

# ***Diversity, Equality & Inclusion***

## **DEI Committee Friday Thoughts**

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### **Celebrating Black History Month: Understanding Why**

G. Theresa Thomas, Associate Executive Director, GHA

I proudly identify as African American and Black, and acknowledge that some people still refer to me as Colored—yes, in 2024 the word “Colored” is still in existence. While I choose to proclaim my cultural distinction proudly, it is hard to miss the obvious outward confirmation of my racial identity.

We remain in a world where what is presumed obvious has sometimes been misinterpreted. Does my skin color define what being Black is? Unfortunately, some people wrestle with what they have heard or think being Black can mean. How unfortunate those people are; they miss the beauty, talent, friendship and love of someone like me simply because I look different than them.

How often do we look at the exterior of a book or only read the introduction and determine it is not worth reading? We judge a building by the exterior or its less-than-green lawn when, unbeknownst to the viewer, the real work occurs on the inside and eventually becomes evident on the outside. We calculate a person’s value by what we see: what they wear, what they have, where they come from or where they live. The truth is, we all make assumptions about others that are far from the truth of who they really are. It happens to African Americans and everyone else.

Designating a month to celebrate the full measure of African American contributions to a world that spent centuries denying their existence allows for their great history to be honored and remembered. The Black History Celebration reminds African Americans of our strength, endurance and unwavering faith, and reconnects us to the heroes of our past. It is also a time of hope: we hope to dispel the negative biases that are associated with being Black in America.

The story of Black History Month begins in 1915, half a century after the [Thirteenth Amendment](#) abolished [slavery](#) in the United States. That September, the Harvard-trained historian Carter G. Woodson and the prominent minister Jesse E. Moorland founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), an organization dedicated to researching and promoting achievements by Black Americans and other peoples of African descent. “Negro History Week” was first celebrated in 1926 during the second week of February. The week coincided with the birthdays of former President Abraham Lincoln and civil rights leader Frederick Douglass.

Black educators and students at Kent State University in Portage County, Ohio, [proposed the idea](#) of Black History Month in 1969, and [first celebrated it](#) in 1970. College campuses across the country celebrated Black History Month throughout the early 1970s before it was officially recognized. [President Gerald Ford](#) officially recognized Black History Month in 1976, calling upon the public to “seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history.”

The why behind the celebration is important. Future generations must be aware of the valuable and lasting contributions of African Americans to our world’s success, even when they went unrecognized for their work during their lifetime. Isn’t it hard to imagine that anyone’s ability to blossom could be forbidden by another human being because of their skin color, or that a useful invention could be praised but not the creator of the invention, if their skin was not the preferred color?

Everyone can celebrate Black History Month! Institutions of learning are now limited in what they can teach, but each of us can create our own personal classroom. We can share a book written by an African American author; we can share our excitement of an invention created by an African American. Let us begin the conversation of why exclusion of any group of people is wrong and end the conversation with how everyone can contribute to the appreciation of African Americans and other marginalized people of color.

I identify with a group of proud people who have and will continue to be a part of the fiber of our country. I identify with people who will remain hopeful of change and are committed to being the change we want to see. I identify with people who share the history of our Blackness with our children and grandchildren, along with a stern reminder that they too are responsible for sharing our history with the next generation.

If you would like to know and understand more about Black History Month and why the celebration is important, visit the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. or The Black Heritage Museum in Arlington, Va. You can also click on one of the links below.

[Black History: Facts, People & Month | HISTORY](#)  
[African Americans | History, Facts, & Culture | Britannica](#)

I am proud of our progress as a nation and keenly aware of the need for more work and conversations, if we want to see [Dr. King’s dream](#) become a reality. Let our efforts be the fuel behind change in our nation. Let us ensure that our nation is “A nation where we are not judged by the color of our skin but by the content of our character.”

I hope you will celebrate with me during this set-aside time to remember that it will not end on February 29, because every day is a day to honor the work of African Americans.

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**Goodwin Living DEI Committee: Statement of Purpose:** Educate, Embrace, and Empower team members, residents, members\* and all served by Goodwin Living to support Diversity, Equality and Inclusion.

**Goodwin Living DEI Committee Desired Outcome:** The Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Committee (DEI) will seek open and honest communication and collaboration that will inform and celebrate the age, culture, ethnicity and sexual orientation of team members, residents, members\* and all served by Goodwin Living without bias. \*Members include Priority Club members and Goodwin Living at Home.

**Questions or comments?** Please contact us [DEI@GoodwinLiving.org](mailto:DEI@GoodwinLiving.org).