



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

## Celebrating Black History Month

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS February 2, 2021

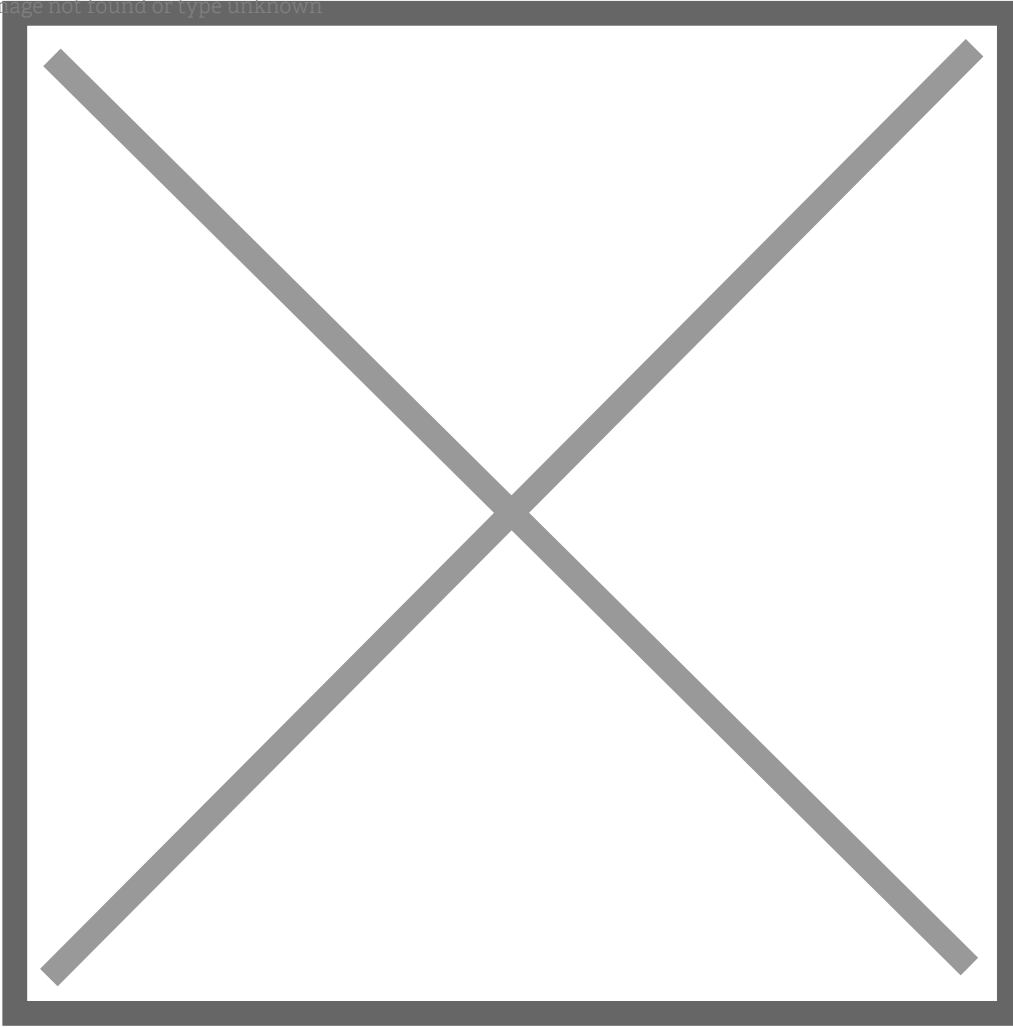
| ISSUE: **BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

Dear Neighbor,

This February marks the 45th anniversary of Black History Month. Many know this month as a time to honor African-American history and culture, but do you know how Black History Month came to be?

Carter G. Woodson founded "Negro History Week" in 1926, as a way to ensure students learned about Black History. He timed the week to coincide with Abraham Lincoln's and Fredrick Douglass's birthdays. However, it wasn't until 1976 that President Ford extended the observation to a full month, honoring the contributions of Black Americans. Now, countries around the world also devote a month to celebrating Black history.

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To me, Black History Month is American History that sadly went untold. Now, we have the opportunity to shine a light on African Americans who fought for equality and justice, opened doors unfairly closed, and made our world a better place, through innovation, politics, writing, sports, the arts and beyond.

For example, we have blood banks and blood transfusions because of Dr. Charles R. Drew's work on plasma and blood storage. Garrett Morgan invented the traffic light and an early gas mask, Frederick Jones invented refrigerated trucks, and nurse Marie Van Brittan Brown invented the home security system. Alice Dunnigan was the first Black woman to be a White House correspondent in 1948. Althea Gibson opened doors for countless Black athletes,

competing at Wimbledon in 1951 and winning in 1957 and 1958.

We must never forget the oppression and injustices African-Americans faced and continue to overcome to achieve such accomplishments. Without these struggles, it wouldn't be possible for people like me to make history. Black accomplishment is rooted in perseverance, strength, and resilience.

And this month, we can all commit to learning about Black History through initiatives and events in New York State and Westchester County, and recommit ourselves in the effort to break down barriers and fight for justice, equality, and inclusion for all.

Until next time,

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

New York State Senator, 35th District

President Pro Tem, Majority Leader