

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.