



Washington State Bar Association

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The state's lawyers celebrate African American History Month

The Washington State Bar Association is committed to diversity and inclusion in the legal profession

(SEATTLE) —African American History month is celebrated in February across the United States to acknowledge the challenges and accomplishments of African American people and the unique position they hold in the history of our country.

In 2012, the Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) released the results of a [Membership Study](#). The study revealed that 12 percent of Bar Association members are racial minorities, and African Americans are represented at 1.8 percent of the attorneys in this group. These figures contrast with the fact that African Americans comprise 3.8 percent of the population of the state. WSBA stands committed to promoting diversity and inclusion within the legal community.

[Carl Maxey \(1924–1997\)](#) was the first African American to pass the Bar in eastern Washington. Maxey devoted his life to achieving equality for African Americans and taking cases to help end discrimination in the state. In 1963, John F. Kennedy appointed Maxey to the Washington State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. Throughout his life, Maxey created hope by changing the racial climate and anti-discrimination laws in Washington. Today, in his honor, the Spokane County Bar Association Diversity Section awards the Carl Maxey scholarship to Gonzaga law students who intend to stay in the Spokane area to promote diversity and inclusion within the Spokane legal community.

Almost 40 years after Maxey started practicing law, the WSBA membership study results communicate a clear message: diversity and inclusion efforts in the legal community continue to be important.

In 1926, historian Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History announced the second week in February to be “Negro History Week,” chosen because it marked the birthday of both Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. In 1976, the federal government acknowledged the expansion of Black History Week to Black History Month.

Visit the [Loren Miller Bar Association's website](#) to learn more about how they are supporting African American attorneys and other attorneys of color in the profession. The Black Law Student Association at the Seattle University School of Law is holding their [7th Annual BLSA Alumni Awards Reception](#) on Thursday, Feb. 7, at 5:30 p.m.

About the Washington State Bar Association

The WSBA is part of the judicial branch and is authorized by the Washington State Supreme Court to license the state's 34,800 lawyers. The WSBA both regulates lawyers under the authority of the Court and serves its members as a professional association — all without public funding. The WSBA's mission is to serve the public and the members of the Bar, ensure the integrity of the legal profession, and to champion justice.

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Working Together to Champion Justice