

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 166

By Gant

A RESOLUTION to honor former Tennessean and prominent African-American writer and author Alex Haley to commemorate Black History Month.

WHEREAS, Alex Haley was born in Ithaca, New York, on August 11, 1921, and was the oldest of three brothers; and

WHEREAS, he and his family moved to Henning, Tennessee, where they resided until he was five years old; and

WHEREAS, Alex Haley enrolled at Alcorn State University in Mississippi at the age of fifteen and, later, Elizabeth City State College in North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Haley later enlisted in the military when he turned nineteen, and on May 24, 1939, he began what became a twenty-year career in the United States Coast Guard; and

WHEREAS, Alex Haley was promoted to the rate of petty officer third-class in the rating of steward, one of the few ratings open to African Americans at the time; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Haley's distinguished service to our country was recognized with the Coast Guard Good Conduct Medal, American Defense Service Medal, American Campaign Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, European-African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal, Korean Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal, United Nations Service Medal, and the Coast Guard Expert Marksmanship Medal; and

WHEREAS, upon retiring from the Coast Guard, Alex Haley became senior editor for *Reader's Digest* magazine; and

WHEREAS, in 1976, he published *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*, a novel based on his family's history dating back to slavery; and

WHEREAS, *Roots* was eventually published in thirty-seven languages, and Mr. Haley won a special Pulitzer Prize for the work in 1977; and

WHEREAS, *Roots* was later adapted as a popular television miniseries of the same name by ABC and reached a record-breaking 130 million viewers; and

WHEREAS, ABC aired a sequel to the miniseries in 1979 called *Roots: The Next Generations*, featuring Tony Award-winner James Earl Jones; and

WHEREAS, Alex Haley and U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander became close friends, and Senator Alexander invited Mr. Haley to co-chair a homecoming celebration for Tennesseans during Mr. Alexander's second term as Tennessee Governor; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Haley lived his life by these six words: "Find the Good and Praise It"; Senator Alexander often quoted this personal motto of Mr. Haley's and has referred to him as "the greatest storyteller Tennessee has ever produced"; and

WHEREAS, a portion of Morningside Park in East Knoxville has been named "Alex Haley Square" in his honor, and a thirteen-foot statue serves as a reminder to all of Mr. Haley's incredible accomplishments and his place in Tennessee's and our nation's proud history; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor American and Tennessee icon Alex Haley for his contributions to our State and nation and celebrate his powerful legacy that has inspired all of us to "Find the Good and Praise It" in our fellow citizens.

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