First celebrated as Negro History Week in February of 1926, Black History Month was conceived by Carter G. Woodson who believed that “truth could not be denied and that reason would prevail over prejudice.” The week encompassed the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. The celebration was expanded to a month in 1976, the nation’s bicentennial.

DID YOU KNOW?

More than 20% of the Black working population over 16 years old are employees of the federal, state, or local government which is just over 5 percentage points higher than the national average. On the other end a much smaller percentage of African Americans are self-employed (3.6%) than the national average of 6.2%.

Black women have made the greatest strides recently. In 2011 33% of Employed Black women have jobs in management or professional occupations compared to 23% of employed Black men. As a matter of fact 64% of working African American women hold “white collar” occupations compared to 50% of African American men. Thirty six percent of employed Black men hold “blue collar” occupations compared to 8% of Black Women.

From 1997 to 2013, African American women-owned businesses grew by 258 percent and as of 2016, African American women-owned firms make up 61 percent of all African American-owned businesses. Lastly, African American women-owned firms generate an estimated $52.6 billion in revenue per year.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Blackfacts.com posts multiple facts from Black History for every day of the year. Access a list of Black Scientists from history at the Famous Scientists website. Got to PBS.org to find 10 Little Known Black History Facts.

If you have any questions about Black History Month, please contact us HERE.

BEST PRACTICES:

In addition to the many cultural events that companies host throughout this month, many organizations are taking the opportunity to use Black History Month as a platform for targeted learning and development, philanthropy and awareness building. Here are some examples of best practices from companies taking their heritage month programming to the next level.

At the American Red Cross, the Cultural Competency Series is a monthly educational program, focused on the unique cultural characteristics of diverse communities as well as overarching theories and principles that support a culturally proficient organization. These sessions are open to all Red Crossers and also recorded and made available on the intranet. The February 2016 session was sponsored by the African American TMRG (AATMRG) on the topic of African Americans’ Contributions to the Red Cross. It offered a historical perspective, which was presented by the AATMRG Co-Chairs and Chief Diversity Officer (CDO). The session concluded with a panel discussion with current African American Red Cross Executives, which was also facilitated by the CDO.

Capgemini is focusing on their need and desire to hire more African-Americans in IT at the senior and executive levels, by partnering with and sponsoring ITSMF (Information Technology Senior Management Forum). A3 attended the ITSMF 1st Quarter Symposium and Awards Ceremony where senior and executive level African-Americans in IT were celebrated for their many accomplishments in the industry. It was a great opportunity to expand Capgemini’s reach into this specific talent pool, as well as learn about ways they can better prepare their current talent pool for senior and executive level IT roles.

Wells Fargo is a founding donor of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), that opened in the fall of 2016. They announced their $1M contribution, in addition to a gift of artifacts dating back to the 1800s (two mining stock certificates and one piece of letterhead) developed by African American artist and lithographer, Grafton Tyler Brown. The artifacts are from their own (Wells Fargo History Museum) collection and were added to a broader NMAAHC exhibit featuring Brown’s work.

In its third year, the Adidas Black History Month sneaker collection honors African-American athletes not just for their accomplishments in their respective sports, but for the mark they have made on American history. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar was the first to be honored, followed by Jesse Owens, This year’s collection honors Arthur Ashe.