



HOUSE RESOLUTION 24-1003

BY REPRESENTATIVE(S) Bacon and English, Amabile, Bird, Boesenecker, Brown, Catlin, Clifford, Daugherty, Duran, Epps, Froelich, Garcia, Hamrick, Hernandez, Herod, Jodeh, Joseph, Kipp, Lieder, Lindsay, Lukens, Mabrey, Marshall, Martinez, Marvin, Mauro, McCormick, Ortiz, Parenti, Ricks, Rutinel, Sirota, Snyder, Soper, Story, Taggart, Titone, Valdez, Velasco, Vigil, Weinberg, Weissman, Willford, Woodrow, Young, McCluskie.

CONCERNING RECOGNIZING FEBRUARY OF 2024 AS BLACK HISTORY MONTH.

WHEREAS, Every February, the United States acknowledges and honors that Black Americans, through their contributions and sacrifices, have played an indelible role in shaping this country; and

WHEREAS, Even though race, and thus the designations of "negro", "Black", and "colored", has been recognized as a construct originally built to separate and disenfranchise people based on skin color that was associated with people originating from the African continent, there is a shared culture derived from that history that should be seen and elevated; and

WHEREAS, Black History Month celebrates the rich cultural heritage, impact, and triumphs of, and acknowledges the adversities faced as a part of, the African diaspora in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, known as the "father of Black history", first set out in 1915 to designate a time to promote and educate people about Black history and culture; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Woodson believed that the history created by Black people, despite attempts to limit their potential, is a critical part of American history, and he founded the organization now known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, or ASALH, galvanizing fellow historians to envision a weeklong celebration to encourage the coordinated teaching of Black history in public schools; and

WHEREAS, In 1926, Dr. Woodson was successful in creating Negro History Week, a week celebrated during the second week of February, as it coincided with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, both of whom ensured emancipation; and

WHEREAS, Because Black history was not woven into the fabric of the American history taught year-round, Dr. Woodson believed that Negro History Week would not place limitations on but would focus and broaden the nation's consciousness of the importance of learning Black history and make the celebration of Black history in the academic field of history a serious area of study; and

WHEREAS, By the late 1960s, due to demonstrations concerning racial injustice, inequality, and poverty during the Civil Rights Movement, Negro History Week evolved into what is now known as Black History Month; and

WHEREAS, Calling upon Americans to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history", in 1976, President Gerald R. Ford officially recognized Black History Month during the nation's bicentennial; and

WHEREAS, The Association for the Study of African American Life and History celebrates its 109th anniversary this year and designates a theme for Black History Month every year; and

WHEREAS, Black History Month is rooted in the West African principle of Sankofa, which is symbolized by a bird whose feet are planted forward with its neck reaching backwards to protect an egg on its back; Sankofa evokes an image of remembering the past to make positive progress in the future; and

WHEREAS, Black Americans have focused on examining three particular eras of Black history to pursue enlightenment and true equality: Looking to history and beliefs in values to be freed first from bondage; then to be freed from overtly oppressive laws and policies designed to separate and disenfranchise; and now, presently, to mitigate the impact of such laws through examining and dismantling lingering systems; and

WHEREAS, Many escaped and former slaves found their way to Colorado in pursuit of freedom to read, build families, and develop opportunities, and here in Colorado, Nat Love and James Beckwourth cultivated their skills in mountaineering, fur trapping, and driving cattle; often called "mountain men", or the pejorative to white cow hands, "cowboys", they contributed to settling the West; and

WHEREAS, Barney Ford and Clara Brown built hotels, shelters, restaurants, and other businesses to support burgeoning mining trades in Colorado; their wealth helped them become influential in shaping the way Colorado would be ratified as a state in the Union; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Justina Ford, who was the first licensed Black American female doctor in Denver, Colorado, delivered over 7,000 babies, serving a diverse clientele of poor people, Black Americans, and non-English-speaking immigrants who had been turned away from hospitals; and

WHEREAS, Oliver Toussaint Jackson, as an early homesteader who was inspired by self-sufficiency and the promises of the federal "Homestead Act", was the founder of Dearfield, Colorado, the largest Black homesteading settlement in Colorado; and

WHEREAS, Denver, Colorado, was known as a place to develop Black talent; the city would not only shape the depiction and artistry of Black people in America, but also propel the arts in America: From Colorado's Denver East High School came artists such as Hattie McDaniel, the first Black Oscar winner, who played Mammy in "Gone with the Wind"; Don Cheadle; Pam Grier; and the founding members of the band Earth, Wind & Fire; and

WHEREAS, Denver's Five Points neighborhood became known as the "Harlem of the West" and a performance hub for America west of the Mississippi, featuring dancers like Cleo Parker Robinson, a Kennedy Center Medal of Honor recipient; and

WHEREAS, Representatives John T. Gunnell and Joseph H. Stuart, Colorado's first and second Black representatives, served Arapahoe County from 1881 to 1883 and 1895 to 1897, respectively; and

WHEREAS, In the General Assembly, Representative Gunnell chaired the committee on federal relations; was a member of the committee on elections and apportionment, as well as a member of the penitentiary committee; and sponsored House Bill 57, which concerned tenants-at-will, or monthly renters, and was introduced on January 15, 1881; and

WHEREAS, Representative Stuart worked on a bill to ensure equal access to public places, regardless of a person's race; and

WHEREAS, Henry O. Wagoner, brother-in-law to Barney Ford and mentor to the sons of Frederick Douglass, was appointed a clerk in the first Colorado state legislature, and in 1880, he was appointed deputy sheriff of Arapahoe County; and

WHEREAS, Black veterans returning from World War II were stationed in or relocated to Colorado and would later fight to ensure that the values of freedom they fought for overseas would be upheld for Black people in the United States; and

WHEREAS, James Reynolds, a member of the Tuskegee Airmen, led the Denver branch of the Congress of Racial Equality, or CORE, as the group organized protests from sit-ins to freedom rides across the country; one of the West's first successful protest demonstrations was the 1943 picketing of a Denver movie theater that segregated its black and white patrons; and

WHEREAS, Future civic leaders like Wilma and Wellington Webb and Anna Jo Haynes would also become members of CORE who would fight to end policies rooted in racism, such as redlining; and

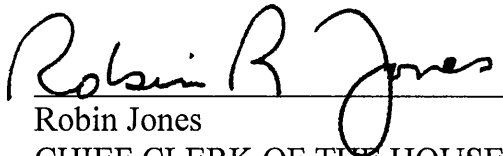
WHEREAS, The journey is never long when freedom is the destination, and to this end, Black Coloradans fought and continue to pioneer equality for all; now, therefore,

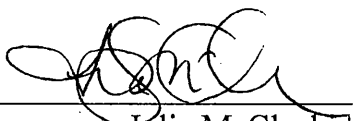
Be It Resolved by the House of Representatives of the Seventy-fourth General Assembly of the State of Colorado:

(1) That the Colorado House of Representatives recognizes the contributions Black Americans have made to the development of Colorado and the United States; and

(2) That the Colorado House of Representatives recognizes February of 2024 as Black History Month and the Association for the Study of African American Life and History's 2024 theme of "African Americans and the Arts".

Be It Further Resolved, That copies of this Resolution be sent to History Colorado, Wilma and Wellington Webb, Anna Jo Haynes, and Cleo Parker Robinson.


Robin Jones
CHIEF CLERK OF THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES


Julie McCluskie
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES