

# ● MONITOR Microscope ●



During every February over the last 59 years, Black Americans across this land have proudly joined together to celebrate the contributions made by generations of Blacks to the development of this country from the time that the first enslaved African was brought to these shores to the present. However, beginning in February 1985, the well over 80 national community-building organizations affiliated with the national Assault On Illiteracy Program (AOIP) have committed themselves to making every day of every month a tribute to "who we are" as long-denigrated children of God. Their goal is to encourage every Black American to begin daily enhancing the image of "Blackness" by thinking Black, buying Black, supporting Black—all in the best sense of helping to make America the land of its promised equitable potential for all Americans.

## Our Debt to the "Father of Negro History"

We owe this annual observance of Black History Month and the beginnings of this new thrust to the unstinting efforts of the late Dr. Carter G. Woodson (1875-1950). Most frequently, he is recalled as the "Father of Negro History" because many believe that he has done more than any other individual to prevent the obliteration of Black or Afro-American history.

In *The Miseducation of the Negro*, published in 1923, Dr. Woodson stated that the Afro-American has been miseducated because he has been taught not to value himself at his proper worth...and today, this unredressed self-deprecation serves as the major basis for the inordinate rate of illiteracy among Black Americans. Almost half of America's entire adult Black population even today do not feel good enough about themselves to want to learn.

Thus today, the national Assault On Illiteracy Program is beginning to take



Dr. Carter G. Woodson

shape among well over 80 national Black-led organizations. Truly, this is a fitting recognition to Dr. Woodson who devoted his entire life to doing all that he could to rebuild that deliberately destroyed sense of social pride or personhood so desperately needed by every race.

## The Significance of ASNLH

On September 9, 1915, Woodson organized the *Association for the Study of Negro Life and History*. He described the formation of the Association as the "first systematic effort of the Negro to treat the records of race scientifically and to publish the findings to the world."

The following year, the first issue of the Association's quarterly, the *Journal of Negro History* was published. The *Journal* was like a reviving breath of fresh air for struggling Black scholars. Remember the *Journal* was launched at a time when White-oriented scholarship in

America generally scoffed at the notion of Africans or African-Americans having a significant history and culture. They considered us the sub-human descendants of ignorant savages and their histories either omitted reference to or purposely denigrated Blacks.

Thus the *Journal* provided Black scholars with a vehicle which would not only fairly judge, but also would print their articles. At the same time, Dr. Woodson, who was the editor of the *Journal* until his death, provided aspiring Black scholars with an uncompromising standard of excellence in historiography.

## All Blacks Need Awareness Of A Proud History

Dr. Woodson, a prophetic thinker, was not only concerned about advancing scholarship in Black history, but he also

(Continued on page 9.)



Mary McLeod Bethune