

Statement of Congressman Danny K. Davis on African American History Month

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February 23, 2009

Mr. Speaker, as all of us know, February is African American History Month, and I rise to pay tribute to some of the outstanding individuals in the community that I live and represent for the tremendous services that they have provided.

I take a great deal of pride in the fact that I represent what I like to call 11 of the most activated communities in America. As a matter of fact, I have 35 advisory groups who advise me on everything that there is pretty much to be advised on.

But two of the chairs I'd like to point out are the education chair, Dr. Lurrerta Hurt, who developed an extensive community education program and approach; and, of course, she put on a great black history program at the Greater Gallery Baptist Church 2 weeks ago. I also would like to acknowledge the tremendous work of Ms. Anetta Wilson, who chaired our Child Welfare Advisory Group. And she and her organization just opened last week an intergenerational living facility that will house 54 families of grandparents, grandchildren, young children, older adult, where grandparents and grandchildren can live in the same environment and interact with each other.

I also want to commend Reverend Walter Bauldrich, and the Coppin A.M.E. Church because on the other side of my district in what we call the south side--I mean, we divide Chicago up into sides and areas. Anetta Wilson opened hers on the west side. But the other part of my district, which happens to be one of the most diverse in America, is on the south side. And Coppin A.M.E. Church opened a 74-unit development for the same purpose, intergenerational living.

So when I talk about the high level of activism, and especially in the last few weeks around just the whole question of the celebration of African American history, I was fortunate to spend part of yesterday at the Ascension Catholic Church in Oak Park, Illinois, for their African American history celebration; at the Herman Avenue Baptist Church in downtown Chicago yesterday afternoon for their African American history; then, of course, yesterday the Village of Bellwood had their large celebration that they do every year.

Much of the focus of some of these celebrations has been taking a look at the Reconstruction Period in history, which is a period that many people, quite frankly, don't know much about. For example, there are African Americans who don't know that there were 22 Members of Congress during the Reconstruction Period who were African American--that is before 1900. During the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s, there were 20 Members of the House. There were two Members of the Senate.

And of course, there was another Member from Louisiana who was elected to both the House and the Senate, P.B.S. Pinchback, but was never seated. As a matter of fact, Governor Pinchback was actually the Governor of Louisiana during this period. He didn't serve that long, but nevertheless, he was the governor.

So history becomes the melding together of many thoughts, ideas, actions not of one group of people but of all of the groupings of people who have come to this Nation seeking a better life, seeking something that they did not have. And the fact that America has become the most diverse country is a tribute to all of us.

So as we celebrate African American history, we celebrate the history of America.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.