decades of years old. It goes back to our traditions as cowboys and cowgirls, and we are not going to let it go.

So every year—we are coming up on it—it is probably going to go for, we say, almost two months that we are legitimately in our cowboy, cowgirl attire.

I was privileged to be honored by the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Black Heritage Committee, which I helped found 20-some years ago because I knew that the Black cowboys and others wanted to be so much a part of it.

I want to pay tribute to Verna Lee ''Boots'' Booker, who was the first cowgirl, if you will, to be in the Houston rodeo. And I received that award. What a privilege to acknowledge that we are everywhere. She was a competitor, and I believe it was in the barrel competition. But what an exciting night to recall her history.

So we are going to be rodeoing over the next couple of weeks, and I want to pay tribute to all of the trail riders, and particularly, those of African American heritage. They have carried on this tradition.

I want to make mention, I know there are many others, but allow me to make mention of the Prairie View Trail Ride Association, which makes its annual trek to the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo in Hempstead. They rendezvous with a dozen other caravans at Memorial Park and they join the rodeo.

Mr. Speaker, they stay out on the trail. This is real. They don't get into a hotel and then get on their horses. They ride that trail for 2 and 3 and 4 weeks, and then come down to the rodeo on the day of the big rodeo parade.

The Prairie View Trail Ride was founded in 1957 by James Francies, Jr., Dr. Alfred N. Poindexter, and Myrtis Dightman. I know there are others, but these are those who started.

Their mission was to promote agricultural interest in young Americans and to perpetuate those principles and methods which have come to be regarded as the ideals and traditions of the Western World as well as the Negro Western Heritage.

I am glad that they wanted to perpetuate this great tradition and, particularly, among African Americans.

A good many of the first Black cowboys were born into slavery but later found a better life on the open range.

I know many of us have heard of the Buffalo Soldiers. The Indians called African American soldiers that because of the woolliness of their hair. They were on horses, and they were fighting as well for the viewpoint of that time.

Some Black cowboys took up careers as rodeo performers, or were hired as Federal peace officers in Indian territory.

Our history weaves in and out, and it is a colorful history, and it mentions a number of people. I will mention Daniel W. ''80 John'' Wallace, who started riding the cattle trails in his adolescence and ultimately worked for cattlemen Winfield Scott and Gus O'Keefe. He put his accumulated savings toward the purchase of a ranch near Loraine, where he acquired more than 1,200 acres—that is a big deal—and 500 to 600 cattle.

We have been ranching for a long time, and Texas has a great tradition.

I want to talk about my friend, Mollie Stevenson, a fourth-generation owner of the Taylor-Stevenson ranch. I would take my children out there. She would have little horses and ponies for them to run and ride. She founded the American Cowboy Museum to honor Black, Indian, and Mexican American cowboys, to be able to embrace everyone.

Weekend rodeos featuring Black cowboys began in the late 1940s and continued to be popular. The contests of the Negro Cowboys Rodeo Association is evident that we have a strong history.

So I think it is important tonight that we salute the long history that we have had in many different areas and be able to say, as I close, again, that there is work yet to be done in the pouring forward of our history, whether it is to reflect on the cowboys who, at times, were poorly fed, underpaid, overworked, deprived of sleep, prone to boredom and loneliness, but they kept on going; or it is to fix the criminal justice system of the 21st century, to be able to recognize that for all the cowboys and the historic persons whose names I have called, Dr. King and his wife, who stood alongside him, Coretta Scott King, that we fix together the criminal justice system, and that we work to find ways to work with law enforcement; but we answer the questions of those grieving mothers, Trayvon Martin's mother, Eric Garner's mother, Sean Bell, Michael Brown, Tamir, and all of them, and we find ways to ensure the wives and family members of law enforcement, that, yes, your husband or wife, as a law enforcement officer, will come home.

Over the years, I have worked with the Federal law enforcement as a member of the House Judiciary Committee. We have always found ways to make their life easier in terms of the quality of life and work and expanded cops on the beat programs, and so now we can come together on training and the grand jury system and prison reform, which are not prone to any one group in America. It is an American issue.

I truly believe that the history of all people, the history of Americans, no matter what their background, is one of clinging to democracy and the principles of the Bill of Rights, that we all have a decent opportunity to be respected by our law enforcement processes. Whether it is our courts or whether it is our process of trying cases, we all are to be respected.

With that, Mr. Speaker, let me say that I end on the very note that this is a great country, and the history of African Americans has contributed to its greatness. Let us use the richness of their history to cast forward a new lot that will change America for the best as we move forward for justice, equality and freedom.

Mr. Speaker, this February we recognize and celebrate the 39th commemoration of Black History Month.

This month we celebrate the contributions of African Americans to the history of our great nation, and pay tribute to trailblazers, pioneers, heroes, and leaders like Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, U.S. Senator Blanche Kelso Bruce, U.S. Congresswoman Barbara Jordan, U.S. Congressman Mickey Leland, Astronauts Dr. Guion Stewart Bluford Jr. and Mae C. Jemison, Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, James Baldwin, Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, and Gwendolyn Brooks just to name a few of the countless number of well-known and unsung heroes whose contributions have helped our nation become a more perfect union.

The history of the United States has been marked by the great contributions of African American activists, leaders, writers, and artists.

As a member of Congress, I know that I stand on the shoulders of giants whose struggles and triumphs made it possible for me to stand here today and continue the fight for equality, justice, and progress for all, regardless of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation.

The greatest of these giants to me are Mrs. Ivalita ''Ivy'' Jackson, a vocational nurse, and Mr. Ezra A. Jackson, one of the first African-Americans to succeed in the comic book publishing business.

They were my beloved parents and they taught me the value of education, hard work, discipline, perseverance, and caring for others.

And I am continually inspired by Dr. Elwyn Lee, my husband and the first tenured African American law professor at the University of Houston.

Mr. Speaker, I particularly wish to acknowledge the contributions of African American veterans in defending from foreign aggressors and who by their courageous examples helped transform our nation from a segregated society to a nation committed to the never ending challenge of perfecting our union.

Last year about this time, I was honored to join my colleagues, Congressman JOHN LEWIS and Congressman CHARLES RANGEL, a Korean War veteran, in paying tribute to surviving members of the Tuskegee Airmen and the 555th Parachute Infantry, the famed ''Triple Nickels'' at a moving ceremony sponsored by the U.S. Army commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

The success of the Tuskegee Airmen in escorting bombers during World War II achieving one of the lowest loss records of all the escort fighter groups, and being in constant demand for their services by the allied bomber units—is a record unmatched by any other fighter group.

So impressive and astounding were the feats of the Tuskegee Airmen that in 1948, it helped persuade President Harry Truman to issue his famous Executive Order No. 9981, which directed equality of treatment and opportunity in all of the United States Armed Forces and led to the end of racial segregation in the U.S. military forces.

It is a source of enormous and enduring pride that my father-in-law, Phillip Ferguson Lee, was one of the Tuskegee Airmen.

Clearly, what began as an experiment to determine whether ''colored'' soldiers' were capable of operating expensive and complex combat aircraft ended as an unqualified success based on the experience of the Tuskegee Airmen, whose record included 261 aircraft destroyed, 148 aircraft damaged, 15,553 combat sorties and 1,578 missions over Italy and North Africa.

They also destroyed or damaged over 950 units of ground transportation and escorted more than 200 bombing missions. They proved that ''the antidote to racism is excellence in performance,'' as retired Lt. Col. Herbert Carter once remarked.

Mr. Speaker, Black History Month is also a time to remember many pioneering women like U.S. Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm; activists Harriet Tubman and Rosa Parks; astronaut Mae C. Jemison; authors Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, and Gwendolyn Brooks; all of whom have each in their own way, whether through courageous activism, cultural contributions, or artistic creativity, forged social and political change, and forever changed our great Nation for the better.

It is also fitting, Mr. Speaker, that in addition to those national leaders who contributions have made our nation better, we honor also those who have and are making a difference in their local communities.

In my home city of Houston, there are numerous great men and women. They are great because they have heeded the counsel of Dr. King who said: ''Everybody can be great because anybody can serve. You only a need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.''

By that measure, I wish to pay tribute to some of the great men and women of Houston:

1. Rev. F.N. Williams, Sr.
2. Rev. Dr. S.J. Gilbert, Sr.
3. Rev. Crawford W. Kimble
4. Rev. Eldridge Stanley Branch
5. Rev. William A. Lawson
6. Rev. Johnnie Jeffery ''J.J.'' Robeson
7. Mr. El Franco Lee
8. Mr. John Bland
9. Ms. Ruby Moseley
10. Ms. Dorothy Hubbard
11. Ms. Doris Hubbard
12. Ms. Willie Bell Boone
13. Ms. Holly HogoBrooks
14. Mr. Deloyd Parker
15. Ms. Lenora ''Doll'' Carter

As we celebrate Black History Month, let us pay tribute to those who have come before us, and pay forward to future generations by addressing what is the number one issue for African American families, and all American families today: preserving the American promise of economic opportunity for all.

Our immediate focus must be job creation, and enacting legislation that will foster and lay the foundation for today's and tomorrow's generation of groundbreaking activists, leaders, scientists, writers and artists to continue contributing to the greatness of America.

We must work to get Americans back to work. We must continue to preserve the American Dream for all.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand here in celebration of the heroic and historic acts of African Americans and their indispensable contributions to this great Nation.

It is through our work in creating possibilities for today and future generations that we best honor the accomplishments and legacy of our predecessors.

PRAIRIE VIEW TRAIL RIDE ASSOCIATION

The Prairie View Trail Ride Association makes an annual trek to the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo in Hempstead.

They then rendezvous with a dozen other caravans at Memorial Park where they will join the rodeo parade in downtown Houston.

The Prairie View Trail Ride Association was founded in 1957 by James Francies Jr., Dr. Alfred N. Poindexter and Myrtis Dightman Sr.

This group's mission statement says: ''The purpose of the Prairie View Trail is to promote agricultural interest in young Americans and to perpetuate those principals and methods which have come to be regarded as the ideals and traditions of the Western World as well as the Negro Western Heritage.

PVTR serves as a booster for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo and supports Prairie View A&M University in their educational programs.''

BLACK COWBOYS OF TEXAS

Black cowboys have been part of Texas history since the early nineteenth century, when they first worked on ranches throughout the state.

A good many of the first black cowboys were born into slavery but later found a better life on the open range, where they experienced less open discrimination than in the city.

After the Civil War many were employed as horsebreakers and for other tasks, but few of them became ranch foremen or managers.

Some black cowboys took up careers as rodeo performers or were hired as federal peace officers in Indian Territory.

Others ultimately owned their own farms and ranches, while a few who followed the lure of the Wild West became gunfighters and outlaws.

Significant numbers of African Americans went on the great cattle drives originating in the Southwest in the late 1800s. Black cowboys predominated in ranching sections of the Coastal Plain between the Sabine and Guadalupe rivers.

A number of them achieved enviable reputations. Bose Ikard, a top hand and drover for rancher Charles Goodnight, also served him as his chief detective and banker.

Daniel W. (80 John) Wallace started riding the cattle trails in his adolescence and ultimately worked for cattlemen Winfield Scott and Gus O'Keefe. He put his accumulated savings toward the purchase of a ranch near Loraine, where he acquired more than 1,200 acres and 500 to 600 cattle.

He was a member of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association for more than thirty years. William Pickett made his name as one of the most outstanding Wild West rodeo performers in the country and is credited with originating the modern event known as bulldogging. He was inducted into the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in 1971.

Black cowboys have continued to work in the ranching industry throughout the twentieth century, and African Americans who inherited family-owned ranches have attempted to bring public recognition to the contributions of their ancestors.

Mollie Stevenson, a fourth-generation owner of the Taylor-Stevenson Ranch near Houston, founded the American Cowboy Museum to honor black, Indian, and Mexican-American cowboys. Weekend rodeos featuring black cowboys began in the late 19405 and continue to be popular.

These contests owe their existence to the Negro Cowboys Rodeo Association, formed in 1947 by a group of East Texas black businessmen-ranchers and cowboys.

In the early days of Texas, the work of the cowhand was essential to the newly arrived settlers building a life on the frontier.

The story of the Anglo cowboys who worked the ranches of Texas is well known, but much more remains to be discovered about the African American cowhands who worked side-by-side with the vaqueros and Anglo cowboys.

The cowboy learned his craft from the vaqueros of New Spain an Texas when it was the northern territory of Mexico, as well as from the stock raisers of the South.

Such a life was hardly glamorous. Poorly fed, underpaid, overworked, deprived of by snakes or tripped by prairie dog holes.

Work centered on the fall and spring roundups, when scattered cattle were sleep, and prone to boredom and loneliness, cowboys choked in the dust, were cold at night, and suffered broken bones in falls and spills from horses spooked collected and driven to a place for branding, sorting for market, castrating, and in later years, dipping in vats to prevent tick fever.

African American cowboys, however, also had to survive discrimination, bigotry, and prejudice.

The lives of these cowhands tell a story of skill and grit, as they did what was necessary to gain the trust and respect of those who controlled their destiny.

That meant being the best at roping, bronc busting, taming mustangs, calling the brands, controlling the remuda, or topping off horses.

From scattered courthouse records, writings, and interviews with a few of the African American cowhands who were part of the history of Texas, Sara R. Massey and a host of writers have retrieved the stories of a more diverse cattle industry than has been previously recorded.

Twenty-five writers here recount tales of African Americans such as Peter Martin, who hauled freight and assisted insurgents in a rebellion against the Mexican government while building a herd of cattle that allowed him to own (through a proxy) rental houses in town.

Bose Ikard, a friend of Charles Goodnight, went on Goodnight's first cattle drive, opening the Goodnight-Loving Trail. Johanna July, a Black Seminole woman, had her own method of taming horses in the Rio Grande for the soldiers at Fort Duncan.

These cowhands, along with others across the state, had an important role that has been too long omitted from most history books.

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

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 7 o'clock and 13 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, February 5, 2015, at 9 a.m.