

BEFORE THE METRO COUNCIL

FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROCLAIMING EVERY)	RESOLUTION NO. 25-5449
FEBRUARY AS BLACK HISTORY MONTH IN)	
THE GREATER PORTLAND REGION)	Introduced by Councilor Ashton Simpson

WHEREAS, Carter G. Woodson, Black scholar and son of former slaves, sought to raise awareness of African American contributions and organized the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), which first initiated Black History Week in February 1926; and

WHEREAS, Black pioneers were among the earliest non-Native people to settle in Oregon, but it was not until World War II, that the Black population in Greater Portland increased due to the need for wartime labor. Black communities in Portland thrived momentarily during the postwar but would experience trauma and disruption from racist policies that would displace many Black community members over time; and

WHEREAS, celebrating Black History Month in Greater Portland and Oregon also means to acknowledge the legacy of racist and exclusionary practices and policies that caused generational harm and pushed many Black community members away from their community and the region; and

WHEREAS, despite the growing population of communities of color in Greater Portland, Black community members make up under 4 percent of the tri-county region; and

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of all of us in government to call attention to the continued need to recognize and combat racism, lead with racial equity to dismantle racist policies and to build a community in which all are welcomed, respected and can thrive; and

WHEREAS, Black History Month is a time where all community members are encouraged to reflect on past and current injustices faced by Black communities and seek actions that ensure freedom, justice and inclusion; and

WHEREAS, it is also a time to celebrate the many accomplishments and important contributions that Black Americans have made to Greater Portland and in Oregon including in politics, medicine, the environment, sports and the arts despite these obstacles; and

WHEREAS, Metro's workforce encompasses 6 percent of individuals who identify as Black American; and

WHEREAS, Metro is committed to continuing to partner with community-based organizations and community leaders to strengthen relationships, advance opportunities to engage and participate at the decision-making table and receive guidance on achieving outcomes that foster the prosperity of Black community members in Greater Portland; and now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Metro Council proclaims every February as Black History Month in the Greater Portland region.

ADOPTED by the Metro Council this sixth day of February 2025.



Lynn Peterson, Council President

Approved as to Form:



Carrie MacLaren, Metro Attorney

**IN CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION NO. 25-5449 FOR THE PURPOSE OF
PROCLAIMING EVERY FEBRUARY AS BLACK HISTORY MONTH IN THE GREATER
PORTLAND REGION**

Date: January 14, 2025
Department: Government Affairs & Policy
Development
Meeting Date: February 6, 2025

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Length: 40

ISSUE STATEMENT

The Metro Council has an opportunity to stand with the Black Employee Resource Group, residents, community partners, and local jurisdictions by adopting Resolution No. 25-5449, proclaiming the month of February as Black History Month.

ACTION REQUESTED

Receive a presentation by the Black Employee Resource Group and consider Resolution No. 25-5449.

IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES

Proclaiming every February as Black History Month serves as both a celebration and a powerful reminder that Black history is American history, Black culture is American culture, and Black stories are essential to the ongoing story of our region.

Metro's Black Employee Resource Group asks that Black History Month be an annual opportunity to foster greater public accountability and policy dialogue on racial justice, and that it is an opportunity for reflection, education, and the celebration of Black contributions at Metro.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends the Metro Council adopt Resolution No. 25-5449.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

- Black History Month aligns closely with Metro’s Strategic Framework and core mission of advancing equity, fostering vibrant communities, and protecting the region’s natural resources. It inspires reflection on past injustices, celebrates progress, and informs policies that support a more inclusive future for all residents.
 - Metro’s Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion identifies racial equity as a core priority. Black History Month supports this by raising awareness of the systemic barriers Black communities have faced and celebrating their contributions to society, reinforcing Metro’s commitment to dismantling inequities in policies, programs, and regional planning.
 - Metro’s mission emphasizes engaging communities and inclusive public participation. Black History Month creates an opportunity for deeper engagement with Black employees, residents, organizations, and leaders, fostering partnerships that enhance civic participation and leadership reflective of the region’s diverse population.
 - Through its stewardship of parks, public spaces, and heritage programs, Metro’s work aligns with the celebration of Black history by promoting policies that protect and share the stories of historically underrepresented communities. Black History Month highlights the importance of inclusive narratives in shaping regional identity.
 - Black History Month’s focus on social justice complements Metro’s initiatives to advance economic equity and environmental justice and ensuring equitable access to transportation, housing, and green spaces. Recognizing the historical context of racial disparities helps guide more equitable policy decisions and resource allocation.
- Council adoption of this resolution will further Metro’s commitment to the goals stated in the Strategic Plan to advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, in particular:
 - Metro meaningfully engages communities of color
 - Metro hires, trains, and promotes a racially diverse workforce
 - Metro creates safe and welcoming programs, spaces, and destinations
- This resolution has been drafted by members of the Black Employee Resource Group.
- **Legal Antecedents**
 Metro Resolution No. 20-5078 Proclaiming February 1 through February 29, 2020 Black History Month

BACKGROUND

The Black American experience in Greater Portland and Oregon is a story of perseverance under two centuries of oppressive and exclusionary acts. The first black exclusion law in Oregon, adopted in 1844 was the first of many aimed at deterring potential black settlement into the state, by deeming it as hostile to Black Americans. Subsequent discriminatory policies and practices over the next several decades attempted to break the will of Black Americans by taking away certain rights and opportunities including voting, receiving quality education, holding public office and achieving economic success.

During World War II, the Black population in Greater Portland increased due to the need for wartime labor. Black communities in Portland thrived momentarily during the postwar but would experience continued bouts of disruption that would displace many Black community members over time.

Today, Black community members make up just under 2% of the population in Oregon and under 4% of the population in Greater Portland according to the latest Census data.

This proclamation is intended to highlight the tremendous contributions made by Black Americans, past and present, to Greater Portland and Oregon, while acknowledging that systemic barriers to advancement continue. It is also a time to act; by ensuring that our efforts not only recognize past and present injustices but also work towards removing barriers and creating opportunities for the Black community to thrive.

Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by Black Americans originally founded by scholar and son of former slaves, Dr. Carter G. Woodson who initiated the first Black History Week in February 1926, choosing the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. Since, 1976, every US President has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month.

2025 Black History Month Theme: African Americans and Labor

The Association for the Study of African American Life and History continues Dr. Carter G. Woodson's legacy of providing an annual Black History Month theme to focus attention on important developments that merit emphasis.

The 2025 Theme is African Americans and Labor. From asalh.org:

The 2025 Black History Month theme, African Americans and Labor, focuses on the various and profound ways that work and working of all kinds – free and unfree, skilled, and unskilled, vocational and voluntary – intersect with the collective experiences of Black people. Indeed, work is at the very center of much of Black history and culture. Be it the traditional agricultural labor of enslaved Africans that fed Low Country colonies, debates among Black educators on the importance of vocational training, self-help strategies and entrepreneurship in Black communities,

or organized labor's role in fighting both economic and social injustice, Black people's work has been transformational throughout the U.S., Africa, and the Diaspora. The 2025 Black History Month theme, "African Americans and Labor," sets out to highlight and celebrate the potent impact of this work.

ATTACHMENTS

None