

Americans today. We are a little unique on this right of privacy. It is really not one of the things that a lot of other countries have. Remember, it is not supposed to be violated by government, our right to be secure in our homes and in our effects.

So here we are in 2015, and where are we?

This morning, somewhere in the United States, somebody woke up and sent out some emails and made a phone call. A person may have had a meeting, so he got his little iPhone out—5 or 6 or whatever it is—and pulled up Google maps to figure out a route to get from where he was to where the meeting was. He took his vehicle or maybe jumped in a cab and checked Facebook if he were in a cab, on the phone, texted his friend, and maybe even played what is now something fun, I guess, for some people—“Candy Crush”—on the iPhone.

After the meeting is over with, this individual may head off to the office, log onto the computer, do a little G-chatting with a friend about where he planned to go for dinner that evening, and later that evening, he uploads a photograph from supper, as we call it in Texas, on his Instagram. That is, maybe, a typical day for a lot of people.

But, all during that route of the American citizen's, the Federal Government has the ability to stalk that individual every step of the way because of the devices that he is using electronically. Maybe, until last year—until some news came out by the national media—most Americans were unaware that their every move could be tracked by Big Brother. Through the NSA, which I call the “National Spy Agency” now, the government has the ability to read citizens' emails, to read their texts, to know their phone logs, to track the location and travel and movements of citizens, to snoop and collect information about individuals through smartphones, apps, to read G-chats, and to look at private photographs—all unknown to the citizen.

The failure to disclose any of this information until recently is why many Americans now fear government intrusion—I call it government stalking—into our lives. The stalking government has kept its Peeping Tom activities a big secret until, primarily, Edward Snowden told us all about it.

□ 1830

His issue is a different issue, but now we know about it.

So how did we get here? Over the years, technology has rapidly changed and given power-hungry—my opinion—bureaucrats the capability to sift through data and find out more information than ever. Just because they have the physical ability doesn't mean that they have the constitutional right or any right to violate the Fourth Amendment because this protects Americans. The Fourth Amendment

doesn't protect government; it protects Americans. It protects citizens.

The government seems to justify the snooping, the Peeping Tom for a couple of reasons. The White House, the administration claims that NSA has no interest in monitoring American citizens; they are just looking for bad guys. Well, I have a hard time believing that. Until evidence came out to the contrary, the NSA, it seems, was snooping and spying on lots of Americans in the name of trying to catch the bad guys.

Furthermore, NSA, when they did a little investigation, they found dozens of instances where their own employees misused intelligence capabilities to spy on people—ex-girlfriends and others. Why? Simply because they had the ability.

So we have learned for years that the NSA has quietly, in my opinion, snooped and spied on millions of Americans without a warrant—and that is the key—and without their knowledge and without their consent. This is justified for a second reason, based upon the name of national security. It is said we live in terrible times. We do. We have got these terrorists running all over the world, bad guys trying to hurt us, so we at the NSA need to get this information to protect Americans from these bad guys.

Well, let's analyze that just for a moment if we can.

We have heard reports that, well, we have caught a lot of bad guys because of this information that NSA has seized, this megadata. So during a Committee on the Judiciary hearing last year, I asked Deputy Attorney General James Cole this question: How many criminal cases have been filed based upon this massive seizure of information by NSA, collecting information on Americans without the use of a warrant and storing it? And to my knowledge it still exists. How many criminal cases?

He testified: Maybe one. Maybe one.

So this nonsense about we are doing all of this because we have to catch the bad guys, they have got one criminal case that they can talk about. Even if there were more, it does not justify, in my opinion, the massive seizure of data without constitutional safeguards.

Let's read it one more time. “The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue”—in this case no warrants at all are issuing—“but upon probable cause supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.”

That is not what is occurring. It is just massive amounts of information are being seized.

Let me try to describe it this way. Let's go back to Bobby Oglethorpe. Let's say that Bobby Oglethorpe lives close to where I do in Atascocita, Texas, and the police come to me as a

judge and say: Judge, we know that Bobby Oglethorpe lives in this ZIP Code here, but we don't know where he lives, and he is no good. He is a criminal, and he is in possession of firearms and drugs, and all kinds of illegal things he has done, but we don't know which house he is in in this particular ZIP Code, so we want to go search all the houses in the ZIP Code and hopefully we will catch him.

No judge in this country would sign a warrant and say: All right. Have at it. Start searching all the houses looking for this one guy with all this bad illegal stuff that he is in possession of.

No judge would do that. Why? Because it violates the Fourth Amendment. Why? Because it is not specific enough. It is a general warrant, like the British were imposing on the Colonies that, as John Adams said, sparked the American Revolution. Wouldn't do that.

Or another example, it is like finding a needle in a haystack. The government wants to seize the whole haystack. They can't do that. They have got to find the needle. They have got to be specific in their warrant. So, in my opinion, based upon the Fourth Amendment, the activity of the NSA, by seizing lots of data, violates the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution.

There are other examples.

So we talked about NSA seizure of data, and to my knowledge, like I said, they still store all this information.

May I inquire of the Speaker how much time I have left?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 12 minutes remaining.

Mr. POE of Texas. Thank you. I appreciate it.

NSA. Let's move on to what is called ECPA. We will talk about the IRS a little bit.

This spring, most Americans are going to be filing taxes, their tax returns, and many Americans, including me, are concerned about the IRS' ability to take information from Americans without their consent or without a warrant. Sometimes that includes emails. So let's talk specifically about the concept of government seizure of emails without consent of the person who sent it or received it and without a warrant.

Current Federal law is that, if somebody has an email within 6 months of when that email was sent, that email, to be obtained by government—not just law enforcement, but any government agency—they have to get a warrant to seize that. But as soon as that 160 days runs, past 160 days, the government doesn't get a warrant because the law doesn't require it. I think in the spirit of the Fourth Amendment, the Fourth Amendment should require that.

Email, what is email? That is an electronic message sent to another person.

Let's go back to regular mail or snail mail, which some people call it. If I write a letter and I seal the envelope and I put the postage on there and I

send it, go put it in the mailbox, one of those blue mailboxes, and I drop that in the mailbox, the government does not have the authority to go in that mailbox and take the letter out, read the letter, seize the letter without a warrant.

So it flows through the United States postal system from wherever to wherever, and it lands in somebody else's mailbox. That mail, generally speaking, is protected under the Fourth Amendment, because it violates the Fourth Amendment if government seizes it and goes into the contents without a warrant.

The same should apply to emails. It is communication. It is just done electronically. But the law does not allow—let me say it another way. If emails are over 6 months old, Americans should be aware of the fact that government may seize those emails from a private company without your knowledge, without your consent, and without a warrant.

That is why I have introduced, along with Representative ZOE LOFGREN from California, that the law should be that emails are protected, that it is a right of privacy and it is an expectation of privacy for Americans that emails be protected and that government should be getting a warrant before they seize those documents, because it is a violation at least in the spirit of the Fourth Amendment. I hope that that legislation does finally come to the floor and we get a vote on protecting the Fourth Amendment, the right of privacy for Americans when it comes to emails.

The same applies not only just to emails, but under the circumstances, it would apply to geolocation devices that the government knows where you are. I think the government, to keep up with you, needs a warrant to stalk you throughout the United States.

The third thing I wanted to mention in the remaining time is a completely different issue, but it has to do with drones, the right of privacy. We are in the drone age. It is estimated that by 2030 we will have 30,000 drones over the skies of the United States, 30,000 of them.

Drones are a marvelous invention. They are highly technical. They can be very small. You can get one at a local store that you can put in the palm of your hand. No question about it, there are good uses for drones. Right now the law is that the FAA regulates the use of drones throughout the United States. It may permit some; it may not permit, may refuse to permit them. It is a bureaucratic decision by the FAA.

Congress needs to weigh in on the issue of drones and set down constitutional guidelines. People need to know the rules. Law enforcement needs to know the rules, and private citizens need to know the rules about their use of drones. And basically, the Fourth Amendment ought to apply to the use of a drone except with the exigent circumstances that already apply to the Fourth Amendment—high-speed

chases, disasters, fires, et cetera—but we need some guidelines on the issue of drones.

Congress has the responsibility to protect the Fourth Amendment of the surveillance of Americans by either law enforcement or by private citizens and develop a standard for both law enforcement and for private citizens to know what the standard is. Yes, there are reasons why we should use them, and the law should allow those, but Congress needs to make the decision, not the FAA.

I have a local sheriff, or the sheriff in Texas where I am from. He generally says he doesn't want to use drones because he doesn't know what the courts are going to decide down the road as to whether or not that use of a drone was a lawful or unlawful violation of the Fourth Amendment. So rather than wait for the courts to decide if this specific use is or is not a violation of the Fourth Amendment, Congress needs to come up with guidelines about the design and the protection of the Fourth Amendment that drones can only be used in certain circumstances; otherwise, they are not allowed to be used because they violate the Fourth Amendment of the United States.

So those are three issues that have the right of privacy that are being, I think, chilled today because there is more and more government intrusion into all of those areas: into the massive data of phone information, information that is put on your iPhone, for example, that is being seized, can be seized without knowledge, without warrant; the massive amount of emails that can be seized—we really don't know how much is being seized because over 6 months your personal email is not protected by law; government agencies, not just law enforcement, can seize that—and then the skies will have 30,000 of those drones.

There needs to be some regulations within protection of the Fourth Amendment, and we need to work with industry and government to outline what those rules ought to be to protect the Fourth Amendment, protect the right of privacy of individuals to be secure in their homes, in their papers, and their effects from government intervention and government intrusion. Congress should set the standard for what a reasonable expectation of privacy is, especially in those areas that I mentioned and the one regarding drones as well.

So I hope that we see some movement in this legislation. Once again, ZOE LOFGREN and I have introduced legislation, as well as others, to protect the right of individuals to be free from searches of their emails after 6 months without a search warrant. We have that legislation pending as well. Hopefully, we can rein in what I call the stalking government about stalking American citizens.

America is not about keeping up and following every citizen in the United States by government. That is what

other countries do. That is what countries like the Soviet Union used to do. That is not what America should be doing, and Congress needs to weigh in on this to protect individuals' right of privacy under the Fourth Amendment, which was the spark, according to John Adams, to the American Revolution, that concept of the Fourth Amendment being violated.

And that is just the way it is.

I yield back the balance of my time.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 30 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I thank the gentleman very much for the yielded time, and I thank the floor staff and the representatives of the Democratic cloakroom, Republican cloakroom for their courtesies.

I want to join my good friend who was on the floor earlier this evening. I was detained in a diplomatic meeting. I could not join my good friend, Congressman AL GREEN, as he began to commemorate and salute Black History Month.

□ 1845

This is story of a proud people, of Americans who participated in every historic event since the founding of this country and whose ancestors proudly wore the uniform on many occasions, including the uniform in the Civil War and wars beyond.

Tonight, I come to salute both national heroes and local heroes from Houston, Texas, and—in particular—the 18th Congressional District.

This, in fact, is the 39th commemoration of Black History Month, and we celebrate the contributions of African Americans who have contributed to the history and the greatness of our Nation.

We pay tribute to trailblazers, pioneers, and leaders, like many of us know, such as Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall; United States Senator Blanche Kelso Bruce; a U.S. Congresswoman from my congressional district, the Honorable Barbara Jordan, who most recently sat amongst us, retiring from the United States Congress in 1978-79; U.S. Congressman Mickey Leland, who lost his life trying to provide food to hungry people in Ethiopia; astronauts like Dr. Guion Stewart Bluford, Jr., and Mae C. Jemison; Frederick Douglass; Booker T. Washington; James Baldwin; Harriet Tubman; Rosa Parks; Maya Angelou, who taught me at Yale University; Toni Morrison, a premier writer; along with another outstanding writer as well, Gwendolyn Brooks—just to name a few of the countless well-known and unsung heroes whose contributions have helped our Nation become a more perfect union.

The history of the United States has been marked by the great contributions of African American activists, leaders, writers, and artists. As a Member of Congress, I stand on those shoulders.

Their struggles and triumphs made it possible for me to stand here today and continue to fight for their values and really the values embedded in what America is all about: the values of equality and justice, progress for all, regardless of race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

Mr. Speaker, I have two very special giants. They are my mother and father. Mrs. Ivalita "Ivy" Jackson, a vocational nurse, and Mr. Ezra C. Jackson, one of the first African Americans who was welcomed for a short period of time into the growing comic book publishing business during World War II.

That was the entertainment. Many Americans found stories of joy, drama, various superheroes, monsters, and a number of other things in the comic book business.

In New York City, a young man by the name of Ezra Jackson was given the door as the youngest son of my grandmother, Olive Jackson, who had sent three sons off to World War II. My uncles each fought. The youngest son was to stay with his widowed mother. In doing so, he found in himself a talent.

Even today, I am very proud to say that his works have been shown in the Smithsonian. He is just an individual, one might say average man—an African American man—who suffered the indignities of discrimination and later found no place in that industry as he was being replaced by White citizens.

I know that their strength—a mother in her tenacity and long-standing work at Booth Memorial Hospital—was the foundation for myself and my brother Michael Jackson and now with many who have come behind. They were beloved parents, and they taught me the value of education, hard work, discipline, perseverance, and caring for others.

I know this is not family night, but I cite my husband, Dr. Elwyn Lee. He became the first tenured African American professor at the University of Houston School of Law.

There are many today that make their pathway standing on the shoulders of others. The most wonderful tribute that I like is to our military veterans who, as I indicated when I started, have fought in every war since the Revolutionary War—how amazing.

These people came first in the bottom of a belly of a slave boat as slaves. They can count their history to every single war, fighting on behalf of the sanctity and the security of our Nation.

I remember joining Congressman JOHN LEWIS and Congressman CHARLES RANGEL, a Korean war veteran, as we were invited to pay tribute to the Tuskegee Airmen and the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion, the famed "Triple Nickels."

I was honored to be able to be at that ceremony sponsored by the U.S. Army commemorating the 50th anniversary of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Everything that we have gained has been because our soldiers, regardless of their race, religion, or background, were able to put on the uniform. I am very grateful to say that so many of those who put on the uniform, even when they were treated in an unfair manner in this country, proudly put on that uniform and fought for the Nation.

I am reminded of all of them, Mr. Speaker, because they live amongst us in our communities, and as we have seen in the honoring of the Devils yesterday, we see that they are so proud to wear their uniform. They have fought so hard.

Let me salute all of our veterans and soldiers, and let me be reminded of those from the African American community who went to serve, even as the laws of this Nation did not treat them fairly.

I am well aware of the Tuskegee Airmen because my father-in-law was a Tuskegee Airman, along with his wife, who was one of the supporters. Phillip Ferguson Lee and Ethiopia Lee, now 94 years old, received a Congressional Gold Medal.

Of course, we know the story of the Tuskegee Airmen achieving one of the lowest loss records of all the escort fighter groups and being in constant demand for their services by the Allied bomber units, a record unmatched by any other fighter group.

You know something, Mr. Speaker? These brave men and women, no matter—as I indicated—what race, it is so interesting. They do not tell their story often. That is why I am so glad that the United States Congress over these last years has begun to honor all of these groups so that their story can be told and forever embedded in the history of this Nation.

I want to go on to say that the impressive feats of the Tuskegee Airmen were outstanding and astounding. I believe that their efforts and much of the success of African American soldiers in World War II caused, in 1948, to persuade President Harry Truman to issue his famous Executive Order—which I am so glad he issued—No. 9981, which directed equality of treatment and opportunity in all of the United States Armed Forces and led to the end of racial segregation in the United States military forces.

One person to tell that story in the eloquent way that it has been told is General Colin Powell—or the famous Davis generals, "Chappie" Davis was who was one and well known—but Colin Powell tells that story.

Clearly, these individuals bravely fought for their country, but they show that they had the right stuff. They are American history, and they certainly are a testament to Black history.

Clearly, what began as an experiment to determine whether "colored" sol-

diery were capable of operating expensive and complex aircraft ended as an unqualified success, based on the experience of the Tuskegee Airmen, whose record included 261 enemy aircraft destroyed, 148 aircraft of the enemy damaged, 15,553 combat sorties, and 1,578 missions over Italy and north Africa.

They also destroyed or damaged over 950 units of ground transportation and escorted more than 200 bombing missions. They proved that "the antidote to racism is excellence in performance," as retired Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Carter once remarked.

I take joy in this presentation and sharing this with my colleagues. It is Black History Month, but sometimes, we need to remember to say thank you to all Americans who have gone on before us. This month, we happen to be focusing on African Americans.

Who can forget United States Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm and the strong voice that she was for the vulnerable? A lady from Brooklyn, her first appointment in this Congress was to the Agriculture Committee. No, she didn't run away from it. She ran toward it. Her famous statement is: "A tree grows in Brooklyn." She ran for President. She made history there.

There are others like Harriet Tubman—we call her General Moses—who led slaves to freedom up and down the east coast. She had a sharp tongue and told anybody that was lagging behind: You aren't going to stay behind because, if you did and got caught, all my others who are trying to escape would be captured.

Certainly, Rosa Parks, who was a proud American, had the great fortitude—although a small woman who did tailoring work—to indicate in a way that subjected herself to being put in prison, put in jail, is that: I, too, am an American.

I am so glad that Mae Jemison lives in my community. I obviously represent the city that loves NASA and loves human space exploration. Mae Jemison, the first African American woman to go into space, now has dedicated herself to exposing young people to math, science, engineering, technology, and creating more astronauts for the restored and reinvigorated human space exploration. That is a good thing. That is a very good thing.

I believe we can look to work together in the 50th year of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. I am a member of the United States Congress and the Judiciary Committee, led by a man who made history himself at that time, JOHN CONYERS, who has served in many capacities but has been a chair of the Judiciary Committee, being the first African American to ever chair that committee, but also a man that at every cornerstone of justice has a fight, whether it is sentencing, whether it is prison reform, whether it is dealing with the issues of copyright, whether it is the social justice issues.

Let me say he was the first employer of Rosa Parks outside of her town of

Alabama where she made her historic stand in Montgomery, Alabama. She worked for Congressman JOHN CONYERS.

I mentioned this is the 50th anniversary of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. We all know the story. I knew the story beforehand. I worked for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Right after the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, I knew the names of Hosea Williams and James Orange and Ambassador Andrew Young as those who worked closely with Dr. King. Certainly, Reverend Jesse Jackson had moved up to Operation PUSH.

I say that to say that we know the story that it was the throngs of unnamed persons who pursued a simple right: the right to vote. I believe their heroic efforts have made it part of America's history.

I always believed one vote, one person is not for me. It is not for whether you are White or Hispanic or Asian or African American. It is for America. I truly believe that they made the first step to tell America that a vote should be unfettered for every citizen.

You should not be blocked from voting—and I hope, Mr. Speaker, we will get to that point—not selfishly for one group versus another, but I hope we will get to that point for all of America.

I think in this month of Black history commemoration, I need to give a challenge. That challenge needs to be that we need to pass the Voting Rights Act reauthorization as was crafted in the last Congress and supported by bipartisan Members.

I had the privilege to be one of the original cosponsors. Former Congressman Spencer Bachus was on that bill with me. We had seen each other and marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. He was, of course, a Representative from Alabama. There was no forcing, no pushing.

It was just quiet thought that this was the right thing to do by a number of Republican Members who supported that legislation in the last Congress, including one of the esteemed former chairmen of the Judiciary Committee, Mr. SENSENBRENNER.

□ 1900

But it was all about thinking that it is important not to block anyone from voting. I still think that that is the right thing. I think the premise is right. I think it is premised on the Constitution.

There is no statement about voting in the Constitution, but there are statements of philosophy and rights and liberties, all driven by someone's right to vote for a government that will promote religious freedom, freedom of access, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, the right to a trial by jury, due process.

Certainly, we know the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments were all geared toward the idea of freedom. And you can only secure freedom, one, by your

wonderful men and women who are willing to stand in uniform and fight for us, many who have gone through the ages and shed their blood.

But the other is an active and involved and participatory civic society, and the actions of a civic society are their voice and their votes.

I plead with my colleagues, let us make the vote and the voice real by supporting the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act, written to respond to the United States Supreme Court.

I may have disagreed with the Supreme Court's position on section 5, but, Mr. Speaker, I have a basic internal mechanism that says you adhere to the law. You follow the law. You follow the dictates of the courts as they reach their final answer in the highest Court of the land.

So we went to working on a structure that, in fact, was not pointed but broad, meaning that you would not point out certain States, you would just say that you couldn't violate a person's right to vote.

And the good news is, you had the ability to work yourself out of the coverage of that act. That is a good thing—work yourself out.

Then, if a State—though I don't think it might happen with the diverse States that we have—wants to work its way in, we find a way to correct their laws that might be blocking someone's right to vote. I am going to have the confidence that we are going to take that up and make a difference in the lives of all Americans.

Let me move on to say that I hope my challenge will be accepted, and I hope that we will take the words of Dr. King. I enjoy reading his writings. He was more than, if you will, the civil rights leader. He was a man who thoughtfully crafted words and messages to inspire and give us a road map.

He had these famous words, "Why We Can't Wait," which were found in the 1960s. What a provocative statement. Is he trying to provoke people to violence? Absolutely not.

He was a committed, dedicated servant and disciple of Gandhi's nonviolence, and his own internal mechanism of nonviolence. It was in his DNA. He would not provoke any form of violence.

We should know that because, as the story looks back and things happened, if you were part of the SCLC, they were driven, they trained all of their foot soldiers in an absolute commitment to nonviolence. And if you showed any sign that you could not adhere, you would not be part of their efforts.

Dr. King had some famous words that I like. I know and like many of his words, but this one: "Everybody can be great or anybody can serve. You only need a heart full of grace and a soul generated by love."

Let me also say, Mr. Speaker, it is important when you come up and talk about great people, that you don't forget home. And I just want to acknowledge some of the great leaders in my

community. I can't call all their names, but I do want to acknowledge Reverend F.N. Williams, Sr., one of the founding pastors of the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church. His father was almost the founding father of Acres Homes, one of the great leaders in the 1920s and 30s, and he has carried on his civil rights legacy.

Dr. S.J. Gilbert, Sr., who led the Mount Sinai Baptist Church.

Reverend Crawford W. Kimble, who was the pastor of Barbara Jordan, an erudite man that wrote beautiful words of leadership and challenge.

The late Reverend E. Stanley Branch, in essence, a Republican, who was a leader who brought all people together.

Reverend Dr. William A. Lawson, the founder of the Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, who walked with Dr. King and is the go-to person on issues of, again, marching and fighting nonviolently for justice.

Reverend Johnny Robeson, who was a great leader of the Baptist Ministers Association. And I remember him distinctly not indicating what politics or party it was, but is it right, is it just?

Commissioner El Franco Lee is the first African American Commissioner on the Harris County Commissioners.

Mr. John Bland, one of the Texas Southern University students who marched to desegregate the various lunch counters.

Ms. Ruby Mosley, up in age, who is a fighter for senior citizens and is a mother of Acres Homes.

Ms. Dorothy Hubbard, the late Dorothy Hubbard, who, in fact, worked in my office and instructed me about how you serve and help people.

Ms. Doris Hubbard, one of the first young persons to be active in the Texas Democratic Party and who has been a champion for equality and justice.

Willie Bell Boone, another one who minces no words about fighting to make sure that everyone's voice is heard.

Holly HogoBrooks, who, again, is a great leader as it relates to the civil rights movement and the marching on the counters.

Mr. Deloyd Parker founded this great organization called Shape, that has lifted the boats of inner city children, one by one. And out of that Shape Community Center have come doctors and lawyers, have come scientists and businesspersons. But they all have a heart for service.

"Doll" Carter, Ms. Lenora Carter, with her husband, was the founder of the Forward Times, I believe, the oldest newspaper.

So you can see that Black history is a storytelling history.

And so, as I close my remarks, I have to take a moment of personal privilege to be able to talk about something that I have enjoyed.

You see, Mr. Speaker, around this time of year, in Houston, we have something called the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. It is eons and

decades of years old. It goes back to our traditions as cowboys and cowgirls, and we are not going to let it go.

So every year—we are coming up on it—it is probably going to go for, we say, almost two months that we are legitimately in our cowboy, cowgirl attire.

I was privileged to be honored by the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Black Heritage Committee, which I helped found 20-some years ago because I knew that the Black cowboys and others wanted to be so much a part of it.

I want to pay tribute to Verna Lee “Boots” Booker, who was the first cowgirl, if you will, to be in the Houston rodeo. And I received that award. What a privilege to acknowledge that we are everywhere. She was a competitor, and I believe it was in the barrel competition. But what an exciting night to recall her history.

So we are going to be rodeoing over the next couple of weeks, and I want to pay tribute to all of the trail riders, and particularly, those of African American heritage. They have carried on this tradition.

I want to make mention, I know there are many others, but allow me to make mention of the Prairie View Trail Ride Association, which makes its annual trek to the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo in Hempstead. They rendezvous with a dozen other caravans at Memorial Park and they join the rodeo.

Mr. Speaker, they stay out on the trail. This is real. They don't get into a hotel and then get on their horses. They ride that trail for 2 and 3 and 4 weeks, and then come down to the rodeo on the day of the big rodeo parade.

The Prairie View Trail Ride was founded in 1957 by James Francies, Jr., Dr. Alfred N. Poindexter, and Myrtis Dightman. I know there are others, but these are those who started.

Their mission was to promote agricultural interest in young Americans and to perpetuate those principles and methods which have come to be regarded as the ideals and traditions of the Western World as well as the Negro Western Heritage.

I am glad that they wanted to perpetuate this great tradition and, particularly, among African Americans.

A good many of the first Black cowboys were born into slavery but later found a better life on the open range.

I know many of us have heard of the Buffalo Soldiers. The Indians called African American soldiers that because of the woolliness of their hair. They were on horses, and they were fighting as well for the viewpoint of that time.

Some Black cowboys took up careers as rodeo performers, or were hired as Federal peace officers in Indian territory.

Our history weaves in and out, and it is a colorful history, and it mentions a number of people. I will mention Daniel W. “80 John” Wallace, who started

riding the cattle trails in his adolescence and ultimately worked for cattlemen Winfield Scott and Gus O’Keefe. He put his accumulated savings toward the purchase of a ranch near Loraine, where he acquired more than 1,200 acres—that is a big deal—and 500 to 600 cattle.

We have been ranching for a long time, and Texas has a great tradition.

I want to talk about my friend, Mollie Stevenson, a fourth-generation owner of the Taylor-Stevenson ranch. I would take my children out there. She would have little horses and ponies for them to run and ride. She founded the American Cowboy Museum to honor Black, Indian, and Mexican American cowboys, to be able to embrace everyone.

Weekend rodeos featuring Black cowboys began in the late 1940s and continued to be popular. The contests of the Negro Cowboys Rodeo Association is evident that we have a strong history.

So I think it is important tonight that we salute the long history that we have had in many different areas and be able to say, as I close, again, that there is work yet to be done in the pouring forward of our history, whether it is to reflect on the cowboys who, at times, were poorly fed, underpaid, overworked, deprived of sleep, prone to boredom and loneliness, but they kept on going; or it is to fix the criminal justice system of the 21st century, to be able to recognize that for all the cowboys and the historic persons whose names I have called, Dr. King and his wife, who stood alongside him, Coretta Scott King, that we fix together the criminal justice system, and that we work to find ways to work with law enforcement; but we answer the questions of those grieving mothers, Trayvon Martin’s mother, Eric Garner’s mother, Sean Bell, Michael Brown, Tamir, and all of them, and we find ways to ensure the wives and family members of law enforcement, that, yes, your husband or wife, as a law enforcement officer, will come home.

Over the years, I have worked with the Federal law enforcement as a member of the House Judiciary Committee. We have always found ways to make their life easier in terms of the quality of life and work and expanded cops on the beat programs, and so now we can come together on training and the grand jury system and prison reform, which are not prone to any one group in America. It is an American issue.

I truly believe that the history of all people, the history of Americans, no matter what their background, is one of clinging to democracy and the principles of the Bill of Rights, that we all have a decent opportunity to be respected by our law enforcement processes. Whether it is our courts or whether it is our process of trying cases, we all are to be respected.

With that, Mr. Speaker, let me say that I end on the very note that this is a great country, and the history of African Americans has contributed to its

greatness. Let us use the richness of their history to cast forward a new lot that will change America for the best as we move forward for justice, equality and freedom.

Mr. Speaker, this February we recognize and celebrate the 39th commemoration of Black History Month.

This month we celebrate the contributions of African Americans to the history of our great nation, and pay tribute to trailblazers, pioneers, heroes, and leaders like Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, U.S. Senator Blanche Kelso Bruce, U.S. Congresswoman Barbara Jordan, U.S. Congressman Mickey Leland, Astronauts Dr. Guion Stewart Bluford Jr. and Mae C. Jemison, Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, James Baldwin, Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, and Gwendolyn Brooks just to name a few of the countless number of well-known and unsung heroes whose contributions have helped our nation become a more perfect union.

The history of the United States has been marked by the great contributions of African American activists, leaders, writers, and artists.

As a member of Congress, I know that I stand on the shoulders of giants whose struggles and triumphs made it possible for me to stand here today and continue the fight for equality, justice, and progress for all, regardless of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation.

The greatest of these giants to me are Mrs. Ivalita “Ivy” Jackson, a vocational nurse, and Mr. Ezra A. Jackson, one of the first African-Americans to succeed in the comic book publishing business.

They were my beloved parents and they taught me the value of education, hard work, discipline, perseverance, and caring for others.

And I am continually inspired by Dr. Elwyn Lee, my husband and the first tenured African American law professor at the University of Houston.

Mr. Speaker, I particularly wish to acknowledge the contributions of African American veterans in defending from foreign aggressors and who by their courageous examples helped transform our nation from a segregated society to a nation committed to the never ending challenge of perfecting our union.

Last year about this time, I was honored to join my colleagues, Congressman JOHN LEWIS and Congressman CHARLES RANGEL, a Korean War veteran, in paying tribute to surviving members of the Tuskegee Airmen and the 555th Parachute Infantry, the famed “Triple Nickels” at a moving ceremony sponsored by the U.S. Army commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

The success of the Tuskegee Airmen in escorting bombers during World War II achieving one of the lowest loss records of all the escort fighter groups, and being in constant demand for their services by the allied bomber units—is a record unmatched by any other fighter group.

So impressive and astounding were the feats of the Tuskegee Airmen that in 1948, it helped persuade President Harry Truman to issue his famous Executive Order No. 9981, which directed equality of treatment and opportunity in all of the United States Armed Forces and led to the end of racial segregation in the U.S. military forces.