

It is a source of enormous and enduring pride that my father-in-law, Phillip Ferguson Lee, was one of the Tuskegee Airmen.

Clearly, what began as an experiment to determine whether “colored” soldiers’ were capable of operating expensive and complex combat aircraft ended as an unqualified success based on the experience of the Tuskegee Airmen, whose record included 261 aircraft destroyed, 148 aircraft 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 Lt. Col. Herbert Carter once remarked.

Mr. Speaker, Black History Month is also a time to remember many pioneering women like U.S. Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm; activists Harriet Tubman and Rosa Parks; astronaut Mae C. Jemison; authors Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, and Gwendolyn Brooks; all of whom have each in their own way, whether through courageous activism, cultural contributions, or artistic creativity, forged social and political change, and forever changed our great Nation for the better.

It is also fitting, Mr. Speaker, that in addition to those national leaders who contributions have made our nation better, we honor also those who have and are making a difference in their local communities.

In my home city of Houston, there are numerous great men and women. They are great because they have heeded the counsel of Dr. King who said: “Everybody can be great because anybody can serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.”

By that measure, I wish to pay tribute to some of the great men and women of Houston:

1. Rev. F.N. Williams, Sr.
2. Rev. Dr. S.J. Gilbert, Sr.
3. Rev. Crawford W. Kimble
4. Rev. Eldridge Stanley Branch
5. Rev. William A. Lawson
6. Rev. Johnnie Jeffery “J.J.” Robeson
7. Mr. El Franco Lee
8. Mr. John Bland
9. Ms. Ruby Moseley
10. Ms. Dorothy Hubbard
11. Ms. Doris Hubbard
12. Ms. Willie Bell Boone
13. Ms. Holly HogoBrooks
14. Mr. Deloyd Parker
15. Ms. Lenora “Doll” Carter

As we celebrate Black History Month, let us pay tribute to those who have come before us, and pay forward to future generations by addressing what is the number one issue for African American families, and all American families today: preserving the American promise of economic opportunity for all.

Our immediate focus must be job creation, and enacting legislation that will foster and lay the foundation for today’s and tomorrow’s generation of groundbreaking activists, leaders, scientists, writers and artists to continue contributing to the greatness of America.

We must work to get Americans back to work. We must continue to preserve the American Dream for all.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand here in celebration of the heroic and historic acts of African Americans and their indispensable contributions to this great Nation.

It is through our work in creating possibilities for today and future generations that we best honor the accomplishments and legacy of our predecessors.

PRAIRIE VIEW TRAIL RIDE ASSOCIATION

The Prairie View Trail Ride Association makes an annual trek to the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo in Hempstead.

They then rendezvous with a dozen other caravans at Memorial Park where they will join the rodeo parade in downtown Houston.

The Prairie View Trail Ride Association was founded in 1957 by James Francies Jr., Dr. Alfred N. Poindexter and Myrtis Dightman Sr.

This group’s mission statement says: “The purpose of the Prairie View Trail is to promote agricultural interest in young Americans and to perpetuate those principals and methods which have come to be regarded as the ideals and traditions of the Western World as well as the Negro Western Heritage.

PVTR serves as a booster for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo and supports Prairie View A&M University in their educational programs.”

BLACK COWBOYS OF TEXAS

Black cowboys have been part of Texas history since the early nineteenth century, when they first worked on ranches throughout the state.

A good many of the first black cowboys were born into slavery but later found a better life on the open range, where they experienced less open discrimination than in the city.

After the Civil War many were employed as horsebreakers and for other tasks, but few of them became ranch foremen or managers.

Some black cowboys took up careers as rodeo performers or were hired as federal peace officers in Indian Territory.

Others ultimately owned their own farms and ranches, while a few who followed the lure of the Wild West became gunfighters and outlaws.

Significant numbers of African Americans went on the great cattle drives originating in the Southwest in the late 1800s. Black cowboys predominated in ranching sections of the Coastal Plain between the Sabine and Guadalupe rivers.

A number of them achieved enviable reputations. Bose Ikard, a top hand and drover for rancher Charles Goodnight, also served him as his chief detective and banker.

Daniel W. (80 John) Wallace 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 and 500 to 600 cattle.

He was a member of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association for more than thirty years. William Pickett made his name as one of the most outstanding Wild West rodeo performers in the country and is credited with originating the modern event known as bulldogging. He was inducted into the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in 1971.

Black cowboys have continued to work in the ranching industry throughout the twentieth century, and African Americans who inherited family-owned ranches have attempted to bring public recognition to the contributions of their ancestors.

Mollie Stevenson, a fourth-generation owner of the Taylor-Stevenson Ranch near Houston,

founded the American Cowboy Museum to honor black, Indian, and Mexican-American cowboys. Weekend rodeos featuring black cowboys began in the late 1940s and continue to be popular.

These contests owe their existence to the Negro Cowboys Rodeo Association, formed in 1947 by a group of East Texas black businessmen-ranchers and cowboys.

In the early days of Texas, the work of the cowhand was essential to the newly arrived settlers building a life on the frontier.

The story of the Anglo cowboys who worked the ranches of Texas is well known, but much more remains to be discovered about the African American cowhands who worked side-by-side with the vaqueros and Anglo cowboys.

The cowboy learned his craft from the vaqueros of New Spain in Texas when it was the northern territory of Mexico, as well as from the stock raisers of the South.

Such a life was hardly glamorous. Poorly fed, underpaid, overworked, deprived of by snakes or tripped by prairie dog holes.

Work centered on the fall and spring round-ups, when scattered cattle were sleep, and prone to boredom and loneliness, cowboys choked in the dust, were cold at night, and suffered broken bones in falls and spills from horses spooked collected and driven to a place for branding, sorting for market, castrating, and in later years, dipping in vats to prevent tick fever.

African American cowboys, however, also had to survive discrimination, bigotry, and prejudice.

The lives of these cowhands tell a story of skill and grit, as they did what was necessary to gain the trust and respect of those who controlled their destiny.

That meant being the best at roping, bronc busting, taming mustangs, calling the brands, controlling the remuda, or topping off horses.

From scattered courthouse records, writings, and interviews with a few of the African American cowhands who were part of the history of Texas, Sara R. Massey and a host of writers have retrieved the stories of a more diverse cattle industry than has been previously recorded.

Twenty-five writers here recount tales of African Americans such as Peter Martin, who hauled freight and assisted insurgents in a rebellion against the Mexican government while building a herd of cattle that allowed him to own (through a proxy) rental houses in town.

Bose Ikard, a friend of Charles Goodnight, went on Goodnight’s first cattle drive, opening the Goodnight-Loving Trail. Johanna July, a Black Seminole woman, had her own method of taming horses in the Rio Grande for the soldiers at Fort Duncan.

These cowhands, along with others across the state, had an important role that has been too long omitted from most history books.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 7 o’clock and 13 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, February 5, 2015, at 9 a.m.