



# Digging up the Past

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Digging up the Past*, a quarterly publication of the Committee for Transformative and Redirectional Recruitment (TRR) with the Department of History at Washington State University. Spring brings with it Black History Month, originally founded as Negro History Week, in 1926. While the field of history has come a long way since 1926, we sometimes still need reminders that “every month is Black History month.” Whether you are reading this in February, or later in the quarter, we know you will find information relevant to you as a resident and/or citizen of the U.S., your/our past, and your/our future. The founder of Black History Month, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, was the second African American to earn a PhD from Harvard University; yet the path to Harvard was a long and difficult one.

Woodson worked full-time, even as a teenager, in the coal mines of Buckingham County, Virginia. He was not able to attend high school until he was 20 years old. But as historian Jarvis Givens points out, even working in the mines fueled Woodson’s belief in the importance of history. Because he was literate, he was able to read to his coworkers who did not have access to any grammar school education. Many were formerly enslaved people who had been banned from learning to read. And so, he read to them in the evenings, and they shared their stories and histories with him. Woodson’s appreciation for the field of history grew throughout this time as he continued to listen to and to share a diversity of histories: national histories, personal histories and community histories; histories of struggle, and histories of liberation.



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Woodson earned his high school diploma in two years and then went on to earn a B.L. degree from Berea College in Kentucky. He earned his Ph.D. from Harvard in 1912. Woodson's books include *A Century of Negro Migration*, *The History of the Negro Church*, and *The Negro in Our History*. He founded the *Journal of Negro History*, and cofounded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (today the Association for the Study of African American Life and History).



**Carter G. Woodson, c. 1895**

Courtesy of the New River Gorge  
National River website,  
National Park Service,  
Department of the Interior

## The Department of History Welcomes Dr. Alan Alexander Malfavon



Dr. Malfavon received his Ph.D. in Latin American History from the University of California, Riverside in 2021. Malfavon is a historian of late-colonial and early independent Latin America. His research interests center around Afro-Mexican, Greater Caribbean, Atlantic World, Veracruz, and African Diaspora Histories. His work focuses on the understudied Afro-Mexican population of the Port-City of Veracruz and its hinterland of Sotavento.

He is especially interested in the many ways that Afro-Mexicans facilitated, complicated, and participated in the multiple socio-political processes that reshaped Veracruz and its borderlands. Malfavon is part of a new generation of historians working to diversify historical narratives by foregrounding the voices, perspectives, and actions of Afro-descendants as essential political and intellectual players in Mexico's political and social past.

Dr. Malfavon loves teaching undergraduate and graduate courses on the history of Mexico, Latin America, and the African Diaspora in Mexico, Latin America, and the Greater Caribbean. He is keenly interested in growing his skill set with GIS (Geographic Information System) and historical mapping to contextualize the meanings of place- and space-making by the African Diaspora in Mexico and Latin America. When not teaching or researching he enjoys playing music, his side-passion, playing son jarocho, samba and bossa nova, reggae, rocksteady, and all sorts of Latin American folk musical traditions. He also enjoys hiking, collecting and playing vinyl records, and watching anything Star Wars related. Star Wars mythologies, of course, are best understood within a Mayan universe.

**College-level history courses enable you to explore aspects of the past that are important and interesting to you.  
The field of history allows you to ... "dig up the past."**

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***Sylvia Rivera: Mother in Arms, by Veronika Akers, History 369***

Sylvia Rivera was a radical Puerto Rican trans activist. She was involved in many gay rights organizations, including the Gay Liberation Front and the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR). As a poor trans woman of color, she experienced oppression in many forms on various levels, which drove her to fight for a broader sense of liberation - liberation not just for any one group, but for every person of every marginalized identity. Her first-hand experience of transphobia in the early gay rights movement pushed her to create safe spaces for trans youth, leading her, in 1970, to found STAR. STAR focused on housing, feeding, and supporting homeless trans youth of color while also providing "a safe-space for trans of color youth to express gender freely and addressed injustices related to prison conditions, police harassment, and anti-trans discrimination in mental health institutions, housing, and employment." Rivera's legacy is remembered by all those touched by her passion and commitment to true liberation. The Sylvia Rivera Law Project, located in New York City, is named in her honor.



***Freeing the World - Emancipatory Internationalism, by Tom Abbot, History 150***

When different regions work for the same goal, that idea circulates through society much faster. Black individuals in Haiti and the United States confronted different challenges when fighting for emancipation and equality, but used similar strategies to promote the idea of emancipatory internationalism. I chose this topic because I am very interested in the history of Haiti and this topic provided me with an opportunity to learn more about the island's revolution. Through my research I learned about the intricacies of the Haitian revolution including the role that Spain played in the revolution. Because of Haiti's vast resources, the island was heavily sought after by nations such as Spain and Britain. Yet the island became free from the rule of European nations because the people of Haiti rose up, both freedmen and women and enslaved. Black military leaders such as Toussaint L'Ouverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines inspired not only the revolutionaries of Haiti, but African Americans in the U.S. as well.

## Here you have a sampling of the many history projects completed by undergraduate students at Washington State University in Fall of 2021.

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*César Chávez and the CSO, or History as Awesome, by Noe Borges, History 150*  
Cesar Chavez is a legendary figure in Latinx history, who was mostly known for his work with the UFW (United Farm Workers). The UFW helped organize one of the largest boycotts in U.S. history: the 1965-1970 grape strike and boycott (which began as the the Delano grape strike). But instead of focusing on the grape strike, for my paper I chose to focus on the activism of César Chávez before the grape strike and before there was a UFW - when he was an organizer with the Community Service Organization (CSO). The CSO worked to register voters, held citizenship classes, and fought police violence. In researching my paper I learned some not so well-known events in Chavez's life, such as when he organized CSO chapters small towns such as Bakersfield, Hanford, and Madera, California. He did this work in the 1950s, before there was a Chicano Movement. If you are a young Latinx person, or even if you are not a part of the Latinx community, Chavez's work can inspire anyone interested in working for justice. His struggle and work ethic to change the lives of farmworkers made him a legendary figure in U.S history, yet his activism began long before there was a UFW.



### *Liberia Civil War, by Lila Rose Ziebarth, History 105*

In April of 1980, Samuel Kanyon Doe, while commanding a group of Krahn Soldiers, led a military coup to overthrow the president of Liberia, William R. Tolbert. Tolbert had begun his presidency with reforms to make Liberia more democratic - and allowed a new political party to form. He also, however, appointed some of his own family members to government positions, and was not able to address the economic divide and the many economic crisis that his country faced. He lost favor with the West when he reached out to China, Cuba, and the Soviet Union for support. When Doe successfully overthrew Tolber's government, Tolbert was assassinated, as well as many of his cabinet members. Some fortunate government workers were able to flee the country, while others were imprisoned. From this project I've learned a lot about the roots of the civil war in Liberia and the cost of the war to the people of Liberia. The country has not been able to recover economically and is struggling to find a good leader.





### At April, by Angelina Weld Grimké

Toss your gay heads, Brown girl trees; Toss  
your gay lovely heads; Shake your brown slim  
bodies; Stretch your brown slim arms; Stretch  
your brown slim toes. Who knows better than  
we, With the dark, dark bodies, What it  
means When April comes a-laughing and a-  
weeping Once again At our hearts?

## Further Reading: Black History Month

### Online:

Celebrating Black History Month: A Look Back at Historic Firsts, *Harvard Law Today*.

<https://today.law.harvard.edu/celebrating-black-history-month-a-look-back-at-historic-firsts/>

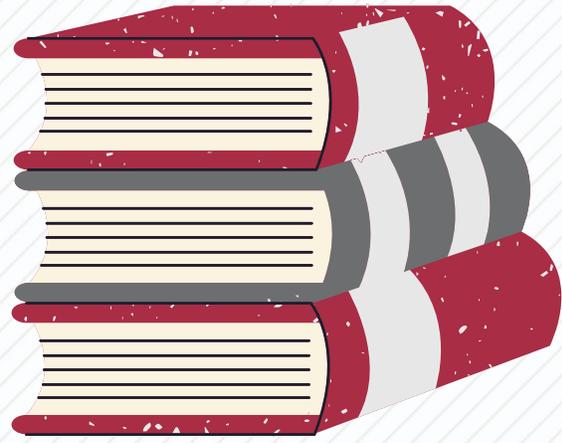
Mineo, Liz. "Celebrating the founder of Black History Month," *The Harvard Gazette*.

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2022/02/celebrating-black-history-months-founder/>

Scott, Daryl Michael. "This Day in History: Feb. 7, 1926: Carter G. Woodson Launched Negro History Week," *Zinn History Project*.

<https://www.zinnedproject.org/news/tdih/carter-woodson-black-history-month/>





## Books for Young Scholars:

Bailey, Diane. *Ida B. Wells*. New York: Aladdin, 2019.

Goggin, Jacqueline Anne. *Carter G. Woodson: A Life in Black History*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993.

Goldstone, Lawrence, and Gates, Henry Louis. *Stolen Justice: The Struggle for African American Voting Rights*. First edition. New York, NY: Scholastic Focus, 2020.

Lewis, John, Aydin, Andrew, Powell, Nate, and Small Press Expo Collection. *March: Book One*. Marietta, GA: Top Shelf Productions, 2013.

Lowery, Lynda Blackmon, Leacock, Elspeth, Buckley, Susan Washburn, and Loughran, PJ. *Turning 15 on the Road to Freedom: My Story of the 1965 Selma Voting Rights March*. New York: Dial Books, 2015.

Schatz, Kate. *Rad American Women A-Z*. San Francisco: City Lights, 2015.

# Rooted in History: Spring Events



If you find yourself on the Pullman campus, please join us at any of the following events:

## **Movie Night: "Dolores"**

To celebrate César Chávez Day, join the Department of History, the Women's Center, and Camaradas, as we view and discuss a powerful documentary about one of the leading labor organizers of the twentieth century.

Thursday March 30, 4:10pm  
Wilson-Short Hall, Room 13

## **Lecture: *The Fight in the Fields: The Farmworker's Struggle for Economic and Social Justice in the Yakima Valley***

Speakers Lupe Gamboa, former farmworker, organizer, lawyer, and community activist; and Michael J. Fox, civil rights activist, labor lawyer, and retired judge.

April 5, 2022, 4pm  
Terrell Library Atrium (also streamed from <https://youtu.be/yjkqgM7l9dE>)

## ***Irwin Nash Exhibit @ the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art WSU***

WSU Pullman is home to a rich photo collection of Yakima Valley history. From the *escuelita* where Drs. Ibarra Frausto and Castañeda worked with a new generation of Washington Chicanxs, to the historic visit by César Chávez and Dolores Huerta, to the everyday life and labor of Mexican and Mexican American workers in the Valley, the collection is filled with many faces that you may recognize.

May 25 - December 22  
Museum Hours: Tuesday-Friday 1:00-4:00pm; Saturdays 10:00am-4:00pm



# Stay Connected with the Department of History!

[history.wsu.edu](http://history.wsu.edu)



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## National Honor Societies



Turn the page to take our quiz - bring your answers to the Department of History Office in Wilson-Short 301 for your **LOADED HISTORY MUG!**

# Five African Americans Who Made American History

Born in 1862, she began her career as a school teacher but then became a noted news reporter. While still a teacher she successfully challenged segregation in the courts of Memphis, though the decision was overturned on appeal. After white men murdered three close friends of hers, she became a leading voice in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century anti-lynching movements. She also founded the first Black women's suffrage organization.

This historian was born in 1885 and spent his youth working in the coal mines of West Virginia. He was not able to begin high school until the age of 20, but completed his diploma in two years and went on to attend Berea College and then Harvard University. After completing his PhD he joined the faculty at Howard University (later served as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences). In 1915 he cofounded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and in 1916 founded the *Journal of Negro History* (today the *Journal of African American History*). He is also the founder of Black History Month (originally Negro History Week)



She grew up in New York. While in college she fought to establish an African American history curriculum. In 1964 she successfully ran for New York State Assembly and in 1968 for Congress. She was the first African American Democrat to run for President of the United States.

Born in 1924 in Harlem, NY, he served as a teen preacher for three years of his adolescence. At the age of 24, he moved to Paris, in an attempt to breathe and create a distance between himself and the deeply and boldly engrained racism of twentieth-century America. His novels include *Go Tell it on the Mountain*, *Another Country*, and *If Beale Street Could Talk*. Among his first novels was *Giovanni's Room*, the first gay novel published by a mainstream publishing house in the U.S.

He was born in 1950 in South Carolina. He graduated valedictorian from his high school, and magna cum laude from college. He earned his PhD in Physics in 1976, and joined the NASA shuttle team in 1978 (one of over 11,000 applicants). In addition to his work as a physicist he played the saxophone and was a fifth-degree black belt in Karate. He was among the seven astronauts who died in the Challenger explosion of January 28, 1986.

