



## **ELISE CARTER**

### **Carter G. Woodson Memorial Award**

Acclaimed historian and author Dr. Carter G. Woodson, widely known as the “Father of Black History,” made it his life’s mission to advance African American culture. Kentucky-based educator Elise Carter continues Dr. Woodson’s legacy by advancing opportunity for African American youth.

Ms. Carter has established herself as a fierce advocate for the history of her people, connecting past glory to future achievement. In her role as a Business and Social Studies teacher at Highlands High School in Fort Thomas, Kentucky, she’s worked over a decade to embolden and empower students to feel they can have a seat at the corporate conference room table... by knowing those that have strived before them.

As one of the few African American instructors in her district, Ms. Carter is leading the charge to ensure Black history is a crucial part of the curriculum. She developed an innovative Social Equity course; by diligently engaging with community leaders who pushed back on the program as a “Critical Race Theory” indoctrination ploy, Ms. Carter stood firm and held her ground for several years, ultimately ensuring that the unfairly maligned concept of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion would not disappear on her watch.

This led to several milestone accomplishments for Ms. Carter: she was named the 2024 Innovative Teacher Award Winner for Northern Kentucky, served as Teacher Leader of the Kentucky Innovative Learning Network, and the University of Kentucky Jewish Heritage Fund for the 2023-2024 school year. But perhaps her legacy achievement was the 2021 co-founding, with Highlands High School colleague Trinity Walsh, of the non-profit education initiative Northern Kentucky Inclusive Students in Education, colloquially known as NISE.

Created in response to increasing attempts to deny all students the opportunity to learn about each other, Ms. Carter’s mandate was to guarantee a safe space to have open discourse about issues impacting marginalized groups. Discourse that would not only serve as much needed expression of emotions, but with an eye towards young people coming up with real-world solutions to address societal ills and take control of their destiny.

In her role as Executive Director of NISE, Ms. Carter has shepherded the program in a changing local and national landscape. The broadening demographic of Fort Thomas in particular, and Northern Kentucky in general, coinciding with increased focus on inequity in the wake of the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, meant the time to change the conversation was now... she got to work and got results.

By keeping the needs of underrepresented groups in the spotlight, fostering community engagement with both civic leaders and the business community, and making sure no student ever feels they aren’t “seen and heard”, Ms. Carter is more than a worthy successor to the pioneering work of Carter G. Woodson.