Announcer (00:00:03)

The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

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February is a time when we can come together to honor and reflect upon the Black community's incredible contributions, struggles and triumphs.

I'm Adair Seifert and today Dr. Lyle foster, business owner and faculty member in the department of sociology, anthropology and gerontology at Missouri State University, explains the significance of Black History Month and how you can celebrate the contributions of African Americans during this month.

 Dr. Lyle Foster (00:00:35)

I would probably start off by saying Black History Month is extremely significant because it's a phenomenal opportunity to really explore and celebrate the contributions of Black Americans, African Americans, to the history of this nation.

Many times, those stories have not been told and so it never ceases to amaze me, particularly in this age of information, how much we learn about things we’ve never heard before. Growing up as a child, this was kind of the one time of the year that you heard about this and obviously today we understand this throughout the year, but it's still a special time to actually highlight what Black Americans have done in this nation.

Adair Seifert (00:01:15)

He explains how you can honor the achievements and contributions of African Americans during this month.

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One way I think was just really what I would describe as intentionality. So obviously the media and that's the written media, that's media like this wonderful radio station, that's media that we watch will be celebrating the month. There will be a number of different programs throughout the nation, throughout our community that we can watch.

I think to celebrate, participate, learn, seek those opportunities out and make that effort this month to take advantage of the celebrations, the programming, the special shows that you'll see in various forms of media. Find a good book that you've always wanted to read and read it!

I think about when one of the trail markers opened up for Silver Spring Park. One of my close friend’s daughter, who's about 8 years old and white, she went home and asked her mother at bedtime how come there were separate parks. Then they had about a 35 or 40 minute discussion and this little girl, couldn't reconcile how Black people and white people couldn't go to the same park by law. But her mother took the time to explain that was a very significant milestone. So, my point is you never know the conversations, you never know the development that's going to have by having these opportunities, and sometimes it can be simply life changing.

Adair Seifert (00:02:45)

He explains ways you can get involved during Black History Month.

Dr. Lyle Foster (00:02:48)

I know that our local library actually does a great job of having community events and our public libraries on campus at Missouri State University, you know, celebrate heritage months. You can go to the office of Multicultural Programs website and look for the special events. Also, our Multicultural Business Association will be highlighting the contributions in this case of Black businesses, you know underrepresented businesses in our community and the role that they play.

I've been very involved in the Springfield Greene County African American Heritage Trail, so while it might be cold, vsit the trail and see some of the significant historical markers. We're also working on adding some new markers but visit those historical markers and read about what's happened here in Springfield locally, because I think Black History Month, it's not only important to recognize the national contributions, but there have been many significant contributions right here in the Ozarks.

Adair Seifert (00:03:51)

He explains the way Black History Month has evolved over the years and what that means in the context of today's social and political climate.

Dr. Lyle Foster (00:03:59)

I think over the last two years we’ve had what in some circles is called a national reckoning. So, I think today because of what has happened, particularly the social justice movement, and social awareness movement, I think there's a national audience saying, “what did we not know?” “What were we not told?”

One of the most important things is it helps us to understand our present better, and hopefully prepare for our future so that I think it is kind of been a natural evolvement that now I think there is a much more intentional celebration.

But growing up in the rural South, as I did, Black History Month was that one time of the year where, particularly for marginalized folks, it was a chance for us to stick our chests out. The rest of the year, it would go back Virginia history, I think it is moved more from just even having that that one month to really looking for those untold stories, you know throughout the year and how do we integrate those stories into the fabric of our local communities and obviously in our nation's history itself.

Dr. Lyle Foster (00:05:00)

That was Dr. Lyle foster, business owner and faculty member in the department of sociology, anthropology and gerontology at Missouri State University.

I'm Adair Seifert for the Missouri State Journal.

Announcer (00:05:11)

For more information, contact the Office of Strategic Communication at 417-836-6397. The Missouri State Journal is available online at ksmu.org.