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B lack H istory M onth

A for Annie Allen

In 1950, Gwendolyn Brooks became the first African American to win the Pulitzer Prize for poetry, for her remarkable second book of poems, *Annie Allen*. *Annie Allen* is an epic cycle that describes from within the changes in a young woman as she moves from effervescent youthful dreams of romance, marriage, and happiness to the concrete reality of adulthood in the inner city circle of Black women.

*What shall I give my children? Who are poor,
Who are adjudged the leastwise of the land,
Who are my sweetest lepers, who demand
No velvet and no velvety velour;
But who have begged me for a brisk contour,
Crying that they are quasi, contraband
Because unfinished, graven by a hand
Less than angelic, admirable or sure.
My hand is stuffed with mode, design, device.
But I lack access to my proper stone.
And plentiful of plan shall not suffice
Nor grief nor love shall be enough alone
To ratify my little halves who bear
Across an autumn freezing everywhere.*

- "Children of the Poor,"
from *Annie Allen*

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B for Black History

By TONYA BOLDEN

Carter G. Woodson is considered the "Father of Black History." A hugely important part of Woodson's legacy is Negro History Week. He launched this annual celebration in 1926 to raise people's awareness of black contributions to civilization. Fifty years later, this endeavor became Black History Month.

Woodson was able to accomplish all that he did because it was all that he wanted to do. Forever a bachelor, he lived a very spartan life. In his essay "A Portrait of Carter G. Woodson," W.E.B. Du Bois remarked that Woodson "had very little outdoor life, he had few close friends. He cared nothing for baseball or football and did not play cards, smoke or drink." Practically everything Woodson established or produced was paid for out of his own pocket or through his own fundraising efforts. He never snuggled up to philanthropists because he was, as Du Bois wrote, "fiercely determined to be master of his own enterprises and final judge of what he wanted to do and say. He pretty soon got the reputation of not being the kind of 'trustworthy' Negro to whom help should be given."

The most important thing he learned from his studies and his teaching

was how much of black history had been ignored and how much of what had been recorded was fallacious. He got hot and bothered about this distortion and neglect. He understood that knowledge was power, understood that the less blacks knew of their history, the weaker they would be; and early on, he held out a hope that if white people were more enlightened on the subject, they would not regard blacks as inferior. What made Carter



In 1926, scholar and author Carter G. Woodson established Negro History Week to highlight African American contributions to the United States. What was once a week's recognition has blossomed into a full month, celebrated in February, in order to include the birthdays of the great antislavery activist Frederick Douglass and of President Abraham Lincoln.

G. Woodson a great man is not that he thought these thoughts, but that he did something about it: He devoted his life to researching and promoting the study of black history and culture.

In 1915, Woodson confounded and went on to head up the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in Washington, D.C. (now the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History). The organization's purpose was, as Woodson put it, "the collection of sociological and historical data on the Negro, the study of peoples of African blood, the publishing of books in the field, and the promoting of harmony between the races by acquainting the one with the other." The creation of the association laid the foundation for the treatment of black history as a serious subject.

B uying Black

Movement

By CLAUD ANDERSON

In the 1920s and 1930s, blacks began to leave the South for better jobs and what they hoped would be improved racial conditions in the North. They most often moved to large metropolitan areas with heavy industrial development. As northern

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- Spike Lee, Filmmaker

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