For Black History Month, we must remember we are a living history

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As we say goodbye to the first month of 2019 and the roller coaster that's been, let's start February off right by honoring Black History Month.

The man credited as the Father of Black History was one Carter G. Woodson, according to CNN. Woodson was the son of former slaves. After being granted with "freedom," slaves still had few opportunities to work. Racism hadn't been eradicated, and most slaves were barred from learning to read or write, making the transition into "freedom" difficult to adapt to. Woodson spent his childhood working in coal mines and quarries but managed to teach himself the basics of English and math. At 19, Woodson entered high school, where he completed a four-year curriculum in two years. He went on to earn his master's degree in history from the University of Chicago and later a doctorate from Harvard.

Upon entering a contemporary academic setting, he found that history textbooks largely ignored America's black population. Determined to provide a platform for black voices, Woodson took it upon himself to write our narratives into the nation's history.

He established the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, later going on to found the group's widely respected publication, The Journal of Negro History.

In 1926, Woodson developed Negro History Week, which was expanded into Black History Month in 1976.

While Black History Month is a beautiful opportunity designated to reflect on the accomplishments of black folks, it often turns into a show-and-tell of individuals. Every year it seems that we see folks either prized for their fiscal contributions (creating hair care products, music, books and dances) or their immense suffering.

This is all fine, but it overshadows a greater conversation we should have. How is it that nearly half a century later, we still find that black history and other cultural-historical month are separate entities from American history?

There's always room in the curriculum to frame America as the hero in every story, swooping in to save the day just in time, but it would be far too much to admit that this entire country was built upon injustices against non-white folks by