

# Celebrating Black History Month

**FEB. 1 - MARCH 1**

During February, we celebrate Black History Month and recognize the achievements, the history, the culture and the contributions of Black and African Americans throughout U.S. history. We also reflect on the advancements toward racial equality and the continued fight for racial justice. The NCAA has a commitment to acknowledge and celebrate all student-athletes. As such, we honor the contributions made by generations of Black and African American athletes on and off the field.

Use and share our full resource guide to **CELEBRATE**, **CENTER** and **CHAMPION** Black History.



Charles Sifford | Tommie Smith (center) and John Carlos | Simone Biles | Bill Willis | Althea Gibson | Wilma Rudolph

**NOTE:** These recommendations are not for Black History Month alone and should be practiced throughout the year.



INCLUSION

Charles Sifford: Courtesy of The Monroe News; Tommie Smith and John Carlos: AP Images; Simone Biles: Lindsey Wasson / Reuters; Bill Willis: Courtesy of Ohio State; Althea Gibson: Getty Images; Wilma Rudolph: Special Collections and Archives - Tennessee State University

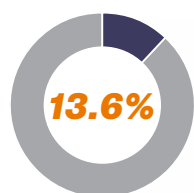
# A Celebration of Culture

## Historical Significance

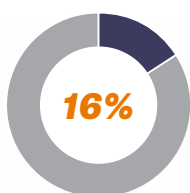
**Black History Month** was first established as **Negro History Week** in 1926 by **Dr. Carter G. Woodson**, who is also known as the “Father of Black History.” Woodson selected February for the celebration because it coincides with the birthdays of **Frederick Douglass** and former President Abraham Lincoln, who both played significant roles in helping abolish slavery. The purpose of the week was to acknowledge the contributions of Black and African Americans, who were often neglected and largely forgotten from the narrative of U.S. history.

It wasn't until 1976, during the height of the **civil rights movement** and raised awareness of Black identity, that President Gerald Ford expanded the week to Black History Month. Today, Black History Month is seen as a celebration of those who've impacted both the U.S. and the world with their activism and achievements. Black History Month is an opportunity for people of all racial backgrounds to go beyond discussions of racism and slavery and highlight Black leaders and accomplishments.

## Black People Represent ...



of the U.S.  
population.



of all NCAA  
student-athletes.

20%

of Division I  
student-athletes.

20%

of Division II  
student-athletes.

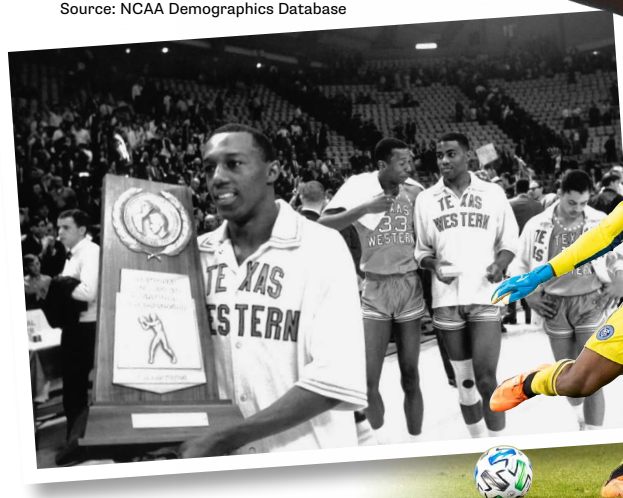
10%

of Division III  
student-athletes.

53

HBCUs are  
NCAA member  
institutions.

Source: NCAA Demographics Database



1966 Texas Western (UTEP) Championship Team | Sean Johnson | Simone Manuel

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## HIGHLIGHTING HBCUs

Historically Black colleges and universities were first established in 1837 with what is now Cheyney University. They were created to provide educational opportunities for gainful employment to free Black Americans. Many HBCUs focused on teaching, theology and industrial arts to provide an educational foundation to support economic independence and self-sustainability. These institutions were founded during a time of legal segregation, and for many years afterward, Black students were generally denied admission to historically white institutions. Thus, by providing access to higher education, HBCUs contributed substantially to the educational, social and economic progress of Black Americans.

Today, more than 100 HBCUs exist, with more than 228,000 students enrolled. Approximately 89% of all HBCUs are in the southern region of the U.S. While HBCUs were originally founded to educate Black students, there are levels of diversity within this unique classification of institutions across race, socioeconomic status and other student demographics. In addition to their academic prowess, HBCUs have produced numerous world-class athletes, such as Althea Gibson, Edwin Moses, Alice Coachman, Wilma Rudolph, Shannon Sharpe, Walter Payton, Jerry Rice, Steve McNair and countless others.



INCLUSION



## CELEBRATE

### Educate yourself on Black culture

Black culture has been credited with influencing pop culture in the U.S. and around the world through music, fashion, dance, sport and many other forms of art. Listen to historic musicians, such as Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, Nina Simone and Marvin Gaye – and current artists like H.E.R., Rapsody, Chika, Common, J. Cole and Kendrick Lamar.

Read literature and books from Black authors like Maya Angelou, James Baldwin and Langston Hughes.

Read articles, watch documentaries and listen to podcasts that share the experiences of Black people. Host group discussions for your student-athletes, coaches and administrators to share their thoughts and insights.

### Explore Black history

Learn about the historic events in the fight for racial equality and justice by checking out the [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#). Explore the milestones and pivotal figures of the [civil rights movement](#) who continue to fuel African American activism and forms of resistance in sport and beyond.

### Show your support for Black-owned businesses

Many Black-owned businesses still face structural racism, which poses a unique threat to their longevity and ability to serve their communities' needs. Becoming new customers, specifically when these companies have a lot more visibility, is a great way to celebrate with your team and athletics department.

## CENTER

### Book Black speakers and talent for your next event

Seek expertise from Black scholars, activists and diversity practitioners. Be open to centering and learning from your Black peers while being conscious of not making them feel they represent the entire Black community.

### Create a sense of community for Black student-athletes within and outside athletics

Be intentional in creating spaces for open engagement and authenticity. Create internal resource groups or community via apps. Host lunches or game nights that create a safe and fun space for student-athletes to learn about one another. Also, observe holidays that are directly tied to the Black community, such as [Juneteenth](#) or [Kwanzaa](#).

### Include student-athlete voices

Center the experiences of Black student-athletes in your department's athlete development initiatives. Work with your diversity office or hire outside consultants to disseminate a climate survey to investigate the sense of belonging for Black and other racial/ethnic minority student-athletes. Allow participants to suggest ways to further support their unique needs.

## CHAMPION

### Partner with campus groups

Connect the bridge between the athletics department and broader campus. Partner with local campus organizations that support Black students socially, emotionally and professionally, such as the African American Student Union, Black Student Alliance and other comparable groups. Invite your student-athletes to join the festivities.

### Establish task forces

Create a platform for your Black student-athletes and staff to be heard. Infuse cultural narratives into programmatic efforts to specifically support their holistic success on campus. Foster inclusion by honoring their experiences on campus as a minoritized group. Check out this resource on how to [create a task force](#).

### Amplify activism by Black student-athletes

Avoid performative allyship by empowering Black student-athletes to use their positions of privilege as athletes to evoke the change they hope to see on campus. Connect Black student-athletes with campus leaders and stakeholders who can spearhead their calls to action.

### Attend a sporting event

The best way to celebrate and support your Black student-athletes is to show up to a sporting event. As always, bring along your friends and teammates to amplify the team spirit.



Jesse Owens | LeBron James | Jackie Robinson | Lisa Leslie | Laila Ali

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# Perspectives of Black Student-Athletes ...

**What advice do you have for teammates and coaches to further support and amplify Black student-athletes' voices?**

"To be able to support anything, you must first understand it. Stand by the side of Black student-athletes if you want to support and amplify their voices. Pay attention to what your Black athletes have to say; a voice requires an ear to hear it. Find out who they are and what they are about. You can't back something you haven't tried to understand."

**How do you use your platform as a student-athlete to bring awareness to your culture?**

"Being a student-athlete is only a small part of who I am. Being African American is a way of life for me. Because I have a platform as an athlete to give my voice greater power and raise awareness for my culture,

I believe there is no better way to promote myself and what I stand for than by demonstrating how proud I am of who I am and where I come from."

**DoRyan  
Jokobe  
Praylow**

Methodist, Junior,  
Division III Football

**How do you celebrate or acknowledge Black History Month?**

"I love celebrating Black History Month and the Black culture by attending events, reading about new historical figures, and simply educating myself more on where I came from."

**What advice do you have for teammates and coaches to further support and amplify Black student-athletes' voices?**

"I recommend that teammates and coaches be conscious of how they emphasize how 'strong' Black athletes are if it does not pertain to the sport. When being an ally to Black athletes, try to consider their mental health as well - it has potential to minimize what that person may be battling and could send the wrong message."

**Titiana Marsh**

Georgia, Senior, Division I  
Women's Track and Field

**Truth Taylor**

Shaw, Junior,  
Division II Women's  
Basketball

**What do you love most about your culture?**

I love what it means to be Black. As a culture, we are intelligent, bold, full of melanin, innovative, rich and diverse. The power we hold as a culture is unmatched. I love our strength, and how years of pain have turned into something beautiful and prosperous for generations to come.

**Why did you choose an HBCU?**

I chose an HBCU because I wanted a different college experience. I did not choose Shaw, Shaw chose me. Shaw is family-oriented, and I felt as if it was a second home.

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