

our elections, we have to acknowledge, we have to be clear about this, that the color line does exist and that there is much to do in terms of seeking liberty and justice for African Americans.

So the question now should be, what does this Congress and this administration have the will to do about this? We all have a duty, a responsibility to fight for equality and justice.

As Dr. W.E.B. DuBois reminded us so eloquently 100 years ago, he said, "By every civilized and peaceful method we must strive for the rights that the world accords to men and women clinging unwaiveringly to those great words which the sons of the fathers would feign forget, 'We hold those truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.'"

Again, I want to thank the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) for bringing us together tonight. As we celebrate Black History Month, as it comes to a close, let us celebrate our achievements but remain vigilant on the issues that affect the millions of African Americans in this country.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I would like to yield back my time and request that time be yielded to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE).

IS RACISM ALIVE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) is recognized for the remainder of the minority leadership hour.

Ms. LEE. Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK), a great African American shero.

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague.

Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to stand here today to celebrate black history, American history. The theme of this month or week and this special order is *The Color Line Revisited: Is Racism Dead?*

Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON), and I also want to thank the Congressional Black Caucus for organizing today's black history special order.

Certainly the history of the people of African descent is interwoven with the history of America. Since the first Africans arrived on what is now American soil in 1619, black Americans have played a pivotal role on behalf of the development of this great Nation. I rise to speak on behalf of this year's Black History Month as designated by the Association of the Study of African American Life in History. For me, every month is Black History Month.

The Color Line Revisited: Is Racism Dead? This poignant theme forces us to

reflect upon the legacy of African Americans and the state of race relations in America. To some people, race relations is a term that they feel a little bit shy to talk about or to think about. But we must still remember that race is a great divider in our great country, and we must talk about it.

We have much to celebrate in the achievements of African Americans and the great strides this country has made towards equality. Just recently, we saw Vonetta Flowers make history by becoming the first African American ever to win a gold medal in the winter Olympics.

We have had many, many firsts, but our many firsts should have been firsts many, many years ago. The fact that I am able to serve as a Member of Congress along with 38 other African Americans is a clear indication of how far we have come. In the State of Florida it took three of us 129 years to come to this Congress. My question is, was racism alive? Would we have been here 129 years earlier?

America has changed much since I was a child growing up in Tallahassee, Florida, which at one time was really the seat of racism in the South. We no longer accept legal discrimination. We no longer allow poll taxes to bar African Americans from voting. We no longer accept separate but equal schools or water fountains. We are no longer forced to sit in the back of bus.

But we do often sit in the back of the bus many times, maybe not in a real bus but in the bus that is America, many times we sit in the back seat. We are not happy about it. We fight every day to be sure that the people we represent and those who are not here in the halls of Congress as we are to say we must fight anything that stands in our way to keep us from equality.

We are very proud, but there is much work to be done. We have come a very long way since the slave ships arrived on these shores. However, there is still a lot to be done.

This theme makes us ask the difficult question, is racism really dead? This is an important question that has the capacity to make us feel a little uncomfortable. We would rather not have to answer this question.

However, is racism dead when the black unemployment rate remains twice that of whites? Is racism dead when a young married couple is denied financing on the house of their dreams simply because of their skin color? Is a racism dead when a young black man is stopped for no apparent reason except for driving while black? Is racism dead when in my congressional district one out of six African Americans lack access to health insurance? Is racism dead when most young men who are fleeing from the police are shot in the back and it does not happen with any other color? When police use unjustified force against people of color, is racism dead?

If racism were truly dead, we would not need a Federal Office of Civil

Rights. We would not need the Fair Housing Act. We would not need the Community Reinvestment Act. We would not need countless other Federal and State offices whose job is to monitor and enforce equal treatment.

These are just some of today's challenges for African Americans and for America and for this Congress.

We need to continue to help America understand these challenges and struggles shall serve as incentives for a new program of action. We must work very hard to eradicate the institutional racism that exists in many of America's institutions, America schools, America's churches. All institutions in America frequently have racism.

Let us work hard to fund educational reform at a level that will impact the schools that need it most. Let us work hard to make health care available and affordable for African Americans and for all Americans. Let us speak out and demand justice in the face of unjustified use of force by police in our communities.

Our goal, as it was for the civil rights movement in the 1960s, should be an end to inequality in America. As we celebrate black history during this special month of February, let us realize that black history is American history. Let us commend ourselves as Americans, as African Americans to work ceaselessly to end the persistent inequalities in our Nation and improve the quality of life for all Americans, the challenge to keep what we have and a god to glorify.

Ms. LEE. Madam Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK) for that very eloquent statement and also for actually working every day of your life to make the American dream real for all.

I would like to now recognize my colleague, the gentlewoman from Georgia (Ms. MCKINNEY), a fighter for justice and human rights both here at home and abroad.

Ms. MCKINNEY. Madam Speaker, I just want to state publicly for the record that you are a tremendous woman, a woman of courage and a woman I admire.

"The black man has no rights which the white man is bound to respect." That is what the Supreme Court wrote in black and white in 1857. In the presidential election year 2000, when the Supreme Court selected George Bush as our President and failed to order that the votes of black voters be counted, did the Supreme Court resurrect the ghost of Judge Tanksley who wrote those words? "The black man has no rights which the white man is bound to respect."

Certainly in Florida black voters had no rights that Jeb Bush and Katherine Harris felt bound to respect. They conspired with their leader, presidential candidate and Texas Governor George W. Bush to create a list, a so-called felons' list in order to target black people and keep them from voting. They came up with a list of 57,700 names from

Florida and Texas as well as Ohio and New Jersey.

Now, I do not think it is legal for Florida to deny Ohioans the right to vote. And we have our esteemed lawyers here, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) who can perhaps tell us about the legality of Florida disenfranchising people who supposedly were from Ohio and New Jersey.

□ 1800

At any rate, for example, you have a voter by the name of Johnny Jackson, Jr., who is a black man from Texas, but in Jeb Bush's Florida, Johnny Jackson, Jr., becomes a convicted felon by the name of John Fitzgerald Jackson. Now, Katheryn Harris maintained that Johnny Jackson, Jr., is the same person as John Fitzgerald Jackson. So when John Fitzgerald Jackson in Florida goes to vote, Katheryn Harris, Secretary of State, and all those people say, "Sorry, you cannot vote because you committed a felony in Texas. And in Texas your name was Johnny Jackson, Jr." Well, we know that that was not the case.

And in case after case after case, black people were denied the right to vote. The black man has no rights which the white man is bound to respect. It happened with names from Ohio, where blacks in Florida were targeted as whites in Ohio; and it happened even in New Jersey, with Latinos who ended up on the list as convicted felons, even though they had not committed any crime at all except to be a minority and a probable Democratic voter in a State that George W. Bush needed to get elected as President.

Sadly, 90 percent of the names on the 57,700 list of convicted felons were wrong. Sixty percent of those who were purged were black. Ninety-three percent of the people who were targeted voted Democratic.

Now, the subject of tonight's Special Order is: Is racism dead? Mr. Speaker, I will leave that up to you.

Ms. LEE. Well, I want to thank the gentlewoman from Georgia for speaking the truth and for reminding us of another chapter of American history and black history. I thank her very much.

I would like now to yield to my colleague, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON), who is a champion for civil rights not only here in the District of Columbia but throughout our country. She is a champion and defender of our Constitution, and one of these days there will be voting rights for all residents of the District of Columbia thanks to her and her constituents.

Ms. NORTON. I thank the gentlewoman for those kind remarks and for reminding this body of that outstanding debt in democracy owed to the 600,000 people I represent. I was pleased to be in the gentlewoman's district during the most recent recess and

saw how well she represents her district.

I also want to thank our caucus chair, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON), for her work in gathering us once again, as we do every year, to speak about African Americans during Black History Month.

The theme chosen is well chosen, I must say: Is racism dead? I have to confess that for me the short answer is no. It is kind of a truism. I feel that I should not have to put forward the evidence, if you happen to live in this country of whatever background; but I do believe that my colleagues have more than demonstrated that proposition and that, by now, for those of us who want to open their minds, it is a self-evident matter.

I thought that I would devote my few minutes, knowing that others would speak eloquently to answer the question of the day, that I would devote my 2 minutes to speaking about racial pride and the pride that our country should take in black heritage in this city. I feel constrained to do so because many people know that this is a great monumental city, but I would bet that many do not know that this is a great hub of African American history.

I do not think I should let the Congress come here every year, sail through here without understanding the kind of black heritage that this city represents. The reason, of course, is that when this city was formed out of Maryland and Virginia, half of the blacks in the United States lived in those two States. So from the beginning it had a large African American population. A quarter of the population was African American. Interestingly, it did not become a majority African American city, it is now 60 percent black, until the 1950s.

This city is always a major tourist destination site. Increasingly, it is becoming a black heritage destination site as well; and I would like to devote my few minutes to saying why. At a time when we want people to come to their capital city as an act of patriotism, I want to say that I want them also to come to learn more about their country. And this is a great city to learn more about our country because so much black history was made in this country.

Indeed, as I speak, the Congress has allowed the home of Carter G. Woodson here, the father of black history, to become a historic site. We are about to get a bill I will soon be introducing in April that will take the home on 9th Street so that it is converted into the kind of home that Mt. Vernon is and that Frederick Douglass's home is. And we ought to do that because we are here talking about black history and this is the man that started black history, started the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, who was the second black after W.E.B. DuBois to get a PhD from Harvard, the man to whom we owe the very idea of

black history because he uncovered it for the first time.

I mentioned the Frederick Douglass home. This is the city where Frederick Douglass did most of his work. He was the Recorder of Deeds in this city. It was from this city that he went to be ambassador to Haiti. It was in this city that he walked the halls of Congress.

To its credit, the Congress has approved a Presidential commission for an African American museum on the Mall, thanks to a bill whose chief sponsors were the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LEWIS) and the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. WATT). This Presidential commission brings us for the first time close to the idea that African Americans ought to be commemorated in this city.

This is the city where, of course, Howard University is found, the flagship university of black America, founded in 1867 as the first university that was open to blacks. It was open also to people of every race and color. Sterling Brown, the distinguished poet who taught at Howard, has said that after the Civil War the most distinguished and brilliant assemblage of negroes in the world, to quote him, came to this city. And that was in no small part because of Howard University. Howard University and the assemblage of so many black intellectuals made this a center for civil rights ferment and for the study and appreciation of African American history.

On U Street now we have 209,145 United States Colored Troops who served in the Civil War commemorated in the first Civil War monument to the black troops who served their country in the Civil War. The descendants of these troops can trace their lineage through a registry located there.

There is a 12th Street Y that was built by one of the Nation's first African American architects, and the son-in-law of Booker T. Washington. It was built by African American artisans in 1912, known not only as a historic structure but known for the many notable young men who passed through that Y: Dr. Charles Drew, the man who discovered blood plasma; former Georgetown University Coach John Thompson. The writer Langston Hughes, to name a few.

There is a home near McPherson Square of Mary McLeod Bethune, the woman who managed to advise four Presidents before blacks got their rights anywhere in the United States.

There is the Sumner school. This was the first public school for African Americans in the country. It later became the old M Street High School and the forerunner of Dunbar High School, the famous African American high school here where I was privileged to attend.

The tourist season is starting. Many of us who live here, who work here, are unaware that this is one of the great cities for black heritage. It is a great American story here in the lives of black people. Much that is history in

this city other than its Federal buildings is in fact black history. The building where we now stand, the Capitol of the United States of America, was built with the help of slave labor and the labor of free blacks.

As we commemorate Black History Month and learn more about our history, as we seek to answer the question is racism dead, we ought also to seek to appreciate what African Americans have done for our country. One way to do so is to see the marvels of African American history laid out in the great Nation's capitol.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia for that very wonderful and thorough history lesson, and I thank her also for representing us, all who live here sometime during the week, for being our representative.

Mr. Speaker, I would like now to yield to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS), the ranking Democrat on the Committee on the Judiciary, our great leader, and one who makes history each and every day here in this House of Representatives.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from California and commend her for this very important event in which we recollect our thoughts and thinking on the most sensitive question in our society, the question of race.

I am delighted to engage in a little recollection of things that have been going on in my life recently. I was at the University of Michigan for a black history program in Ann Arbor, Michigan, a month ago; and I must say I was astounded by the department size, the fact that they had professors, they had fellows who were coming from all over the world. There was a young fellow that had just come from South Africa that day, who made the mistake of not bringing an overcoat to Michigan in January. It was a great program. And there was a genuine interest demonstrated by the university that I had not known about before. A talented professor, teacher, a member of my congressional district in Detroit, heads up this department at U of M, and she goes from Detroit to Ann Arbor 5 days a week and loves her work. There was a real enthusiasm there.

And then 2 weeks ago I was approached by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA) to join him in a program in Traverse City in which they were celebrating the life of a soldier who had to pass for white in World War II to get into the Air Force, because it was before they created Tuskegee Institute, which Mayor Coleman Young, our first African American Mayor in the city of Detroit, went to this school. But this was before him. And so he had passed away. We gave his family nine or 10 medals, from the Purple Heart, up and down, that had been denied him. And thanks to my colleague, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA), and myself, we were able to get the Department of the

Air Force to go over this incredibly valiant record. He had reenlisted several times, and on his last mission his plane was shot down and he was killed.

□ 1815

Mr. Speaker, it was quite enlightening because there were very few people of color at the school. I was at a school, it is the first K-12 school I will ever recall being in in the North. Here it was in Traverse City. It was a very nice school, 300 young people, but still it went from K-12, which is quite a stretch in these days.

In addition, I will be joining the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) tomorrow in terms of a meeting that we will be having concerning Three Strikes and You're Out. I am looking forward to that because it is very, very important.

I will be at the Wolverine Bar Association of Michigan's Annual Barristers' Ball this Saturday evening, a huge event, but it marks something more than just a wonderful social event. It marks the time not too far distant when African American lawyers could not practice law in the larger firms in Detroit.

Wade McCree, Jr., who became a county judge, a Federal judge and appeals judge, was President Jimmy Carter's Solicitor General and was surely scheduled to go on the Supreme Court, went into workmen's compensation as a referee, although he was Harvard trained with all honors, because no law firm would accept him at that time.

Our former colleague from Michigan, Congressman George Crockett, he, with Attorney Bill Goodman and others, they formed a firm called Goodman, Eden, Crockett, Robb, Philo & Millender, which was the first integrated firm in Detroit. This was in the 1940s. We are past that. We have broken into that. Our former mayor, Dennis Archer, is president-elect of the American Bar Association. A doctor and former health department head of Washington, D.C., is now a vice president of the American Medical Association.

So we have started making these kinds of movements, but it is important for us to understand that, even as we do, so we will be meeting tomorrow, a meeting that I invite everyone to, where we will be dealing with the subject of people of African descent in Latin America who have been largely ignored, notwithstanding there are 150 million of them, and they are moving forward in a very important way.

So this kind of refreshes our minds as to where we are, what the struggles are. Reparations is still more than a dozen years old in the Congress, but it is many, many more years old, and we are still struggling to get a fair hearing here.

The criminal justice system speaks for itself. Racial profiling, even though outlawed, is still practiced widely; and with the terrorist activity, there are

those that argue that we should relax racial profiling because Arab Americans should be subject to different criteria than other people, while law enforcement has repeatedly stated that racial profiling is a poor police technique.

Mr. Speaker, we have a health system in which the discrepancy of health statistics between people of color and not of color are widely known, and the Congressional Black Caucus is working very hard on that.

Our unemployment statistics are double everybody else's, have been and still are.

I cannot help but raise the question: How long are we going to tolerate African American slums and ghettos in the major cities of America? They could have been wiped out in one fell swoop generations ago, and yet they are allowed to persist with Band-Aid programs.

The AIDS crisis is a question of color because many people of color have no way of getting any assistance whatsoever, or the prevention techniques are not made available.

Haiti is a question, and I always am intrigued by Americans who say, why are you so interested in Haiti? Haiti is the place where African slaves were transported, the indigenous people were eliminated, and this is the closest black country on the Western Hemisphere, the only black country in the Western Hemisphere and is the nearest you can get to Africa without leaving the Western Hemisphere.

We have the problem of the disparities in the treatment by our own State Department of the 48 States that compromise the continent of Africa, and that is even though we have an African American Secretary of State. We are struggling just as we always have.

Affirmative action has been under constant legal threats, and I am not proud to say that in the Eastern District of Michigan we had a decision that came out so badly that it is almost unbelievable, and it is going to make its way up to the courts.

These are some of the concerns that I have.

I will be in Philadelphia celebrating Black History Month. I want to read other Members' remarks. I think they would make a very interesting paper, document or book, and I would volunteer to work with the gentlewoman on that kind of activity. I congratulate all of my colleagues who have chosen to participate this evening.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. Listening to the gentleman from Michigan is like listening to a history book. The gentleman reminds us how far we have come and how far we have to go.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE), a great woman who fights every day on behalf of her constituents.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from California for participating in

leading us in this effort, along with the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON), the chairperson of the Congressional Black Caucus, particularly allowing for us to focus on revisiting *The Color Line: Is Racism Still Alive?*

In listening to my colleagues, each have offered a different perspective; and I might, in the moments that I have, and I would like to be able to come back to the floor tomorrow to elaborate on the system of justice that concerns me greatly.

It is important to note that we have made progress, and I do believe that all of us who have come here have indicated that we know that slavery in its technical sense is over. The Jim Crowism of the early 1900s is over. Segregation of the deep South is claimed to be over.

I am reminded of 1901 when the last African American Congressperson was drawn out of this Congress. In fact, there was no African American who sat in the House of Representatives, similar to what we have in the other body, where no African American sits now in the United States Senate, and we now enter into the 21st century.

Although we can say to our colleagues and to all of America that there have been strides, we do have a knowledge of African American history. We can cite W.E.B. Dubois and Booker T. Washington. We can cite the work of George Washington Carver. We know that the street light was designed by an African American. We are quite familiar with some of the military generals, particularly General Davis. We are familiar, of course, with the men and women who fight in the United States military and the strides they have made.

We are familiar with the new millionaires and CEOs like Dick Parsons of AOL, Ken Chenault of American Express, Franklin Raines of Fannie Mae Corporation, and Stanley O'Neal of Merrill Lynch; and many people would cite that as a fact that we have made great progress. But I would just bring some attention to some of the cancerous sores that continue in this system that really should bear attention and ask the question: Is it because of color?

Is it because of color that we go to inner city schools and find the inequities in the funding systems where our children are not learning?

Is it because of color that we find that if we have what we call alternative school systems where you put children who have been designated as troublesome that you will find, go there and find a large percentage of those being minority children?

Is it the issue of color where you are not finding male role models in the public school systems or a multitude of them as principals in the administration where we are teaching our children?

When we look at our juvenile justice system, and we have looked at it across

the country. When I first came to Congress, I traveled around the country to visit with various States about the juvenile justice system. That was at the end of the time or maybe at the beginning of the time when our mind-set was to lock up juveniles and throw away the key. It was interesting when we looked at those percentages, the high percentage of incarcerated juveniles were African American young people and in large part African American males.

In Harris County, Texas, we find a large percentage of those in courts who do not go home. When the judge gets to ruling, he would say, you go home with your parents. We are putting you on probation. We are giving you a warning, if you will. A large number of those are not African American young people. A large percentage of African American young people are sent to the Texas Youth Council.

We do have an inequitable system that points to the need to address the issue of color. I believe as we look at the incarcerated persons in our Nation we will find a higher number on death row who happen to be African Americans who did not get a high school education. Those are systemic problems that point to the issue: Is race an issue?

As I applaud the success that we have had, applaud the number of lawyers and physicians who have graduated from our schools, I want to point to the fact that those numbers have gone down.

Lastly, I would say what we need to entertain, we need to have an overall, wide national discussion on this word called reparations so it is not stigmatized by the lack of understanding what it means. At the ending of slavery, it was announced that those who were freed would get 40 acres and a mule. Some people view that as a joke, but it was economic compensation for the 400 years of slavery. That was never fulfilled.

And although people will say I did not cause slavery, it was not me, I grant you that, but it is extremely important that we as a Nation not only express the apology to seek forgiveness for what happened to throngs of African Americans who are the ancestors of those who suffered the brutality of slavery, but it is necessary for us to have a fair, calm, generous discussion about what reparations really mean and how we can move this country forward as we did for the Japanese that were interned, as we did for those in the experiment.

□ 1830

Let us do that, and I believe then we will answer the question whether racism is alive and as well we will heal this Nation and come together as a unified Nation as we should.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay homage to all those great African American pioneers who made it possible for me to stand today. It is truly on their shoulders that I stand, and I am

honored to carry their legacy of justice, freedom and equality into future generations.

The question often arises in contemporary society, "Is racism still alive?" After all, as many would point out, African Americans and other minorities in this country have achieved greatness despite centuries of slavery, decades of discrimination, and an attitude of hatred that continues to permeate our society.

The number of African American elected officials has increased by 3,000 percent since 1963, the year of the historic March on Washington. Black college graduates have increased by 400 percent, and African American consumer power is equal to that of more than 200 countries, including Australia, Belgium and Hong Kong.

And stories like Newsweek's coverage of the four extraordinary black men who head multi-national corporations—Dick Parsons of AOL Time Warner; Ken Chenault of American Express; Franklin Raines of Fannie Mae; and Stanley O'Neal of Merrill Lynch, who control 300 billion dollars worth of market capital and employ 300,000 people—these are extraordinary success stories and extraordinary statistics.

Mr. Speaker, that might be the end of the story, but it is not. Today, African Americans are still under-represented in business, government, and higher education. African Americans are the largest growing AIDS population, and represent a disproportionate percentage of all major illnesses. Twenty-five percent of all young black males are, or are predicted to be, under the jurisdiction of the criminal justice system.

Perhaps these statistics paint a more realistic picture of the status of race in America, but statistics are not enough. While racism no longer hides behind Jim Crow laws and restrictive covenants in housing, racism is unfortunately alive in America.

Today, it hides behind the cover of public policies that disregard the poor; attitudes that deny access with subtlety; and ignorance that blinds the nation. Racism fears the outspoken greatness of academic pioneers like Harvard University's Cornell West, much like it feared the greatness of Harvard's first African American graduate, W.E.B. Dubois.

When America becomes truly committed to ending racism, we will see an immediate end to racial profiling; an end to an educational system that relegates black students to inferior preparation; and a criminal justice policy that judges individuals by their character and their deeds, rather than the color of their skin. The color line must be visited on a regular basis—for as Cornell West reminds us, the color line is too significant to ignore.

Ms. LEE. I want to thank the gentlewoman from Texas for reminding us in a very clear and forthright fashion of the unfinished business of America.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON), a great woman who constantly and consistently reminds us of the needs of rural America and of all of those issues that America needs to address in each and every one of our policy decisions.

Mrs. CLAYTON. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding and for her leadership in calling to the attention of the American people the history and achievements of blacks, or African

Americans as we label or refer to ourselves.

The history and achievement of blacks or African Americans in the areas of business and wealth creation has been one of great amazement and achievement. I was reminded recently of a book that described the life of a Reverend William Washington Brown who lived in the 1880s. He is a former slave, and coming out of slavery he organized businesses throughout the Northeast and Southeast, from Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Virginia, South Carolina, even up to Massachusetts. He organized banks, he organized insurance companies, stores. This is a former slave himself.

He did it by organizing something called the United Lodge. He was establishing these lodges throughout the States. It was called the United True Reformers. It was the reformers who felt that you could bring dignity to yourself by being industrious and having wealth and working hard and bringing together your collective economy and owning something yourself. What a marvelous idea.

This person learned to read and write after he was an adult. He became a minister, and he wanted to pass that on.

We have a great history in the area of business, and so we have a lot to celebrate in the whole area of business ownership. There are great businesses now, insurance businesses now, a lot of them that we ought to celebrate. African American banks and ownership of those, again we ought to celebrate those. Those are achievements. But there are not enough of those opportunities.

In my own background, my father worked for a black insurance company for more than 42 years. I remember my brother and I saying that we were going to grow up and own an insurance company. That insurance company, of course, we never did, but that insurance company became another insurance company, and now it is called the Atlanta Life Insurance Company. In my own State now, we have the North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company.

I cite that to say there has been progress. We are acknowledging that. But when you examine in the full achievement and expansion and opportunity for business and banks and wealth, it has been minuscule. So the question is, if a former slave could do this early on, if it were not for race, then why is it that that pace has not continued?

By the way, the story on the United True Reformers is that they found a way to break that up. It became too powerful. You can organize banks in Massachusetts and Georgia, you can have insurance companies, you can have people selling things for churches. If you can understand the power of that, the system broke that up.

Well, the system not only breaks up businesses but also breaks up the wealth of land.

I wanted to, in my last few minutes, talk about the land. You remember early on when we moved from slavery to freedom, there was this great promise, but more than that, we as African Americans were people of the land. We owned a lot of land. It is reported that in 1910 we had more than 15 million acres of land. Today, it is reported that we have something less than 2 million acres. I ask the question, what has happened from 1910 to now 2002 that indeed blacks do not have that land? What in the system has allowed this?

So the question of race continues to find us in the opportunities of business and also in the ownership of land, some of the ways obviously that we are found.

By the way, there was a wonderful series of articles by the Associated Press. They had a three-part series, 10 articles, and they examined more than 100 takers of land in 13 southern States and border States. They examined documents and others so that we would know that this was not just anecdotal evidence but really was written evidence. The history shows that there were different methods that were used to defraud or to take land from African Americans. They were, obviously, through intimidation, violence and even murder. That was early on. Now the system is a little less violent, but nevertheless the results are the same.

So the results we use now is in selling the land for taxes, having eminent domain, petitioning the land. All of that finds a way of disenfranchising the many people who own land.

I would say that the question of race is a persistent one. The question of race is not only in individuals but is also corporate. I think we need to find ways where we celebrate the history of everyone, and we need to find ways where this country can make sure that the opportunities for America is celebrated by everyone.

I want to thank the gentlewoman for the opportunity to participate and to acknowledge that we have indeed made great progress. We have reason to celebrate that America has brought opportunity, but also it has many ways we can improve this for everyone.

Ms. LEE. I want to thank the gentlewoman from North Carolina for once again educating us and for all of her work on behalf of everyone in our country.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Alabama.

Mr. HILLIARD. Mr. Speaker, I have titled my remarks "The Color Line Revisited, Is Racism Dead?"

Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the question, is there still a color line in America?

Mr. Speaker, when I visit the unemployment office, the persons there are mostly black. When I fly home on the airplanes, the persons there are mostly white. When I go to prisons, Mr. Speaker, most of the prisoners are black. When I visit our inner city schools which are underfunded, overcrowded

and often in bad condition, the children are mostly black. When I visit the private academies in my district, the children are mostly white. When I see the victims of police violence, Mr. Speaker, the policemen are mostly white. The victims are mostly black.

Yes, there is a color line in America. This color line is green, the color of money; it is red, the color of the lines drawn through black neighborhoods by banks; it is blue, the color of the skin of the black homeless freezing on side streets; it is gray, the color of prison bars; it is yellow, the color of the eyes of junkies in the inner cities.

Mr. Speaker, yes, there is a color line. It is a line on the soul of America. It is a line on the mind of America. It is a line around our cities, around our neighborhoods and around our banks. No, it is not absolute as was the line of segregation. It is smeared and vague and in most cases denied, but it is there. It is everything except what they call it. But it is real. It is the line that tells the truth on America. It is a line that defines the heartbreak of America. It is the great sin of America. It is the line that splits our Nation. It is what it has always been. It is discrimination. Yes, it is racism.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, there is a line in America. It is a color line. That line is racism. Racism is alive and flourishing.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, each year during Black History Month we honor the many great African American men and women, who over the course of our nation's history have made important and lasting contributions to our country and its people.

It is also a time that we, as a people, examine our place in American society. Through this examination, we identify and celebrate our achievements, while also rededicating ourselves to overcoming those obstacles that still confront us.

Here in America, people are born equal and made unequal by their surroundings. These conditions create a socioeconomic gap, where birth and inheritance breed success, while merit and hard work are frequently meaningless.

It is worth noting that, more often than not, the roots of this socioeconomic gap have come from the seeds of racism.

But let's assume for the sake of argument that racism is dead. I certainly will not claim that race makes no difference in society today, but this assumption will help prove a point.

Let me first say one thing: Wealth and poverty are inherited more than they are earned. Because of this fact, we need to do more to resolve race-based inequalities within our system.

The battle over affirmative action has been, more than anything else, an attempt to solve the social inequalities based on race in America.

It is a means by which people who come from poor quality public schools to move up the socioeconomic ladder, whereas without such a mechanism, escaping the lower class is extremely difficult no matter how hard you work.

But assuming racial preferences are dead, there needs to be some kind of remedy to ensure at least equal opportunity at success.

Those opposed to racial preferences claim that it is the way affirmative action actually equalizes the playing field that is unfair. But this argument only works if an alternative solution is proposed and enforced.

This has not happened. So in the absence of affirmative action, the best solution to leveling the playing field in educational opportunity is to equally fund all public schools.

All Americans should want to eliminate any barriers that underprivileged people now face in attempting to educate themselves and make a decent living.

In the meantime, there is still something to be said for hard work. But at the same time, when hard work cannot save a large portion of society from living a lower-class lifestyle, our system of capitalism is failing.

That is why it is imperative that public schools be funded equally and that people who can't afford college tuition can still go to college if they so choose.

Capitalism relies on the theory of competition, and the hardest work and greatest talent paying off the most. Right now, the hardest work and greatest talent can get you nowhere or anywhere depending on where you start from.

For a capitalist system to hold true to its ideals—and to even be efficient—it must allow people from all types of backgrounds to have the same opportunities; or else the best will not always reach the places where they can be most productive.

This will never occur until we have equal funding and equal opportunity at all levels of our educational system.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FLAKE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, in harmony with the theme that the 1-hour presentation on Black History Month has set forth, is there a color line, is there racism, emphatically, yes, there is. This does not prevent us from noting the positive achievements that have taken place and the progress that has been made. We are quite pleased that there are now 39 Members of the House of Representatives who are African Americans. We have gotten back what we lost certainly after the Civil War. There were some 30 representatives elected, some in the Senate as well as the House.

All that was lost. Step by step we have seen gains wiped out over the years during reconstruction, and for about a hundred years before the civil rights movement under Martin Luther King we were steadily going backwards and every achievement that was accomplished was accomplished without the help of the mainstream population, just about every achievement. Many of the achievements were accomplished despite a great deal of hostility and animosity from the mainstream population.

I sit on the Committee on Education and the Workforce and, of course, am very interested in all aspects of edu-

cation. The historically black colleges and universities, fortunately, are in the spotlight and have been the recipients of quite a bit of Federal attention from both parties in the last year or so; and in the last 10 years the Federal Government has stepped up to the plate and provided special assistance to the 113 historically black colleges and universities. They were established and they achieved a very important role, have come to a very important role, achieved a very important place in African American society by educating those who could not get an education anywhere else. Many of our leaders of today still are graduates of historically black colleges and universities.

But the history of those institutions is a history where they got very little help from the mainstream society, and they received a lot of hostility and animosity from the local communities. The southern communities were often very hostile toward the so-called intellectuals who were in the black colleges and universities.

Even after the Morrill Act, the Federal act which established land grant colleges in every State, even after that Act was amended to establish a parallel land grant college in the segregated States where blacks were not allowed to attend the land grant colleges, even after that happened, there was tremendous discrimination. The amount of money received by the land grant colleges which blacks attended, were allowed to attend, were allowed to set up and provide a faculty for, et cetera, was much smaller. The amount of money was much smaller. That historically was the case, and even today those same land grant colleges established by the Federal Government are receiving less funding from the States than the land grant colleges that serve primarily the mainstream population, traditionally white land grant colleges.

So every step of the way there have been impediments. Is race a factor? Yes, unfortunately, it is. All over the world you have racism, and certainly you have racism in the United States. But the important thing is to note that we must operate and act and work constantly to make certain that the negative impact of racism is not used to make other people suffer. We must alleviate as much racism as possible, counteract as much racism as possible, pass laws which keep racism in check. That is the best we can do.

History has shown us that the only way we can guarantee that you will be able to make the progress that these institutions have made and be able to cite the positive accomplishments is that some group has to work against the prevailing, ongoing racism. We have had in America a golden opportunity to do that.

□ 1845

What makes America great is that it provides the room, it provides the leeway, to fight; and we have fought and accomplished a great deal, despite the racism.

I would like to look forward to the day when an American President could say that he wants to apologize for slavery and receive the overwhelming support of the American people. Unfortunately, when President Clinton implied that he might want to do that in the last year of his term, he was criticized; and there was a poll taken and the majority of white Americans, 70 percent, said no, there should be no apology for slavery.

We can apologize for the Holocaust. The Germans can apologize for the Holocaust, and the Japanese asked to apologize to the Chinese and Koreans; but there should be no apology for slavery, the majority of American people said.

That is unfortunate, because the opposite of not apologizing is covering up. It does not mean I refuse to apologize; but it means I will cover up, and we will continue to cover it up.

The only way we can break the back of racism and guarantee that racism will not be harmful is to recognize it and jointly, black-white, all minorities, work together to try to alleviate the harsh impact and effect of racism, so everybody in America has an equal opportunity to go forward.

Black History Month is a time to celebrate those positive achievements; it is also a time to remind everybody that we cannot achieve unless we recognize the truth of racism and attempt to combat it.

REQUEST FOR OUT OF ORDER SPECIAL ORDER

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous request to address the House for 5 minutes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FLAKE). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, my understanding from the gentleman's side was that they were, first of all, going to run about a half an hour, but they certainly are entitled to an hour, so I have no objection to that.

But now this is the second 5 minutes, and I would like to know when the speakers are going to end. We have another speaker behind myself, and we would like to stay on schedule. I was assured by the gentleman's side a few moments ago they had one 5-minute request, and now we are into two 5-minute additional requests. They have had an hour.

I guess I would just like to know from the gentleman's side, how much longer it is going to continue.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MCINNIS. I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I am sorry if there was a misunderstanding. We thought the gentleman was advised there would be two speakers. However, the gentleman certainly has the right to object.