Inclusive Excellence and University Diversity Officer

February Events

Green & Gold Speaker Series: Featured speaker California Secretary of State Shirley Weber, on Reparations Taskforce findings, 12 – 1p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 7, in the University Union Ballroom.

Reparations Exhibit: Worldwide and Historical View of Reparations 1783-Present, 11 a.m. – noon Tuesday, Feb. 7, in the University Union lobby.

Community Town Hall: "Ending the Epidemic of Racial Violence: Healing, Wholeness, and Action", 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 7, in the University Union Ballroom.

For more Black History Month events [visit the IE calendar](#).

[View Online](#)