

HOUSE RESOLUTION 57

By Love

A RESOLUTION to honor and commemorate Black History Month in Tennessee.

WHEREAS, largely marginalized throughout much of the history of the United States, African Americans were almost entirely omitted from historical documentation in this country until the 1920s, even though they were active participants in every major event and period since the nation's founding; and

WHEREAS, in 1925, an African-American scholar, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, launched an effort to focus awareness on the contributions of African Americans to American society that, in 1976, became Black History Month, a month-long celebration in February of the estimable contributions of African Americans to this country; and

WHEREAS, Black History Month stands as a tribute to the spirit and culture of African Americans and offers every citizen the unique opportunity to place his or her country's history in its proper perspective by recognizing a range of the vast contributions made by African Americans; and

WHEREAS, the most famous "conductor" on the Underground Railroad, Harriet Tubman escaped from slavery in the South to becoming a leading abolitionist before the American Civil War; she risked her life and freedom many times, leading hundreds to freedom in the North. She aided the Union Army during the war and established a home for the aged after the war, dedicating her life to helping impoverished former slaves and the elderly; and

WHEREAS, in honor of her noble life of purpose and by popular demand via an online poll, the United States Treasury Department announced in 2016 that Harriet Tubman will become the first American woman to be represented on United States paper currency when she replaces Andrew Jackson on the \$20 bill; and

WHEREAS, February offers every American the chance to learn about courageous African-American patriots like Crispus Attucks, who became the first American to give his life for his country in the American Revolution, when he was felled during the Boston Massacre; Doris (Dorie) Miller who was the first African American to be awarded the Navy Cross for his actions that saved countless lives during the attack on Pearl Harbor and who lost his life aboard another vessel; and General Colin Powell, who was the first African American to serve on the Joint Chiefs of Staff and, under President George W. Bush, became the first African American to serve as Secretary of State; and

WHEREAS, breaking barriers in science and technology, Katherine Johnson, an African-American physicist and mathematician, calculated the trajectories, launch windows, and emergency back-up return paths for many space flights from Project Mercury, including the early NASA missions of John Glenn and Alan Shepard, and the 1969 Apollo 11 flight to the moon through the Space Shuttle program; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Mae Jemison was the first African-American woman to go into space aboard the space shuttle *Endeavor*, and George Robert Carruthers created the ultraviolet camera, or spectrograph, used by NASA to reveal the mysteries of space and the Earth's atmosphere; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Mark E. Dean, the John Fisher Distinguished Professor at the University of Tennessee College of Engineering, was the chief engineer for the development of the IBM personal computer and holds three of the original nine patents; he also invented the "bus" which allows add-on devices like keyboards, disk drives, and printers to be connected to computer motherboards; and

WHEREAS, in the field of health care, Dr. Daniel Hale Williams was the first person to successfully complete open heart surgery; Dr. Charles Richard Drew was responsible for America's first major blood banks and the effort that grew into the American Red Cross Blood Donor Service; and Dr. Patricia Bath, the first African-American woman physician to receive a

medical patent, revolutionized the field of ophthalmology when she invented a device that refined laser cataract surgery, the Laserphaco Probe; and

WHEREAS, in public service to our Nation, Hiram Revels of Mississippi became the first African-American United States Senator in 1870; Edward Brooke of Massachusetts became the first African American popularly elected to the United States Senate in 1967; and Thurgood Marshall was the first African American to serve on the United States Supreme Court; and

WHEREAS, awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2015, Shirley Chisholm of New York was the first African-American woman to be elected to the United States House of Representatives and the first woman to run for the presidential nomination of the Democratic Party; and

WHEREAS, the forty-fourth President of the United States, President Barack Obama was the first African American to win election to the highest office in the country; his major achievements included significant regulatory overhauls of the U.S. healthcare system, modernization of consumer protection and financial regulations, and further expansion of civil rights for every American; and

WHEREAS, an accurate history of the United States of America cannot be told without sharing the life stories of countless African Americans, including those distinguished individuals mentioned above, and equally, the story of the State of Tennessee must include the history of those African Americans who have proudly served their fellow citizens as members of the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, in November 1872, just over two years after the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, Tennessee voters elected their first African-American representative to the General Assembly, Representative Sampson W. Keeble of Nashville; and

WHEREAS, standing on the floor of the House of Representatives in the State Capitol that just twenty-five years prior was built through the labor of enslaved persons, Representative Sampson Keeble sought passage of legislation to provide protection for wage earners, amend Nashville's charter to allow African Americans to operate businesses downtown, and appropriate state funding for the Tennessee Manual Labor University; and

WHEREAS, thirteen other African-American men would serve in the Tennessee General Assembly during the Reconstruction Era: John W. Boyd, Thomas Frank Cassels, Isham F. Norris, Thomas A. Sykes, Samuel A. McElwee, David Foote Rivers, Leonard Howard, Green E. Evans, William A. Fields, William C. Hodge, Styles Linton Hutchins, Monroe W. Gooden, and Jesse M.H. Graham; no African American would serve in the General Assembly again for nearly seven decades; and

WHEREAS, starting with the election of A.W. Willis in 1965, fifty-five more African Americans have joined their forefathers to serve in the General Assembly, including M.G. Blakemore, Robert T. Booker, Dorothy Brown, Russell Sugarmon, Jr., J.O. Patterson, Avon N. Williams, Jr., Alvin King, Harold M. Love, Sr., I.H. Murphy, James I. Taylor, Harold Ford, Charlie Pruitt, Harper Brewer, Lois DeBerry, Emmitt Ford, John Ford, C.B. Robinson, Dedrick (Teddy) Withers, Edward Davis, Rufus Jones, Roscoe Dixon, Pete Drew, Mary Pruitt, Larry Turner, C.J. Walker, Ulysses Jones, Joe Armstrong, Thelma Harper, Henri Brooks, Tommie Brown, Larry Miller, Bretran Thompson, Kathryn Bowers, John DeBerry, Edith Taylor Langster, Joe Towns, Jr., Barbara Cooper, Johnny Shaw, Nathan Vaughn, Sidney Chism, JoAnne Favors, Ophelia Ford, Gary Rowe, Karen Camper, G.A. Hardaway, Eddie Neal, Brenda Gilmore, Reginald Tate, Johnnie Turner, Antonio Parkinson, Raumesh Akbari, Harold M. Love, Jr., Lee Harris, and Rick Staples; and

WHEREAS, Black History Month annually allows us to shed light on the countless contributions by African Americans to our great Nation and reminds us of the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., that "Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable...Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals."; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we hereby commemorate Black History Month as an important time to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of African Americans in our Nation's history and for all people of Tennessee to learn more about the past and to better understand the experiences that have shaped our Nation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.