About this Special

BY KATHLEEN J. ENGLAND & PROF. RACHEL J. ANDERSON

Black History Month is devoted to honoring and celebrating the achievements and contributions of African Americans as well as recognizing the central role of African Americans in U.S. history. Black History Month is the successor to Negro History Week, which was started in 1926 by Dr. Carter G. Woodson (1875-1950). Dr. Woodson was a historian, the second African American to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard University, the founder of the Journal of Negro History in 1916 and he is known as the “Father of Black History.” February has been officially designated Black History Month by every U.S. president since 1976.

In Nevada, Black History Month has its origins in Black History Week, proclaimed by Governor Grant Sawyer on February 6, 1959. Nevada Black History Week became Black History Month along with the rest of the country in 1976.

Dr. Carter G. Woodson (1875-1950), creator of Negro History Week, the predecessor of Black History Month (Source: Scurlock Studio Records, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution)

Elana Graham, Arthur L. Williams, Jr., Connie Akridge, Justice Michael L. Douglas and Bryan Scott at the 2011 LVNBA Scholarship Gala. (Source: LVNBA Archive at the Wiener-Rogers Law Library)

Leroy Badie, Margaret Badie, Rev. C. A. Crosby and Sgt. William Watkins with Governor Grant Sawyer (1918-1996) as he signs a proclamation designating the week of February 8-15 Negro History Week in Nevada (Source: Special Collections, University of Nevada, Reno Libraries)
This special Black History Month issue highlights the achievements and contributions of African-American lawyers in Nevada in honor of the 51st anniversary of the first African American (Charles L. Kellar) passing the Nevada state bar examination, the 48th anniversary of the first two African Americans admitted to the State Bar of Nevada (Earle W. White, Jr. and Robert L. Reid), the 32nd anniversary of the first two African-American women admitted to the State Bar of Nevada, the 48th anniversary of the U.S. 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 47th anniversary of the 1965 Nevada Civil Rights Act, and 150 years of history of African Americans in Nevada (at least since Nevada first became a U.S. territory).

African-American attorneys have faced racism and discrimination while becoming a part of the Nevada legal community. Despite facing many barriers, African-American attorneys in Nevada have achieved many accomplishments. The first generations were instrumental as a society. Through this cooperation between the State Bar of Nevada, the National Bar Association Archive at the Wiener-Rogers Law Library; The Mark E. Mitchell Collection of African American History; Nevada Historical Society; Nevada Humanities; Nevada State Library and Archives (in particular, Peter Michel and Kelli Luchs); Special Collections, University of Nevada, Reno Libraries (in particular Kimberly J. Roberts); Scurlock Studio Records, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution; University of Nevada, Las Vegas Libraries, Special Collections (in particular, David Millman and Dennis McBride); Oral History Research Center at UNLV (in particular, Claytee D. White); Oral Archives (in particular, Carol Lloyd); Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas (in particular, David Millman and Dennis McBride); Oral History Research Center at UNLV (in particular, Claytee D. White); Special Collections, University of Nevada, Reno Libraries (in particular Kimberly J. Roberts); Scurlock Studio Records, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution; University of Nevada, Las Vegas Libraries, Special Collections (in particular, Peter Michel and Kelli Luchs); Thompson Reuters and Wiener-Rogers Law Library (in particular, Professor Jeanne Price, Jennifer Anderson and Matthew Wright).

This is a joint venture between the State Bar of Nevada and the Las Vegas Chapter of the National Bar Association (LVNBA). Numerous experts and institutions were involved in this project. As co-chairs of this issue’s Steering Committee, we wish to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the other members of the Steering Committee: Richard F. Boulware, Senator Richard Bryan, Professor Joanne L. Goodwin, U.S. Magistrate Judge Robert J. Johnston, Professor Kay P. Kindred, Geralda Miller, Guy Rocha, Beau Sterling and Claytee D. White. We would like to thank the State Bar of Nevada, the Las Vegas Chapter of the National Bar Association, State Bar of Nevada Executive Director Kimberly K. Farmer, and the Nevada Lawyer staff for making this special issue possible. We would like to particularly thank our issue editor, Beau Sterling, for his dedication to the substance and integrity of the content of this issue. We would like to especially express our thanks and appreciation to the Nevada Lawyer staff of Jennifer Smith, Melinda Ca tren and Christina Alberts and Graphic Designer Georgina Corbalan. They were integral to this project and without their skill and hard work this issue could not have been realized. We would also like to thank the following people for their assistance and support for this project in a variety of ways: Karl Armstrong, Michael Beede, Sabrina Dolson, Doreen Spears Hartwell, Judge Gloria Sturman, Professor Jennifer C. Dunn, Paulette Reed-Anderson, Dean John V. White and Arthur L. Williams, Jr.

We were able to include many historically significant photographs and documents in this issue with the help and support of a number of individuals and organizations: Arthur L. Williams, Jr.; Johnson Publishing Company (in particular, Vickie Wilson, the Operations Department and the Legal Department); Las Vegas Chapter of the National Bar Association Archive at the Wiener-Rogers Law Library; The Mark E. Mitchell Collection of African American History; Nevada Historical Society; Nevada Humanities; Nevada State Library and Archives (in particular, Carol Lloyd); Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas (in particular, David Millman and Dennis McBride); Oral History Research Center at UNLV (in particular, Claytee D. White); Special Collections, University of Nevada, Reno Libraries (in particular Kimberly J. Roberts); Scurlock Studio Records, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution; University of Nevada, Las Vegas Libraries, Special Collections (in particular, Peter Michel and Kelli Luchs); Thompson Reuters and Wiener-Rogers Law Library (in particular, Professor Jeanne Price, Jennifer Anderson and Matthew Wright).

This is an important and historic issue for many reasons. It furthers the goals for which Black History Week and later Black History Month were created as it honors and celebrates the achievements and contributions of African-American attorneys in Nevada. This issue acknowledges not only their strengths and achievements, but also highlights wrongs and injustices that we are still coming to grips with as a society. Through this cooperation between the State Bar of Nevada, the Las Vegas Chapter of the National Bar Association and outside historical scholars, we hope to illuminate the central role of African Americans, especially African-American lawyers, in Nevada legal history. Through this introspection and celebration of achievements, it is our hope that our legal community will be strengthened and inspired. This issue represents more than cooperation and collaboration for the sake of Black History Month; it is part of an ongoing, year-round commitment to celebrating the role of lawyers and the law in society.

KATHLEEN J. ENGLAND is a civil rights lawyer admitted in Nevada in 1979. Serving on the State Bar of Nevada Board of Governors for 10 years, she was President from June 2009 to June 2010. She holds a J.D. from Suffolk University Law School.

PROF. RACHEL J. ANDERSON is a UNLV Boyd School of Law professor and Vice-President of the LVNBA (complete bio on p. 18).