

H. Res. 69

In the House of Representatives, U.S.,

February 9, 2005.

Whereas the late Ossie Davis, actor and civil rights leader, was born Raiford Chatman Davis, the oldest of five children born to Laura Cooper and Kincaid Davis, on December 18, 1917, in Cogdell, Georgia;

Whereas Ossie Davis graduated in the top 5 percent of his high school class, received a National Youth Administration scholarship, and walked from Waycross, Georgia, to Washington, D.C., to attend Howard University, where he studied with Alain Leroy Locke, the first black Rhodes Scholar;

Whereas Ossie Davis began his career as a writer and an actor with the Rose McClendon Players in Harlem in 1939;

Whereas during World War II Ossie Davis served in the Army in an African-American medical unit, including service as an Army surgical technician in Libya, where he worked on stabilizing some of the 700,000 soldiers wounded in that war for transport back to State-side hospitals;

Whereas Ossie Davis made his Broadway debut in 1946 in *Jeb*, where he met his wife, actress Ruby Dee, who he married in 1948;

Whereas Ossie Davis went on to perform in many Broadway productions, including *Anna Lucasta*, *The Wisteria Trees*, *Green Pastures*, *Jamaica*, *Ballad for Bimshire*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *The Zulu and the Zayda*, and *I'm Not Rappaport*.

Whereas in 1961, he wrote and starred in the critically acclaimed *Purlie Victorious*;

Whereas Ossie Davis' first movie role was in *No Way Out* in 1950, followed by appearances in *The Cardinal* in 1963, *The Hill* in 1965, and *The Scalphunters* in 1968;

Whereas Ossie Davis made his feature debut as a writer/director with *Cotton Comes to Harlem* in 1970 and later directed *Kongi's Harvest* in 1971, *Black Girl* in 1972, *Gordon's War* in 1973, and *Countdown at Kusini* in 1976;

Whereas Ossie Davis held numerous leading and supporting television and motion picture roles throughout his distinguished career;

Whereas Ossie Davis was a leading activist in the civil rights era of the 1960s when he joined Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the crusade for jobs and freedom and to help raise money for the Freedom Riders;

Whereas Ossie and Ruby Dee Davis, having protested the injustices of the McCarthy Era House Committee on Un-American Activities in the 1950s, were blacklisted from Hollywood;

Whereas Ossie and Ruby Dee Davis raised their voices for numerous causes, including support for the United Negro College Fund, vocal opposition to the Vietnam War, and participation in the August 28, 1963, March on Washington, D.C., at which the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech.

Whereas Ossie Davis served for 12 years as master of ceremonies at the annual National Memorial Day Concerts on the grounds of the United States Capitol and was an advocate on behalf of the Nation's veterans;

Whereas Ossie Davis eulogized both Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X at their funerals;

Whereas Ossie Davis was inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame in 1994 and received innumerable honors and citations throughout his life, including the Hall of Fame Award for Outstanding Artistic Achievement in 1989, the United States National Medal for the Arts in 1995, the New York Urban League Frederick Douglass Award, NAACP Image Award, and the Screen Actor's Guild Lifetime Achievement Award in 2001;

Whereas Ossie Davis and his wife, Ruby Dee, are the parents of three children and have recently published their joint autobiography, *With Ossie and Ruby: In This Life Together*; and

Whereas Davis enjoyed a long and luminous career in entertainment along with his wife before he died in Miami, Florida, at the age of 87 on Friday, February 4, 2005, where he was making a movie called "Retirement": Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes the extraordinary contributions to the Nation of the late Ossie Davis for his service to the Nation in the military, as a civil rights leader, and as an actor;

(2) honors him as a great American and pioneer in the annals of American history; and

(3) expresses its deepest condolences upon his death to his wife Ruby Dee Davis, his other family members, and his friends.

Attest:

Clerk.