

Proclamation 6970 of January 30, 1997

National African American History Month, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

For much of the past century, the contributions that African Americans and other minorities have made to our Nation's progress were not fully recognized. African American History Month is an important means by which we help right that wrong. It awakens our collective social conscience to the importance of giving all of our children a complete and accurate record of their country's history. And, perhaps most important, it helps to reinforce America's highest ideals—our respect for diversity, community, and freedom.

During this time of celebration and learning we are inspired by the courage, wisdom, and vision of men and women such as Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Carter G. Woodson, and Fannie Lou Hamer. These great Americans dedicated their lives to ensuring that the ideals of freedom and equality are guaranteed to all. Their noble efforts—and the efforts of those they inspired—renewed the spirit of our founding creed: "All men are created equal." As we approach the 21st century, it is more vital than ever that we remain vigilant in protecting the ideals these visionary leaders fought so hard to uphold. We must continue to extend the circle of equality, justice, and opportunity until it embraces every American.

As we pay homage to our past, throughout the month of February and all year long, let us, with enlightened minds and emboldened hearts, continue the legacy of the civil rights movement. Let us present a diverse but united front to those who would reverse the vital progress that has been made. As the world's beacon of hope and freedom, let us approach the new millennium keeping this vigil.

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 1997 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 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-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON