

WHITE PLAINS SOCIAL SECURITY HEARING OFFICE CLOSURE

(Mr. LATIMER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LATIMER. Mr. Speaker, the new administration, as it indiscriminately cuts services, has announced that it will not keep the Social Security Administration's hearing office in White Plains, New York. Closing this hearing office with no local replacement is unacceptable to the community it serves, and it covers multiple congressional districts.

Seniors and people who are disabled come to this office from Westchester and the other counties of the Hudson Valley to fight for their benefits. With this closure, residents, likely on a fixed income, will have to travel much longer distances: to Albany, to New Haven, or to the south Bronx at greater expense, in some cases 4 hours one way on public transit.

This is a financial and logistical hardship for people already fighting for support. With the Westchester County government, my office and I have identified sites in White Plains close to the current office that are available. This would keep government services in the community where it belongs.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge the new administration to reconsider driving constituents away from convenient services and to work with Members from New York State to find a solution before May.

□ 1930

PROPOSED CUTS TO MEDICAID AND SNAP BENEFITS

(Mr. SUBRAMANYAM asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Mr. Speaker, I am genuinely alarmed by the budget that we may be voting on this week.

There is a lot not to like, but every American should be paying attention to the cuts being proposed to Medicaid and SNAP benefits. These cuts will hurt millions of Americans and create irreversible damage to our communities.

Mr. Speaker, it will hurt my community, where tens of thousands of people benefit from these programs, but this is going to impact every community across every district and across Virginia and across the country. Is it because the richest country in the world can't feed hungry kids or can't get people the care they need?

No. It is because this budget takes that money and it gives it to the very richest corporations at the expense of small businesses and working families. The unintended consequences of these cuts will hurt every American, even if they are not on Medicaid or SNAP, and force more middle-class families to live paycheck to paycheck while giving the ultrarich a tax break.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about a bipartisan budget that doesn't hurt Americans and is not a giveaway to companies who don't need it.

FIVE BULLET POINTS

(Ms. STANSBURY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. STANSBURY. Mr. Speaker, Federal employees found themselves targeted yesterday by yet another reckless scare tactic by Elon Musk. As they were asked for five bullet points to demonstrate what they accomplished last week, a failure to comply would result in their termination by resignation according to a tweet by Elon Musk.

Hours later, Trump officials in the same administration told their staff not to respond. In solidarity, let me say what my five bullets for the week are: I fought to defend the Constitution and the rule of law. I fought back against these reckless assaults on our people. I heard the heartbreaking stories of how they are impacting New Mexico. I met with Tribal leaders, Federal employees, and hundreds of New Mexicans. I headed back here to D.C. to take back the fight because we will not stop this fight.

We will not allow this chaos, this incompetence, and this lawlessness to go unchecked. I want all Americans to hear me: We will fight back.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2025, the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. FIGURES) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FIGURES. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Alabama?

There was no objection.

Mr. FIGURES. Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor that I rise today to co-anchor this Congressional Black Caucus Special Order hour along with my distinguished colleague from Oregon (Ms. BYNUM).

For the next 60 minutes, Members of the Congressional Black Caucus have an opportunity to speak directly to the American people about Black History Month, an issue of great importance not only to the Congressional Black Caucus but to Congress, the constituents we represent, and to all Americans.

It is a privilege to be able to stand here today. Black History Month is not just an opportunity to reflect on our

past, but it is certainly an opportunity to uplift our present and renew the cause to fight for our future.

I begin with a story because Black History Month is often thought of as a time to recognize those historical figures that we all know: the Martin Luther Kings of the world, the John Lewises of the world, Rosa Parks, and others. Black History Month is about more than just those who are known. It is about a lot of those who are not known.

I begin with a story of a few young men in the State of Alabama. Following what history has come to label as the end of the civil rights movement in 1968, in 1969, four young men had been intentionally recruited to break down a color barrier at the University of Alabama's law school.

Eight young men walked through the doors of the University of Alabama School of Law in the fall of 1969. Among them was a young man named John, a young man named Ronald, a young man named Booker T., and a young man named Michael.

This was a time when the civil rights movement had ended, the struggles to realize the progress that America has made throughout the decade-plus of fighting and protesting. It was about leveling those playing fields and equalizing the opportunity and access for people like these young men.

They walked through the doors as the first African Americans to come into the University of Alabama's law school, and they would all ultimately become lawyers: John England, Booker T. Forte, Ronald Jackson, and Michael Figures.

Black history in America is a story of resilience and excellence and an unshakeable pursuit of justice, an unshakeable commitment to making this country, as Martin Luther King would say: "Be true to what you said on paper," for all of us.

From the Halls of Congress to the streets of our communities, Black leaders and educators and entrepreneurs and activists have shaped this Nation. Yet, we know that honoring this history isn't just about reflection. It is about action because that is what we owe people. That is what we owe people.

I come from Alabama, the birthplace of the civil rights movement, a place at a time when this Nation and this world was experiencing injustices that we cannot fathom today; and a place where people, based simply on the color of their skin, could not eat in certain places, work in certain places, be educated in certain places, or live in certain places.

The people of Alabama, particularly Montgomery, Alabama, stood up at a point when many cities and towns and people in those cities and towns across this country had a rightful fear of standing up in that way. Montgomery said: No.

In 1955, when they launched a bus boycott, little did they know that they

were giving rise to the greatest civil movement that the world has ever seen and that the world has ever known, led by a young minister who was a mere 26 years old at the time: Martin Luther King, Jr.

This movement would give rise to what America proudly holds itself out to be today. That is that place of equal opportunity, that place of equal access, and that place of equal justice.

This is a movement that was rooted in people. It was rooted in people who had a faith in a nation that, when we look back at history, we wonder: How could they? How could they? How could people who came from such a history of segregation and degradation, slavery and Jim Crow, how could they remain steadfast in a commitment to a country? How could they have that love for a country that history had shown them did not love them in the same manner?

They held it because they knew that the greatness of America was really about what America could be and what it could be for them. Even if they came here in the bowels of slave ships, even if they slaved as laborers in cotton fields, they knew that America one day could be better for them and could be better for their children and their grandchildren.

That is what Black History Month is about. It is about recognizing the unwavering faith that people, who had every reason not to have such faith, maintained in this Nation and the contributions that they made to making America be true to what it said on paper.

When you have understanding and an appreciation where Black people in this country have come from, literally from the bottom, literally with nothing, literally as second- and third- and fourth-class citizens and noncitizens initially; when it is understood that when this building was built, people who looked like me could only be here for three reasons: To either build it, clean it, or serve food; when it is understood that when this country was formalized in a Constitution people who looked like me were not deemed to be an entire person—barely just more than a half a person—three-fifths of a person is what Black people were counted as, then it is understood why many of us are very sensitive to efforts to attack things like diversity and efforts to attack things like equity and inclusion, because we know that we come from a culture and from a people who had to deal with adversity, inequity, and purposeful exclusion for centuries; when all we wanted was a level playing field; when all we wanted was the same opportunities as others.

We never asked for special treatment. We never wanted to be recognized in any way that others were not recognized, but they held on to that faith for this Nation, and they led us to being a better place.

Coming from that background, several actions of this administration strike a little bit differently. It stings

a little bit more when things happen like the rolling back of an EEOC order that has been in place since 1962 that was meant to make sure that people were not discriminated against.

It means something a little bit different when the administration hits a pause on funding to 1890 land-grant institution scholarships while not hitting a pause on that funding to 1862 land-grant institution scholarships.

It hits a little bit differently when Auburn University, a predominantly White institution, is not impacted, but Alabama A&M University and Tuskegee University are impacted. One must ask: What is the difference between an 1862 school, a Texas A&M and Auburn University and LSU, and an 1890 school, an Alabama A&M and a Tuskegee?

When one looks at the facts, it is the fact that the 1890s were historically Black colleges and universities. That stings a little bit differently. It hits a little bit differently when there is an understanding of the history of where people come from, that one of the first actions that had to be taken after the administration came in was going to bat to make sure that the Tuskegee Airmen remained a part of the curriculum in training our Nation's airmen—something so basic, something so nonpartisan, something that we should all be able to agree on—that a group of men who went and put their lives on the line for a world, for a country, that, when they returned home, they were still called the N-word.

They were still forced to sit in the back of the bus. They were still told to take off their uniforms. They were still told that they were not good enough. They still could not send their kids to school in much of this country's public school systems. Yet, because of a diversity, equity, and inclusion ban, we had to go to bat for them.

It wasn't just Democrats. There were Republicans, too, who saw that that was an issue that we should not have. Senator KATIE BRITT from my home State was there with us, as was the Congressional Black Caucus and other Members across this country.

It is the attacks that we see on such things that hits a little bit differently during Black History Month because it is a failure to acknowledge the history. It is a failure to acknowledge a group of people who persevered through the worst of circumstances in this Nation, a group of people who literally emerged from bondage, a group of people who emerged from torture, from rape, from kidnapping, and from family separation.

That is why it means so much to us. That is why it is important that we recognize Black History Month because contributions have been made by dozens of people, hundreds of people, thousands of people, millions of people who were not supposed to be in this country as citizens. Yet, here we are, and here we stand.

Although, when this building was built, there were zero Members who

looked like us, there now stands 62. We know that we have an obligation to stand up and respect that history because Black history is not just for me. It is not just my history.

That young man named Michael Figures who walked into University of Alabama's law school, he would have a son. He would have four sons. One of them is named SHOMARI FIGURES, who stands here today as a Member of Congress because of the fights of him and the fights of those known and unknown before him.

Black history is not only my history. Black history is your history, whether you like it or not. It is our history. Black history is American history. Black history is who we are. That is why we must continue the fight to make sure that we honor the contributions and the sacrifices that so many people have made.

It is to make sure that we do not go back, to make sure that it is clearly understood that our efforts throughout the civil rights movement and since have only been to make sure that we have a level playing field, have only been to make sure that I can't be excluded when I have the exact same qualifications as you.

□ 1945

I stand here today as a proud son of a father and mother who have both made Black history in their own right. I stand before you here today as the proud grandson of men who set the stage.

Most Black people in this country don't come from privilege. I consider myself to be blessed. I think here in Congress, a lot of the time, we see a lot of people born on third base thinking they hit a triple. That is the unfortunate reality of where we find ourselves—people forgetting where they came from, people forgetting what we went through, people forgetting how we got here in the first place, people forgetting the struggle, people forgetting what we overcame, people forgetting what we could not have and why we fight so hard for what we do have and to be able to maintain it in the future.

I don't forget. I won't forget. I cannot forget because every day I walk in here is a reminder of what was sacrificed for me. Every day that I have the privilege of calling myself a United States citizen, a United States Representative, is a reminder for me of what it took for myself and for people like me to be able to stand here.

I know I was born on first base because my grandparents made sacrifices for my father to be able to step up to the plate and swing for the fences, and swing for the fences he did. He broke down color barriers in his own right. He gave his life to public service, and he died one day at a dinner table, but what did not die with him was an appreciation, an understanding, a recognition of where we have been, what we have been through, how we got here,

and what we must do to ensure that future generations enjoy the same opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, it is now my privilege to yield to the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. BYNUM).

Ms. BYNUM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as the first, but not the last, Black Member of Congress in Oregon's history to celebrate Black History Month in these hallowed Halls of Congress. Listening to Brother Figures' speech has me a bit choked up. We are the next generation.

It is not lost on me that I am just one generation removed from segregation. My mother graduated from Whittemore High School in Conway, South Carolina, in the class of 1970, a segregated class, and graduated valedictorian without a future. That wasn't that long ago.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a groundbreaker because of what that means not just for my children but for young people all across my State, for them to see that change is possible, and when something big has never been done before, it just might be because they haven't accomplished it yet.

As a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, I am reminded that I am not in this fight alone. They were always there with me, 3,000 miles away, never leaving me alone. We are a community of leaders, Mr. Speaker, united in our goal to shape a more equitable, prosperous, and just society.

Mr. Speaker, this Black History Month, we recommit ourselves to continuing to make progress together. We are here not just for our children but for our children's children.

Mr. Speaker, happy Black History Month.

Mr. FIGURES. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. CLARKE), chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Ms. CLARKE of New York. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congresswoman JANELLE BYNUM from the great State of Oregon and Congressman SHOMARI FIGURES from the great State of Alabama for co-anchoring tonight's Congressional Black Caucus Special Order hour.

I rise today with my colleagues of the Congressional Black Caucus to commemorate Black History Month and to reflect on the innumerable contributions to our country that Black Americans have made throughout our Nation's history.

During Black History Month, we celebrate the generations of Black Americans whose courage, advocacy, sacrifice, and patriotism have moved our Nation and the world forward. From Reconstruction and the Great Migration to the success of Black Wall Street, the jazz age, the Harlem Renaissance, the civil rights movement, and beyond, there is no time in history that Black people have not contributed to the vitality and success of our country.

As chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, I am proud that as our caucus

has grown from 13 visionary members in 1971 to a historic 62 members in the year 2025, 4 of whom serve in the United States Senate, we have continued fighting to dismantle barriers, create opportunities, and protect the rights of our communities.

Throughout our Nation's history, the Congressional Black Caucus has been called to confront countless threats to our communities, our educational attainment, our economic prosperity, and our health and well-being. Time and again, we have answered the call and stood in the breach on behalf of Black America and the values that make our country strong.

Under the shadow of the Trump administration, we are being called to yet another unprecedented and consequential time in the history and life of our country that we must address head-on.

With the creation of the 14th Amendment, America took one step toward rectifying its original sin of slavery and protecting the birthright citizenship of all Black Americans. Threats from President Trump to the 14th Amendment have put Black America, once again, in a perilous position. Today, we are facing cruelty and threats to the very fabric of our democracy and existence.

As the Trump administration seeks to continue to take our country back in time, the Congressional Black Caucus stands at the front lines of protecting our communities and calling out these and other thinly veiled attempts to erase centuries of progress for Black America.

This administration's recent actions aimed at taking away critical tools of success and our fundamental freedoms will not go unanswered.

On the shoulders of our Founders, we will continue to push back against efforts to impede our progress, erase our history, and cut off our access to capital and better opportunities in our communities.

This month and every month, we will continue to make clear that the contributions of Black Americans will not and cannot be erased, undermined, or undone.

We will continue to fight for access to the ballot box, fair representation, diversity initiatives, and our fundamental freedoms, which are, sadly, under threat each and every day.

As the conscience of the Congress, we will not sit back and be silent as these attacks on our communities continue. Our history, Black history, is American history, and we are not going back.

Mr. FIGURES. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Georgia (Mrs. MCBATH).

Mrs. MCBATH. Mr. Speaker, I am so honored and privileged to be here tonight to speak on the Congressional Black Caucus, with our Special Order hour tonight specific to honoring Black History Month.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join tonight's Special Order hour honoring

Black History Month, my Black history, my people, my community.

As a second vice chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, it is vitally important to me that we commemorate the stories and triumphs of Black Americans all year long and especially during Black History Month.

I am the daughter of civil rights leaders. My father was the Illinois branch president of the NAACP and served on its executive board for over 25 years. I grew up in the struggle. I grew up in the marches. I grew up in the rallies. I certainly learned how to sing "We Shall Overcome" because it is what I sang with my family all the time, for as long as I can remember.

I draw upon the strength of these experiences, the experiences and strength of my mother and my father during a time which feels not unlike the uncertainty of the 1960s. Though there are those who may feel discouraged that we are fighting the same bigotry and the same hatred, going down the same road that my parents fought against, that Dr. King fought against, that Rosa Parks and Fannie Lou Hamer fought against, that our dear friend and beloved colleague John Lewis fought against, I continue to look to the civil rights movement as a reminder that we are not powerless.

Our voices and our role as legislators in this body give us all the tools that we need to speak up, to stand up, and to fight back for Black America and for all of America.

It is what my father did and what my mother did, even during a time when diners charged him more money for a cup of coffee than the White man sitting next to him.

I can remember, as a child living in Chicago, Illinois, going into a local Walgreens. I remember standing there with my family, all of them fair-skinned, with red hair, brown hair, and freckles, and me, the brownest child in the family, being told I couldn't go sit with my family because they didn't believe I was a part of my family.

It is these kinds of experiences that I will fight for the rest of my life to make sure that no child, no individual in this country, ever feels discriminated against. It is what my father did. It is what I did as a grieving mother when my son, Jordan, was killed by a White man who simply didn't like the loud music that he was playing in his car. It is what we must do now as a Presidential administration, emboldened by hatred and vengeance, seeks to weaken and dismantle Federal programs that support our veterans, care for our seniors, and defend our Nation from public health emergencies, just to name a few.

What we must continue to do as we face threats of erasing Black history, American history, we must continue to fight from our classrooms and from our textbooks.

□ 2000

We must stand up. Black America must speak out. We must remember

our responsibility to act—not just to react—in the best interests of all the American people. In the face of attacks on minority communities in a nation where our diversity is truly our strength, it is more important than ever that we celebrate the progress of this Nation—and Black history is part of this Nation—of every step which brings us closer to forming a more perfect Union.

We have been promised that by this Constitution. We have been promised that by this country, and I know that we will continue to fight every step of the way to fulfill that promise.

In my time in Congress, I have been privileged to represent a rich tapestry of this Nation, woven by the many threads which make us uniquely American. I have been proud to represent one of the most diverse congressional districts in America, and I am honored to represent so many talented local leaders who have blazed a trail and accomplished many firsts in their community.

In my current district, eight mayors or county executives are the first Black people to ever serve in those positions. Cobb County Commission Chairwoman Lisa Cupid, College Park Mayor Bianca Motley Broom, Douglasville Mayor Rochelle Robinson, Fairburn Mayor Mario Avery, Fayetteville Mayor Ed Johnson, Mableton Mayor Michael Owens, Palmetto Mayor Teresa Thomas-Smith, and Powder Springs Mayor Al Thurman.

These leaders can be proud of the fact that they were the first, and I take pride in knowing that they will certainly not be the last.

The fact that I was elected the first Black Representative of Georgia's Sixth Congressional District, the first Democrat to hold that seat since 1979, the first person of color to ever hold that seat in 2018 is a testament to the progress in our State and to the work of leaders on the ground and Black America. I am grateful for all those who have paved the path of progress for me and all future leaders to follow in their footsteps.

Mr. Speaker, we face extraordinary and unprecedented challenges in this moment, but this month and always, we will celebrate the strength of America's diversity, the unity of her people, and our unwavering determination to leave behind a brighter tomorrow for future generations, for our children. They deserve that. Because of the celebrations of African Americans that we are talking about during this Special Order hour, I have every confidence that my people will overcome.

Mr. FIGURES. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from the great State of New Jersey (Mrs. McIVER).

Mrs. McIVER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representatives BYNUM and FIGURES for organizing this Special Order hour.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate Black History Month and the profound and vibrant legacy of the many Black Americans who have made our country.

Black history is a living, breathing narrative that enriches our Nation and influences our daily lives. It is a powerful testament to resilience, creativity, and the pursuit of justice.

We think about those who came before us and fought for freedom, trailblazers like Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth, whose voices paved the way.

As only the second Black woman ever elected to Congress to represent New Jersey, I stand on the shoulders of giants, including my colleague, mentor, and friend, Representative BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN. We both are here because of the path that leaders like Shirley Chisholm blazed before us.

With the highest ever membership to the Congressional Black Caucus, 62 members strong, we have never been stronger. We represent the dreams of our ancestors, and those dreams are in danger by this administration's hateful policies that hurt Black people nationwide.

Our hard-fought progress is threatened by the racist agenda pushed forward by this administration, but we will not back down. In the words of the late, great John Lewis: "We have been too quiet for too long. There comes a time when you have to say something. You have to make a little noise. You have to move your feet. This is the time."

Together, we must make a little noise and create good trouble to protect the progress we have fought so hard for. Together, we can ensure that the stories and contributions of our community continue to inspire and uplift future generations.

Mr. FIGURES. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Ms. STANSBURY).

Ms. STANSBURY. Mr. Speaker, I stand before you tonight to honor and to celebrate Black History Month.

Black History Month is not just a celebration, but a reminder of the struggles, achievements, resilience, and contributions of Black Americans throughout our Nation's history.

In New Mexico, it is the opportunity to honor and celebrate that Black history is not only American history, it is New Mexico history, especially as so many Black leaders are blazing the way for future generations: Judge Shammara Henderson, the first Black judge to serve in the New Mexico Court of Appeals; Senator Harold Pope, the first Black State senator to serve in the history of the State of New Mexico; Councilor Nichole Rogers, the first Black woman to serve on Albuquerque's City Council; and Representative Pamela Herndon, who is the first Black State house representative to represent New Mexico State House District 28, which is my State house representative in Albuquerque.

These are just a few of the New Mexico leaders who are making history as we stand on this floor tonight, who are leading the way, whose voices are not only needed but necessary and who

must be at all the tables where decisions are being made.

As we know, these voices are currently being threatened by systemic attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion, as thousands of Federal employees have been fired and put on leave, funding for programs has been gutted, schools and public institutions have been threatened, and leaders like General Charles Q. Brown, Jr., who have proudly served this great country with the highest levels of distinction, have found themselves targeted and dismissed.

We must be real about the moment that we face. These policies and cuts are not just policy decisions. They are about undermining the fundamental justice and equity of the United States, about erasing our history and turning back the clock on the progress of countless generations who have struggled and marched and fought to move this country forward.

That is why we must and we will continue to fight back in Congress, in the courts, and in our communities, and to continue that work of bending the arc of the moral universe and this country toward justice because this is the work ahead for all of us and the work we will and must do.

Mr. FIGURES. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from the great State of Ohio (Mrs. BEATTY).

Mrs. BEATTY. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to first say thank you to our co-anchors; only freshmen in this House but certainly seasoned in the life that they have led. I thank Congressman FIGURES and Congresswoman BYNUM, and to our Madam Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, Congresswoman YVETTE CLARKE.

Mr. Speaker, tonight you will hear many stories of Black history, which is definitely American history. I rise today because Black sacrifice and excellence has shaped our Nation. We stand on the shoulders of many brave soldiers and Sojourners, but tonight I choose to salute living legends.

I salute the 62 members of the Congressional Black Caucus, four Black Members for the first time serving in our United States Senate, and 58 House Members in this Congress, the largest in our history. As we say in the Baptist church, we have come a mighty long way. From 1971, when 13 Members sat on this House floor, 12 Black men from across this Nation and one brave, courageous, bad sister, Shirley Chisholm. My, have we come a long way.

We come tonight, and we speak truth to power in this most unprecedented time in our Nation's history: a time when we are fighting for civil rights and justice, a time when we are fighting just to ask for an opportunity, for a broader talent base, something we call diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Programs like Medicaid and Medicare, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, FAA, and funding for HBCUs, historically Black colleges and universities, Federal jobs being taken away

from individuals with little or no notice and promise of payment that has only fallen short or to be told that they would get it and found out only to be lies.

Tonight, we will answer what the people are asking for: What are we doing?

Well, I can tell you that the Congressional Black Caucus is standing up for justice.

I can tell you that the Congressional Black Caucus is going back into our communities, and we are holding tele-townhalls.

I can tell you that we are responding to the American people because we know what is at stake. We know that if we will not stand up for them and fight for them that little might not happen. I can tell you that we are communicating. I can tell you that we are legislating. I can tell you that we are standing with the lawyers who are litigating. We are fighting to protect and pursue opportunities that give Black Americans the same advantages that White Americans have enjoyed since our Nation's founding.

Our history is made stronger and more vibrant. Just when Black Americans think that we are equal, we are still fighting for equal rights.

Here we are, from chaos and confusion with this administration, but we are still leading. Former chairs, now ranking members. If I did a roll call, Mr. Speaker, I would tell you that we have people like MAXINE WATERS, BOBBY SCOTT, BENNIE THOMPSON, and GREGORY MEEKS leading some of the most prestigious committees in this Congress.

I would tell you that we have so many people who possess law degrees that it would be like having a roll call of Who's Who to tell you that even in our freshman class—if I started by saying: TURNER, FIELDS, BELL, CONAWAY, FIGURES, SYKES, MCCLELLAN, LEE, CROCKETT, JOHNSON, SEWELL, MEEKS, NEGUSE, JEFFRIES, and BISHOP, who all possess law degrees.

We have some of the best orators in the country. I could say AYANNA PRESSLEY, and I can tell you historians like JIM CLYBURN. I could tell you that we are fighting because we possess those talents in fields because we have suffered along the way.

You have heard the stories of our parents. You have heard the stories of our grandparents. We just don't come tonight for a Special Order to tell you our stories, but we want America to know that we are suffering. We want America to know that we stand with them in this time when we are in trouble.

Just last night, I was on a call with Win With Black Women and Win With Black Men, a call that was prompted several months ago during the election when 44,000 Black women got on a call, and 50-some thousand Black men got on a call. Just as tonight, when a White woman joined us, White women and White dudes got on the call be-

cause we knew that America was in trouble.

□ 2015

Mr. Speaker, last night I am so proud to say, as I close, that we stood up for another sojourner, a sojourner who had been fighting for us as she went on air every night. We also say thank you to Joy Reid for what she has done and to let her know that we, too, are lifting her up.

We are also celebrating those who, too, will give us a voice, whether it is on traditional media, legacy media, social media, or podcasts. We are coming after those who are coming after us, Mr. Speaker. We want America to know that we will not be silent even against this administration. We will not sit down. We will protest. We will resist. We will do all the things that our forefathers did. We will do all the things that those shoulders that we stand on did.

What they did, we will do because this America belongs to us. We fight for justice, dignity, equity, diversity, and inclusion because we, too, are part of America. Black history is American history.

Mr. FIGURES. Mr. Speaker, I yield to another distinguished gentlewoman from the State of Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR).

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Congressman from Alabama (Mr. FIGURES) and also Congresswoman BYNUM from the State of Oregon and the chair of the Black Caucus, YVETTE CLARKE of New York, for inviting me to speak this evening.

Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate Black History Month, I rise to honor an extraordinary American hero that I had the great pleasure to know from my home community in Ohio, Lieutenant Colonel Harold H. Brown. He was a Tuskegee Airman, and this is the bronze statue that was cast in our region as part of our Air Force museum, honoring his astounding life.

He was a warrior for justice on many fronts and an unwavering patriot. He was always happy. His story is one of resilience, excellence, and service, embodying the very best of our Nation's ideals.

From a young age, Harold dreamed of soaring through the skies. I don't know where he got that idea, but just at 19 years old, he turned that dream into reality as a pilot in the legendary Tuskegee Airmen. These were a heroic group of African-American aviators who defied both gravity and systemic racism to serve their country during World War II. As others have referenced tonight, we stand on their shoulders.

Harold flew combat missions with unparalleled skill and valor. He loved to fly, taking on some of the most dangerous missions over war-torn Europe. His service came at great risk. The plane we see there, he liked to fly privately also and would wear a scarf around his neck. He was a great teacher, and he managed community colleges after his service.

During one of his many missions, his plane was shot down in battle, and he was captured as a prisoner of war. Even in captivity, Harold never wavered in his duty to his country.

After the war, he continued to serve, answering the call again during the brutal Korean war. He answered the call. His legacy extended beyond the battlefield. He became an educator, beloved, a mentor and champion for the desegregation of the United States military.

The impact of Harold Brown and his fellow Tuskegee Airmen is immeasurable in this country. The Red Tails, as they were known, flew more than—get ready for this—15,000 sorties between 1943 and 1945, earning a reputation as some of the most skilled pilots in the United States military.

Bomber crews specifically requested their escort, knowing the Tuskegee Airmen would protect them against enemy attacks. They were angels in the sky. They were so brave. They fought not only against the forces of fascism abroad but, again, the deep-seated racism at home, paving the way for the desegregation of the Armed Forces with the leadership from Ohio, setting a precedent for generations to come.

Right in my district of Toledo, the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen lives on. The area around us in northern Ohio—Ohio is known as the State of flight, and 58 of these brave aviators called Ohio home, with several hailing from the great Toledo area and Harold himself from Port Clinton and points east.

Their contributions to our Armed Forces and to our communities remain an indelible part of our history. Institutions such as the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library, the National Museum of the Great Lakes, and the Liberty Aviation Museum in Port Clinton, Ohio, where this photo was taken, have preserved their stories, ensuring that future generations will remember their courage and their sacrifice.

These men were not just warriors in the sky. They were pioneers who shattered social and racial barriers, proving their excellence time and again, despite the discrimination they faced. Despite their heroism, their place in history has not always been respected. Just recently, sadly, we witnessed a shameful attempt to erase the legacy of Harold Brown and countless others who fought with him and for this country.

Under the Trump administration, the U.S. Department of Defense, following a sweeping executive order, removed diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, including historical education on renowned figures including the Tuskegee Airmen and the Women Air Force Service Pilots.

A training program that honored these heroes was halted. Their history was nearly erased in the name of a stupid and mean-spirited political agenda that sought to rewrite America's past

to fit a narrow, exclusionary narrative. This was more than an insult to the African-American community. It was an insult to America itself. It was an affront to every soldier, airman, sailor, and Marine who fought not just for our country but for the ideals upon which it stands.

The removal of these Department of Defense programs was a deliberate attempt to diminish the contributions of African Americans in the military and to erase the struggles they overcame in their fight for justice and equality.

Let this be a lesson. The power of the America people is stronger than any one administration. When this erasure was exposed, when the outrage of everyday citizens—not just Black, not just Brown, but White—demanded justice, the American people forced a reckoning with the United States Department of Defense and the President of the United States. Public outcry led to the reinstatement of the course honoring the Tuskegee Airmen.

Truth cannot be silenced, and history cannot be rewritten to serve the will of the few. We, the people, hold the power to safeguard our history. The legacy of Harold Brown and his daring, patriotic fellow airmen has been restored, not because those in power willingly chose to do so but because Americans of conscience refused to allow their contributions to ever be forgotten.

This is a testament to the enduring power of truth and justice and a reminder that each American must remain vigilant in protecting both truth and justice. As we honor Harold Brown today—and he never wanted honor. The entire community, most of whom were Caucasian like myself, came out. There was music and joy, and there was happiness in his memory.

We remember his service, but also we remember his fight. Let us carry forward his mission, not just in the skies but in every arena where justice is challenged, where history is threatened, and where the sacrifices of our ancestors and predecessors risk being erased.

We owe it to Harold Brown and his family. We owe it to the Tuskegee Airmen and their families. We owe it to ourselves and to future generations of the American family. Harold Brown and the Tuskegee Airmen of northern Ohio changed the world for the better, and so can we.

Mr. FIGURES. Mr. Speaker, as we bring this Special Order to a close, I again highlight the fact that the celebration of Black history is not a celebration of just a few individuals who did some notable things. Black history is about celebrating the faith that an entire people, an entire culture had and the potential of what this Nation could be: A faith that was unshakable. A faith in their God. A faith in this Nation. A faith that America could be America for them, too.

They held on to this. We still hold to it. Through the darkest days of this country, when Black people could lit-

erally only hold onto the security and four walls of a church, where they could sing hymns like “I Will Trust in the Lord” or “Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior” or “Take My Hand, Precious Lord.”

Precious Lord, take my hand
Lead me on, let me stand
I am tired, I'm weak, I am worn
Through the storm, through the night
Lead me on to the light.
That is where we come from.

I stand here before you just three generational lines removed from slavery, and I know that sounds crazy. That is how close we are from where we came from. The faith that my great-grandparents had at that same generational line, where we had people born in my family into slavery, to come just three generations, it is that same faith that leads me here. It is that same faith that led my father to break down those color barriers at an institution where just a few years before a Governor stood and declared that segregation today, segregation tomorrow, and segregation forever. It is that same faith that led him to apply to that law school where just a few years before his older brother applied and was told send us a picture. He refused to do so.

We celebrate that faith. We celebrate that resilience, that resolve, that perseverance. That is what Black History Month is about, and that is why we continue to hold on to that faith, because we, too, believe that America is still America for us, too. It is America for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

SPACE DOMINANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2025, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HARIDOPOLOS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HARIDOPOLOS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the topic of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mr. HARIDOPOLOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise with my colleagues, in fact, the freshmen Members of Congress, to reach far beyond party lines, beyond State borders, and even beyond our planet. It affects every American, shaping our economy, our security, and our future. I am talking about space.

As President Trump said, you can't be number one on Earth if you are number two in space. I am going to yield to our senior Member of the freshman class this year, VINCE FONG.

Congressman FONG represents the 20th District of California. He is on the Transportation and Infrastructure

Committee, as well as the Science Committee, specifically serving on the Space and Aeronautics Committee. He proudly represents the Central Valley of California.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. FONG).

Mr. FONG. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend and colleague from Florida (Mr. HARIDOPOLOS) for leading this Special Order today about the importance of America leading in aerospace and aviation.

My district in California encompasses a number of military, space, and aerospace facilities, including Naval Air Station Lemoore, Edwards Air Force Base, Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, NASA Armstrong Flight Research Center, and the Mojave Air and Space Port.

We are known for our innovation and research and continuing to push the boundaries of space exploration and our rich legacy in this industry.

□ 2030

Dating back to almost a century ago, Chuck Yeager became the first person to break the sound barrier in 1947 as a test pilot for what is now Edwards Air Force Base.

During World War II, the Mojave Air & Space Port was used as a training facility for the United States Marine Corps, and the Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake was established for research, testing, and evaluation of military weapons.

In the 1950s, NASA Armstrong Flight Research Center was the location where many of the technologies for Project Apollo were tested, including where the lunar landing research vehicle was flown in the 1960s in preparation for the historic American Moon landing.

With a deep, embedded history in the aerospace industry, my region continues to defy odds, make historic discoveries, and innovate for the future.

As we see our foreign adversaries like Russia, China, and Iran increasing their space technology efforts, it is critical that we stay ahead of the curve to ensure we stay at the cutting edge of technologies.

This is one of the reasons why I introduced the Making Advancement in Commercial Hypersonics Act, also known as the MACH Act. This legislation authorizes the establishment of the MACH program at NASA and allows NASA to support scientific experiments through high-speed flights.

In order to stay competitive in hypersonics technology, we must fully utilize public-private partnerships, like I have in my district, to advance this necessary technology. East Kern County is making great strides not only for our community but also for our Nation.

The MACH program builds on successes we have already seen in commercial spaceflight and lays the groundwork for urgent, necessary advancements to keep our competitive edge as a nation.