

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF THE
GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER
MUSEUM AND CULTURAL CEN-
TER

HON. GREG STANTON

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 17, 2026

Mr. STANTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center in Phoenix. The museum is a truly historic site with real significance for Black history in Arizona and the United States.

The building that houses the museum, known today as "The Carver," is itself a storied symbol of both injustice and perseverance. It first opened in 1926 as the Phoenix Union Colored High School, the only Arizona high school built exclusively to serve Black students during the era of segregation. That difficult history is inseparable from the Carver's legacy. Today, the site stands as a place dedicated to preserving and retelling Black history.

Any account of Black history in Arizona is incomplete without the Carver. Despite school segregation, the Carver produced graduates who went on to become leaders, public servants, artists, educators, and civil rights advocates. The building is standing proof that talent and hard work are rewarded, even when the opportunity for success was difficult, if not impossible, to come by in a racially segregated world.

The school closed in the 1950s following the desegregation of Phoenix high schools, but the future of the building was uncertain. Alumni and community leaders recognized its historical and cultural importance and mobilized to save it from demolition. In 1996, the site was reborn as the George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center, ensuring that the legacy of those who studied, taught, and organized there would not be lost.

The Carver Museum today preserves and shares formative chapters of Black history in Arizona through exhibitions, archives, educational programming, and community events. Exhibits share the experiences and contributions of African Americans who helped shape Phoenix and Arizona history.

The importance of the Carver goes beyond historical preservation. The museum is a community gathering place. It is a space for learning and bringing people from different backgrounds and generations together. It is a resource for educators and researchers, a powerful reminder that Black history is not distant or abstract. It is local and lived. The Carver is foundational to the story of Black history in Phoenix and our state. By preserving the past, the museum helps current and future generations of Arizonans become well-rounded, and well-informed civic leaders who are ready to serve our community and make a real difference.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the George Washington Carver

Museum and Cultural Center on its 100th anniversary. May it continue to educate, inspire, and remind us that honoring history is essential to building justice and opportunity for all.

HONORING ARLENE BLAKE, PMP,
AS A DISTINGUISHED LEADER IN
CENTRAL FLORIDA FOR BLACK
HISTORY MONTH

HON. DARREN SOTO

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 17, 2026

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Arlene Blake, PMP, a community visionary, workforce development advocate, and champion for women's economic advancement in Central Florida. She is the founder of Women on the Rise International, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to building economic mobility for women through financial literacy, career development, entrepreneurship, and personal wellness. Over the past decade, she has transformed Women on the Rise into a career and leadership hub serving hundreds of women across the region.

Arlene's work focuses on addressing barriers that prevent women from thriving, including childcare, technology gaps, lack of mentorship, and limited access to culturally aligned support networks. In 2024, she secured the organization's largest program investment to date, expanding a career development initiative that has helped women increase earnings, secure higher-paying jobs, launch small businesses, and gain the financial confidence needed to build long-term stability for themselves and their families.

Her contributions to the community have been recognized widely. Arlene has been featured in the Girl Scouts of Citrus Council's Legacy of Excellence Exhibit as a Phenomenal Black Woman in Central Florida, named a Rising Star by the Citrus Club, and honored with the Noble Knight Award from the University of Central Florida College of Community and Innovation. She has been recognized by the Orlando Business Journal as both a Woman Who Means Business and one of the Most Influential People in Orlando, and was named Woman of the Year by Orange Appeal Magazine.

Beyond her nonprofit leadership, Arlene is the founder of Just Start It, LLC, where she supports organizations and professionals in improving systems, strengthening performance, and expanding community impact. She remains committed to advancing women's economic well-being, strengthening families, and ensuring Central Florida remains a region where women can rise, lead, and build lasting legacies.

HONORING BIANCA BELABRE AS A
DISTINGUISHED LEADER IN CEN-
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HON. DARREN SOTO

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 17, 2026

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Bianca Belabre, a marketer, strategist, and community advocate whose work advances creativity, education, and economic opportunity in Osceola County.

Raised in a Haitian household and influenced by her parents, Gilna Charles and Jean Robert Belabre, Ms. Belabre grew up shaped by immigrants' pursuit of the American dream, instilling values of resilience and education. From Brooklyn, New York, Ms. Belabre relocated to Osceola County at the age of 13. She attended the Osceola School for the Arts as a vocalist, where she developed an appreciation for creativity and storytelling.

Ms. Belabre is a graduate of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Health Science as a Bright Futures Scholarship recipient, followed by a Master of Public Health. She serves on the board of the Osceola Chamber of Commerce, chairs the Poinciana Area Council, and is on the board of the Black Empowerment Community Council. Through these roles, she supports community events and business education, and helps fund scholarships for students in Poinciana, awarding \$6,000 in 2025. She also delivers educational presentations for local business groups and nonprofit organizations.

In 2019, Ms. Belabre launched A Creative Station, a marketing agency specializing in digital marketing, strategic planning, and content creation. She supports business owners through training and marketing management. She was contracted by the Early Learning Coalition of Osceola County to launch the Early LearnHub brand and lead the design of an immersive educational mural at the Hart Memorial Library in Kissimmee. Ms. Belabre is also the co-founder of The Boss Collective and The Modern Boss Podcast, supporting more than 100 women entrepreneurs in the surrounding area.

Her leadership has been recognized with the Vanguard Award from the Black Empowerment Community Council and the Tomorrow's Leaders Today Award from the Osceola Chamber of Commerce.

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