

One Hundred Ninth Congress of the United States of America

AT THE FIRST SESSION

*Begun and held at the City of Washington on Tuesday,
the fourth day of January, two thousand and five*

Concurrent Resolution

Whereas, even though African-Americans were excluded from playing in organized white-only leagues, the desire of African-Americans to play basketball could not be repressed;

Whereas, unlike baseball, which had Negro leagues, basketball had no organized black leagues, thus forcing blacks to take to the road out of necessity;

Whereas among the most well-known black barnstorming teams who found their beginnings in the 1920s were the New York Renaissance (or Rens), the Harlem Globetrotters, the New York Enforcers, the Harlem Clowns, the Harlem Road Kings, the Harlem Stars, the Harlem Ambassadors, and the Philadelphia Tribunes;

Whereas, despite the racism they faced, Negro basketball teams overcame great obstacles to play the game before black players were allowed to play in the National Basketball Association in the early 1950s;

Whereas the New York Rens became one of the first great basketball dynasties in the history of the game, compiling a 2,588–539 record in its 27-year existence, winning 88 straight games in the 1932–33 season, and winning the 1939 World Professional Championship;

Whereas the Harlem Globetrotters proved that they were capable of beating professional teams like the World Champions Minneapolis Lakers led by basketball great George Mikan in 1948;

Whereas the barnstorming African-American basketball teams included exceptionally talented players and shaped modern-day basketball by introducing a new style of play predicated on speed, short crisp passing techniques, and vigorous defensive play;

Whereas among the pioneers who played on black barnstorming teams included players such as Tarzan Cooper, Pop Gates, John Isaacs, Willie Smith, Sweetwater Clifton, Ermer Robinson, Bob Douglas, Pappy Ricks, Runt Pullins, Goose Tatum, Marques Haynes, Bobby Hall, Babe Pressley, Bernie Price, Ted Strong, Inman Jackson, Duke Cumberland, Fat Jenkins, Eddie Younger, Lou Badger, Zachary Clayton, Jim Usry, Sonny Boswell, and Puggy Bell;

Whereas the struggles of these players and others paved the way for current African American professional players, who are playing in the National Basketball Association today;

Whereas the style of black basketball was more conducive to a wide open, fast-paced spectator sport;

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Whereas, by achieving success on the basketball court, African-American basketball players helped break down the color barrier and integrate African-Americans into all aspects of society in the United States;

Whereas, during the era of sexism and gender barriers, barnstorming African-American basketball was not limited to men's teams, but included women's teams as well, such as the Chicago Romas and the Philadelphia Tribunes;

Whereas only in recent years has the history of African-Americans in team sports begun receiving the recognition it deserves;

Whereas basketball is a uniquely modern and uniquely American sport;

Whereas the Black Legends of Professional Basketball Foundation, founded by former Harlem Globetrotter Dr. John Kline, of Detroit, Michigan, honors and highlights the significant contributions of these pioneers and their impact on professional basketball today; and

Whereas the hard work and efforts of the foundation have been instrumental in bringing African-American inductees into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Massachusetts: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That—

(1) Congress recognizes the teams and players of the barnstorming African-American basketball teams for their achievement, dedication, sacrifices, and contribution to basketball and to the Nation prior to the integration of the white professional leagues;

(2) current National basketball Association players should pay a debt of gratitude to those great pioneers of the game of basketball and recognize them at every possible opportunity; and

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(3) a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Black Legends of Professional Basketball Foundation, which has recognized and commemorated the achievements of African-American basketball teams, the National Basketball Association, and the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame.

Attest:

Clerk of the House of Representatives.

Attest:

Secretary of the Senate.