

2025 -- H 5287

LC000732

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

HOUSE RESOLUTION

PROCLAIMING FEBRUARY OF 2025, AS "BLACK HISTORY MONTH" IN THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

Introduced By: Representatives Hull, Abney, Biah, Chippendale, Morales, Felix, Shekarchi, Blazejewski, Batista, and Phillips

Date Introduced: February 04, 2025

Referred To: House read and passed

1 WHEREAS, Throughout the history of the United States of America, truly significant
2 African American contributions to the economy, social growth, sciences, and arts in this great
3 nation have all too often been ignored. In recognition of this plethora of major accomplishments
4 made by men and women of African ancestry, the month of February is celebrated as "Black
5 History Month" across the nation; and

6 WHEREAS, It is also vital to understand that every day of every month of every year in
7 the history of our country, significant and historical contributions have been made by African
8 Americans; and

9 WHEREAS, African Americans were first brought to America forcibly. They were
10 enslaved, faced inhuman cruelty, and were subjected to injustices beyond understanding. Families
11 were torn apart, lynching went unpunished, and segregation and denial of fundamental
12 constitutional rights and protections went on for decades; and

13 WHEREAS, Though these men and women suffered immense tragedies and social
14 inequalities, they also persevered, and their triumphs and contributions to the economic, artistic,
15 literary, scientific, and technological advancement of our country are significant and momentous;
16 and

17 WHEREAS, African Americans have been an integral part of Rhode Island's social,
18 political, and economic development from its beginning as a British colony, to its inclusion in the
19 formation of the United States, to the rich diversity of today's Ocean State; and

1 WHEREAS, From the initial shots fired in the struggle for American Independence, to
2 the participation of the Rhode Island 1st Black Regiment in the Battle of Newport, to the garrisons
3 of the Rhode Island 14th Heavy Artillery Regiment (Colored) in 1863, Americans of African
4 descent have responded to the call of duty; and

5 WHEREAS, In recognition of the numerous positive and patriotic contributions of
6 African American Rhode Islanders in the United States military, we honor their legacy of
7 bravery, honor, and sacrifice. From the earliest recordation of Black History in our state,
8 including those of slaves, former slaves, and free men, African Americans have served with pride
9 to protect our vital interests and provide for our common defense; and

10 WHEREAS, Structures in the City of Newport, such as the Brick Market, later used as
11 the town hall and theater; the Old Colony House, which at one time served Rhode Island as its
12 capitol; and the oldest library in America, the Redwood Library, stand as lasting and beautiful
13 tributes to the African Americans who lived in our state and played a major role in the
14 construction of these magnificent historic structures; and

15 WHEREAS, Many African Americans have made enormous and significant contributions
16 to our nation, from Dr. Martin Luther King, whose eloquent and courageous actions on behalf of
17 freedom and liberty for all earned him the Nobel Peace Prize and started our nation on the long
18 and all-too-slow path towards equality for all, and President Barack Obama our nation's first
19 African American President, who continued and expanded upon Dr. King's vision through his
20 support for expanding healthcare access for everyone, diversified the federal bureaucracy,
21 strengthened women's right to fair pay, and protected LGBTQ citizens from employment
22 discrimination; and

23 WHEREAS, Other African Americans who have contributed much to our nation's
24 vibrancy and success include Maya Angelou, the noted poet, civil rights activist, and recipient of
25 the Spingarn Medal from the NAACP and the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President
26 Barack Obama, famed novelist James Baldwin, famous inventor George Washington Carver,
27 Civil Rights activist and educator Mary McLeod Bethune, Congresswoman Shirley Chisolm, the
28 first African American to run for President of the United States, noted author and abolitionist
29 Frederick Douglass, Doctor Charles Drew, whose research and work on plasma literally saved
30 millions of lives, famous sociologist, writer and activist W.E.B. Du Bois, noted jazz composer
31 and bandleader Duke Ellington, Civil Rights activist Jesse Jackson, film director Spike Lee,
32 famed actors Sidney Poitier and Denzel Washington, the great Hall of Fame baseball player
33 Jackie Robinson, who courageously faced down death threats to integrate Major League Baseball,
34 famous boxers and American heroes Joe Louis and Muhammed Ali, Supreme Court Justices

1 Thurgood Marshall, who, as a lawyer, won the famous Brown v. Board of Education public
2 school desegregation case before the United States Supreme Court, and Ketanji Brown Jackson,
3 the first African American woman to be appointed to the Supreme Court, photographer Gordon
4 Parks, Olympic heroes Jesse Owens and Rafer Johnson, Abolition activists Sojourner Truth and
5 Harriet Tubman, and noted educator, Civil Rights activist Booker T. Washington, golf legend
6 Tiger Woods, tennis superstars Serena and Venus Williams and numerous other African
7 Americans; and

8 WHEREAS, The United States and particularly the State of Rhode Island owe a debt of
9 gratitude to our African American citizens and their forefathers, whose documented achievements
10 have too long gone unrecognized; and

11 WHEREAS, The 2025 Black History month theme is "African Americans and Labor",
12 will focus on the many ways that work, all kinds of work, free and unfree, skilled and unskilled,
13 voluntary and vocational, have intersected with the collective experiences of Black people. From
14 the agricultural labor of enslaved Africans to the importance of vocational training, self-help
15 strategies and entrepreneurship in Black communities, as well as the important role organized
16 labor played in fighting both economic and social injustice. The 2025 Black History month
17 theme, "African Americans and Labor", sets out to highlight and celebrate the potent impact of
18 this work; now, therefore be it

19 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island hereby
20 proudly proclaims February as "Black History Month", and furthermore recognizes and applauds
21 the sacrifices and myriad contributions made by African American men and women throughout
22 this great nation's history; and be it further

23 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
24 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society.

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