BLACK HISTORY
MONTH/FEbruary

VICE CHANCELLOR
CANDICE STOREY LEE

Candice Storey Lee, Ed.D. currently serves as Vanderbilt’s vice chancellor for athletics and university affairs and athletic director. Lee is Vanderbilt’s first female athletic director and the first Black woman to lead an SEC athletic program. In 2019, Sports Business Journal named Lee to its list of "Power Players: College Sports," which recognizes individuals who have "distinguished themselves as some of the best thinkers, problem-solvers and dealmakers in college sports and they will play a distinctly important role in its future." In 2018, Adidas named Lee to its prestigious "NEXT UP" class, comprising "senior-level administrators, hand-picked by some of the most respected athletic directors in the industry, who are believed to be ready to take the next step as athletic directors in their own right."

HISTORY AND MEANING OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH

As a Harvard-trained historian, Carter G. Woodson, like W. E. B. Du Bois before him, believed that truth could not be denied and that reason would prevail over prejudice. His hope to raise awareness of African Americans’ contributions to civilization were realized when he and the organization he founded, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, conceived and announced Negro History Week in 1925. The event was first celebrated during a week in February 1926 that encompassed the birthdays of both Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. The response was overwhelming; Black history clubs sprang up, teachers demanded materials to instruct their pupils; and progressive whites, not simply white scholars and philanthropists, stepped forward to endorse the effort.

By the time of Woodson’s death in 1950, Negro History Week had become a central part of African American life and substantial progress had been made in bringing more Americans to appreciate the celebration. At mid-century, mayors of cities nationwide issued proclamations noting Negro History Week. The Black Awakening of the 1960s dramatically expanded the consciousness of African Americans about the importance of Black history, and the civil rights movement focused Americans of all colors on the subject of the contributions of African Americans to our history and culture.

The celebration was expanded to a month in 1976, the nation’s bicentennial. President Gerald R. Ford urged Americans to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history." That year, 50 years after the first celebration, the association held the first African American History Month. By this time, the entire nation had come to recognize the importance of Black history in the drama of the American story. Since then each American president has issued African American History Month proclamations.

(Excerpt from an essay by Amy Michael Scott, Howard University, for the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, available at africanamericanhistorymonth.gov)

FOR MORE ON BLACK HISTORY MONTH AND THE HERITAGE CALENDAR PROJECT, VISIT THE OFFICE FOR EDI AND THE BLACK CULTURAL CENTER AT:

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