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ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMISSION ON
AFRO-AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

GOVERNMENT

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HEARING
BEFORE THE
SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
NINETY-FIRST CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

H.R. 3295

A BILL TO PROVIDE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A
COMMISSION ON AFRO-AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

HEARING HELD IN WASHINGTON, D.C., JUNE 4, 1969

Printed for the use of the Committee on Education and Labor

CARL D. PERKINS, *Chairman*



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ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMISSION ON AFRO-AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

MONDAY, JULY 28, 1969

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
OF THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met at 10:10 a.m., in room 2257, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. John Brademas (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Brademas, Scheuer, Meeds, and Collins.
Staff members present: Jack Duncan, subcommittee counsel; Marty LaVor, minority research assistant; and Nancy Neilen, clerk.
(Text of H.R. 3295 follows:)

[H.R. 3295, 91st Cong., First Sess.]

A BILL To provide for the establishment of a Commission on Afro-American History and Culture

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That (a) there is hereby established a Commission to be known as the Commission on Afro-American History and Culture (hereinafter referred to as the "Commission"). The Commission shall be composed of eleven members, appointed by the President from persons who are authorities on Afro-American history and culture, American history, education, journalism, communications, and other related fields.

(b) The President shall designate one of the members of the Commission as Chairman, and one as Vice Chairman. Six members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum.

(c) Members of the Commission shall each be entitled to receive \$100 per diem when engaged in the performance of the duties vested in the Commission, including traveltime; and while so engaged when away from their home or regular place of business, they may be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, as authorized by section 5703(b) of title 5, United States Code, for persons in Government service employed intermittently.

(d) The Commission shall meet at the call of the Chairman or at the call of a majority of the members thereof.

SEC. 2. (a) The Commission shall have the power to appoint and fix the compensation of such personnel, as it deems advisable, without regard to the provisions of title 5, United States Code, governing appointments in the competitive service, and the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of such title, relating to classification and General Schedule pay rates.

(b) The Commission may procure, in accordance with the provisions of section 3109 of title 5, United States Code, the temporary or intermittent services of experts or consultants. Persons so employed shall receive compensation at a rate to be fixed by the Commission, but not in excess of \$75 per diem, including traveltime. While away from his home or regular place of business in the performance of services for the Commission, any such person may be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, as authorized by section 5703(b) of title 5, United States Code, for persons in the Government service employed intermittently.

SEC. 3. The Commission shall conduct a study of all proposals to create a better understanding and knowledge of the contributions of Afro-Americans and their heritage to American history and culture.

SEC. 4. Within one year after the enactment of this Act, the Commission shall submit to the President and the Congress a comprehensive report on its study and investigation which shall include its recommendations and such proposals for legislation and administrative action as may be necessary to carry out its recommendations. The Commission shall cease to exist thirty days after such report is submitted.

SEC. 5. Total expenditures of the Commission shall not exceed \$500,000.

MR. BRADEMAS. The subcommittee will be in order. Today the Select Subcommittee on Education will conduct hearings on H.R. 3295, a bill to provide for the establishment of a Commission on Afro-American Culture.

The bill before us today, the principal sponsor of which is a distinguished member of this subcommittee, the gentleman from New York, Mr. Scheuer, would establish an 11-member presidentially appointed Commission who are authorities on Afro-American history and culture.

The task of the Commission would be to study proposals which would lead to a more effective dissemination of information relating to distinguished American Negroes, past and present. It is not, I understand, the purpose of this Commission to specify the methods by which Afro-American history would be taught, but to study approaches to this question and to make recommendations to the President at the end of the year.

The final implementation would be up to the President who, after having studied the recommendations of the Commission, would have the choice of proposing specific legislation, setting up new agencies, or acting upon the record in other ways he may deem appropriate.

Black American leaders have warned us that a people without a sense of identity will take vigorous steps to assert themselves. They have pointed to the presence of black stereotypes in history books and in the media, in the absence of a sense of heritage among many of our black citizens, all of which creates handicaps not easily overcome.

Moreover black leaders have ascribed considerable contributions of black Americans to all Americans. Mr. Scheuer's bill seems to provide an initial step toward assuring that the contribution of black Americans and their culture be disseminated with candor and without distortion. Before the Chair calls on the first witness he would like to call on Congressman Scheuer for any comments he might make on this bill which I believe was considered by this subcommittee and passed by the House of Representatives but not acted upon by the Senate.

MR. SCHEUER. Yes, Mr. Chairman, and first may I thank you for bringing this bill to speedy hearings early in the life of the 91st Congress. This bill 3295, was introduced in the 90th Congress, cosponsored by 25 of our colleagues and it did pass the House by a vote of 263 to 45, after having been reported out of the subcommittee and the full Education and Labor Committee, but it did not manage to get through the Senate in time for passage so we are commencing the machinery again.

The purpose of the bill here this year, as last year, and it has had virtually no change in its text, is to study the best means of preserving, collecting, and integrating the story of the Negro past and contributions to our history and culture into the mainstream of American life.

We want to learn how we can best report the contributions that black Americans are making now to our history and culture, how we can report the current history more accurately as it unfolds in our newspapers, our television, our radio, and our other media.

Dr. Wesley and many others including myself going back 3 years, I suppose, thought, that this was important and if anything the events that have taken place in the last 3 years have underscored this.

We have seen insistence on college campuses for black studies and courses that are more relevant to the need and aspirations of blacks for a self-image that represents the richness and the nobility of black American history and culture, that represents this richness and nobility better than, in the view of many, the rather sterile course content and curricula content that we find in our universities.

The same phenomena is beginning to appear in our high schools, a reaction by black Americans against a course of studies that does not reflect adequately in their view and in the view of many others, the contributions that black Americans have made and are making today to our history and culture.

So, if anything, the relevance, and I hate to use that overemployed word, but the relevance and need for this bill is even greater than when we first started thinking about it.

So, with those few words, Mr. Chairman, I again wish to thank you for commencing hearings early in the session on this bill, a factor which augurs well for its passage in this Congress.

Mr. BRADEMAS. Thank you.

Our first witness is Dr. Charles H. Wesley of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History.

I remember the very eloquent address that you gave in my own community last year in connection with a day recognizing the contributions of American Negroes to our country. Just as I was pleased to see you in South Bend, Ind., I am pleased to see you in Washington, D.C.

STATEMENT OF CHARLES H. WESLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF NEGRO LIFE AND HISTORY

Mr. WESLEY. Thank you, Mr. Brademas, and I recall your own very excellent address on that occasion; a very excellent address and a fine community.

In beginning, I want to express my appreciation and the appreciation of our association to Mr. Scheuer for the excellent manner in which he conducted the project last year for this commission. We are indebted to him. He also came to our annual meeting last year here in Washington, and we are very pleased to express this appreciation and say to you, sir, strength to your arm.

This is my statement as executive director of the Association of Negro Life and History.

Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee:

Bill No. 3295, the bill now under consideration to create a Commission on Negro History and Culture by Presidential appointment, is a long overdue proposed action, not only because it was passed by the House of Representatives in your last session, but also on its merits alone.

The selection of such a commission should have been undertaken in past years as a national action and an expression of black cultural appreciation, for both white and black.

We of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History commend your efforts to create this commission and express the hope that the decisions of your committee can be affirmative. There is a need for the collection of historical materials, and there is an urgency for this action, so far as black Americans are concerned.

Our association has approved the bill on three separate occasions, at its July 1967, executive council annual meeting in Washington, D.C.; a second time at its 53d anniversary meeting at the New York Hilton Hotel, October 1968, and a third time at its executive council 1969 session, June 22, 1969.

The executive council is composed of distinguished historians, many of them in outstanding universities now, business and professional leaders, whites and blacks working together in the interest of black history's truth.

This association is not one of the newly arrived organizations in education and public concern, because there are many today. It was organized in Chicago, Ill., at the Young Men's Christian Association under the leadership of the eminent Harvard-trained historian, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, on September 9, 1915, and incorporated in the District of Columbia on October 3, 1915.

The purposes of this organization were voluntary and cooperative, by white and black historians and devoted scholars of the collection of historical data bearing on the Negro population throughout history. I may add, Dr. Robert Clark of the University of Chicago, its department of social science and history, was the first president of this association.

The organization sought to publish books on black life and history, to study black Americans through schools, colleges, universities, and clubs, and to contribute to harmony between blacks and whites by interpreting the one to the other in history.

In January 1916, the association published the first number of the *Journal of Negro History*, which has been issued in every quarter since with regularity. This journal is found in the libraries of the first rank colleges and universities, as well as local libraries. White Americans who read the journal have often changed their attitudes toward black people because they learned of the accomplishments in their history.

In 1926, this association began its celebration of Negro History Week in each February, embracing the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln, February 12, and Frederick Douglass, February 14, a white American and black American, who were respectively instrumental in the achievements of the Negro people. Branches and clubs of the association were established to reach local communities. Junior branches included the children.

In 1937, the *Negro History Bulletin* was launched as a monthly, published from October to May for use by schools, colleges, and universities, as well as for those individuals, both black and white, interested in educating themselves on subjects pertaining to black people.

Subscriptions to these two publications increased by over 5,000 each in the forties. Our subscriptions now are 15,000 for the *Journal* and 18,000 for the *Bulletin*, with both having circulations which reach Europe, Asia, Africa, South America, and the West Indies, especially for their libraries.

More than three score books and monographs have been published by the association's Associated Publishers, its publishing agency, and have passed through many editions and printings.

The death of Dr. Woodson in 1950 was followed by difficult times for our association, for he had practically carried the burden of responsibility for the association on his own shoulders. Gradually, it has been brought forward into larger service and wider operations of its activities.

In the latter part of the fifties, cooperation was begun with the National Education Association as a result of the longtime relationship with the American Teachers Association. This gave our association a new and strong ally. When Negro History Week came in 1966, a filmstrip was developed jointly with the National Education Association for the use of teachers. This film was entitled "The Legacy of Honor."

This cooperation has continued, and a second film, "Black Treasures," was produced jointly. A third one on Negro education is now in process, this, too, with the National Education Association.

This association has established for itself an unimpeachable reputation for scholarly objectivity and an expertise in the field of African-American studies. On this foundation and on this history we again approved the passage of the proposed bill for a Commission in Negro History and Culture.

Such a commission is needed because many of the American people, even educated ones, have had a picture in their heads of the person called "a Negro." It is not a true picture, and our human relations are based upon it. An American may be educated in internationalism and still hold an untruthful image of the black person in his mind which colors his attitude and his action.

This bad image has been invented and kept alive, and even black Americans have bad images of themselves. These pictures, false as they are, reveal the black people to be a humorous, dance-crazy, rhythm-loving, happy-go-lucky and less intelligent people, less capable of learning than others of a different color. These bad images can be changed only by the truth in history's record. It is not to be done by preaching, talking, or pleading.

Such a commission with its report of the truth in American history and its support of it can remove the myths and falsehoods which have been basic to the prejudice of whites for blacks, and vice versa, and growing apparently sometimes in our day, for it will introduce the one to the other in fact and bring an end to the legend now surrounding black people.

It is true today, as it was in 1853, when a black speaker said to a convention of the free people of color, as they called themselves, "Our white fellow countrymen do not know us. They are strangers to our character, ignorant of our capacity, oblivious of our history." That was said in 1853.

Such a commission will be one response of Congress to black America, which is now demanding and insisting on a black curriculum, with black history, black literature, black art and black accomplishments in a school or college. Blacks march, they protest, they seek black history courses and black books.

Why should they not do so, when nearly all history is white, while they are black. Why should not both colors be included in the interest

of truth, justice, and fair play? Every outbreak of the black people has been based upon the consistent demand for black history with its accounts of the courage and work of the enslaved, the talents and abilities of the free, the struggles, aspirations, and achievements of black folk along with white folk in American history. Says the National Commission on Civil Disorders in its 1967 report:

The quality of education offered by ghetto schools is diminished by use of curricula and materials poorly adopted to the life experiences of the students. Designed to serve a middle-class culture, much educational material appears irrelevant to youth of the racial and economic ghetto. Until recently, few texts featured any Negro personalities. Few books used for courses offered reflected the harsh realities of life in the ghetto, or the contribution of Negroes to the country's culture and history. Their failure to include materials relevant to their environment has made students skeptical about the utility of what they are being taught.

As a consequence of these happenings, from 1915 to 1967, our association's annual meeting in New York City witnessed the largest book display in our 53 years of history. Educators report that the use of black history materials has influenced black students to better class performances.

Colleges and universities across the Nation beginning with Yale and Harvard, have begun the establishment of department of black studies and next fall this number will be increased greatly. The Southern Regional Education Board has urged colleges to emphasize materials on Negro culture.

The National Endowment for the Humanities has granted aid to summer workshops on black history and culture. State after State has required textbook accuracy and reliable treatment of minorities in teaching. Various organizations have arisen with such designations as Black Pride, Afro-American Educators, Afro-American Student Association, Black Student Union, Sisters in Blackness and many others with the publication of literature and it is rumored that the number of these groups will increase.

Another viewpoint was expressed by Dr. Alvin Poussaint of the Department of Psychiatry of Tufts University when he said:

The styles of life and language in books meant to teach spelling, reading and history were white models that were often divorced from the realities of life of the Black child. How could he feel that he was a worthwhile human being if he was not white and living in a clean suburban house like Dick and Jane? Negro models and heroes are seldom presented for the Black youngster to emulate. In fact, if he took the textbooks seriously, he might feel that Black people did not exist. A complete negation of the Black man's sense of self.

This is fundamental in this association's appeal to you honored gentlemen.

There has developed out of these ideas a concept of black awareness. For black people, black has become beautiful, and they seek to make it respectable. With integration seeming to slow up, some blacks turned to separatism and black nationalism. This concept was mentioned by such a view as one reported by a New York Times reporter who was told by a black woman:

I may be speaking out of turn, but you know that Black people must get together and do something for one another because white people don't really care about us.

Gentlemen, I ask you, do you really care?

The statement spreads as thousands of untold events on the racial basis give basis to its growth. But does Congress care about the history books? Does it care how the heritage of black Americans has been discounted, ignored, and despised? What can it do to produce a different atmosphere? Does it care that Negro manuscripts, letters, documents, stories, musics are being lost and not conserved?

It can pass this bill and give the opportunity to the President to appoint a commission to study this problem which is basic in our human relations in the United States, because it has been left alone throughout the past.

This is one way of major importance that we of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History believe that a contribution can be made by Congress to the improvement of relations of white and black.

When they learn to know one another in history, they will learn to live together in peace. A denial of this opportunity may well mean the continuation of the frustration faced by black people, the increase of efforts to bring law and order into action against them as they seek to be Americans in history and fact. Our association urges by resolution the adoption of the bill for a commission on Negro history and culture.

Mr. BRADEMAS. Thank you very much, Dr. Wesley, for your most eloquent statement. I have just two or three questions to put to you sir.

Dr. WESLEY. I will be glad to answer.

Mr. BRADEMAS. One question may involve the area of theology, but you are competent in that field, too, my recollection tells me.

Last year when this bill was introduced and passed by the House, it bore the title of a bill establishing a Commission on Negro History and Culture. This year it bears the title of a Commission on Afro-American History and Culture.

Another alternative would be Black American History and Culture. I wonder if you would give us your judgment as an historian on what would, in view of these three alternative possibilities, and indeed, perhaps others, be the most appropriate adjective to use for such a commission?

Mr. WESLEY. Well, race under any designation is rather difficult to define with any exactness. Americans of the majority are referred to as white. You know and I know that really you are not white for white is as this paper here. It is a color that is well known.

Mr. SCHEUER. Will the witness yield?

Mr. WESLEY. I yield.

Mr. SCHEUER. E. B. White described the true colors of the races as brown and pinky grays.

Mr. WESLEY. That is right. But now Afro-American has been used, colored people has been used and black has been used. I was in Philadelphia speaking at LaSalle College and after I completed, during a period of questioning a young man rose in the rear and said, "Why does the speaker use all of these terms? We use the term 'Black'."

I said, "Young man, look at you. You are not black, you are brown. That is an error to begin with to refer to yourself as black and you want to be as exact as you can in your designations about yourself. You will notice in my address I used all these designations. I used these because you are all interested in it. Negro is a historic term, granted it may have begun in other lands than our own. It comes from the word

"Nigger" which means black and has been used so consistently in dealings with documents, we refer to them in their historic use and term.

"We could change each one of these documents, if we were thinking in terms of what you want, from Negro to black. But we do change it, out of deference to those asking for it, to black today, but we must use Negro in its historical sense and the term black in its historical sense."

I say when whites are willing to change their designations, we will be willing to change ours.

So my suggestion is, use whatever designation you want to use about the darker peoples in the world. So it is your choice. We ourselves are beginning to use—for instance, we have four steps in Negro history, "The Child's Story of the Negro."

We plan to change that title to the "Child's Story of Black Folk." We have a second book called, "Negro Makers of History." We plan to change it to "Black Makers of History."

A third step is, "The Story of the Negro Retold" and that will be changed again in terms of black, and then we have a final book, "The Negro in Our History" and it will become "Black Folk" or "Black Americans in Our History."

So I think that is an answer. I am not dogmatic about it at all. We remain flexible but conscious always of the inheritance we have, both in laws and statutes and terms that are documentary with reference to black people.

Mr. BRADEMAS. Let me pursue my first question with this one: In your judgment, would it make any significant difference to the American-Afro, Negro, black community, if we were to use one adjective over another?

I dwell on this matter really for some practical guidance, because this legislation is obviously going to be of great concern to that community. I am anxious to seek the best professional judgment as I am sure Mr. Scheuer is, on what you feel would be the most appropriate scientific historically valid adjective.

Mr. WESLEY. I think that the term Afro-American or African-American is a term that would be equivalent to Irish-American, Jewish-American or any other hyphenated Americans.

So I would suggest that the use of the term either African-American or Afro-American might be used instead of the word Negro, just for the niceties of the situation, but when you wanted to use the word Negro from a historical point of view, it is just as acceptable to use it.

But what we are interested in, or those who are proposing the use of the word black or Afro-American, is a sort of respectability for black folk. It is said to refer to black folks and some Negroes who could be referred to as white. They are saying black is beautiful.

Mr. BRADEMAS. There is an Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. You are the executive director of it. Is there an analogous association to which there belong those students and scholars of what we have come to regard as black studies curricula in American colleges and universities?

Mr. WESLEY. There are various organizations developing throughout the country, Black Student Association, as I said, Sisters of Blackness and all that kind of thing developing throughout the country. They are new organizations that are rising. Many of them are for a particular local situation.

There is a National Association of Afro-American Editors which has started in New York quite recently. They are going to hold a convention soon in Atlanta. These are new organizations. There are very few other organizations outside of the American Jewish Historical Society and American Irish Historical Society, every one of these relationships to other countries has represented itself in relation to some historical society.

Mr. BRADEMAS. What I had in mind was, like, Yale and Harvard and many of the other major universities who have undertaken to offer degrees in black studies. My question is more narrow than the broader one to which you addressed yourself, namely, does there presently exist an association in the United States to which there belong the deans or the principal professors or scholars in the field that we now know as black studies?

Mr. WESLEY. There has been a rather loose organization of these persons who have been in the black revolution, so to speak in these institutions. They have been meeting and conferring and associating themselves, but as for an organization that would be similar to this one which we represent, I do not believe we have.

Mr. BRADEMAS. I know there is a black sociologists group.

Mr. WESLEY. That's right.

They are all members of our organization, too. Some feel because this association is an old association and because some of us represent a conservative group, apparently, that they represent something different. You have the same expressions in the white group where you have radicals against conservatives or liberals against those who are pointing backward or pointing on the norms of the situation and there is that kind of development.

If Congress doesn't take some kind of action, not an action to suppress, but an action to indicate the norm and the average and the standards in the situation, we will have utter confusion developing very, very rapidly, and some action should be taken by Congress to show that this is the way we think these studies should be developed or something to that effect.

It is very necessary that something be done in this instance that black Americans will not necessarily be asking for black curriculums all the way, but actually be interested in the black curriculum but interested also in becoming an American who can enter into a career or profession or occupation where he can make the same kind of progress that is made with the average white American.

Mr. BRADEMAS. Thank you very much, Dr. Wesley.

Mr. Scheuer?

Mr. SCHEUER. Dr. Wesley, thank you for your most interesting testimony. I am stimulated to ask a further question about the black studies program and this may lie in the future. I am sure it does. Would it be your view that the presentation of the contribution that black Americans have made to our history and culture ought to come in the form of separate textbooks on black Americans and separate courses on black American history and music and culture and theater or do you feel that the contributions of black Americans should be integrated in our history books and our books on music appreciation and literature and drama and that the courses themselves should not be on black Americans, but courses on American history and culture in which the

contributions of black Americans would play a much more physical and dominant role?

Mr. WESLEY. That last is the ideal and I hope we shall have it. But I think now we have to prove that there is such a thing as black history, because the minds and images of people have been closed to that. They think of the black man as unworthy.

I read in the morning paper about an attitude in nearby Virginia about black people going into a swimming pool. That is based on the idea that black people are dirty.

In order to get at that—we will have to have separate courses and textbooks but the goal ultimately, as we have tried to indicate in the last book to which I referred, "The Negro in Our History," we are going to have to have integrated textbooks.

There is one now. There is a textbook called "The Land of The Free," written by two white historians and the president of our association, John Hope Franklin, at the University of Chicago. These three persons have written an integrated American textbook—two white and one colored. These three persons have almost led the way in an integrated textbook.

I was in Philadelphia recently and came across another integrated textbook, written by a man who has been principal of a school and retired and by a woman who has been principal of a school, both black persons. These persons are trying to integrate this situation in history.

But in order to get it out where it can be seen, I think we have to show that there is such a thing as Negro history and, in doing that, we have to have the separate textbook to demonstrate it, and somebody will see, well, this is a fact, this is done in the same way that our other textbooks are done; it has authority back of it. Then, as a result of that, there will be integration.

I don't think we will get a fair deal, as one would say, if we attempted to integrate it now, because there would be the kind of thing that we have now; the book goes along and says something about colonial expansion and settlement. Then it suddenly decides that we will bring in the Negro: 1619. 20 slaves were brought in. They were not slaves. They were indentured servants, just as the white people came as indentured servants and served for 20 years.

We know that because there was a free Negro in 1625 who came over with that group. The reason we know that, he was a slave owner and prosecuted that slave's freedom in the courts of Virginia.

So it is this kind of thing that needs to be brought out to show that the Negro is a human being.

Mr. SCHEUER. Even to the extent of being a slave owner?

Mr. WESLEY. Yes. And there were many who served with the Confederates likewise. These stories have to be told, and I think they can be told with some recommendations and proposals from your committee.

Mr. SCHEUER. So I take it you envisage that there will be a twin development of continuing developments to influence the lives of black Americans in a meaningful way, not an embarrassingly forced way but in a meaningful way and, concomitantly, the development of literature on the contribution of blacks.

Mr. WESLEY. Yes. There is an effort to get away, as you know, from the use of a textbook in the classroom. Frequently there is the use of a

curriculum guide and materials on the library shelves. When one gets into literature and he wants to integrate it, he can refer to the black literature textbook on the library shelves, which can be drawn out of the library and read by the students.

That is the kind of thing I think is taking place in the modern classroom today. So when we talk about a textbook, it may be a main book when it is used, but associated with it are numbers of books in the library for collateral readings. So the separate textbook provides a field right now, I think, which is needed.

Mr. SCHEUER. And there is a need for separate specialized textbooks as well as separate generalized textbooks?

Mr. WESLEY. Yes, sir. I think that is needed in the period through which we are going to demonstrate that there is such a thing as Negro history, not just slavery and freedom, and you have made the greatest progress in so short a period of time. You have heard that again and again, but it is not true. There was progress before the Civil War. We don't know about it, but we should know.

Mr. COLLINS. I have heard that same statement many times. You know, over in Britain—it was what, 800 years, as I heard it, about the first 800 years after the turn of that, 1088—but we went about 800 years before we really made progress. When in any race has civilization made the progress that the Negro race has made in the past 100 years?

Mr. WESLEY. It was made in various parts of Europe by people who had better opportunities than the black people had. Now, if we were to add to that statement that despite their obstacles, despite their hindrances, and both by law and in fact, they have made the greatest progress of any, perhaps we would be on the way to that kind of statement.

But, I fear, to make that statement without thinking in terms of what is behind it—that is, the factual, free Negroes who are in America and before the Civil War—we could not really equate the period after the Civil War with the same kind of equality.

Now, before the Civil War, there were Negro businessmen, there were Negroes who were lawyers. A suit called the *Roberts* case was started in Massachusetts in 1848. Charles Sumner, who was Senator from Massachusetts, had associated with him a black lawyer, Robert Morris. It was a case on segregation. It was the case that gave the basis for the *Ferguson* decision.

Here was a black man appearing in this kind of segregation case in 1848, and nobody knows about it.

Mr. SCHEUER. I think my colleague Mr. Collins would be interested in the black businessman of an earlier venture, the man in 1625 that you mentioned.

Mr. WESLEY. Yes. When you read in your textbooks, the very first thing you see about black Americans in the text was that in 1619 a Dutchman of war brought in 20 "negars." That was 1619. We have found that in 1625 there was a free Negro by the name of Andrew Johnson, who had purchased his freedom, purchased land, owned slaves, and then later in the years prosecuted a case against a slave who was suing him for his freedom. The slave maintained that his term of years was up. Andrew Johnson said his term of years was not up. So the case went to court.

So we discovered here was a free Negro who became a planter and was able to prosecute a case in the courts. They were liked so well in

the community that they were freed from taxation, and we have the law in which reference is made to Andrew and Mary, who are to be freed from taxation.

Here you have just one instance, but I am confident that these instances can be built on to indicate that here is a man who is a black man and he has a black slave and he owns land and he is thought of so well that the community takes some action in his favor.

All of this back in the 17th century is tremendously important to know, and there are a number of them.

We have in our *Journal on Negro History* an article on colored slave-owners in which reference is made not only to Andrew Johnson but to colored slaveowners. I think one thing that can be done by this commission is to look at these isolated cases and act on it with the hope that we can discover something more that will make this black man an average American like the rest of the Americans, and I think that can be done very easily through history.

Mr. COLLINS. I must say, you talk about the need to work on the Negro, raising their heritage, and we haven't had a more scholarly witness before.

I will tell you what disturbs me about this subject. Why should we have this Afro-American Commission any more than we should have an Irish Commission or any of the others? I am Irish. I was in Boston 2 years doing graduate work. I heard so many times the term "the dumb Irish." If you have ever been in Boston, you know about this.

At home we are very aware of the Jewish people; if there was ever a group that we could look up to for brains, it is the Jewish people. I heard that 25 percent of the people who had won the Nobel Prize were Jewish.

I come from Texas. We have as big an American-Mexican group in Texas as we do a black group. Why shouldn't we have a Mexican Commission?

Mr. WESLEY. There is.

Mr. COLLINS. A Mexican Commission as such?

Mr. WESLEY. Not a commission but there is a Mexican heritage.

Mr. COLLINS. Of course, and they are very conscious of it.

Mr. WESLEY. Yes.

Mr. COLLINS. We could start in on this commission at home. We also have a few Lebanese at home. Would we not end up with a commission for every national derivative?

Mr. WESLEY. Because it has been neglected. Although they refer to them as "dumb, idle, crude," and whatnot, and there was a "Know Nothing" Party in America to affect the Irish and others to keep them out of political life. The Irish and Jews lived in the ghettos as Negroes live in them today, and they were kept out of jobs and despised generally. But their second and third generation could move over into the American culture and were accepted.

The Negro cannot change his color and he is kept, therefore, as a submerged minority. Frequently, it is said, by the Irish and the Jews, "Why is it you don't do what we have done? We lifted ourselves by our bootstraps." And the simple answer is, "You would not let us."

There are laws in this land which make it very difficult for a Negro. There is not only law but there is custom, there is belief, there is the image inside the white mind which says, "This man is a black man; don't give him this opportunity. Why would you put him there?"

So every one of the leaps forward, every one of the attacks which Negroes have had to make against the so-called white power structure has been against opposition, very frequently, and opposition which has sometimes kept them back and excluded and put them in a corner there. Only temporarily have the Irish and Lebanese and the Mexicans—and we are working on this Mexican idea, too, but we don't know ourselves. They know about Mexico, but we don't know anything about Africa.

We are asking for a chance to tell about Africa. Africa had its kingdoms like Europe did, but the story is not told. If slave traders came to the United States and carried the millions upon millions of people, you would have to find the history of America beneath its soil because it would have been terminated.

But Africa had its kingdoms with law and order, not Christian religion, but with an attitude toward the unknown. That ought to be known.

We have a book on Negroes in Africa, their history and culture. I wrote a pamphlet the other day on the changing African historian's point of view, showing the point of view is changing today not so much by what black scholars are doing but by what white scholars are doing.

Just as we spent money on the space efforts, which is fine to do, we need to do this. Somebody will say, "Why do it?" Yes, we should do it, but we ought to think in terms of this area of human relations which can be affected and changed if there is the study of history and the social study in an equitable and honest and fair way.

All we want to do is to get a chance to do it. Our association has been struggling along as a voluntary association. We need some support, and these other efforts that are coming out today are indicative of the need for Congress to take some kind of action in this particular instance.

I don't know whether I have answered your question. I have gone far afield, but I have tried to give some kind of stable answer.

Mr. COLLINS. Thank you very much.

Mr. BRADEMAS. I might just observe to the witness and my colleague Mr. Collins, I happened to be the first American citizen of Greek origin to be elected to Congress, so I used to tell Adam Powell not to give me a hard time, because I happened to be the smallest minority.

I used to tell Greeks, Poles, Italians, and others, about the question "Why can't American Negroes do what we did?" And there seems to be very little comprehension about the difference between these people largely of European stock, and of color. You cannot tell the difference, very often, between a Greek, Jew, Latvian, Lithuanian, or a Pole or Hungarian, but you can sure tell the difference between a white man and a black man. I should think that that would be an obvious proposition.

Mr. WESLEY. And if we just wait long enough, over centuries and centuries it will take care of itself, but it seems to me we ought to be concerned about doing something about it now for ourselves.

Mr. SCHEUER. I think there is a second very important difference; as a member of another one of these minorities, the Jewish minorities, I suppose I am familiar with some of the prejudices that the Jewish people have suffered along with the Irish and the Poles and Greeks,

but the American majority never made slaves out of us or any of these other minority groups, and I think that is a very compelling difference. We did not suffer 300 years of slavery.

Mr. WESLEY. And we had much more to overcome than the other minorities without help. We just came to the place in 1954 where we are talking about equal education, and we don't have it yet; equal housing, we don't have that yet either.

This bill has no concern over that but it seems to me, this is the basic argument, that could indicate that these people as a submerged minority need something more to help them than the rest of the minorities needed. This is not begging. It is just stating a fact.

Mr. BRADEMAs. Dr. Wesley, thank you very much for your very eloquent testimony.

Mr. WESLEY. Thank you.

Mr. BRADEMAs. Our next witness is a very distinguished member of the other body, a cosponsor of this legislation and a living symbol that this is bipartisan, Senator Scott, the Minority Whip.

STATEMENT OF HON. HUGH SCOTT, A U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA

Senator SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the committee. I appreciate your kindness in calling upon me at this time. We seem to be at a point of indicating our various origins, and I may add that I am of Scottish, Welsh, Irish, English "infracion" and I find no longer any need for the defense of any of those minorities in the United States. I am not going to expend sympathy upon the Irish, because they have done very well in this country and they began by being policemen, keeping all the rest of us in order, and they moved from there to the highest of all possible posts which can be held.

I think the distinction has been well made by Dr. Wesley that the Negro's physical visibility is what has contributed so much to his relative political invisibility because he was the victim of decisions made as far back as the second of July 1776, when the drafters of the Declaration of Independence left out of that draft Mr. Jefferson's emotional and moving paragraph in condemnation of slavery, and in 1784, when the State of Virginia, by three votes, defeated Mr. Jefferson's provision in the draft of that constitution abolishing slavery in that State by 1800.

I think the history of suppression and history of disadvantage and inequality is all well known and is certainly to be found in many of our history books; but the history of achievement, contribution, and participation and the history of rising aspirations is not yet a part of that American history commonly taught at all levels in all of our educational institutions; and therefore I am pleased to appear today in support of the bill to establish a Commission on Afro-American History and Culture.

I may add that my first appearance before this committee was in 1943, where one of the members of the committee from Texas made the same arguments I have heard here today precisely. After 26 years I am overwhelmed by reminiscence.

This commission would be composed of 22 members appointed by the President who would be authorities on Afro-American history, edu-

cation, American history, journalism, communications, and other related fields.

I was very encouraged last year by passage of this proposal by the House of Representatives and a subsequent favorable report by the Subcommittee on Arts and Humanities headed by Mr. Pell. The imminence of adjournment prevented the 90th Congress from completing action on the proposals.

During the first month of the 91st Congress, I again joined with the distinguished member of this committee Representative Scheuer in this effort by introducing in the Senate an identical bill, S. 14.

The void in recorded American history created by the inadvertent "conspiracy of silence" about the black American is now pretty well known. I have watched with growing pleasure some overt steps by our communications media and educational institutions to fill this void. For example, Newsweek magazine on June 30 featured on its front cover six black faces and its third report on the Negro in America since 1963. This latest report is entitled "Report from Black America."

As I look over the newspapers, I see advertisements of books responding to the "demand for Negro history." I see feature stories about historical landmarks made by black Americans such as the Frederick Douglass Institute here in Washington. I see a pictorial and essay portrait series entitled "They Had a Dream" in the Washington Evening Star, which digests the lives of little-known black Americans such as a celebrated conductor, Dean Dixon; a black Catholic Bishop, James Augustine Healy; an inventor, Elijah McCoy; B. O. Davis, Sr., a U.S. Army General; Bill Pickett, the cowboy who invented the rodeo sport bulldogging, and many more.

There has been a great stirring within the academic community toward teaching black history—partly in response to student demands. Academic institutions such as the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities are rousing activity in the area of ethnic teaching and knowledge. Recently the Ford Foundation announced a series of grants to colleges and universities totaling more than \$1 million for the development of Afro-American studies.

However, the May issue of the School Review, a University of Chicago Department of Education quarterly publication, contained an article by Prof. Mark M. Krug which concluded that the role of the Negro in recorded American history is still "incomplete and often distorted." The time is ripe for national leadership to foster better understanding and knowledge of the black experience, heritage, and contributions to our total society.

I believe a Commission on Afro-American History and Culture, such as that proposed in the bill before you today, could coordinate intercultural programs of foundations, educational institutions, and the news media and help bring them to public attention.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I urge favorable action on H.R. 3295, which will establish a Commission on Afro-American History and Culture to make a comprehensive study of all proposals designed to create better knowledge of the black experience and its influence on today's American society.

I would like to conclude with a plea that action on this bill and I hope action in the other body will likewise be motivated by bipartisan concerns.

The quiet whispers against legislation of this sort usually turn on the question of political advantage, and we might as well bring it to the surface and expose it. We can either admit or deny political advantage as our own convenience advises us. I can only say that when I came to Congress, the proportion of Negroes in my district was 1 percent, and my support of civil rights measures, beginning with HEPC, has been constant and I am proud of this.

To knock down any feeling that the bill is regional or political, I think the greatest possible cohesiveness from both sides of the aisle would offer this kind of legislation its best chance for adoption.

Therefore I think it is extremely important that all of us seek to avoid the sheer, stark outlines of political opportunism or of a person's seeking publicity for the sake of alerting one minority to the fact that there is concern for it. The concern exists whether minorities are alerted or not. They do not need to be alerted. They were never more aware than they are today for the necessity for the elimination of those last areas of discrimination or those enclaves of apathy, those pockets of indifference which themselves contribute to the frustrations, and the frustrations in turn contribute to civic confrontations.

So I think what you are doing here is the laying of some bricks in the wall of the American determination to establish that what the Constitution said, what the Declaration of Independence said is truly being given an opportunity to enter the field of reality. Therefore, I am very pleased to support the bill and urge the favorable action of the committee. Thank you, sir.

Mr. BRADEMAS. Thank you very much, Senator Scott.

Do I take it, sir, that you would be in general agreement with the proposition that the situation with black Americans is distinctively different from that of Americans of a variety of national origins, the kinds I was alluding to earlier?

Senator SCORR. Yes; it is clearly different. I don't suppose anything is more obvious or more accepted by the American people that the difference exists whether the form of acceptance is approbation or criticism. The fact that it is one of the top subjects in America establishes how obvious the neglect of one part of our culture has been.

Mr. BRADEMAS. I am very grateful for your statement. I want to express my own awareness of the leadership that you have given both in the House and in the Senate throughout your entire service in Congress to the struggle for civil rights and equality of opportunities. I think you embodied the fact that this is a concern that is and ought to be shared on both sides of the aisle.

Mr. Scheuer.

Mr. SCHEUER. Senator, I want to thank you for your cosponsorship of this bill. I am very honored that you have joined in our program and support its purpose. I want to emphasize the very point you make: that this bill has had broad, wide, bipartisan support, and to me this is one of its strengths.

I share your views. I am impressed with everything that you say.

I do want to clarify one point, one phrase that you used, to avoid any possibility of misunderstanding in the future. You mention in page 2 of your testimony that you believe a Commission on Afro-American History and Culture could coordinate intercultural programs of foundations and educational institutions. Dr. Wesley, in his testimony, used the phrase that the Commission might guide these kinds of efforts.

I don't think any one of us wants to stimulate the thought on the part of anyone that the long arm of the Government or of the President is going to tell or coerce institutions into doing something or not doing something but I think the purpose is that it would provide for, and to the extent that that information would provide some guidance and stimulate some coordination, I think that is what we are looking for.

Senator SCOTT. That is what I wanted to make clear. I am glad you are giving me the opportunity to clarify it. I don't think there should be anything more than a standing in readiness to provide guidance if requested and an alertness to see that the Commission's purposes are carried out, in every sense, as a noncoercive activity.

Mr. SCHEUER. I was sure that was your purpose, and I didn't want to leave the slightest bit of ambiguity in the record.

Dr. Wesley, I assume when you said "stabilize and guide," you meant: to provide service or consultation but that it was primarily an information device to make the media aware of the vacuums, the challenges, the shortcomings, and perhaps provide some signposts but not the slightest attempt to undertake any coercive action.

Mr. WESLEY. That is correct. I share Senator Scott's view, also, in that respect.

Mr. SCHEUER. I thank you very, very much for your helpful testimony.

Mr. BRADEMAS. Mr. Meeds.

Mr. MEEDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Senator Scott, I, too, appreciate your testimony. I am very impressed with the way you answered the questions of the gentleman from Texas a little while earlier when he said: Why was it necessary to establish such a commission, and you said: When a culture of a group has been retarded for 300 years, maybe it needs a little emphasis 300 years later. Is that right?

Senator SCOTT. Yes, sir, I think it is just about right. I think we can all purge ourselves to a small degree of a human as well as a national sense of guilt by giving belated recognition.

Mr. BRADEMAS. Thank you very much, Senator. We appreciate your coming.

I believe that concludes our witnesses for this morning. The Chair would like to announce that anyone who wishes to submit any further statement with respect to this measure can do so by writing either to me at my office or sending any statement to the subcommittee counsel, Mr. Duncan, at the Rayburn Office Building.

(Whereupon, at 11:22 a.m., the subcommittee adjourned subject to call of the Chair.)

I don't think any one of us wants to stimulate the thought on the part of anyone that the long arm of the Government or of the House is going to tell or coerce legislatures into doing something or not doing something but I think the purpose is that it would put us on the ground that that information would provide some guidance and stimulate some consideration. I think that is what we are looking for.

SENATOR SCOTT. That is what I wanted to make clear. I am glad you are giving me the opportunity to clarify it. I don't think there should be anything more than a standing in readiness to provide guidance if requested and authorities to see that the Commission's purposes are carried out in every sense as a noncoercive activity.

MR. SENATOR. I was sure that was your purpose, and I didn't want to leave the subject unduly in the recesses.

THE HOUSE. I assume when you said "stimulate and guide," you meant to give the Senate or Government but that it was primarily an information device to make the heads of the Executive, the Judiciary, the Department, and perhaps provide some stimulus but not necessarily attempt to influence any sort of action.

MR. SENATOR. That is correct. I share Senator Scott's viewpoint in that respect.

MR. SENATOR. I think you were very much for your impartial testimony.

THE PRESIDENT. Mr. Scott.

MR. SENATOR. I think you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Scott, I was quite sure that I was very impressed with the way you presented the situation of the Commission from Texas a little while earlier when he said, "It was in an effort to establish such a commission, and in the United States a group has been retained for 100 years, and it needs a little more help, and that is what it is."

SENATOR SCOTT. Yes, I think it is just about right. I think we can all agree that we have a small degree of a human as well as a national sense of guilt by the delayed recognition.

MR. SENATOR. Thank you very much, Senator. He appreciates your testimony.

It follows that committee our witnesses for this morning. The Chair would like to announce that anyone who wishes to submit any further statement with respect to this measure can do so by writing either to the nearest office or sending any statement to the subcommittee counsel, the Chairman of the House Office Building.

Mr. Chairman, at 11:25 a.m. the subcommittee adjourned subject to call of the Chair.



