

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 184

Recognizing and celebrating the significance of Black History Month.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 28, 2023

Mr. GREEN of Texas (for himself, Ms. ADAMS, Mr. ALLRED, Mr. AUCHINCLOSS, Ms. BALINT, Ms. BARRAGÁN, Mrs. BEATTY, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER, Ms. BONAMICI, Mr. BOWMAN, Mr. BOYLE of Pennsylvania, Ms. BROWN, Ms. BUDZINSKI, Ms. BUSH, Mr. CARBAJAL, Mr. CÁRDENAS, Mr. CARSON, Mr. CARTER of Louisiana, Mr. CASAR, Mr. CASTEN, Mr. CASTRO of Texas, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. CLYBURN, Mr. COHEN, Mr. COSTA, Ms. CROCKETT, Mr. CROW, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Ms. DEAN of Pennsylvania, Ms. DELBENE, Mr. DESAULNIER, Mrs. DINGELL, Mr. DOGGETT, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. ESPAILLAT, Mr. EVANS, Mrs. FLETCHER, Mrs. FOUSHEE, Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois, Mr. VICENTE GONZALEZ of Texas, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. HIGGINS of New York, Mr. THOMPSON of California, Mr. HORSFORD, Ms. JACOBS, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE, Ms. KELLY of Illinois, Mr. KILDEE, Ms. KUSTER, Mr. LARSEN of Washington, Ms. LEE of California, Ms. LEE of Pennsylvania, Mr. LYNCH, Ms. MATSUI, Ms. MCCOLLUM, Mr. MCGOVERN, Ms. MENG, Mr. MFUME, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Mr. MORELLE, Mr. MOULTON, Mr. NADLER, Ms. NORTON, Ms. OMAR, Mr. PANETTA, Mr. PAPPAS, Mr. PAYNE, Ms. PETTERSEN, Ms. PINGREE, Ms. PLASKETT, Ms. PORTER, Ms. PRESSLEY, Mr. RASKIN, Ms. ROSS, Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, Ms. SÁNCHEZ, Ms. SCANLON, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Ms. SEWELL, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Mr. SOTO, Ms. STANSBURY, Ms. STEVENS, Ms. STRICKLAND, Mr. TAKANO, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Ms. TITUS, Ms. TLAIB, Mr. TONKO, Mr. TORRES of New York, Mrs. TRAHAN, Mr. TRONE, Mr. VARGAS, Mr. VEASEY, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Ms. WATERS, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Ms. WILLIAMS of Georgia, Ms. WILSON of Florida, and Mr. JACKSON of Illinois) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Accountability

RESOLUTION

Recognizing and celebrating the significance of Black History Month.

Whereas this resolution may be cited as the Original Black History Month Resolution of 2023;

Whereas this resolution has been endorsed by the Association for the Study of African American Life and History;

Whereas the theme for Black History Month 2023 is “Black Resistance”, which chronicles how African Americans have resisted oppression in all its invidious forms including: enslavement, lynching, mob violence, police brutality, Black codes, convict leasing, Jim Crow laws, lawful segregation, and invidious discrimination;

Whereas slavery was a brutal and inhumane system that treated human beings as property and stripped them of their inalienable human rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;

Whereas the history of Black resistance in the United States predates the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, as it historically spans centuries from colonial slavery through contemporary invidious discrimination;

Whereas this resolution illuminates some of the momentous recondite history of Black resistance that predates the resistance movements of the 20th and 21st centuries;

Whereas Black resistance to slavery was a constant presence throughout the history of enslavement in the United States, and it took many forms, including acts of rebellion, escape, suicide, sabotage, litigation, work slowdowns, feigning illness, misplacing or damaging tools, and other forms of noncompliance;

Whereas there is historical evidence of as many as 250 instances of slave revolts involving 10 or more slaves during the history of American slavery;

Whereas the Nat Turner and Gabriel Prosser rebellions were two of the most significant acts of armed resistance to slavery in the United States, inspiring other enslaved people to resist and making clear the determination of enslaved people to fight for their freedom;

Whereas Gabriel Prosser's rebellion against Virginia and the United States in 1800 was a landmark event in the history of Black resistance to slavery in the United States and, although he and his followers were hanged, his bravery and leadership continue to inspire generations of activists and advocates;

Whereas the Stono Rebellion, the New York City Conspiracy, and the German Coast Uprising are other instances of significant slave uprisings in the United States and its predecessor colonies;

Whereas in the fight for freedom, liberty, justice, and equality the righteous resistance of many Black freedom fighters has been depreciated, downplayed, deprecated, disparaged, denigrated, disrespected, and demonized;

Whereas the story of Claudette Colvin who refused to give up her seat on a segregated bus months before the famous incident where Rosa Parks refused to do the same has been deprecated, downplayed, and disrespected;

Whereas Bayard Rustin, a lifelong civil rights advocate and lead organizer of the March on Washington, was nearly written out of history merely because of his sexual orientation;

Whereas religion was a form of resistance to slavery as it allowed the enslaved to assert their humanity, dignity, and independence;

Whereas spiritual songs were often used as a form of resistance by building community and maintaining good spirits, as a means of healing, and even to communicate secret messages;

Whereas the song “Steal Away” was used by Nat Turner to call people to him to discuss plans for his rebellion, and the same song was also sung by slaves who planned on escaping soon;

Whereas a song, “Get on the Gospel Train”, provided courage for slaves to escape, citing room for many people, a train available to everyone, and a promise that also alluded to the fact that both Blacks and Whites provided assistance to fugitive slaves as they traveled the Underground Railroad;

Whereas the song “Sweet Chariot” was said to be a personal favorite of Harriet Tubman’s as it indicated to slaves that they would be escaping soon;

Whereas the song “Follow the Drinking Gourd” was used to remind slaves of the clues they would need to find their way north;

Whereas those slaves who resisted their enslavement by running away were not only recaptured, punished, and returned to their torment, but also exposed in newspaper ads, which assured enslavers that all was well;

Whereas the following is a selection of ads on captured suspected fugitive slaves run in the Montgomery Advertiser from 1849 to 1865;

Whereas John, 23, ran away from Levi Williams, and had a \$25 reward offered for John's return;

Whereas George, 20, was captured in Mobile County after he had escaped from owner James Edward Wilson in Memphis, Tennessee;

Whereas Hannah, arrested in Pickens County, was a 75-year-old woman who was said to belong to John Smith of Lowndes County, Mississippi;

Whereas Frank, whose age was described only as a boy, was an at-large runaway with a \$15 reward for his capture;

Whereas Lucinda, 20, was jailed in Mobile County, Alabama, belonged to Mrs. Elizabeth Hinsley of Sumter County, Alabama, and had multiple scars on her right arm;

Whereas Black resistance to slavery was confronted with harsh court decisions that stripped Blacks of their human rights;

Whereas in the 1857 Dred Scott v. Sandford decision, the Supreme Court ruled that having lived in a free State and territory did not entitle an enslaved person, Dred Scott, to his freedom;

Whereas the Court further ruled in Dred Scott v. Sandford that people of African descent "are not included, and were not intended to be included, under the word 'citizens' in the Constitution, and can therefore claim none of the rights and privileges which that instrument provides for and secures to citizens of the United States";

Whereas in Dred Scott v. Sandford, Chief Justice Roger Taney declared, in the Supreme Court's infamous majority opinion, that Dred Scott, a Black slave, "had no rights a white man was bound to respect";

Whereas the Supreme Court in the 1896 case *Plessy v. Ferguson* embraced legal segregation, which advanced constitutional justification for laws that allowed for separate and supposedly equal public facilities for White and Black Americans;

Whereas the Underground Railroad, led by figures such as Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass, played a vital role in resistance by helping enslaved people escape to freedom;

Whereas, during the Civil War, Black soldiers made up approximately 10 percent of the Union Army, with approximately 180,000 Black soldiers enlisting to fight for their freedom and the abolition of slavery;

Whereas despite facing discrimination and being paid less than White soldiers, Black soldiers played a crucial role in the Union's victory in the Civil War by risking and in too many instances sacrificing their lives in the fight for the freedom of their fellow man;

Whereas the Black soldiers' participation in the Civil War was not only significant in terms of numbers, but also in terms of the impact their participation had on the fight for racial equality and civil rights, as it challenged the notion that Black Americans were not capable of fighting for their own freedom;

Whereas the Civil War, as well as the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments, emanated from Black resistance to slavery in the United States;

Whereas the abolition of slavery did not end White supremacy;

Whereas the period between the end of the Civil War and the civil rights movement was marked by continued discrimi-

Whereas Black activists in the United States have inspired many other marginalized communities around the world to fight for their rights and equality;

Whereas the month of February is officially celebrated as Black History Month, which dates to 1926 when Dr. Carter G. Woodson set aside the second week in February as Negro History Week to recognize the heritage and achievement of Black Americans: Now, therefore, be it

2 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

3 This resolution may be cited as the “Original Black
4 History Month Resolution of 2023”.

5 SEC. 2. RECOGNIZING AND CELEBRATING THE SIGNIFI-
6 CANCE OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH.

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1 of its celebration to raise the awareness of this commu-
2 nity's accomplishments for all Americans.

