

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 1040

Recognizing and celebrating the significance of Black History Month.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 29, 2024

Mr. GREEN of Texas (for himself, Ms. ADAMS, Mr. AMO, Ms. BARRAGÁN, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Ms. BONAMICI, Mr. BOWMAN, Ms. BROWN, Ms. BROWNLEY, Mr. CARBAJAL, Mr. CÁRDENAS, Mr. CARSON, Mr. CARTER of Louisiana, Mr. CASE, Mr. COSTA, Ms. CROCKETT, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina, Ms. DEAN of Pennsylvania, Ms. DELBENE, Mr. DELUZIO, Mr. DESAULNIER, Mrs. DINGELL, Mr. DOGGETT, Ms. ESCOBAR, Mr. ESPAILLAT, Mrs. FLETCHER, Mr. FROST, Mr. GARAMENDI, Ms. GARCIA of Texas, Mr. GOLDMAN of New York, Mr. IVEY, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE, Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY, Mr. LANDSMAN, Ms. LEE of California, Ms. MCCOLLUM, Mr. MCGOVERN, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Mr. MORELLE, Mr. MOULTON, Mr. MULLIN, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Ms. NORTON, Ms. OMAR, Mr. PETERS, Mr. PHILLIPS, Ms. PORTER, Ms. PRESSLEY, Ms. SALINAS, Ms. SÁNCHEZ, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK, Ms. STANSBURY, Ms. TITUS, Ms. TLAIB, Mr. TRONE, Mr. VARGAS, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Ms. WILLIAMS of Georgia, and Ms. WILSON of Florida) 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 2024;

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 2024 is “African Americans and the Arts”, which commemorates the influence of African Americans to artistic and cultural movements in all fields, including visual and performing arts, literature, fashion, folklore, language, film, music, architecture, cuisine, and other forms of cultural expression;

Whereas African-American art has a long and extensive history, imbued with the experiences of African, Caribbean, and Black Americans’ lived experiences;

Whereas many cultural and artistic genres have been created and pioneered by people of African descent throughout history;

Whereas this resolution highlights Black artists and creators in various fields and their contributions to larger African-American movements;

Whereas enslaved Africans brought the tradition of sweetgrass basket weaving from West Africa to the low country of the American colonies over 300 years ago, a visual artistry which predates the American Revolution;

Whereas the enslaved Africans created the musical form of spirituals, religious folksong often sung during hours of manual labor;

Whereas famous spirituals include songs such as “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”, composed by Wallace Willis;

Whereas some spirituals served as a means of communication between liberators and seekers of freedom;

Whereas Robert Johnson, the Mississippi-born musician, was an elusive and influential early Blues musician who has since been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame;

Whereas McKinley “Muddy Waters” Morganfield, another Blues musician inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, released the songs “I Can’t Be Satisfied” and “I Feel Like Going Home”;

Whereas early Blues musicians, who were also often gospel performers, created the foundation for jazz, R&B, hip-hop, and other forms of music that are continuing to develop;

Whereas Phillis Wheatley, an educated and enslaved poet, published “Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral in 1773”, the first volume of poetry by an African American published in the modern era;

Whereas David Walker, a free Black man, wrote for the Freedom’s Journal, an antislavery weekly, as well as wrote and circulated abolitionist literature in the 1820s;

Whereas one such piece of literature was “Walker’s Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Colored Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America”, a widely circulated abolitionist pamphlet which called for the enslaved to rebel against their enslavers;

Whereas Maria Stewart, an abolitionist and women’s rights advocate, contributed to the literary world by being the first Black American woman to write and publish a political manifesto;

Whereas Edmonia Lewis created the sculpture The Death of Cleopatra in 1876, challenging contemporary society’s norms on death in art by depicting the moment after the

snake's venom had taken its toll instead of the more traditional depiction of her contemplating suicide;

Whereas Henry Ossawa Tanner painted *The Banjo Lesson* in 1893 shedding light on the poverty in which so many African Americans of the time lived while still maintaining their dignity and grace;

Whereas the Black Renaissance and New Negro Movement gained momentum in the 1920s and 1930s, bringing the Black arts to the international stage;

Whereas the novel "The Fire in the Flint" was a powerful view of 20th century racial oppression written by Walter White in 1924 and translated into French, spreading to the Black population in France and French-speaking colonies in Africa and the Caribbean;

Whereas, due to World War I, Black soldiers in the Armed Forces such as James Reese Europe brought Black culture and music with them when they were sent abroad;

Whereas Langston Hughes, the poet, social activist, playwright, and columnist, was a powerful figure during the Harlem Renaissance and spread Black culture and art through his travels to West Africa and Europe;

Whereas the Harlem Renaissance was a significant and pivotal cultural movement that influenced the Black Renaissance;

Whereas cities like Los Angeles, Chicago, and New Orleans were home to many Black artists whose creations also contributed greatly to the Black Renaissance;

Whereas the Black arts movement began in the 1960s as a way to artistically explore the themes and issues that were advocated by the Black power movement;

Whereas the poet Amiri Baraka is widely considered to be the father of the Black arts movement;

Whereas this cultural movement emphasized the autonomy of Black artists to create their art for Black people with the goal of awakening Black consciousness and ultimately liberation;

Whereas the Black arts movement brought about artists such as Audre Lorde, Alvin Ailey, Judith Jamison, Nikki Giovanni, and Sonia Sanchez;

Whereas, in 1973, a new genre of music called hip-hop was created in the Bronx, New York, in part by Black musicians DJ Kool Here and Coke La Rock;

Whereas five foundational elements of hip-hop include: MCing, DJing, graffiti art, breakdancing, and knowledge of self;

Whereas hip-hop, since its inception, has been a central force in political, social, and cultural spaces and has continued to be a space in which issues such as racism, violence, sexism, economic disinvestment, and others have taken center stage;

Whereas Afrofuturism is a term used to describe creative works that envision liberated futures for Black and oppressed peoples, usually including elements of science fiction, fantasy, or technological advancements, ranging across all fields of the arts;

Whereas examples of Afrofuturism can be found in the music of artists such as Sun Ra, Rashan Roland Kirk, Jimi Hendrix, and Janelle Monáe;

Whereas Octavia Butler's science fiction novels such as "Kindred" and the "Xenogenesis" series feature elements of Afrofuturism;

Whereas recent films such as Marvel’s “Black Panther” and the Oscar-winning “Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse” also prominently feature examples of Afrofuturism;

Whereas Afrofuturistic elements can also be found in the paintings of British-Liberian artist Lina Iris Viktor, the sculptures of Kenyan-born sculptor Wangechi Mutu, as well as the creations of Caribbean writers and artists like Nalo Hopkinson and Grace Jones;

Whereas the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass inspired the creation of Negro History Week, the precursor to Black History Month; and

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

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives recog-
 2 nizes the importance of commemorating Black History
 3 Month as it acknowledges the achievements of Black
 4 Americans throughout the Nation’s history and encour-
 5 ages the continuation of its celebration to raise the aware-
 6 ness of this community’s accomplishments for all Ameri-
 7 cans.

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