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.

A few years ago about this time, I was honored to join my colleagues, the late Congressman John Lewis and former 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; mathematicians like Katherine G. Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan and Mary Jackson; authors Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, and Gwendolyn Brooks; all of whom have each in their own way, whether through courageous activism, cultural or intellectual 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 whose 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 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 some of whom who have passed:

Rev. F.N. Williams, Sr.
Rev. Dr. S.J. Gilbert, Sr.
Rev. Crawford W. Kimble
Rev. Eldridge Stanley Branch
Rev. William A. Lawson
Rev. Johnnie Jeffery ''J.J.'' Robeson
Mr. John Bland
Ms. Ruby Moseley
Ms. Dorothy Hubbard
Ms. Doris Hubbard
Ms. Willie Bell Boone
Ms. Holly HogoBrooks
Mr. Deloyd Parker
Ms. Lenora ''Doll'' Carter
Mr. Gerald Womack

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 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.

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

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. OWENS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. OWENS. Before I get started, Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX), who serves on the Education and Labor Committee.

FREE SPEECH AT GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Utah for yielding to me today.

Mr. Speaker, I was encouraged to see George Washington University, GW, reverse its decision to censor posters highlighting the human rights abuses of the Chinese Communist Party, CCP.

The Olympic-themed posters bring attention to the CCP for its oppression of Tibetans and Uyghurs. They also denounce China for undermining democracy in Hong Kong, implementing an authoritarian surveillance system over its own people, and for its dishonesty in the handling of COVID–19.

Calling these posters racist is absurd and a dishonest attempt to pander to an authoritarian regime housing ethnic minorities in modern-day concentration camps. They aren't promoting racism but decrying it.

Allowing students to stand up for human rights and democratic values on college campuses should not be a point of controversy.

Condemning ethnic cleansing and genocide is not controversial. Condemning the erosion of privacy is not controversial. Condemning the destruction of democratic values is not controversial. In fact, condemning these crimes should be something that unites all Americans.

The individuals who hung these posters are braver than many pundits and politicians who are turning a blind eye to the CCP's atrocities. We should celebrate their courage, not punish it.

Too many universities tout free speech policies but punish those with different viewpoints for simply speaking their mind. We must allow our colleges and university campuses to be places that welcome free speech and an open exchange of ideas.

Speech meant to incite violence is never acceptable, and I condemn racism in all its forms. Yet, we must ensure that we aren't letting politically motivated groups cry wolf whenever someone says something they may not want to hear or speaks up for the millions who cannot do so themselves.

If cries of racism can be weaponized to silence political opponents, then our country will be ruled by the diktats of political correctness and a fear of censorship instead of rational free thought. If we want to stay a self-governed and free country, then we must protect our most fundamental rights, and this includes the freedom of speech.

Colleges and universities must protect the free and open exchange of ideas. Silencing students or professors for challenging the status quo makes university officials no better than the Chinese Communist Party.

In the end, GW made the right decision and should be commended for it. I hope other schools will learn from this and support free speech from the start.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I thank Dr. FOXX again for her great leadership.

Next, I yield to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. DUNCAN).

□ 1330

HONORING THE LIFE OF RAYMOND G. ''JERRY'' STRAWBRIDGE

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Utah for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of a model American and South Carolinian, and let me add, a very good friend of mine, Raymond G. ''Jerry'' Strawbridge, who passed away Monday.

Jerry was chairman of the Saluda County Council, and epitomized what it meant to be a public servant and a true patriot, as he did so much to serve his church, his country, Saluda County, South Carolina's Third District, the State of South Carolina, and our great Nation.

Jerry was a family man, a business owner, a veteran, chairman of Saluda County Republican Party for 8 years, chairman of Saluda County Water and Sewer Authority, a 32nd degree Mason, and very involved in his lodge. He was also a sergeant major for the South Carolina National Guard where he served for 40 years, and that is quite a feat.

His accolades include: National Defense Service Medal, Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal, the Army Achievement Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, NCO Professional Development Ribbon, Army Service Ribbon, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, U.S. Meritorious Service Medal, and the South Carolina Guardsman Retirement Medal.

My heart goes out to Jerry's wife, Denise, and his children and grandchildren. I am praying for them as they mourn the loss of a truly incredible person who served so well. He will surely be missed by his community and his legacy will continue to have an impact on Saluda County and South Carolina for many years to come.

Mr. Speaker, during these times we are comforted by Scripture and the words of Jesus. ''Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.''

May God bless the Strawbridge family, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative DUNCAN for his comments. I appreciate that very much.

Today I rise in honor of Black History Month and the everlasting resiliency of patriots in the Black community who have risen above circumstance to live the American Dream.

As we get started, I yield to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. TENNEY), my really good friend.

Ms. TENNEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman so much for yielding. It is just an honor to serve with you and also to serve with our great colleague, BYRON DONALDS from Florida. I thank the gentleman for hosting this very important Special Order to celebrate and recognize Black History Month.

Upstate New York has a strong abolitionist history, and I am honored to highlight the stories of our region's abolitionist heroes today. These individuals played a pivotal role in bringing our Nation's founding ideals to fruition following the brutal failure of slavery in our early days.

Not many people outside New York realize just how rich our history is within the abolitionist movement. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to visit a few of these sites with Congressman OWENS back in October which we later recalled and memorialized on the House floor in January in another Special Order. Many of these sites, such as the Gerrit Smith Estate National Historic Landmark and the National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum, are located in the heart of my district in Peterboro, Madison County, New York.

The Gerrit Smith Estate is named for Gerrit Smith, a wealthy New York landowner and one-term Member of the House of Representatives, who, coincidentally, represented the 26th District, as I do now. Smith put his wealth to good use by fervently supporting the abolitionist movement. He truly put his wealth behind his beliefs and promoted the rights of individuals to have life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

For nearly 40 years, Smith dedicated his whole heart to the abolitionist cause. Other notable abolitionist heroes such as Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, all made their way to the Smith Estate at one point or another to participate in Smith's good work.

Peterboro, New York, became a haven for fugitive slaves because of Gerrit Smith's courage and undying vision for a better, more equal America. Gerrit donated much of his farmland to escaped slaves so they could become self-sufficient and avoid slave hunters. Gerrit Smith also supported Frederick Douglass' newspaper, The North Star, and gave him what would be the equivalent of about $7,000 a month in today's dollars, and kept that newspaper going to inform the public about what was happening in the abolitionist movement.

His home became a stop along the famous underground railroad where people would come for shelter, food, and support. Hundreds of enslaved people found their way to freedom because of Gerrit Smith's valor and generosity. Down the road in Peterboro you will find the National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum. This fixture of the community is located in the same building where the first-ever meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society was held in 1835.

Because of their importance to the movement, both the Gerrit Smith Estate National Historic Landmark and the National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum now are listed as 2 of the 22 sites on the New York State Underground Railroad Heritage Trail.

The abolitionist Reverend Henry Highland Garnet once told an old friend by the name of Frederick Douglass: There are two places where slaveholders cannot come. There is Heaven, and there is Peterboro. We are so proud to have Peterboro in our district.

I am so honored that I got to stand there below that sign with my great colleague, BURGESS OWENS from Utah. Gerrit Smith and the New York State Anti-Slavery Society surely are to thank for that. We also want to celebrate Black History Month and recognize the many accomplishments of so many Black Americans.

Another one of them just outside my district is Harriet Tubman, where she spent a lot of her later years, a woman who lived to be 92; and you have heard Congressman OWENS talk about her and me as well in Special Orders, but truly a remarkable person. We stood in awe of Harriet Tubman's accomplishments, her tenacity. She was strong, she was compassionate, she was courageous, she was kind. And not only did she serve as a conductor of the underground railroad, among so many accomplishments, she also freed countless slaves. She worked as a scout, a spy, and a nurse in the Union Army. At her core, Harriet Tubman was a woman of such deep compassion and care for everyone around her.

In her later years, she helped so many who came through her home in Auburn, New York, providing them shelter, medical attention, and just undying love. Despite the obstacles she faced, Harriet Tubman never gave up nor was she ever consumed by anger or cynicism. She led with integrity and was incredibly resilient. She is a tremendous role model for all of us today.

As I have said before, the way to improve our Nation is not to cynically tear down our institutions or erase and rewrite our history, but rather to take inspiration from the ideals of our Founding, and those who persevered with great courage to fight for a better future against so much that was against them.

People like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman are just great Americans, tremendous Americans and part of our history, and so many contributed to their ability to achieve the goals to finally eradicating slavery and bringing us where we are today in celebrating Black History Month for such a long period of time in our country, as Congressman CLYBURN mentioned earlier.

I just want to thank Congressman DONALDS and also Congressman OWENS for their great leadership on behalf of our side of the aisle, and also just on representing and protecting our institutions of freedom, human rights, individual rights, and all that they do as great Americans. I am honored to be able to be here with them today. I thank you so much again for your great generosity.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman. I really appreciate it.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DONALDS), my great friend.

Mr. DONALDS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today alongside my good friend, Congressman BURGESS OWENS, from the great State of Utah in celebration of Black History Month.

I, like Mr. OWENS, stand on the shoulders of Black Americans who came before us despite hurdles and glass ceilings, but still rose to the Halls of Congress, or to the highest echelon of our American history.

You see, there are so many pioneers who came before us, some of us who are still contemporary pioneers, Mr. Speaker. People like Majority Whip CLYBURN of South Carolina, Senator TIM SCOTT, the late Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, Justice Clarence Thomas and Justice Thurgood Marshall, Frederick Douglass, Madam C.J. Walker, Booker T. Washington, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr., Dr. Ben Carson. I could go on and on.

You see, I stand here today as the first Black person elected as a Representative of Florida's 19th Congressional District. I am the third-ever Black Republican ever elected in the great State of Florida.

During Black History Month, we pay homage to all of those who came before us and those who continue to empower the lives throughout the Black community in America. You see, Black history is American history, and even though today we might have a lot of issues about the plight of Black people in our great country, it is without question that the advances, many of which have come in America, have been through the hands, the intellect, the ingenuity, the innovation of Black Americans who have contributed to the great fabric of our country.

It really makes the contributions of Black Americans more than just for the Black community. It makes it for all of America. It is what helps the red, white, and blue that we all revere, actually be meaningful because of all of the different stains and pains, blood that was shed throughout the pathway of Black Americans to still be able to add and to still be counted for great contributions to our Nation.

In 2022, Mr. OWENS and I stand here today as free men, both reaching the American Dream and dedicated to ensuring that future generations of Black Americans can achieve the same success that we have, and to add to that, to achieve even more success that we could even dream was possible even in 2022.

Regardless of what anybody says, America is not a racist Nation. I mean, look around. While we may have so many differences, and we might not always agree on a lot of things when it comes to politics or economics, obviously, sports, religion, et cetera, we all stand here together, all colors, all creeds, and all convictions here in the people's House, proving that we are a nation that has achieved life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all people in this great Nation.

The last comment I will make, Mr. Speaker, is that, obviously, the month of February is when we celebrate Black History Month, but we are at a time in America where Black history in our schools should not just be confined to the month of February. We are at a time in the United States where all of the contributions of Black Americans and all of the pain that has been felt by Black Americans should be taught and conveyed throughout all of our halls of academia, whether you are talking about middle schools, high schools, or even higher education.

This month is exceptionally special to me because I do understand that the sacrifices that my mother and my family made for me throughout the years and all of the things that they believed that I could possibly achieve have culminated in me standing here on this floor even making these comments about the rich history of Black Americans to the United States.

So it is with great humility, and it is with great appreciation for all of those who have come before me and, Mr. Speaker, to all the Black Americans who served with me today, that I just want to wish everybody a wonderful Black History Month, and also for everybody to reflect on how much we have gained here as a people in these United States.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for his comments.

Mr. Speaker, on that note, I would like to highlight something that I want those who are listening to be aware of. As you listen to those of the Republican Party, those who believe in these conservative values of love of God, country, family, that as we talk about our history, as we talk about things we are doing and have overcome and achieved, notice the sense of hope that we bring to the message. Notice the sense of unity.

Yes, we look back on the past because we have a lot to learn from the past. But we look at the past in the way of what we have achieved and how far we have come, not where we are today. And I want Americans to think through the last couple of years. Are we tired of being afraid? Are we tired of being angry? Are we tired of fear? Listen to the messages of our great history and you will see that this country is a country of second chances. This country is a place where you come here no matter what language you speak, how poor you are, you have the opportunity to live your own American Dream.

It was the Marxist, Karl Marx, who said it very simply. ''The first battlefield is to rewrite history.'' Why would the Marxists—why would the hard left want to steal our history, change our history? Because within our great American history we have pride in our past, appreciation for our present, and a vision for our future.

We are American people and it is within our DNA that we are hopeful. And only through the nuances of changing history which, by the way, has been done since the 1940s by the Progressive, ''father of the public school system,'' John Dewey, that this change has been happening.

□ 1345

We have talked about the success of Tulsa, a remarkable success. Just a few decades after the Civil War ended, you have this environment of success where people could live the American Dream, a little town where 600 businesses were established with over 50 millionaires, and six of them had their own private planes. It was started back in the early 1900s.

In 1921, that little community was destroyed within 12 hours, not by the American people, but by Southern Democratic KKK members. That is the nuance.

We have been fighting against evil for a long time, and we will continue to. But let's just make sure that we, the American people, know who the fight is against. It is not against those of us who believe in God, country, and family, a free market, the belief in looking at each other from the inside out versus the outside in.

We are friends, no matter what side of the aisle we sit on, those of us who believe in our American way, those of us who see our future as coming closer together, not dividing us. We are on the same team, my friends. Let's remember that.

I am going to read the introduction that I have from one of the books I wrote earlier: For those who grew up in the Deep South, in the days of the KKK and Jim Crow segregation, pride in community was not founded on the embellishment of opportunities lost due to racism. Instead, it was built on the highlighting of the great accomplishments achieved, in spite of the obstacles.

The can-do outlook that prevailed in the past generations cleared the pathway to prosperity and celebrated creative, courageous, and self-respecting community determined not to be held back. That community succeeded in their quest. That community was my dad's generation and the ones before that who believed in this great country, who went to war to fight for this great country.

I am going to talk about a couple of my heroes. I have had a chance, thank goodness, growing up in the Deep South in the days of KKK, Jim Crow, and segregation, in Tallahassee, Florida, to be raised by a community who was proud of who they were, a community whose parents and teachers collaborated, talked, and respected each other, because the goal at the end of the day was their children would go out and give their community a good name, give their family a good name, and represent the race that could achieve anything by overcoming obstacles.

My hero is not an NFL player, a basketball player, or some person on TV,

who I had no idea who they were, what their character was. My hero was someone who I saw the mistakes that he made. He was not a perfect person, but he was a great father. That is my dad, Clarence Burgess Owens, Sr.

Dad represented that generation very, very well. By the way, for those who don't know, which I am sure most don't because of the history that has been changed, my race has never been a race of hopeless, hapless people waiting for White people to show up and give us freedom. We got freedom through the fight in which we participated in, the Civil War. There was no race that appreciated that freedom more than my race.

For generations from that point on, we have had within our DNA a desire for freedom, the conservative values of home, family, free market, and faith. I grew up in a home that taught that. It was a good experience.

My dad was raised by parents who did not finish high school. Well, my grandmother did finish high school when she was 50 years old. My grandfather dropped out when he was in the third grade. They were businessowners.

But let me tell you how it works out in America, because every generation looks to help the next generation stand on their shoulders. In my community, that was the goal. In my family, that is exactly what happened.

From those humble beginnings, those parents of four children that did not have an education, a formal education, that next generation were kids that had nothing but good education. My dad got his Ph.D. at Ohio State in agronomy. My uncle got his Ph.D. in economics at Ohio State in 1950 to 1951, the days of the KKK, Jim Crow, and segregation.

I had an uncle who was an engineer. He was part time and decided he wanted to fly planes. In the early 1960s, this was something that no one ever did, and that is he purchased his own private plane, a single prop. He would take mail from Wichita Falls, Texas, to Chicago. Who did that in 1960–61?

Well, as a 12-year-old, I had a chance to experience and understand the opportunity to dream past my limitations or perceived limitations. One time, he flew out to Tallahassee, where I had a chance to fly, for the first time, in this private plane.

I learned something through that process. That is what that generation did. They wanted to make sure that every generation was getting more educated, more critical thinking skills.

We went up. For those who don't understand what a stall is, it is important to know what a stall is before you stall. He took us up and stalled the airplane. He saw that I was panicking. He grabbed the control and explained airplane lift. To this day, I can explain to you exactly what airplane lift looks like and how it feels.

That was a generation that overcame.

Now, my dad grew up in Texas and went to war. He was in the Philippines, and this is in Japan, where he finished up. Again, he received some documentation because he ended up coming back from war to Texas. In those days, in Texas, because of Jim Crow laws, he could not get his postgraduate degree.

I ran across a box of letters after dad passed away, something he never talked about, a box of rejection letters from colleges across our country, particularly the Northeast, that had rejected his application to get his postgraduate degree. I knew it was because of race. I could see it in the applications, in the amount of letters I saw in this particular box.

What is interesting about that generation, about dad, is he never complained about it. He never pulled it out. He never said: ''Well, this is what they did to me.'' That was a generation that took rejection and took obstacles as motivation. That was a generation that said: If you don't believe me, sit back and watch. I am going to run harder, study harder, work harder. I will prove that I will command your respect because I do believe in meritocracy—which they did.

He continued that process and got into Ohio State. Five years after graduating from Ohio State with his Ph.D., we were living in Liberia, Africa. He was doing research there.

Dad went on to teach for 40 years at Florida A&M. He was a researcher. He was a farmer for 35 of those years. He was a remarkable mentor, and he believed that our race, if given the opportunity of education, could achieve and move forward.

Because he understood his past, because he was taught at that time the greatness of people like Booker T. Washington and the many people I am going to talk about in the next few minutes, he appreciated the progress that he had made and his family had made at that point, and he saw such a great future for those that were coming behind him.

I have a granddad who was a third grade dropout, a dad who was a college professor, and his son, who now stands before you in Congress.

This country, there is nothing like it. It is time for us to understand: If you want a second chance, if you want to dream big, if you want to overcome, this is the place. And guess what? You will have help from every corner of this United States. Every culture, every religion, every color, it does not matter. Because in this country, we teach ourselves to look at each other from the inside out, not the outside in.

I refuse, as long as I stand in Congress, to allow the left to demean my race's past. I refuse to allow the left to narrate that my race was one that was hopeless, hapless, could not achieve, and sit back and look at nothing but the negative that happened. By the way, negative happens to every race, every culture, every person. It is life. It is what you do with it that makes us Americans.

Americans never give up on our dream. We believe in something called meritocracy. We do not believe we should give this power over to any government power. We believe we should live our lives and move forward.

If you think about the person who would appreciate, more than anyone else in this room, a full glass of water, that person would be the one who has not had a drop in days. That first drop would be like heaven.

That was the Black community when freedom was given to us, a race that for generations never thought freedom was a possibility, a race that sent their sons to war, that volunteered because they understood the power of freedom.

They understood the power of having their faith, that they could worship without someone beating them up or hanging them, one that believed in family because there was no guarantee in those days that a family would ever stay united.

They believed in an idea called ownership of property, free market, to be creative, to get paid for your own work, your own effort, your own risk, and the benefit of education.

There was no race in our country that understood and believed and appreciated this more than mine did. There is a reason why, in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, it was the Black community that led our country in the growth of the middle class. Many graduated from college. Many committed to marriage. Many became entrepreneurs.

There is a reason why, growing up in Tallahassee, I could look around in that community, not seeing a Black America, not associating with White America until I was 16 years old, and seeing nothing but business ownership everywhere, whether it be Baker's Pharmacy, Perkins Service Station, Speed's Grocery Store, FAMU Hospital with Black nurses and Black doctors. There were engineers, lawyers, and teachers. And the message was very simple: You live in America, young man. You can achieve anything you want to if you commit to those tenets that make our country great: faith, family, the free market, and education.

We have had our representation of brave warriors throughout history, as we do today, frontline warriors who serve in the military, that go out every single day, that thin blue line to protect us from evil.

Why is their contribution so important? They believe in something very simple, and it is something from Booker T. Washington: You do not have to beg or ask for respect when you can command respect. You do not have to beg or demand somebody else's property in a free country when you can earn it yourself.

How do we do that? Through meritocracy. How do we do that? By showing courage when others might feel fear.

Ask the all-Black Army, the 54th Army Regiment from Massachusetts, during the Civil War, Freedmen who volunteered to go south to fight a battle to free fellow members of their

race. Or ask the 1869 Buffalo Soldiers or the World War II unit that went to Germany called the Black Rattlers, who the German called the Hellfighters, because they had so much respect for the way they fought and what they did.

My race has stood on the shoulders of the great men and women I am going to talk about the next few minutes. One of the greatest, I realized, after my dad had passed and after I did my homework, that that entire generation listened to and built their lives around was Booker T. Washington. He was a former slave who started Tuskegee University in 1881.

By 1905, it was creating more self-made millionaires than Harvard, Yale, and Princeton combined. Why? Because he was teaching those young people coming through not just to master one trade but two. Yes, work harder than the next guy. Yes, don't complain about the work. Don't complain about what is asked of you. Don't do what is being taught to our kids today where kids say: Well, I have to work harder than the other guy because of my color.

No, you have to work harder than the other guy because that is what America is about. You outrun, you outwork, you out-study. You find your greatest potential by what you put into your efforts. You don't lower your standards because somebody else has lowered theirs. We don't do that. That is not America.

□ 1400

Black History Month is dedicated to the heroes who rose above slavery, segregation, and racism to champion life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for future generations. Because of their courage, Black Americans have made enormous strides to shape the soul of our Nation.

From a childhood in the segregated South to serving in Congress, I am inspired by the tenacity of giants like Charles R. Drew, Robert Smalls, J. Mayo Williams, Bessie Coleman, Dr. Mildred Jefferson, Elizabeth Freeman, Sergeant William Carney, and so many others who fought for the founding ideals of liberty and equality.

I would like to share with you a few of my heroes who have had a tremendous impact on my life and the lives of countless, countless Americans. These, by the way, are Americans who were proud to be Americans. These are Americans proud of their race. These are Americans who saw their kids living a much better dream, and the last thing they would do is tell them to stop dreaming. The last thing they would do is tell them the obstacles are too great for them. The last thing they would do is say these White people are going to keep you from achieving your dreams. No, we were taught it didn't matter who it was or what it was, that we had within us the ability to overcome all obstacles.

Dr. Charles R. Drew was born in 1904 here in D.C., breaking the barriers throughout his life of a racially divided America to become the most influential scientist of the 20th century. It was during his research into banked blood at Columbia University that his ultimate destiny in serving mankind was shaped.

As World War II created an important need for procedures to preserve blood, and injuries seen by physicians became more severe, the need for blood plasma intensified. As he was the leading authority in the field, Dr. Charles Drew was selected as a full-time medical director of the Blood for Britain project, where he supervised the successful collection of thousands of pints of vital plasma for the British, saving countless lives.

In February 1941, Drew was appointed the director of the first American Red Cross Blood Bank and was put in charge of blood for the use of the U.S. Army and Navy. Dr. Drew returned to Freedmen's Hospital and Howard University, where he served as a surgeon and professor of medicine from 1942 until he passed away in 1950.

Robert Smalls was born into slavery in Beaumont, South Carolina, and gained his freedom daringly and courageously. He commandeered a Confederate cargo ship and sailed the vessel into Union waters before being captured, freeing himself, his crew, and their families.

His action that day helped persuade Lincoln to accept Black soldiers in the Union Army. He went on to serve in the Union's Navy and was eventually elected to Congress.

Elijah Abel was one of the early leaders in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a popular missionary who, as a Black man, lived the restored gospel that was intended for Black and White, bond and free.

Born in Texas in 1892, Bessie Coleman, also known as Queen Bess or Brave Bessie, was the first Black female pilot. Her mother, Susan, was a maid; her father, George, was a sharecropper of Native American and African-American descent. Bessie grew up helping her mother pick cotton and wash laundry to earn extra money.

By the time she was 18, she had saved money to attend the Colored Agricultural and Normal University, now Langston University, in Langston, Oklahoma. She dropped out of college after only one semester because she could not afford to attend.

Bessie's brothers, who both served in the military in World War I, came home with stories of their time in France, often teasing her that French women could learn how to fly airplanes, but Bessie couldn't. Because of this, she applied to many flight schools across the country, but no school would take her because she was a Black woman.

With no opportunities in America, Bessie saved and saved, and finally obtained scholarships to travel to France to flight school. She even had to take a French class at night to complete her flight school application.

After finishing flight school, she toured the country, giving speeches, showing videos of her air tricks to earn money, refusing to speak anywhere that was segregated or that discriminated against Black Americans.

In 1922, she performed the first public flight by an African-American woman. I want you to keep in mind these dates; these are the dates the other side of the aisle would like to tell you we were hopeless, hapless, and doing nothing. No, we were doing just like every other race in this country has, every other culture that has overcome obstacles. We had great vision, and we had great courage, and we succeeded big time.

She became more popular both in the United States and Europe. She toured the country giving flight lessons, performing in-flight shows, and she encouraged women to learn how to fly, becoming famous in America and Europe as a star pilot.

On April 30, 1926, Bessie passed away in a tragic plane crash. She remains an inspiration to untold millions around the world.

Madam C. J. Walker was born in 1867 on a Delta, Louisiana, plantation, where her parents had been enslaved before the end of the Civil War.

She and her sister grew cotton in Delta and Vicksburg, Mississippi, and survived by working in the fields. To escape abuse from her brother-in-law, she married Moses McWilliams at the age of 14.

Following the death of her husband, she moved to St. Louis to join her four brothers, who had become barbers. With just $1.50 a day, she managed to save enough money to send her daughter to public school.

As a talented entrepreneur with a skill for self-promotion, she often said, ''I got my start by giving myself a start.'' How about that one? ''I got my start by giving myself a start.''

She was the first self-made woman millionaire in America, earning her fortune through her business empire, a line of hair care products especially for Black women she created after experiencing hair loss. The self-made millionaire used her fortune to fund scholarships for women and donated large parts of her wealth to charity.

Elizabeth Freeman, better known as Mum Bett, was born into slavery but became the first slave to be freed under the Massachusetts Constitution. Less than 1 year after the adoption of the Massachusetts State Constitution, she filed a lawsuit for freedom, marking the beginning of a group of freedom suits that would ultimately lead the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court to outlaw slavery in their State. Despite not knowing how to read or write, she was clever enough, strategic enough, determined enough to secure her freedom.

She sought out the help of a local lawyer after being inspired by the constitutional provision that all men were created free and equal. They won the case, implicitly ending slavery in the State of Massachusetts.

After securing her freedom, she became a paid domestic worker and also made a living as a prominent healer, midwife, and nurse. After 20 years, she was able to buy her own house, where she lived with her children. She passed away December 28, 1829, at the age of 85.

It is amazing, these remarkable men and women who figured out the American Dream could work for them if they never gave up on it.

J. Mayo Williams was one of the first Black professional football players in the 1920s and went on to become one of the most successful record producers in the 1930s and 1940s. He was the only man to be inducted into both the National Football Hall of Fame and the Blues Hall of Fame.

Senator Hiram Revels of Mississippi in 1870 became the first African American to serve in the U.S. Senate. As a member of the Republican Party, he challenged the social order and was an outspoken opponent against segregation, fighting for equality across racial lines.

Sergeant William Carney was the first Black Medal of Honor recipient. He kept the American flag held high. He was born in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1840 to a family of enslaved people. His parents bought their freedom and moved to Massachusetts. He enlisted in March 1863, and his unit, the 54th, which included two sons of abolitionist Frederick Douglass, headed down to South Carolina.

By the way, the South Carolina Confederate President had made note that any Black soldier caught would be instantly hung. This is what these men knew and understood, yet they marched south to fight for the freedom of their race and their country.

Carney's unit headed down to South Carolina. Their first combat mission was leading the charge on Fort Wagner in Charleston. Carney saw his unit's flag bearer was shot and killed and ran to catch the American flag he was holding. Carney, too, was shot during the battle, but he held that flag high and crawled up the hill toward the fort. He planted the flag in the sand and kept holding on even after he was rescued. He was the first to receive the Medal of Honor.

Let me tell you how acts like that of courage and knowing our history add up. As a seventh grader, I had the opportunity—I was chosen in my segregated high school, junior high school to raise the flag in the morning and to bring it down in the afternoon—an honor.

I remember walking to school every morning, early in the morning, and my friend, Spencer Williams, and I, we understood the nature of that flag, what it meant. My dad had come back from war, and how he felt about the flag, we were sure never to let that flag touch the ground.

That reverence for our flag allowed me to feel proud as an NFL player to hear the national anthem, to see that flag flying on the sideline, getting teary-eyed. I was living my dream in a country that allowed for the American Dream to be alive and well. To see how far we had come in the 1970s, from my upbringing in the 1960s, to see my teammates of all colors, backgrounds, and creeds, that we could care less about our background, color, or creed. We cared about the fact that we wanted to win. We looked inside for those who had the character, tenacity, discipline, courage to play hard so we could win. That is America. That is what we do.

Dr. Mildred Jefferson was the first Black woman to graduate from Harvard. She dedicated her life to protecting life at all stages. In 1951, Mildred became the first Black woman to graduate from Harvard Medical School. By the way, she was a pro-life advocate, just like my parents' generation was across the board. We believe in our children, believe in our history and their future, and believe they are a gift from God. My race would not stand for what has happened today as we watch my race being targeted for abortion. She also was the first woman employed as a general surgeon at the Boston University Medical Center.

Phillis Wheatley was born in West Africa and sold into slavery at the age of 7. Despite being enslaved, she learned to read and write. Her Massachusetts owners saw talent in her poetry skills and encouraged her. Phillis was brought by her owners to London, seeking to publish her work. She quickly rose to prominence when she published her book, ''Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral.''

She became a talented poet. Her poems became popular and even drew the praise of George Washington and poet Jupiter Hammon.

As I close this out, I can't say enough how proud I am to have been raised in the time I was raised, in the community I was raised in, in the race I was raised in, in a country that gave us all hope for a great future.

Because we lived so close to Florida A&M and had all these college kids getting engaged with civil rights, at the age of 12, I had the opportunity and decided to join them for a demonstration in front of Florida's State Theater. I was the youngest, but I witnessed what it was for young men and women to be disciplined, to be articulate, to be dressed well, to represent our race because it wasn't just in front of Florida's State Theater that we were making an impact; it was those watching across our country.

I want those who watch Martin Luther King's demonstrations again to notice something about that remarkable group of people. Notice the white shirts, the dark ties, the dress shoes. Notice the articulation of those who represented these great warriors, these leaders in freedom. Notice their discipline as they were attacked by dogs, fire hoses, people calling them names. Notice they did not retaliate. They did not go down and burn down buildings. They believed in the American people. They believed in this country, that they could command respect from around our country by being the best examples of what it was to be an American.

□ 1415

They were Christians, and it was Martin Luther King's view that by fighting in the way Christians could fight, nonviolently, they could earn the hearts of Americans across the country, and that is exactly what they did.

See, what Martin Luther King was doing in our Nation at that time was not just fighting against the Jim Crow laws that we talk about all the time, the evil that we saw in the south perpetrated on Black Americans by Democrats, by the way, at that time. It was more than just Jim Crow that we were fighting against. It was a narrative that Black Americans couldn't think, we weren't leaders, we weren't intelligent, we were unkempt, we were undisciplined, we were cowards. That was the narrative that we fought against.

That was the narrative that I faced when I left Tallahassee, Florida, with the goal of being a marine biology major and hearing through the grapevine from someone, a White person who had gone to Florida State, that I couldn't do it because Blacks could not think in those days. That was the thought.

Unlike today—I didn't say I'm going to give up, I am going to quit, I am going to sue. I was taught that when somebody tells you you can't, you prove them wrong. I spent the next 4 years at the University of Miami living in a library when I wasn't playing football. I wanted to prove that guy wrong. That was the generation I was raised by, thank goodness. That guy probably never knew probably that I succeeded, but I knew. My parents knew. And now I can tell you the story that that is the way our race was.

We have to fight this soft bigotry of low expectations, my friends. It is the worst of all evils. For people to wrap their arms around us, tell us how much they love us, and then tell us we can't. To wake up to news reports that we have an administration that, for the sake of equity, is going to give Black people access to crack pipes. That is equity? We now have the opportunity to get free crack pipes.

Equity is not lowering the standards. Equity, equality is raising the standards so high and telling every single child that can hear your voice that you can do it. That is equality. That is meritocracy. That is how we get respect. You don't beg for respect. You command respect.

In closing, I often say that Black American history is so rich because of the heroes who came before us.

These proud Black Americans broke countless barriers and have been lifelong inspirations for untold millions right here in America but also around the world.

Black History Month is an important celebration and recognition of American history, and I am humbled to stand on the shoulders of the great men and women who came before me.

I encourage all of you to read up on the true history of our Nation. The true history of our Nation is that we the people have done it. We the people with our good hearts established the Underground Railroad. I would not be here without their courage, their sacrifice, their vision.

I am so thankful to have been taught to love our great Nation, to love the people before us, that are with us, and those in the future that we will fight for.

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

IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, and still I rise, Mr. Speaker, and still I rise, proud to be an American, proud to be a Member of this august body, proud to say that I am a free man, unbought, unbossed, and unafraid, proud to speak truth to power and to speak truth about power, proud that my family who loved me dearly instilled in me a belief that I could do anything that anyone else could do.

But they also taught me that there were obstacles in life, and that you will do some things, Alexander—that is my first name—because of, and you will do a good many things in spite of. And that has been the history of African Americans in this country. We have done a good many things because of people of good will who have befriended us, but we have also done a good many things in spite of people of ill will who have done all that they could to defeat us. But still we rise. Still we rise.

And today, I would like to discuss the topic: If not now, when? If not now, when? And this topic I embrace because of the Supreme Court of the United States of America and the possibility of a person of African ancestry who happens to be a female being appointed. If not now, when?

Let's examine the facts. This is Black History Month. This is Black history. And there are facts that are undeniable, indisputable, incorruptible.

Here are the facts, and here is why we find ourselves giving this speech today, making these statements today. Here are the facts. We have had a total number of Presidents of 45. Forty-five Presidents of the United States, one of color. One of color. Forty-five, one of color. Number of women, zero, of any color, any persuasion.

The Presidency of the United States has been an all-male institution, and for the most part, overwhelmingly so, it has been a White male institution. Just the facts. That is all.

Forty-five, one of color, zero women.

Now, there are some people who find it offensive to hear facts. They find these facts to somehow cause them some degree of consternation. My dear friends, can you imagine how these facts impact people of color? How they feel, knowing that we have had 45 Presidents, but only one of color? How these facts impact women? Forty-five Presidents, not one woman?

So if it causes you some degree of consternation, just imagine what it does to people who happen to be women. Forty-five men, zero women.

Now, let's take a look at the Senate. If not now, when? Let's look at the Senate. Total number of Senators in the United States of America. The total number is 1,944. 1,944 persons have had the honor, privilege, and pleasure of serving in the United States Senate. And it is a preeminent privilege, a superlative pleasure, and a splendiferous honor to serve in the United States Senate. 1,944 have had this great, singular honor.

Number of men: 1,886. 1,944 total Senators. Total men: 1,886.

Let's look at the number of men of color: 27. Number of women: 58. Number of White men: 1,857. The Senate has been around for over 200 years. For over 200 years—in fact, more than 230 years—we can say that the Senate has been overwhelmingly White and overwhelmingly White men.

There are some people who find it uncomfortable to hear these things said. Can you imagine how it must make these persons who have been excluded from the Senate, can you imagine how they feel? Can you imagine what they think when they would want to know that their children could have served in the Senate or had the opportunities that others have had? Yes, these are opportunities that have been denied some people.

I love my country. It means something to me to be an American. I believe that we ought to have liberty and justice for all. That is why I do all that I can to make it real. I want to make real the great and noble American ideals, government of the people, by the people, and for the people. That has got to include all of the people. All persons are created equal. That has got to include all persons.

Number of men: 1,886.

Now, the Senate of the United States of America is the institution that confirms persons who will be on the Supreme Court. So for over 200 years, we have had White men making the nominations—Presidents, remember 45, White men for the most part; one, Barack Obama, a recent addition to the august club—White men have been nominating. And White men have been nominating other White men. White men nominating other White men. 1,886 White men confirming other White men.

This is Black History Month. If not now, when will we tell the truth about what is going on?

Let's now look at the Supreme Court itself. The Supreme Court, the highest court in the land. First assembled in 1790, more than 200 years ago, more than 230 years ago, more than 232 years ago, 233-plus some months to be exact. Since this date when the Court was first assembled, we have had a total number of 115 justices. On the first court there were 6. Total number of 115 justices. The number of men: 110. 110 men. Number of women: 5. Number of Black women: Zero. 230-plus years, 115 persons nominated and approved to the Supreme Court, 110 of them men. Number of women: 5. Number of Black women: Zero.

If not now, when? When? We have had 200-plus years to appoint an African-American female to the Court. If not now, when?

Well, Congressman GREEN, Black women haven't been qualified. Really? If you believe that, there is nothing wrong with Congressman GREEN, there is something wrong with you.

□ 1430

Over this period of time, we have had 40 persons to serve on the Supreme Court who haven't been lawyers; 40 nonlawyers. Over this period of time, we have had justices who had no undergraduate degree; 5 no undergraduate degree; 40 not lawyers.

The rules apply as they are applied, and the rules have been flexible. By the way, there is no requirement that you be a lawyer to serve on the Supreme Court of the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, 40 nonlawyers, 5 persons with no degree at all; yet, not one Black woman on the Supreme Court. There are people who don't want this subject embraced. They don't want it discussed because they would like to kind of see this happen, somehow it just occurs and everybody lives happily ever after.

A lot of suffering has taken place to get to this point, and we ought not allow the truth about the consequences of being Black to escape us. It is just true that color has been a barrier to some people being on the Supreme Court—zero Black women, 115 Justices.

If not now, when? When will we have a President who has the courage to do what should have been done many years ago. I thank God for President Biden, a man of his word and a man of courage. Courage makes the difference.

There were great orators when Dr. King lived. There were persons who understood the issues as well as, and some who understood the issues better than Dr. King. What separated Dr. King from his contemporaries was his courage. He had the courage to do what others were afraid to do. They wouldn't speak up. They wouldn't speak out. Because they knew there were consequences for speaking up and speaking out. But Dr. King had the courage to look faith in the eye and say, I will do that which others could do, and some might even do better, but I will do it. He had the courage. So did John Lewis.