

## *Celebrating Black History Month*

By Eric Hernandez, IDEA Committee Member:

Welcome to February CE! As is tradition every February, we in the United States celebrate Black History Month in honor of the activists that advanced racial justice throughout the nation's history. Even more, we should use this time to reflect on the lessons of the past and how we can apply it to the context of our present day. We can trace that sentiment back to the very origins of Black History Month, thanks to a pioneer in African-American history—Carter G. Woodson.

Woodson, a son of former slaves, observed how neglected Black history was in academics and was inspired to change that. Woodson would go on to dedicate his life to being a leading scholar of African-American history in the early 20th century, both recording and making Black history universally accessible. Among other things, Woodson (along with four other scholars) founded the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, and ultimately led the cause to establish a Black History Week in February. Eventually, after the accomplishments of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, this morphed into the nationally-recognized Black History Month we celebrate today.

Woodson fought to ensure that the voice of African-Americans were recorded throughout history—recording the ills of slavery and convict lease systems. Woodson, just like your favorite—or not-so-favorite, (let's be honest)—history teacher would proclaim, "Those who fail to learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat it". These words held weight, even if it doubled as a veiled threat from our teachers about failing and repeating a class. It is crucial to be able to trace current events through our shared history by recognizing the social patterns, rhetoric, movements, and ideologies that led to these events. Let's all keep this in mind for Black History Month 2023, and give Carter Woodson his well deserved praise.

