Public Law 98-245
98th Congress

# Joint Resolution

Mar. 27, 1984
[H.J. Res. 454]

Honoring the contribution of blacks to American independence.

Whereas, from 1776 to 1783, more than five thousand black men participated in the American Revolution as members of the Continental Army, and State and local militias; and

Whereas blacks participated in every major battle of the Revolution, including Monmouth and Yorktown and were encamped with Washington at Valley Forge; and

Whereas many blacks distinguished themselves in battle with acts of heroism that were well-noted at the time, some were praised by their officers and a few honored or rewarded by State legislatures; and

Whereas a large proportion of black recruits were inhabitants of the original thirteen colonies; and

Whereas black soldiers participated in integrated fighting units and performed a wide array of duties requiring bravery and skill; and

Whereas many blacks who participated in the Revolution are unknown soldiers, who used assumed names or were identified on muster rolls only by race and therefore their descendants will never know of the specific contributions they made to the cause of independence; and

Whereas, despite efforts by the Continental Congress and various States to exclude them up until 1778, blacks continued to enlist as substitutes until laws barring their participation in the war were removed, and free blacks of Massachusetts personally protested to General Washington about their initial exclusion from service; and

Whereas the Congress has never officially recognized the contributions of free blacks and slaves to the struggle for American liberty and independence: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,* That—

(1) the Congress extends thanks to the descendants of free blacks and slaves who participated in the Revolution and acknowledges the contributions of these courageous men and women who, in aspiring to freedom, helped bring about American independence and set in motion events that contributed to the attainment of equal rights for blacks, particularly in recent decades;

(2) the Congress encourages the Federal Government, State and local governments and private organizations, particularly those hereditary organizations that honor Revolutionary War patriots to conduct appropriate activities during Black History Month 1985 in honor of black involvement in the Revolution;

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(3) the Congress encourages State legislatures and city councils, especially those located in jurisdictions that provided black soldiers to the Continental Army and to State and local militias, and in jurisdictions where battles occurred, to issue proclamations acknowledging black contributions to the cause of freedom; and

Plaques and markers.

(4) the Congress encourages the placement of plaques and markers in appropriate places, at Valley Forge and elsewhere, in commemoration of black involvement and heroism in the battles of the Revolution.

Approved March 27, 1984.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—H.J. Res. 454:
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 130 (1984):
Feb. 29, considered and passed House.
Mar. 12, considered and passed Senate.