

When Dr. Woodson, the Father of Black History, was earning his bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Chicago, this country had only the slightest respect for people of color. Dr. Wilson's devotion to ensuring that Blacks would escape "the awful fate of becoming a negligible factor in world thought" was ridiculed and attacked. However, in the end he prevailed and pioneered the celebration of Negro History Week, now Black History Month. The theme for this year's celebration is "Heritage and Horizons: The African American Legacy and the Challenge of the 21st Century."

The African American legacy in my home state of Illinois is great. Illinois is the birthplace of prominent African American writers such as Ellis Cose, Charles Johnson and Lorraine Hansberry. Illinois' native sons, James Cleveland and Miles Davis, are two of the world's greatest musical composers who transcend racial lines. And beloved daughter of Illinois, Katherine Dunham, dancer and choreographer, continues to bring the tradition of great African dance to a wide audience.

In addition to a rich history in the arts, African American Illinoisans also have played a significant role in state, local and federal government. Consider, for example, John Jones, the first African American elected to any public office in Cook County; Floy Clements, the first woman elected to the Illinois legislature; Harold Washington, former mayor of Chicago; and Carol Moseley-Braun, the first African American woman elected to the United States Senate. These African Americans, like those who have come before them, continue to shape our nation's history and inspire new generations of African Americans.

Today's African Americans have made great strides and overcome a variety of color barriers. The unemployment rate for African Americans has fallen from 14.2% in 1992 to 8.3% in 1999, the lowest annual level on record. The real wages of African Americans have risen rapidly, over 5% in the past two years. Moreover, while the African American child poverty rate is still too high, it fell to 36.7% in 1998, the lowest level on record. However, as these data suggest, there is still more work to be done.

The rate of firearm-related injuries is still unacceptably high. Racial profiling on our highways and in our airports and housing developments continues to be a serious problem. The rising cost of tuition continues to place ethnic minorities at an academic and economic disadvantage. The poor conditions and quality of too many of our schools keep children from low socioeconomic households from breaching the digital divide. Racial disparities in mental health and health care are pervasive in our society. And in the Chicago metropolitan area, after a two year decline, the number of reported AIDS cases has jumped 24 percent. Although African Americans represent

13% of the US population, they account for more than half of new HIV infections.

AIDS knows no boundaries. This month, as we examine and reflect on the legacy and challenges of African Americans, we must not forget our brothers and sisters in Africa. Approximately 23.3 million adults and children are infected with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa, which has about 10% of the world's population but nearly 70% of the world's infected people. I recently witnessed the devastation of this deadly virus first hand—isolation, prejudice, and a multitude of new orphans. This month, as we celebrate the heritage and horizons of African Americans, we must ask ourselves, what is on the horizon for our African brothers and sisters?

These are just some of the problems which require our attention if we are to fulfill the dreams of visionaries like Dr. Woodson, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and other African Americans who continue to serve as role models for all Americans. Dr. Woodson believed in looking back in order to look forward. In this special month that seeks to learn from the past and shape our future, we need to examine how to build on the legacy of hope left to us from those who have gone before us.

As we move forward into this new millennium, let us extend Dr. Woodson's mission past the month of February and make it part of the fabric of our lives. Let us look to our forefathers, no matter what their race, creed, or color, and unite in our diversity to build one America and to build a world where every child has hope for the future.●

THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA 90TH ANNIVERSARY

● Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to the Boy Scouts of America on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of its founding.

From its beginning in 1911, the Boy Scouts has grown in size to more than five million active members in 1999. In the 90 years since its origination, the Boy Scouts has influenced more than 100 million boys, young men, and women. Minnesota scouting officials estimate that in my home state, more than 100,000 young people participate in the program today.

Using goal setting and team building, Boy Scouts develop skills to overcome obstacles through trial and error. Whether earning their next merit badge or learning how to properly interact with the environment, Boy Scouts are able to translate what they have learned through the program into their families, churches, and communities.

Let me also take a moment to commend the almost 500,000 adult volunteers, including 24,000 Minnesotans, who serve as leaders for the Boy Scouts. Both men and women serve the Boy Scouts in various capacities rang-

ing from unit leaders to merit badge counselors. The Boy Scouts of America would certainly not be possible if it were not for the efforts of these stalwart volunteers.

Although times have changed, fads come and go, the Boy Scouts continue to be an effective tool in training our nation's youth. Through the Scouts' core values of helping other people at all times and keeping themselves physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight, scouts impact our communities in many ways. Students who have been through the Boy Scout program and have adopted these values as their own are needed now more than ever before.

Over the years, the Boy Scouts have produced many of the country's most respected civic, professional, and community leaders. Right here in the Senate, 66 of my fellow colleagues have served as a scout, a leader, or in some cases, both. With all that the Boy Scouts have done for our country, I hope its next 90 years will be as productive as these first 90 have been.

On this 90th anniversary of the founding of the Boy Scouts of America, I wish my very best to the Boy Scouts, not only in Minnesota, but to Scouts across our great Nation.●

AMERICAN HEART MONTH

● Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize February as American Heart Month. As its sponsoring organization, the American Heart Association (AHA) plays a major role in advocacy at both the national and local levels through activities to increase public awareness of health concerns. Their messages this month is "Be an American Heartsaver! Know the warning signs of heart attack. Call 9-1-1. Give CPR."

These three simple steps are aimed at reducing the number of lives lost every day—nearly 700—because the victims were unable to reach a hospital in time. The harsh fact is that cardiovascular diseases are the number one killer of men and women. In 1997, 34 percent of deaths from cardiovascular disease occurred prematurely, before the victims reached age 75. In total, more than 953,000 deaths were due to cardiovascular disease in 1997; 47 percent of those victims were women and 53 percent men.

During American Heart Month, thousands of AHA volunteers across the country canvass neighborhoods to raise funds and provide educational information about cardiovascular diseases and stroke. This is where the AHA makes its mark through its steadfast pursuit to reduce disability and death from cardiovascular diseases and stroke. By educating the American public about the early warnings signs of heart attacks and stroke, the members and volunteers of the AHA know that individuals will be better prepared to save themselves—and others around them.