

In Jacksonville, we celebrate Mary Littlejohn Singleton, who became the first Black woman elected to the City Council in Jacksonville, Florida, and then elevated herself to be elected to the Florida Legislature, the first one since the Reconstruction era. Singleton paved the way for other Black women to follow in her footsteps in the Florida Legislature, like former Congresswoman Carrie Meek, and our colleague, FREDERICA WILSON, who serves now with us today.

It is stories like John G. Riley's and Singleton's and countless others that remind me to work and lead us ahead in the future. We must think differently and act differently to affect change by working together to help our fellow men and women.

I am committed to standing with the Congressional Black Caucus and to keep the fight for equality for all Americans.

CELEBRATING THE 60TH BIRTHDAY OF OVERSEER ELVIS L. BOWMAN

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

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 60th birthday of my good friend, overseer Elvis L. Bowman, the senior pastor of the Greater Mt. Tabor Christian Center in my hometown of Fort Worth, Texas.

Pastor Bowman was born February 23, 1957, and became a lifelong member of Greater Mt. Tabor Christian Center and their congregation; and the church was founded by his father, E.L. Bowman.

Pastor Bowman graduated from the University of Texas in Arlington with a bachelor's degree in business and a minor in music. He has since used his education to serve the congregation in so many wonderful ways.

An accomplished musician, Pastor Bowman served as a staff musician under his father before being appointed minister of music in 1974. He then served as the Church business manager before he was appointed pastor in 2002. He was later elevated to full gospel district overseer of Tarrant County in 2008.

Pastor Bowman, I wish you happy birthday, my friend, on your 60th birthday. I wish you nothing but health and happiness. Please enjoy your special day.

LEGISLATION TO DEREGULATE GUN SILENCERS

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, on a warm Sunday morning, yesterday, six men in a blue truck and six men in a black truck began shooting along Griggs Road. Women and children fled. Families fled in fear of their lives. Because of the gunshot noise, police were

able to come, and those who were hovering and sheltering could dial 911 on their cell phones.

So today I want to join with the law enforcement coalition who are working with former Congresswoman Gabby Giffords and Mark Kelly, who are standing up against legislation that would deregulate and allow civilians to buy silencers.

It indicates that the gun lobby applauds introduction of the Hearing Protection Act. A quote in an article says many gun owners and sportsmen suffer severe hearing loss after years of shooting. Yet, the tool necessary to reduce such loss is onerously neglected and taxed.

What about the law enforcement officers who will suffer at the hands of those who want to do us harm with silencers on their guns? What will happen to those who will be murdered in the streets? What about them and their families?

This is a legislation misdirected. This is a legislation that is unfortunate. I join with my fellow Americans and law enforcement officers, first responders, in standing up against a nonsensical and misdirected initiative.

Let's stand with those who are to protect us and let's protect our families and not support this legislation.

□ 1930

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FITZPATRICK). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. VEASEY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include any extraneous material in the RECORD.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, W. E. B. Du Bois is quoted as saying: "The cost of liberty is less than the price of repression." And the cost of liberty has come at a steep price for members of the Black community. But despite this immense challenge the Black community has faced, our resiliency is what we celebrate every month during Black History Month.

Every February, we get together to talk about it, highlight it, and share with school children, friends, and family the accomplishments of the men and women who changed the course of American history. We thank these pioneers for expanding what we believed possible and use them as an inspiration for the fight that remains.

There have been so many African-American pioneers in every field, including medicine. Dr. James McCune Smith was the first African American to earn a medical degree and practice

medicine in the U.S.; Dr. Daniel Hale Williams owned the first Black-owned hospital and is credited with the first successful heart surgery performed by an African American; Dr. Charles Drew—many have heard of him—renowned for his research during World War II which allowed for us to better understand blood plasma and its storage for transfusions. More recently, Dr. Regina Benjamin became the first Black woman elected to the American Medical Association Board of Trustees and was appointed the 18th surgeon general by President Barack Obama in 2009.

Each of these medical pioneers broke barriers for the betterment of the community, and each worked to use tools of their profession to improve the health of each patient they treat and also for future generations.

The Secretary of Health and Human Services shared similar responsibilities, but on a much, much wider scale, Mr. Speaker. The agency, as you know, of HHS is tasked with enhancing and protecting the health of all American citizens. However, the recent appointment of Dr. Tom Price as HHS Secretary threatens to roll back the progress pioneered by Black medical professions and the progress made under President Barack Obama.

Dr. Price, as many of you know and as has been documented and seen on television on the cable news shows, was very hostile, extremely hostile, and openly hostile to the Affordable Care Act during the time that he was in Congress, despite the law ultimately extending health insurance for close to 20 million Americans who didn't have it before. That is what is so amazing that a doctor would take that view.

Because of the ACA, 2.3 million African Americans between the ages of 18 and 64 gained coverage, and the uninsured rate, among African Americans, fell by nearly 7 percent. In the district that I represent, 47,000 more residents now have coverage thanks to the ACA. And for the district that I represent, that is pretty significant.

People hear a lot about the Texas miracle and about all the jobs and the economic growth in the State of Texas. Despite living in Dallas-Fort Worth—one of the most vibrant economies in the entire world, quite frankly—it had the highest uninsured rate out of any congressional district in the country. It is a shame that, with that type of prosperity, we would have such a large group of people—over 1 million people collectively when you include people outside of the district that I represent—in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex who don't have insurance. It is really a shame. We cannot let the progress forged by African-American trailblazers be undermined by a Secretary of Health and Human Services who does not see how expanding healthcare access can help better health outcomes for African Americans.

Similarly, in an area of history where we saw historic tenures of both

Eric Holder and Loretta Lynch as Attorneys General, the recent confirmation of Jeff Sessions as Attorney General is very troubling and really a blatant reminder that we must remain vigilant for those who would like to turn back the clock on the civil rights progress that African Americans fought and died for, particularly when you start talking about voter fraud.

It seems like right now what we are starting to see is the very beginning of people who are against the gains that have been made. They are trying to lay the groundwork so they can go in and do some really, really serious oppression. And that is absolutely scary just because that was a chapter in our country's history that we don't want to go back to.

We want to know that the new Attorney General is going to be working for us and not trying to undermine us when it comes to people being able to exercise their suffrage. And in the Senate Chamber, a very esteemed colleague in Congress, Senator WARREN, brought much attention to a letter that Coretta Scott King wrote opposing Senator Session's consideration for a Federal judgeship.

This Chamber has yet to hear Mrs. King's words in a letter that she used to highlight the brutal harm Sessions could wreak on voting rights. And if you look at her letter, it simply states: "Free exercise of voting rights is so fundamental to American democracy that we cannot tolerate any form of infringement of those rights. Of all the groups who have been disenfranchised in our nation's history, none has struggled longer or suffered more in the attempt to win the vote than black citizens. No group has had access to the ballot box denied so persistently and intently."

And Mrs. King continued: "The actions taken by Mr. Sessions in regards to the 1984 voting fraud prosecutions represent just one more technique used to intimidate black voters and thus deny them this most precious franchise. The investigations into the absentee voting process were conducted only in the black belt counties where blacks had finally achieved political power in local government. Whites had been using the absentee process to their advantage for years, without incident. Then, when blacks, realizing its strength, began to use it with success, criminal investigations were begun."

Mrs. King went on to state: "In fact, Mr. Sessions sought to punish older black civil rights activists, advisers and colleagues of my husband, who had been key figures in the civil rights movement in the 1960's. These were persons who, realizing the potential of the absentee vote among blacks, had learned to use the process within the bounds of legality and had taught others to do the same."

And that is what I am talking about, Mr. Speaker, is that sort of attitude, that sort of hostility towards the African-American community when it

comes to the right of suffrage, the right to vote that we hold so precious—that all of us are worried about.

But Mrs. King went on to describe why she believes Jeff Sessions would do irreparable harm to her husband's civil rights legacy. "The exercise of the franchise," she states, "is an essential means by which our citizens ensure that those who are governing will be responsible. My husband called it the number one civil right. The denial of access to the ballot box ultimately results in the denial of other fundamental rights. For, it is only when the poor and disadvantaged are empowered that they are able to participate actively in the solutions to their own problems.

"We still have a long way to go before we can say that minorities no longer need be concerned about discrimination at the polls. Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans and Asian Americans are grossly underrepresented at every level of government in America. If we are going to make our timeless dream of justice through democracy a reality, we must take every step possible to ensure that the spirit and intent of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the 15th Amendment to the Constitution is honored."

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I yield to a Member of this body that is no stranger when it comes to civil rights, knew Mrs. King, knew many of the key players and figures, and was a key player and figure himself, and that is the gentleman from South Carolina. I would like to recognize our assistant leader, JIM CLYBURN, to come and talk on this topic of Black History Month and some of the things that are so important to our community this month and why we are going to continue to talk about these issues.

Mr. CLYBURN. Thank you very much for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to join my colleagues and people throughout the United States to celebrate Black History Month. It may come as a surprise to some that Black History Month is also celebrated in Canada and the United Kingdom, although they do so in the United Kingdom in the month of October.

Thanks to the hard work and persistence of Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, known today as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, the celebration of Black history was inaugurated in 1926. In response to Mr. Woodson's advocacy, it was to be for 1 week, the second week in February, in order to envelope the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln, February 12, and Frederick Douglass, February 14.

First proposed by students at Kent University in 1969 and 1970, the week was officially expanded to a month in 1976. Gerald Ford was President at the time. When the month was established, President Ford urged the country to "honor the too-often neglected accom-

plishments of black Americans." There is a lot of talk about health care these days, and in no area has the contributions of African Americans been more neglected and dishonored as much as in the field of health care.

How many people are aware of the contributions of Charles Drew who unlocked the secrets that led to the ability to perform blood transfusions; or Daniel Hale Williams who performed the first successful open-heart surgery; or Samuel Kountz who performed the first successful kidney transplant not done on identical twins? Because of these and many other slights in many other fields, Mr. Speaker, I have not always celebrated this occasion with pleasure.

During those discussions back in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I, and many others, felt that the appropriate action was not just to expand from 1 week to a month but to mandate the incorporation of African-Americans' contributions and achievements throughout the curricula of all of our schools year round.

But, with each passing day, I grow more and more appreciative and reflective of a lesson taught in 1 Corinthians 11:13, which I share with you in JIM CLYBURN's version. "When I was a child, young and inexperienced, I spoke with the reasoning and understanding of a child, but as I grew and matured, I put those childish thoughts, expressions, and ways behind me."

I have come to understand, Mr. Speaker, that Black History Month is not only about celebrating past achievements and contributions. It is also a time for reflection and introspection.

□ 1945

Aristotle once intoned: "A life without contemplation is not worth living."

I have spent a lot of introspective moments over the last several weeks. Over the last several days, I have reflected on the comments made by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., at the annual meeting of the Medical Committee for Human Rights back in 1966, when he said: "Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane."

That is what was on my mind when I addressed this House on the day that we passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. On that occasion, I referred to the Affordable Care Act as the civil rights act of the 21st century.

It may seem a bit odd to some to hear the Affordable Care Act referred to as a civil rights act, but that is exactly what it is. The Affordable Care Act outlawed discrimination against children with preexisting conditions, outlawed discrimination against people with disabilities, and outlawed discrimination against women just because they are women.

Mr. Speaker, I want to believe that we have grown and matured beyond where we were when our country allowed insurance companies to discriminate against women with breast cancer

and men with prostate cancer. I would like to believe, Mr. Speaker, that we have put behind us the childish practice of kicking children off of their family insurance policies as soon as they turn 21, even if they are still in school or have not yet found employment. Mr. Speaker, what could be more childish and immature than allowing insurance companies to deny benefits to the sick and disabled in order to gain big bonuses and payouts for executives?

These arguments are not new. In fact, they are reminiscent of an age-old debate.

Fifty years ago, during my years of student protest, there were those who urged us to slow down. You are pushing too hard, too fast, they would say. Some of those who wanted a slower approach claimed to be on our side, like those eight White ministers who implored Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to slow down, arguing that Christianity took 2,000 years to accomplish all it has. Those ministers believed that the escalation of marches and demonstrations to secure civil rights was unwise and untimely.

In 1963, while sitting in the Birmingham city jail, Dr. King started penning a letter that, of course, he finished after leaving jail, but in that letter he dealt with the whole issue of time. In his letter, Dr. King said: “Time itself is neutral; it can be used either destructively or constructively.”

He continued: “More and more I feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful word and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people.”

Dr. King continued: “Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men”—and, I might add, women—“willing to be coworkers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that time is always ripe to do right.”

I believe these words ring true today, in our current situation. Our Nation has waited for nearly a century to find a way to bring all its citizens into the healthcare system. The time was ripe to do right for the American people.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank our assistant leader for his comments. He has such a plethora of information when it comes to the civil rights movement. He knew Reverend Abernathy and a lot of figures that aren’t as well known, like A. G. Gaston and James Farmer from my family’s hometown in Marshall, Texas. He is able to bring all of that in today and tie it into the relevance of what we are working on here in Congress.

I yield to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE), a friend here on the House floor from Houston. She

is a fellow Texan that also knows about Black history just because so much of great Black history in our country has been made in Harris County, in Houston, Texas. I thank her for participating on this very important Special Order hour.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Let me thank my friends and distinguished leaders of this Special Order, Congressman VEASEY of Texas and Congresswoman PLASKETT of the Virgin Islands.

As I begin today, I want to pose a question that was posed by Eddie Chambers. Chambers is a professor of art and art history at the University of Texas in Austin.

As I say that, let me respond to Congressman VEASEY and indicate that we do have a lot of history in Harris County, but also in the State of Texas. Also, I had the privilege of working for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference during the leadership of, then, Ralph David Abernathy and met Hosea Williams and many of the foot soldiers that worked with Dr. King. I can see the historic perspective that they were able to garner by their experience and association with this great modern-day profit, a man who understood that injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere.

As I answer the question, I want to cite from Eddie Chambers’ article that appeared in the Chronicle today. He said in one of his sentences: “Is there an important place for a celebration that might well appear in some respects as anachronistic?”

“In a word,” he said, “yes.”

He went on to say: “As a professor whose classes invariably deal with aspects of African-American history and African Diaspora history, any moment of doubt I might have about the validity of Black History Month are dispelled once classes begin each semester. I am still shocked and saddened at the level of ignorance among students of important events and personalities that are part of African-American history, and consequently, American history. I don’t, of course, blame my students, and this ignorance is by no means restricted to students of a particular ethnicity or cultural background.”

In other words, he said: “Widespread ignorance of Black American history leads to an insufficient grasp of American history.”

So my few words tonight will explain or highlight the fact that this is a need for not only African-American History Month, which is February, but it needs to be taught throughout the year and integrated into the education of all students, no matter where they live; and it is shameful testimony that the books that children are learning from, the curriculum, is so missing, so lacking in the history that is American history—African-American history.

My challenge tonight is for those of my colleagues who are listening, those educators in primary and secondary education, in colleges, Ivy League and

otherwise, what is your answer to the question: Is it now still time to celebrate and commemorate Black History Month? What are you doing about it?

I know that Texas is certainly full and rich with history, although our schoolbooks do not denote that. In fact, there was a vigorous fight with the Texas education board on their lack of responsibility in terms of insisting on textbooks that had an inaccurate recounting of Black history.

Certainly, we know—I hope that we know—the names of Congresswoman Shirley Chisolm, the first woman African American to run for President; my colleague and former predecessor, the Honorable Barbara Jordan, who in the Judiciary Committee said, “We, the people,” and repeated a statement of the importance of the Constitution; activists like Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, and Sojourner Truth.

Secretary Hillary Clinton and myself introduced legislation to put the first American bust, that of Sojourner Truth, in the United States Capitol, where she sits today. Who would have known her name, had it not been for the celebration through that legislation of over 2,500 women who came to celebrate the placing of this bust?

Astronaut Mae Jemison still remains the first African-American woman to go into space. We have mathematicians Catherine G. Johnson, Dorothy Vaughn, and Mary Jackson, who I believe are evidenced in the film “Hidden Figures.” “Fences” is another great movie of great history. We have Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, and Gwendolyn Brooks. All of these are evidence of great people.

Or the likes of Ruby Mosley, who started with the city of Houston but was an activist and is an activist in Acres Homes. Not one thing of good news happened in Acres Homes and around the city without Ruby Mosley’s great leadership. She is still going.

Barbara Jordan, Mickey Leland, Craig Washington, and myself, who served in this seat in the 18th Congressional District, fought to make sure that seniors had housing, make sure their Social Security and city services were there, and standing up to fight for civil rights. There were so many like Ruby Mosley. All of them should be placed in literature to announce their greatness.

And then, of course, let me say how proud I am to have a father by the name of Ezra C. Jackson, one of the first African-American cartoonists working in New York City in the media of comic books. He was a strange figure there. Tragically and unfortunately, as the White men begin to return after World War II, the African Americans who worked during that time, since he was the youngest of four sons—three went to World War II—were displaced. Racism. But yet I am so proud of him for being such an astute and brilliant artist. So much of his work still remains, shown in the Smithsonian in its early stages of putting together the

National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Also, my father-in-law, Phillip Ferguson Lee, one of the Tuskegee Airmen. Clearly, it began as an experiment to determine whether colored soldiers were capable of operating expensive and complex combat aircraft but ended as an unqualified success, based on the experience of the Tuskegee Airmen, whose record included 261 aircraft destroyed, 141 aircraft damaged, 15,553 combat sorties, and 1,578 missions over Italy and north Africa.

This past weekend, we buried a church member of mine, Clyde Alexander, who was also a Tuskegee Airman. To both of those men, we pay tribute, and I ask the question: How many textbooks in America, in school districts, rural and urban, have the story about the Tuskegee Airmen?

Is the question: Do we need to celebrate and commemorate Black history? If that is the question, then the answer is not only a resounding yes, but what are you doing in the academic institutions across America to ensure that we tell the story not of African American history or Black history, but of American history?

Let me finish my remarks by adding a challenge evidenced in the Los Angeles Times.

One of the things that comes out of the commemoration of African-American history is a connection to the diaspora. The Congressional Black Caucus has been the singular connecting force to the diaspora, whether it is to the Caribbean; whether it is to the African Brazilians in Brazil who happen to be of Nigerian heritage; whether it is, as I indicated, in the Caribbean, where my parents and grandparents came from, from Jamaica; from Panama, where my grandfather worked on the Panama Canal. All of this is part of the portfolio of the Congressional Black Caucus, and I thank our chairman, Mr. RICHMOND.

□ 2000

We have been the strongest voices on these issues. Mickey Leland, who was my predecessor, died on the side of an Ethiopian mountain because he cared about the horrible and devastating drought that was killing those in the region and he continued to want to take them food and to hold dying babies in his hands.

Now we have a new challenge, and that is of Somalia, a new hunger emergency. Millions are going to die if this President does not recognize that his responsibilities include not only being the Commander in Chief, but many times the chief humanitarian of the world.

In the last drought, some 350,000 children died in this region because of starvation. Right now they are expecting that starvation is going to impact hundreds of thousands of women and children. This is a picture of a woman and her child walking by the dead goats that would be the source of their livelihood because there is no water.

As I close my remarks, I call upon this Congress and I call upon this President to get the wheels back on the White House and begin to recognize that America has always been the comforter in receiving refugees, and it has always been a friend of the continent of Africa. There are Members of Congress who have gone to Africa in times of need, but we have also worked with the administration, from George Bush to Bill Clinton, to Barack Obama and many others, who recognized that we are connected to the continent of Africa by the very slaves who were brought here.

Let us fight for Somalia to survive. I call upon my fellow colleagues to join me in legislation dealing with the starvation here, that we can raise up humanitarian dollars and efforts to save the lives of hundreds of thousands who are now on the brink of starving. That is what this month commemorates, not only the African American history, but the diaspora of which we are so connected.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Texas for sharing that great information and talking about some of the highlights that Black Americans have made toward our story when it comes to African American History Month this February.

I now yield to the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands, STACY PLASKETT, who is here tonight to also talk about contributions from the part of the world that she represents. I thank her for her efforts here tonight and for being part of this Special Order hour.

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman MARC VEASEY for assisting me and for being a leader in this Special Order hour for the Congressional Black Caucus. Of course, I thank the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, our friend and colleague, the Honorable CEDRIC RICHMOND, for his continued leadership of both our caucus and on issues impacting Black America and minority communities across this Nation.

Mr. Speaker, Black History Month is a time to reflect on notable African-American icons, their achievements as a people, and our continued struggle for a more perfect Union. Not only does it serve as a source of great pride and an anchor to the African descendants in the African-American community, but it is also a vehicle to educate the masses on the totality of the Black experience throughout the history of this Nation.

As we gather this evening to celebrate the life, legacy, and achievement of African descendants, it is important to remember the journey told and employ the same resilient spirit in our continued push for fair and equal access to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Mr. Speaker, the Congressional Black Caucus is a body of 49 members in both houses of Congress representing millions of African Americans and other

minorities and majority people across this country. We are alarmed by the recent actions of this administration and the threat those actions pose to the hard-fought progress of African descendants and minorities in this country.

The nomination of Jeff Sessions as Attorney General for many minorities across this country was a direct affront to the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Stokely Carmichael, our colleague JOHN LEWIS, and the many others who sacrificed and dedicated their lives to the civil rights movement and the right to vote. The concerns expressed by the great Coretta Scott King 30 years ago about the dubious past of Mr. Sessions with respect to enforcing civil rights laws remain the same for many Americans today. Mr. Speaker, the American Dream was, in fact, made possible by the plight of African descendants, and we must remain vigilant and steadfast in the fight against racial, social, and economic injustice.

Mr. Speaker, I want to raise another area of concern that African Americans have, and that is for health care. My district of the U.S. Virgin Islands, home to the first African-American female physician in Congress, my esteemed predecessor, Donna Christensen, like many underserved communities across the country, is adversely impacted by disparate health outcomes. Diabetes, hypertension, along with funding for disease such as sickle cell, may be adversely affected in this administration. Programs for nutrition and preventative health, like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs, or SNAP, provide critical food to the neediest in all of our communities, especially mine, the Virgin Islands, and especially to our children.

Repeal of the Affordable Care Act would create unhealthy African-American communities. Since the Affordable Care Act was passed, nearly half of the African-American adults who didn't have health insurance now have health insurance. Under the Affordable Care Act, the number of working-age African-American adults who are uninsured has been cut from 27 percent to 14 percent, the lowest rate ever. The number of African-American children without insurance also decreased to the lowest rate ever, negative 5 percent. Repealing the Affordable Care Act would take away coverage for more than 3.3 million African Americans. In my district, we are looking for ways to expand coverage, not to remove or repeal it.

Members of this caucus and members before us have offered policy solutions and continue to push policies and initiatives that would help African-American communities because we know the work that our communities have done, the work of our forefathers to ensure that we have a place at the table; individuals like Shirley Chisholm, as was

spoken about by my colleague SHEILA JACKSON LEE. People who have come to America to be part of the experience of the African diaspora are people from many parts of the Caribbean. Right now we have Congresswoman YVETTE CLARKE, representing the Ninth District of New York, of Jamaican descent. Other notable Jamaicans who have served this country: General Colin Powell, the first Black U.S. Secretary of State; Constance Baker Motley, the first Black woman appointed to the Federal bench; our previous Attorney General, Eric Holder, whose family hails from Barbados; Cicely Tyson, the Academy Award-nominated actress whose family is from Nevis; Edward Blyden, from my own St. Thomas, who has been known as the father of pan-Africanism; Hubert Harrison, a prominent political activist, writer, and orator; and my own special hero, Ruby Rouss of the island of St. Croix, who was the first Black woman assigned as a permanent staff of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe. It is the work of these great African Americans and those who are not heralded and those that we don't know.

Ms. JACKSON LEE talked about her own family members. My own father, LeRoy Plaskett, and my mother, who came from the Virgin Islands and went to New York as older siblings to give back and to ensure that their younger siblings could have the things needed back home in the Virgin Islands. They have given a legacy for all of us, and we are so grateful for the work they have all done. I spoke of Congresswoman YVETTE CLARKE of New York.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I now yield to another distinguished member of the New York delegation, my colleague, the great HAKEEM JEFFRIES, who has led this Special Order before and who I look to for guidance on how to continue the great work that he and JOYCE BEATTY did previously.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands for her very kind remarks and for yielding and for the tremendous job that she and my classmate, MARC VEASEY, have done in leading this CBC Special Order hour over this 115th Congress during the last few weeks.

We stand here today in the midst of Black History Month where many African Americans throughout the country are asking the question: What do we do now that the unthinkable has occurred?

As a community, as a nation, we have gone from the Presidency—distinguished and dynamic 8 years—of Barack Obama to the current situation where we have a swamp percolating at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue under the leadership of Donald J. Trump.

He began Black History Month by saying that he was convening folks for what he called his little Black history breakfast. Those of us who actually watched some of the coverage seemed perplexed by his reference to the great

Frederick Douglass as if he was still alive. If anyone has any questions about the relevance of Black History Month, we can start by noting that perhaps it is important to make sure that the Nation's Commander in Chief understands the contributions that African Americans have made to the United States of America, going all the way back to the Boston Massacre, where one of its leaders, Crispus Attucks, was the first American killed at the onset of the American Revolution in connection with the Boston Massacre, challenging the unjust taxation policies of the British Empire.

Now, the 45th President of the United States of America asked a question over the last several months: What exactly do Black folks have to lose?

Many of us were perplexed by that question, given his history, and actually think that you have lost your mind if you come to the conclusion that the current occupant of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue has any interest in making a positive difference in the lives of people of color generally, African Americans specifically, perhaps because of his own history.

We know that in the early 1970s The Trump Organization, of which he was president, was sued by the Justice Department for racial discrimination in the housing stock that they owned, where they were denying African Americans and people of Puerto Rican ancestry access to apartments, notwithstanding their economic qualifications to be renters or co-op owners.

I would just note parenthetically that it was the Nixon Justice Department—not the Kennedy Justice Department or the Johnson Justice Department or the Carter Justice Department or the Clinton Justice Department or the Obama Justice Department—that concluded that Donald J. Trump and his organization was discriminating on the basis of race.

Those of us from New York understand that the current occupant of the White House was the leader of the high-tech lynch mob designed to try to get the wrongfully convicted Central Park Five sentenced to death, taking out a full-page ad in some of the local periodicals in New York calling for that. It turns out that all five individuals were wrongfully convicted and spent years in jail for a crime they did not commit. Donald J. Trump has never apologized for that reckless and irresponsible action.

Then, of course, for 5 years he perpetrated the racist lie that Barack Obama was not born in the United States of America, all designed to undermine the legitimacy of the 44th President of the United States of America, which is why here in Black History Month it is very interesting to me that some of my friends on the other side of the aisle question whether we, as members of the Congressional Black Caucus, or others are being irresponsible in not giving the current President a chance.

How dare you ask that question. From the beginning of the Presidency of Barack Obama, you declared war on him. You followed a philosophy that may be familiar to those of us who are familiar with the history of the Deep South: obstruction today, obstruction tomorrow, obstruction forever.

□ 2015

Mr. MCCONNELL declared that his top priority was to make Barack Obama a one-term President. And yet, he questions whether Americans, who are part of the growing resistance movement, have failed to give Donald Trump a chance. Let's be clear. He has zero credibility on the issue of lecturing us about Presidential etiquette. We will decide what the rules of engagement are when it comes to this current President. Pipe down as it relates to talking to any of us about how to engage the White House because he has no credibility on the issue. His obstruction took place in the midst of two failed wars in the worst economy since the Great Depression.

So we have got a lot of issues that we have got to sort out with this current President here in Black History Month, both for the African-American community and for the broader community of Americans in blue States, in red States, in urban America, in rural America, in suburban America, in the north, the south, the east, and the west. And I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus, and others, to tackle issues like criminal justice reform, to fix the Voting Rights Act that was damaged in such an irresponsible way by the Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, and to work to build an economy that works for all Americans, not simply the millionaires and billionaires who dominate the Trump Cabinet.

I thank my distinguished colleague from the Virgin Islands (Ms. PLASKETT) for giving me the opportunity to share some thoughts today. I thank my colleague, MARC VEASEY, for his continued leadership. And I look forward to hearing my distinguished colleague, BRENDA LAWRENCE, from Motown.

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. VEASEY.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the distinguished gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. LAWRENCE), who is my classmate and one of my very good dear friends.

Mrs. LAWRENCE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Representative MARC VEASEY from Texas, who has been an amazing advocate for voting rights and has been standing with the people in Texas across this country for American values with the refugee ban.

And I can't say enough about my colleague, my freshman class member, STACY PLASKETT, from the beautiful Virgin Islands. Her commitment to being a voice for people who are often not heard has been one that has been valuable, not only to us here in Congress but for this country.

Mr. Speaker, Black History Month is a time to celebrate our progress while recognizing the challenges that we still face today.

The President, Donald Trump, posed the question to African Americans asking: What do you have to lose?

Our Black history is outlined with the great progress and hard sacrifices endured by our forefathers. Under this administration and under these current circumstances that we are dealing with, yes, Mr. President, we have a lot to lose. We have a lot to lose for every point of progress that we have made in this country. And for every hard fought step forward, we have a lot to lose.

Instead of draining the swamp, this administration is filling it with unqualified and dangerous megadonors. Our basic rights and privileges included in our Constitution are under the risk of being attacked under this administration. Old battles that we fought and celebrate the wins, such as equal rights and quality education and criminal justice, have now begun again anew.

How are they under attack, you would ask? Well, let's go appointment by appointment.

Under DeVos' leadership, our education system is under attack.

African Americans have historically fought for equal access and opportunity in education.

African Americans had to suffer through the Jim Crow era to fight a segregated education system. They were forced to learn under a system that was both separate and unequal.

African Americans have faced and fought against injustice in the education system ever since our emancipation.

And now, in 2017, our Secretary of Education is Betsy DeVos. And frankly, she is not qualified to be the Secretary of Education because she has zero experience in public education, and she is not the right person to lead our public schools. Being a millionaire does not mean you are qualified to direct good policy.

We have real issues in Detroit. Under DeVos' direct involvement in Michigan public schools, we now have a challenge in our city of Detroit with school deserts. Some of you may not have heard about that. But a school desert is where a community does not have a local public school to attend. This means a family's only opportunity to educate their children would be to go to a for-profit charter school that is miles away, and there is no public transportation given for your child to get there, so you are in a school desert.

Our Secretary of Education should be enforcing civil rights equality and making sure that every child is educated in America, and this includes children of color who can't advocate for themselves.

Funneling taxpayer dollars to private religious schools is a step backwards. Resegregation masked under the guise of school of choice is a step backwards.

So let's talk about Secretary Sessions.

Our criminal justice system is under attack.

Civil rights icons that we know and celebrate during Black History Month, like Martin Luther King and our amazing Congressman JOHN LEWIS, endured pain and suffering during a peaceful protest and support of voting rights in 1965.

Disproportionate injustices against African Americans and minorities did not end with the civil rights movement.

Today, we fight for equality under the law. This fight continues.

Now, we have Senator Jeff Sessions charged with leading the Justice Department. His record speaks for itself. He was denied for a position as a Federal court judge speaks volumes.

Clearly, there seems to be a certain amount of fear of the truth when it comes from the mouth of Coretta Scott King.

We cannot go backwards. African Americans have worked hard to be a part of the fabric of this country through education, and health care is one of them.

Let's talk about Charles Drew, who, with his research, developed a technique to have blood banks that we can use in transfusions; Daniel Williams, the first person to successfully complete open-heart surgery; and Dr. Patricia Bath, whose invention in cataract lenses transformed eye surgery, and she was the first African-American woman doctor to receive a patent for a medical invention.

Now, our society's most vulnerable stand to lose something that we fought so hard for, and that is ensuring everyone receives health care in America, ACA. Women should not be charged more for insurance than a man. The sick shouldn't be denied insurance because of preexisting conditions. And Republicans instead want to repeal, take away, the ACA without any plan to replace it. We are going backwards.

This month, we celebrate how far we have come. We celebrate the progress of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. We celebrate the heros and sheros who paved the way. We have come too far to go back now.

That is why I am proud to be a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, along with others who have fought for Americans' equality and for the millions of Americans we represent. It is time for us to remember the great progress we have made as a nation. It is time to remember the past injustices so that we never repeat them. The sacrifices of those who came before us must never be forgotten. Their sacrifices must not be in vain.

During this month of remembrance, let us all remember we are not going back. We, the African-American community, we Americans, we are moving forward.

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mrs. LAWRENCE so much for that discussion and inspiration she has given us. We are not going to go back.

We have heard from so many of our colleagues about the achievements of African Americans. But not just the achievements—the struggles, and the issues that we are facing today.

Mr. Speaker, we heard from Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON LEE, who outlined not just the past struggles of African Americans and their achievements, but also about the rising concerns throughout the African diaspora when she talked about what is happening in Somalia and other places, and the fact that African Americans have a duty to support other diasporas and the work that they are doing and the struggles they have.

We heard about the Affordable Care Act from our assistant leader, Mr. CLYBURN, the civil rights movement, the work that was done, and the assault that is occurring now on some of those issues.

So we, as the Congressional Black Caucus, have a duty to present those issues here before you all, our colleagues, here in Congress, Mr. Speaker, to put those issues on the RECORD so that we can expound on them.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to Mr. VEASEY if there is anything else that he wanted to discuss or that he reflected on in hearing some of the words that our colleagues spoke about today.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Ms. PLASKETT) for offering that to me.

There were several things that I heard that were deeply inspiring, yet deeply troubling at the same time. It is amazing how when you start talking about Black history, and you get ready to apply it to present day, you understand just how important it is that we do bridge those two things—the history, the future, and where we are at today.

If you look at education, for instance, I know that BRENDA LAWRENCE talked about the school desert phenomena and how there are some neighborhoods where there are no neighborhood schools. That is really sad. Because when you think about Brown v. Board of Education and some of the things that were brought out about people having to travel great distances just to be able to get an education, and now you start looking at today in modern-day America and there still are no neighborhood schools, there is still segregation in schools, and then you see a Secretary of Education who wants to try to implement plans that many say would resegregate the schools, would eliminate neighborhood schools, that is what brought us here. The neighborhood school is what brought us here.

That is what allowed us to have so many great inventions when you start talking about the inventions in Black History Month, when you learn about medicine, when you start talking about science, almost all of those people mentioned, even during that time of some of the most awful segregation in our country.

And I think about that in my own family. I have a high school invitation from the 1930s in a little town called Henderson in Rusk County. I think LOUIE GOHMERT is the representative there. When you open up the high school invitation—it is from my grandmother's first cousin—and it says Henderson Negro High School, and the graduation will be held at the Henderson Negro High School auditorium.

I like to bring that up because when people start asking: Well, why is there Black History Month—

Ms. PLASKETT. So we don't forget.

Mr. VEASEY. So we don't forget. But before there was a Black History Month, people started putting those things—Black, Negro, colored, whatever it may happen to be for that time period—in front of schools. They didn't put White in front of there. There was no Henderson White High School. It was the Negro High School.

□ 2030

I think the important thing in our trying to bridge all of that is we want to make sure that we don't go back. We don't want to take steps backwards when it comes particularly to education because all of those people, whether they went to the Henderson Negro High School, whether it be blood transfusions—whatever it may happen to be—they got there because of the investment that we made in this country in our public education system. The fact that someone in a position of importance would want to roll back those opportunities is absolutely scary.

It is the same with health care, when you start talking about health care and so many people who don't have adequate health care. It is when we see the racial discrepancies and the life expectancy amongst African Americans. An African-American man, in particular, has the lowest life expectancy.

And you want to remove people—20 million Americans—from having life insurance?

Ms. PLASKETT. Sure.

Mr. VEASEY. It is absolutely scary.

I thank the gentlewoman for participating in this very timely conversation. We needed to have this conversation with the country.

Ms. PLASKETT. We did. There are some additional conversations that we need to have, but I know that our time has drawn nigh.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 31 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, February 14, 2017, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

543. A letter from the Assistant to the Board, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, transmitting the Board's final rule — Amendments to the Capital Plan and Stress Test Rules [Docket No.: R-1548] (RIN: 7100 AE-59) received February 9, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Financial Services.

544. A letter from the Assistant General Counsel for Regulations, Office of Policy Development and Research, Department of Housing and Urban Development, transmitting the Department's final rule — Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects received February 9, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Financial Services.

545. A letter from the Special Inspector General For The Troubled Asset Relief Program, transmitting the Office's quarterly report on the actions undertaken by the Department of the Treasury under the Troubled Asset Relief Program; to the Committee on Financial Services.

546. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Department of Energy, transmitting a report titled "Effects of Climate Change on Federal Hydropower: The Second Report to Congress", pursuant to Sec. 9505 of the SECURE Water Act of 2009; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

547. A letter from the Director, Regulations Policy and Management Staff, FDA, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's final rule — Refuse to Accept Procedures for Premarket Tobacco Product Submissions; Revised Effective Date [Docket No.: FDA-2016-N-1555] received February 9, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

548. A letter from the Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's Initial Report to Congress on the EPA's Capacity to Implement Certain Provisions of the Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act as required under Sec. 26(m)(1) of the Toxic Substances Control Act as amended; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

549. A letter from the Acting Secretary, Department of the Treasury, transmitting a six-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to Lebanon that was declared in Executive Order 13441 of August 1, 2007, pursuant to 50 U.S.C. 1641(c); Public Law 94-412, Sec. 401(c); (90 Stat. 1257) and 50 U.S.C. 1703(c); Public Law 95-223, Sec 204(c); (91 Stat. 1627); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

550. A letter from the Director, International Cooperation, Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, Department of Defense, transmitting Transmittal No. 04-17, informing of an intent to sign the Memorandum of Agreement Between the Department of Defense of the United States of America and the Kingdom of Denmark, pursuant to Section 27(f) of the Arms Export Control Act and Executive Order 13637; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

551. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-104, pursuant to Sections 36(c) and

(d) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

552. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-079, pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(d) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

553. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-109, pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(d) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

554. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-101, pursuant to Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

555. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-096, pursuant to Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

556. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-084, pursuant to Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

557. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-133, pursuant to Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

558. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-127, pursuant to Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

559. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-119, pursuant to Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

560. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting determinations of the Secretary and the associated report, pursuant to the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act of 2012; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

561. A letter from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting seventeen (17) notifications of a federal vacancy, designation of acting officer, nomination, or action on nomination, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3349(a); Public Law 105-277, 151(b); (112 Stat. 2681-614); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

562. A letter from the Solicitor, Federal Labor Relations Authority, transmitting a notification of a federal vacancy, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3349(a); Public Law 105-277, 151(b); (112 Stat. 2681-614); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

563. A letter from the General Counsel, National Mediation Board, transmitting the Board's final rule — Access to Information [Docket No.: C-7156] (RIN: 3140-AA00) received February 9, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

564. A letter from the Acting Attorney General, Department of Justice, transmitting a decision of the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, United States v. Robert Cardena et al., 842 F.3d 959 (7th Cir. 2016), pursuant to 28 U.S.C.