

February marks the annual observance of Black History Month, a time to recognize the achievements, contributions, and culture of African Americans. In 1926, Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, an African American historian and educator, established Negro History Week to honor the contributions of African Americans. Woodson chose February for this observance because the birthdays of abolitionist Frederick Douglass and President Abraham Lincoln fall in this month.

The theme for 2013 is At the Crossroads of Freedom and Equality: The Emancipation Proclamation and the March on Washington, which celebrates the anniversary of two important African American turning points: the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation and the 1963 March on Washington.

The Emancipation Proclamation, decreed by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1st, 1863, declared slaves in all Confederate states then at war with the Union "forever free" and made them eligible for paid military service in the Union Army. Although it did not officially end slavery, it did transform the nature of the war, and marked the beginning of the end of slavery in the U.S.

The 1963 March on Washington, in which a quarter million people demonstrated for civil rights on the grounds of the Lincoln Memorial was the largest demonstration for civil rights the country had ever seen. The successful 1963 March on Washington marked a high point of the modern civil rights movement, with Congress passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 after the March on Washington.

The Atlantic City Free Public Library offers two excellent eBooks, which provide more information on these two major civil rights events. These are the [Gale Library of Daily Life: Slavery in America](#) and

[Gale Encyclopedia of U.S. History: Government and Politics](#)

. Both of these are part of our virtual reference collection and are easy to access 24/7! These eBooks are a great place to start your research, since they offer well-researched and detailed information.

In addition to these two eBooks, if you are searching for more information on the Emancipation Proclamation or the 1963 March on Washington, or other topics in African American History, be sure to also check the

[Oxford African American Studies Center](#)

, which is one of our best research databases. This is one of the most comprehensive and scholarly databases on African American history

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