

face today are equally as dangerous as those that the Founders faced.

I wanted to highlight very briefly another document that is one of our founding documents, that is the Declaration of Independence. One of the early paragraphs in the Declaration I think crystallizes something that is incredibly important, we all know those words, but I think it is important to repeat them:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness,” and “that to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

Incredible, powerful words.

But the message here that I always harken back to is that the power that government has is derived from the people, because the people derive their power from the Almighty, and the power that people have they then cede to government. It is not the other way around.

□ 2315

We do not believe that government has power and gives it to people. We believe that people, because of the inherent power from the Almighty and because of the inherent quality of life, have that power and cede it to the Federal Government and to the State government to bring about the kind of things that Congresswoman FOXX talked about.

The founding of our Nation truly is tied to a reliance on a higher authority and everyone at the time knew that. We have gotten a bit away from that, and I think one of the things that is incumbent upon us as leaders is to make certain that we remember that and that we remind people of that and that we talk about it freely and openly make certain that everyone understands and appreciates the importance of the Almighty.

One of the items that I will close with that moves me so every time I read it is Lincoln's Proclamation for a National Day of Fasting and Prayer. There are a couple of portions of that that I find incredibly eloquent. I quote from the proclamation:

“It is the duty of nations, as well as of men, to own their dependence on the overruling power of God, and to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon, and to recognize the sublime truth announced in the holy scriptures and proven by all history that those nations only are blessed whose God is Lord.

“We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have

forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which has preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us. And we have vainly imagined in the deceitfulness of our hearts that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own.

“Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us. It behooves us then to humble ourselves before the offended power and to confess our national sins and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.”

Mr. Speaker, we live in a wonderful and a wondrous Nation, a Nation that has blessed more individuals on the face of the Earth than any nation in the history of mankind. It is our privilege to serve in the United States House of Representatives and to bring this message of hope and optimism and positive speaking to the American people.

HONORING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. WATT) is recognized for the time remaining before midnight, approximately 42 minutes.

Mr. WATT. Mr. Speaker, as chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, it is a great pleasure for me to lead this annual Special Order of the Congressional Black Caucus in honor of Black History Month. The theme for this year's African American history month is “Celebrating community, a tribute to black fraternal, social and civic institutions.” And it is dedicated to exploring the impact that these civic organizations have had on the evolution of African American life and history.

A word or two about the history of Black History Month. The celebration of Black History Month started in 1926 as the vision of Dr. Carter G. Woodson who, out of frustration from not finding references to black history in any of our history books, launched an initiative to highlight the many outstanding contributions of African American people throughout the history of the United States. This year we are celebrating the 80th anniversary of Black History Month.

Initially, black history started off as a 1-week event during the second week of February because it marked the birthdays of two men who greatly influenced black people in this country, Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. However, as time passed, it was clear that one week was not sufficient to highlight the achievements of black people and eventually the celebration became known as Black History Month.

Mr. Speaker, this year during Black History Month, we are celebrating the

institutions, fraternal, social, civic and religious, that have been so vital in our progress, the many national organizations and the community and grassroots organizations around the country that have been and continue to be the backbone of the African American community. Often times these organizations have stepped in when the Federal, State, and local governments have failed to provide the necessary services, and for that they are to be commended, most recently in the aftermath of the Hurricane Katrina disaster.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I have often said that Black History Month is about the future, a time to assess and acknowledge that there is no place for complacency and no time to rest. For that reason, the Congressional Black Caucus continues to focus its agenda and our efforts on closing and eliminating disparities that continue to exist in every aspect of our lives.

It is now my pleasure to recognize some of my colleagues to help us celebrate this Black History Month celebration. I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, let me just commend Mr. WATT as chairman of our Congressional Black Caucus for providing leadership in this important celebration and observance of the great and extraordinary contributions that African Americans have made and continue to make in America and throughout the world.

No race of people has come through the ordeal and the circumstances of slavery, of Jim Crowism, of racism, of de facto segregation, and in spite of all these obstacles made extraordinary contributions in every field of endeavor: business, medicine, the arts, sports, politics, business.

Today we are here to highlight especially the role of fraternities in our community. Nowhere is that more particular than within the African American community, for the African American fraternities were brought about not as a result or a need for social edification or for frivolity; but those fraternities that came about in the African American community came about because of great need at a time of extraordinary struggle and circumstance within the African American community.

Such was the case with all of our fraternities and certainly with the fraternity that I am a member of, which is the first fraternity and the oldest fraternity, the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity. I would like to spend just a few moments talking about this fraternity because this was the first fraternity, and its development exemplifies all fraternities and the importance of their contribution.

In 1905 in Ithaca, New York, a group of African American students at Cornell were so devastated with the racism and prejudice at that institution that they found themselves in, that half of the six refused to come back in 1906;

but three did and others joined them in 1906 and they came together to form the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity. Seven African American men, seven African American men that we affectionately refer to as the 7 Jewels: Brother Callis and Brother Chapman and Brother Jones and Brother Kelley, Brother Murray, Brother Ogle, and Brother Tandy. Seven.

There is something about that number seven. That is God's number, the number of completeness. As we know, we had to march around the walls of Jericho 70 times. The Bible says you must forgive your neighbor 70 times 7. There are 7 days in the week; 7 holes in our head: nose, two eyes, two nostrils, two ears. Seven is completeness. And that is why I believe that these fraternities were God's gift at an important time that they came on the scene. Before the civil rights movement, before the others, these men formed the organization and came to produce some of the outstanding leaders in all fields. Frederick Douglass and W.E.B. DuBois and Thurgood Marshall were all members, as were Duke Ellington and Adam Clayton Powell and Martin Luther King, Jr. Scores and hundreds of leaders in every sphere and activity of life were there.

So as we celebrate Black History Month, let us celebrate it where it means the most. And if these members of our fraternity were here, they would say to us in their words, those very precious words that, well, my brothers and my sisters, you see, life for me ain't been no crystal stair. It's had tacks in it and splinters, boards torn up. No carpet on the floor, bare. But all the while, I's been a climbing on and reaching landings and turning corners, and sometimes going in the dark where there ain't been no light. So, boy, don't you stop. Don't you sit down on the steps because you finds it's kinda hard. Don't you fall now while I still going. I still climbing on, honey. And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

Life was no crystal stair for those who started our African American Greek fraternities and sororities. But because they had that vision to keep going, they made an impact on the lives of African Americans, on the lives of the people of the United States of America, and on the lives of the people of the world. On this Black History Month we are say thank you to our Greek letter organizations, the African American fraternities and sororities who have helped us so greatly.

Mr. WATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BOBBY SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from North Carolina for organizing this Special Order so that we can give appropriate recognition to black fraternal, social, and civic organizations.

African Americans have been in the forefront of significant change in American society, and many of those leading the fight were members of very

distinguished organizations with the support of those organizations.

I share membership in Alpha Phi Alpha with my distinguished colleague from Georgia and six other Members of Congress. As my colleague mentioned, Alpha Phi Alpha was the first collegiate black fraternity. I am proud to be a long-time and life member of Alpha Phi Alpha. And since its founding in 1906, Alpha Phi Alpha and all black fraternities and sororities have supplied a voice and vision to the struggle of African Americans and people of color around the world.

For example, one of the long-standing programs sponsored by Alpha Phi Alpha is "Go to high school, go to college." Another is "A voteless people is a hopeless people." They encouraged education and voter registration. More recent projects for Alpha Phi Alpha is Project Alpha, promoting responsibility among African American males in all aspects of health care.

Before the formation of college fraternities, the very first African American fraternity, Sigma Pi Phi, was formed in 1904 in Philadelphia by a group of physicians and dentists. This organization was created for college and professionally educated African Americans including college presidents, Congressmen, cabinet members, and nationally prominent figures such as W.E.B. DuBois and Martin Luther King, Jr. I am also a member of Sigma Pi Phi.

□ 2330

There are countless other organizations that have existed for the purpose of improving economic status, spiritual well-being, and civil rights of all Americans. The Free African Society was founded in 1787; the National Negro Business League was founded in 1900; the National Afro-American Council in 1903; the Niagara Movement, the forerunner of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, NAACP, was well under way by 1905.

The members of these and many other organizations have addressed the most serious moral challenges facing Americans today. The contribution of African American social and civic organizations has included everything from scholarships to social reconstruction. The members of these organizations have confronted the handicaps, the restrictions, the persecutions, the prejudices, the inequities in the opportunities faced by people of color.

Thanks to the relentless efforts of African American member organizations, there are more people of color today in corporate, Federal, State and municipal offices than ever before. The work of members of Alpha Phi Alpha, Sigma Pi Phi and other organizations has had a huge impact over the last 100 years, but our work is far from over.

In the 21st century, we will continue to work for political, economic and social change. It is imperative that all fraternal, social and civic organizations in the African American commu-

nity continue to provide service to African Americans as a whole and the United States in general.

Carter G. Woodson, known as the father of Black History, was born in Buckingham County, Virginia, to former slaves. He reminded us of the importance of commemorating African American contributions when he stated, "If a race has no history, if it has no worthwhile tradition, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and it stands in danger of being exterminated."

As we celebrate African American History Month, let us recognize the achievement and traditions of African Americans and let us never forget the members of black fraternal, social, and civic organizations that pursued uncharted paths and paid for the freedom that we hold so dear.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from North Carolina for organizing this Special Order so that we can recognize these organizations appropriately.

Mr. WATT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Virginia for his eloquence, and let me just add a few comments while we are waiting for one other Member to come and join in this Special Order.

I actually tend to agree with one of our recent actors who started to question the whole concept of Black History Month, not because it is not important to all of us, but because the accomplishments of African Americans are so profound and so diffuse in every aspect of our lives that it is quite obvious that the same thing that happened with Black History Week, that we found that there just was not sufficient to do justice to those accomplishments, is now happening to Black History Month. A month is not sufficient to do justice to a discussion and an emphasis and a highlighting of those accomplishments.

So, as we continue to celebrate Black History Month, we should continue to recognize that Black History Week, which became Black History Month, in and of itself is a recognition that we simply have not done what we should be doing throughout our history to acknowledge the important contributions that African Americans have made.

We could spend hours here on the floor, had we the time, on any of the subjects which are the title of this Black History Month: black fraternities, African American sororities, social organizations, civic institutions, religious institutions. We could spend days talking about the sororities, Alpha Kappa Alpha, which my wife happens to be a member of; Delta Sigma Theta; the Zetas. The whole list of sororities, they go on and on. Most of them sprang out of a need for service, a recognition that there were not social responsibilities, but civic and important unfinished business that needed to be attended to. Organizations of various kinds, headed by powerful women in our country, the Council of

Negro Women, I mean we could go on and on and on with the list of organizations, social and civic organizations, that have grown out of a need to emphasize and uplift the community so that perhaps what was previously referred to in the prior Special Order here, about the Preamble to the Constitution, really would be made a living, viable document, equality and justice for all. Many of these organizations sprang out of that.

We could spend a week, a month or two talking about the churches, the religious denominations, the AMEs, the AME, African Methodist Episcopal Zion denomination or the African Methodist Episcopal denomination, which formed because African American people either were not welcome in the white religious institutions or because those religious institutions were not providing the kind of freedom of expression or the level of equality. Even though they were talking the talk, they were not necessarily walking the walk throughout our history.

So all of these things are extremely important. Perhaps we do not do justice to any of them in the short period of time we have this evening, but we should never forget that all of them are extremely important.

Again, Black History Month is not only about reflecting on the past, it is about the challenges, the lack of equality that exists today that we must continue to confront going into the future. We should never lose sight of that.

With that, I see that my colleague from the great State of Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) has arrived, and so I will now yield to her for her expressions in this Black History Month Special Order.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus for being enormously astute to ensure that there is a marker in the history pages of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD that Members of Congress, and particularly Members of the Congressional Black Caucus, rose to ensure that we commemorated African American History.

There has been some controversy on this month over the years. Most recently, one of our more respected actors made mention of a very valuable point, that black history, African American history need not be commemorated in one month. In fact, it is American history, and I frankly agree with those words. I think it is important, however, that we take the opportunity to let others know that we have not forgotten.

In the course of reading and reviewing what remarks I might make this evening, I came across a very interesting book entitled, "The African American Bookshelf," that categorizes or catalogs, "50 Must Reads From Before the Civil War Through Today," and I wish to share briefly some of the words and stories in this book, but the first I would go to is of more recent vintage, which talks about COINTELPRO.

One would argue, how does that relate to the issue of African American history. The COINTEL was the counter-intelligence program, and it was the program utilized in the early parts of the civil rights movement, moving into the black student movement, the Black Panthers, and frankly, it was an effort focused on black activists who were perceived to be agitators, a small piece of African American history that was rarely focused on. In fact, Martin Luther King was the target of COINTELPRO, and rather than understand the movement and understand the voice of Dr. King, who spoke eloquently about nonviolence, this program was a program that ignored the value of the movement and viewed them as threats to America's security and democracy.

The COINTELPRO's treatment of Martin Luther King described, and detailed in the COINTELPRO paper, is the most egregious example in what was attempted in his case. It belongs in television fiction, where shadowy government forces are at work, that no one can discover ironically a conspiracy theory had been used all too often in such drama. In essence, Dr. King, in this instance, was considered an enemy of the State.

The issue of lynching as well plays a very large part in our history. I know that today we pay tribute to many of our civic organizations, sororities and fraternities and our organizations that captured the sentiment of African Americans, such as the NAACP, the Urban League, the many fraternities and sororities, 100 Black Men, the National Council of Negro Women, the Congress of Black Political Women, many organizations that have created a pathway for African Americans to walk across very troubled waters.

But we must also weed in and out of those very great historical perspectives of those organizations to know that they, too, lived alongside challenges like lynchings in the early 1900's, and in this book, it recounts the stories of what lynching actually meant. In fact, we have heard some people call it an act of terror. Why? Because it was an effort to terrorize southern blacks on plantations and in the rural south right after Reconstruction in order to stop the progress that had been made through reconstruction and in moving into the 20th century.

So, as we reflect on black history, it is important to look forward and then, of course, to travel down memory lane.

What I most want to say about our civic and civil and fraternities and sororities as organizations, I pay tribute to you because you are primarily the infrastructure of our community. When there is a need, these organizations are called upon. When there is a fight for social justice, these organizations are called upon. When, for example, we engage in a legislative strategy, such as the reauthorization of the Voter Rights Act, we call upon these civil and civil rights organizations to help formulate

the strategy and begin to ignite the excitement among the community to draw them together.

□ 2345

Most recently, we have discovered a new phenomenon called the State of the Black Union, which was established by Tavis Smiley and is in its 7th year, another vehicle to capture the intellectual thought and the practices of not only the civil and civic organizations but also individual philosophers, academicians, physicians, and emerging leaders. I am very grateful that this last one was held in Houston, Texas.

I cite this because I believe more and more we must confront the theory that black history should not be relegated to one month; but, frankly, we should be engaged in the thinkings of our history all throughout the year and continue to press the envelope, if you will, that more and more curricula should be including black history.

And let me just say to you that what I have discovered over the recent years is that black history in our schools' curricula around America, African American history, is not moving up; it is being dumbed down. Some would say it is because of the cost cuts that many school districts have to make, that they are cutting music and cutting the arts and many times cutting athletics and that the teaching of black history has taken a back seat. We must be more than sensitized to the fact that there are young people today, no matter what their race or color, creed or religion, that are being educated in America's schools with no iota, no understanding whatsoever of this rich history of African Americans, not even the sense of our early slave history and how we first came to this country in bondage.

Many of the freedom fighters at that time, from Harriet Tubman to Nat Turner to Sojourner Truth, and the list of abolitionists, including Frederick Douglass, who established the framework of freedom, our children today are not learning about that particular history. That is much cause for pause. So I hope as Members of Congress rise to the floor of the House to commemorate the African American history here in America that we will also have a consciousness, as we have in the past, and that our voices will be heard that it is unacceptable that the teaching of black history is not on the upsurge, on the rise, but yet on the decline.

One of the issues, of course, that we hope will come out of the fact that we are commemorating African American history, is that respectively we will all be challenging our school districts and making an assessment of what children are learning because of the value, the importance, if you will, of learning that kind of history.

The idea of freedom also is an early idea, and I want to cite again some of the early freedom fighters, like Harriet Tubman. I have a little silver pin that is an F that stands for freedom. Harriet

Tubman was the conductor on the Underground Railroad. She has an enormously important story, and she is an exciting personality because she helped to free any number of escaped slaves. In fact, she escaped in the summer of 1849.

This was a time when America sold its soul for a cross of gold, even though William Jennings Bryan didn't make the expression famous for half a century later. True, there were white conductors of the Underground Railroad who gave their lives to see to it that black people were able to trickle out of slavery, but Harriet Tubman took this to heart. She became the general, General Tubman, who guided frightened slaves into freedom in the North. She did this continuously over and over and over again.

I have read previously that when a slave was too frightened to go forward, she threatened that slave with his or her life: you die here or you go to freedom. So she was a strong personality that really captured the spirit of African Americans. Through all kinds of trials and tribulations, we have overcome the obstacles that have faced us.

We now come upon the 21st century, and we have two important struggles right before us. One of those struggles includes the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and I think it is imperative that we energize the populace, all walks of life, to begin to raise their voices in support of the work of this Congress, the good work of this Congress to move forward and reauthorize the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Then we have, in conclusion, one of the most challenging mountains to climb: to be able to heal and to bring back to normalcy the gulf region. That will be a smear on the pages of America's history in how that community and those communities were treated and how they are being treated. So it will go down in the pages of black history, because as we know, the faces of the individuals being shown during Hurricane Katrina were African Americans.

We have challenges to go forward; but as we go forward in our challenges to make their lives better, to pass omnibus bill H.R. 4197, work done by the Congressional Black Caucus to make the Katrina survivors whole with housing, education, the environment, compensation and the right to return, we must do it in the backdrop of the history of a people who never turned away from suffering, never turned away from trials and tribulations, and never turned away from challenges.

We have a history to stand upon. It is a history that America should cherish, and we should continue to honor it at the same time that we teach our children. And, frankly, I believe that if we are to embrace the history of all people, we will make America a better place to live.

With that, I yield back to the distinguished gentleman.

Mr. WATT. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues, Representative DAVID SCOTT from Georgia, Representative BOBBY SCOTT from Virginia, and Representative JACKSON-Lee from Texas. There were a number of our Members who would have loved to have participated in this Special Order this evening. Unfortunately, it turned out that we were the fourth Special Order of the evening, and it is approaching midnight so they are not here.

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to honor the memory of all of our great heroes and heroes that have gone before, our organizations, our civic fraternities, sororities, churches who have contributed so much to our progress, but also recognize that there are many miles to go before we sleep.

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, our nation's history is interwoven with the accomplishments and contributions of African Americans—from Hank Aaron, Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong to George Washington Carver, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Maya Angelou—and because of their efforts our nation is stronger. The African American community recently lost two of its leaders and as we mourn the passing of Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King, we should be reminded that we must continue the civil rights work they devoted their lives to. What better way to celebrate the legacy of these leaders and all of those who have worked to ensure racial justice than by reauthorizing the expiring portions of the Voting Rights Act. The struggle for civil rights continues today and we must make certain that all citizens not only have the right to vote, but that their ability to vote is protected.

Although the Voting Rights Act has been essential in protecting the voting rights of minorities, additional safeguards are necessary to ensure that every citizen is included in the election process. I remain committed to furthering the causes of the Civil Rights Movement and will work hard in the coming months to guarantee the right to vote for every citizen. I hope that this month we will celebrate the lives of all of the strong and determined men and women who have worked to ensure equality for all Americans.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, celebrating Black History Month is an opportunity to reflect upon the innumerable contributions that Blacks have made to the advancement of American society and culture. People of color whether from the homeland in Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America or North America, they have been more than instrumental in shaping the social complexion of America and humanity.

It was Carter G. Woodson in 1926 who initiated "Negro History Week" in the United States to promote "a better understanding of the contributions" of Blacks to human civilization. This noble effort 80 years ago has been successful in informing people all over the world about the numerous contributions of Blacks. It has also aided in reshaping and negating distortions that historians have in many cases intentionally promulgated. Black History Month continues to amplify accurate depictions and narratives about a myriad of global endeavors. These undertakings have drastically improved the daily lives and landscape of the world.

Individuals such as Pianky, the military genius and Black King of Nubia who conquered

Egypt around 700 BC; Antar, the African-Arabian poet and story teller; and Abram Hannibal, the soldier and commander of 18th century Russia to Chaka who led South Africa until his assassination in 1828 all exemplify and indicate historic contributions to society. "Their presence and deeds underscore an essential reality: Blacks have been part and parcel of world history, from exploration and revolution to scientific and other achievements."

Other notable achievements encompass pioneering the making of iron, valuable works of art, carved stones into historic ornaments and statues, the conversion of oil-bearing plants for both medical and dietary purposes. Early contributions also include developing cereal and transformation of a wild plant into cotton which led to the art of weaving. Additionally, people of color are among the earliest farmers who produced wheat, groundnuts, yams and watermelon.

Other accomplishments within the past 150 years, include performing the first open heart surgery, produced scientific evidence of cell life and metabolism, pioneered in blood plasma preservation, invented the inhalers used by rescue workers at disaster sites, created communication devices that allowed conversations between fast moving trains, invented machines that allowed for the mass production of shoes and improved the efficiency of lubricating systems used in large industry today.

This impressive list is not exhaustive of all the global contributions of people of color. However, it illustrates the vital contributions to America and the world. As we think about democracy in this country, people of color have been at the fore in pursuing "A more perfect Union." Consider Rosa Parks who refused to give up her seat on a bus, which sparked the Montgomery County Bus Boycott and the Civil Rights Movement. Also, it would be hard to think about American Democracy without Martin Luther King Jr. and his leadership and dream to bring the ideals of democracy into reality for all Americans.

In his 1970 essay, "What America Would Be Like Without Blacks," Ralph Ellison argued that "Whatever else the true American is, he is somehow Black."

[CaribEditorial, Feb. 7, 2006]

IMPORTANT ROLE OF PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

The name Dr. G. Carter Woodson means little to most Americans, West Indians or Africans. Indeed, only a minority of people in Virginia, Woodson's birthplace, ever heard of the former coal miner who graduated high school at the age of 21 years, but later earned a Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1912, around the time when thousands of West Indians, especially Jamaicans and Barbadians, were immigrating to Panama to help build the world-famous canal.

But, as more and more people, Black and White in the United States, the Caribbean, Canada, Africa, and elsewhere observe Black History Month, they are learning that it was Dr. Woodson who initiated "Negro History Week" in 1926 in the U.S. to promote "a better understanding of the contributions" of Blacks to human civilization.

Woodson's fledgling effort 80 years ago has since become an international phenomenon, one in which millions of people, Black and White, observe Black History Month. Caribbean and African nations may have joined the observances a bit late, but we believe in the old adage better late than never.

For, in the process, Black History Month is helping to shape our thinking and negate the

destructive effects of historiographies, which either deliberately distorted or ignored the positive roles of Black people in almost every aspect of life on the planet.

Clearly, time has proven Dr. Woodson right.

Undoubtedly, Black History Month is bringing to the fore important and accurate narratives about the multifaceted chapters Blacks have written in advancing global human development.

From their ancestral homeland in Africa to North America, the Caribbean, Latin America, and other parts of the world, people of color have been instrumental in improving the daily lives of human beings everywhere.

Names that run the gamut from Pianky, the military genius and Black King of Nubia who conquered Egypt around 700 BC; Antar, the African-Arabian poet and storyteller; and Abram Hannibal, the soldier and commander of 18th century Russia to Chaka who led and forged the proud Black nation of South Africa until his assassination in 1828 dot the pages of history.

Their presence and deeds underscore an essential reality: Blacks have been part and parcel of world history and were present from exploration and revolution to scientific and other achievements.

Blacks from Africa pioneered in the making of iron, fashioned precious stones into historic ornaments, statues, and valuable works of art; and used oil-bearing plants for both medicinal and dietary purposes. The developed cereal and transformed a wild plant into cotton, thus opening up the world to the art of weaving. They were among the world's first farmers, producing wheat, groundnuts, yams, watermelons, and possibly coffee.

In the past 150 years, Black inventors and pioneers created the key devices that perfected the overall lubrication systems used in large industry today; invented the lasting machine that revolutionized the mass production of shoes; created the means to communicate between fast-moving trains; came up with the inhalators used by rescuers at sites where disasters have occurred; performed the first successful open-heart surgery; produced scientific evidence of cell life and metabolism; and pioneered in blood plasma preservation, more commonly called blood banks.

These are but a handful of the exploits of Blacks, deeds which were previously shunted aside but have since been recognized through the study of history by and of Blacks. Along the way that historical record gained prominence in books, scholarly papers and presentations in classrooms, libraries, newspaper and magazine columns, and in special radio and television programs.

If knowledge is power, then it stands to reason that we in the United States, the Caribbean and Africa have much to gain from the information and the results of academic and scientific inquiry, which Black History Month and other observances inspire.

People everywhere owe Woodson a debt of gratitude for his pioneering action that effectively promoted the institutionalization of Black History as an academic discipline and as a vehicle that has made us all aware of the truth of the valuable contributions of Blacks to international development.

He was driven to act because he complained in the 1930s that while white historians used textbooks to persuade students and others that Blacks couldn't "subject passion to reason," they failed to teach them the authentic stories of African achievement.

Dr. Woodson argued, quite correctly, that the knowledge of "real history" would liberate people of African descent from mental slavery and inspire to demand social equal-

ity while upsetting the "oppressor in America and the colonizer in Africa." Add the Caribbean to that equation and the international scope of his efforts would become clear.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, every February, Americans celebrate Black History Month. This tribute dates back to 1926 and is credited to a Harvard scholar named Carter G. Woodson. The son of former slaves, Woodson dedicated his life to ensuring that black history was accurately documented and disseminated. In an effort to bring national attention to the contributions of black Americans, Woodson organized the first annual Negro History Week in 1926. He chose the second week of February in honor of the birthdays of pivotal black supporters Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. From Jackie Robinson to Tiger Woods, Harriet Tubman to Barack Obama, Black History Month pays tribute to inspirational African Americans from the past, as well as those who will continue to make history well into the future.

For 1 month, people of African descent in America are recognized for their contributions. The irony of recognizing and paying tribute to people of African descent in America is that we are recognizing all people of the Earth. Africa represents all people of the world. Every person born since creation, every person alive today, and every person born in the future was, is, and will be of African descent. The gift Africa has provided the world is humanity and civilization.

Be that as it may, Black History has been presented and accepted as a fragmented afterthought. It is celebrated for 1 month and/or mentioned with a couple of lines in a text or Social Studies course outline. In most instances, the references begin with slavery and end with the Civil Rights Era and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. A question I ask high school students is, "What were slaves before they became slaves?" Their response, 90 percent of the time, is "nothing." It appears many of our youth believe their ancestors fell out of the sky as slaves.

Black History is world history. Old and new research on Africa and its place in human history has proved that Africa is the birthplace of mankind and was, for many centuries, in the forefront of human progress. African or Black History must be looked at anew and seen in its relationship to world history as only the history of the first and second rise of Europe. Yet, the history of Africa was already old when Europe was born. Until quite recently, it was rather generally assumed, even among well-educated persons in the West, that the continent of Africa was a great expanse of land, mostly jungle, inhabited by savages and fierce beasts. It was not realized that great civilizations could have existed there, or that great kings could have ruled there in might and wisdom over vast empires. Today, many of us, as the descendants of queens and kings of Africa, refuse to identify with the Motherland of all people. We begin with 1619 and slavery. We identify with 370 years of physical and mental bondage as opposed to three thousands years of uninterrupted civilizations. Our story is everyone's story. Our story begins with the worshipping of one God, builders of the pyramids, and builders of the first cities and universities.

To reverse our fall from being builders of pyramids to project dwellers; to reverse our fall from being controllers of our own destiny

to caretakers of someone else's destiny; and to reverse our unraveling as a whole people will necessitate knowing who we are and what we represent. Our future as a people, community, and world is related to the past. Back to the future—Black History not for a month, but for a lifetime!

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WATT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of this Special Order today related to Black History Month.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Carolina?

There was no objection.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. ABERCROMBIE (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of illness.

Mr. HINCHEY (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and March 1 on account of illness.

Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of illness.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of official business in the district.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of illness.

Mrs. BIGGERT (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of illness.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today and the balance of the week on account of illness.

Mr. OSBORNE (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of business in the district.

Mr. ROHRBACHER (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of illness.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. DEFAZIO) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.
 Mrs. MCCARTHY, for 5 minutes, today.
 Ms. DELAURO, for 5 minutes, today.
 Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.
 Mr. EMANUEL, for 5 minutes, today.
 Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.
 Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, for 5 minutes, today.
 Ms. WATERS, for 5 minutes, today.
 Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.