Profile of Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson

Dr. Carter G. Woodson was born to former slaves James Henry Woodson and Anne Eliza (Riddle) Woodson on December 19, 1875 in Buckingham County, Virginia. Although his parents were illiterate, Dr. Woodson autodidactically learned how to read and write by the time he reached 17 years of age. At age 17 Dr. Woodson and his brother (Robert) moved to Huntington, WV where they hoped to attend high school. However, the reality of their economic condition necessitated that they work as coal miners to support themselves. Dr. Woodson only managed to attend formal schooling for a few months a year between the ages of 17 and 21. Then, in 1895 Dr. Woodson entered high school and earned his high school diploma at the age of 23 in 1897.

After earning his high school diploma, Dr. Woodson taught school in Fayette, County, WV until the year 1900. He returned to Huntington, WV where he became principle of Douglass High School. While working as principle, Dr. Woodson took college correspondence courses. Dr. Woodson earned a Bachelor of Literature degree from Berea College in 1903. From 1903 to 1907, Dr. Woodson worked as a school supervisor overseas in the Philippines. Dr. Woodson earned his Master of Arts degree from the University of Chicago in 1908. Then, in 1912 Dr. Woodson made history by becoming only the second Black person in history to earn a Ph.D. degree from Harvard College (W.E.B. DuBois had earned a Ph.D. from Harvard in 1895).

On September 9, 1915 Dr. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life & History (ASNLH). The purpose of this organization was not merely the documentation and chronicling of facts and figures about Black history. The organization also sought to promote the study of all aspects of Black life for the betterment thereof. On January 1, 1916 Dr. Woodson began publishing the Journal of Negro History, a quarterly publication dedicated to the promulgation of Black history. During this time Dr. Woodson became acquainted with Marcus Garvey. The two men shared similar philosophies about the betterment of Black people, and Dr. Woodson regularly wrote columns in Garvey’s weekly publication - The Negro World.

[OMEGA NOTE] The Fraternity's annual celebration of National Achievement Week which recognized contributions and achievements of Blacks began as the result of the exhortation by honorary member Bro. Dr. Carter G. Woodson at the Nashville, Tennessee Grand Conclave in 1920. It was first called “Negro History and Literature Week” out of deference to Bro. Carter. The celebration was abolished in 1924 by the Washington Conclave. However, in December of 1925 at the Tuskegee Conclave, the observance of the annual celebration was revived as the “Negro Achievement Week Project”. The Fraternity felt that this was not enough, so it was determined that the purpose of the celebration recognize Blacks which might escape public notice and thus not be properly recorded in the pages of history.

In 1926 Dr. Woodson initiated the celebration of Negro History Week. The week he selected was the second week of February because it coincided with the birthdays of Fredrick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. Negro History Week was intended to be a
celebration of the accomplishments and contributions that Blacks throughout history have made to the world. The intent of this celebration was not only to call attention to the accomplishments of Blacks all over the world, but also to motivate and inspire Blacks to improve their own conditions in spite of the challenges that beset them. Over time, Negro History Week became a permanently entrenched celebration in the struggle of Black Americans. In the 1970s Negro History Week was expanded from one week in February to span the entire month of February. Moreover, the celebration was renamed to Black History Month.

Throughout his long and distinguished career Dr. Woodson was a prolific writer. His literary compendium consists of eighteen (18) books on various aspects of Black life and Black history. His pre-eminent work was the Mis-Education of the Negro. Published in 1933, the Mis-Education of the Negro was an analysis of the failure and shortcomings of the traditional methods of educating Black people and why those methods did more to perpetuate the second-class citizenship status of Blacks rather than elevate them to first-class citizenship. Dr. Woodson also wrote numerous articles in various publications and newspapers on a wide range of topics related to various aspects of Black life, Black history, and Black empowerment.

[OMEGA NOTE] In 1949, the name was changed to “National Achievement Week”. The first week in November was designated as “National Achievement Week”. National Achievement Week includes the following: Achievement Week program, selection of an Omega Man of the year, selection of a citizen of the year, and participation in the National High School Essay contest.

Dr. Woodson made his eternal transition on April 3, 1950. His body rests in Lincoln Memorial Cemetery just outside of Washington, D.C. Dr. Woodson’s legacy is one of a perpetual pursuit of knowledge and history of Black people. Dr. Woodson knew that awareness and recognition of the contributions of Africans in history to the advancement of the world elevates the self-esteem of Blacks. With a healthy self-esteem, Blacks can overcome whatever obstacles and oppressive forces may work against them.

Omega Source:
Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. History Book, Bro. Herman Dreer

Internet Sources:
http://www.chipublib.org/002branches/woodson/woodsonbib.html#introduction
http://www.cwo.com/~lucumi/woodson.html
Books Written By Dr. Carter G. Woodson

The following is a list of books written by Dr. Carter G. Woodson.

(source: http://www.chipublib.org/002branches/woodson/woodsonbib.html#introduction)


5. **FREE NEGRO OWNERS OF SLAVES IN THE UNITED STATES IN THE UNITED STATES IN 1830: TOGETHER WITH ABSENTEE OWNERSHIP OF SLAVES IN THE UNITED STATES IN 1830, ed.** Washington: ASNLH, 1924; Repr. Negro Univ. Press. E185.W8873


Periodical Articles Written By Dr. Carter G. Woodson
The following is a list of periodical articles published by Dr. Carter G. Woodson.
(Source: http://www.chipublib.org/002branches/woodson/woodsonbib.html#introduction)