

A RESOLUTION celebrating February as Black History Month and honoring Dr. Carolyn Dupont.

WHEREAS, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, who worked in the Kentucky coal mines as a child and was the son of former slaves, enrolled in high school at the age of 20 and went on to graduate from Berea College, receive his master's degree from the University of Chicago, and earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University where he was one of the first scholars to study African-American history; and

WHEREAS, in 1926, Dr. Woodson proposed and launched a weeklong celebration of the individuals and occasions having a significant impact on African-American history in America, and has since been known as the "Father of Black History"; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Woodson chose the month of February to conduct this commemoration because the birthdays of two men whose actions have significantly affected African-Americans in this country—Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln—were both in February; and

WHEREAS, in 1976, the commemoration was extended from a weeklong event to the entire month of February; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of this great Commonwealth should recommit themselves, not only in February but throughout the year, to an ideal America where equality and justice will always prevail, and to the principles of love, wisdom, and compassion toward one another; and

WHEREAS, to that end, in August 2015 Dr. Carolyn Dupont, associate professor of history at Eastern Kentucky University, and 71 other professional historians from across this Commonwealth signed a letter urging the removal of the Jefferson Davis statue from Kentucky's Capitol Rotunda; and

WHEREAS, in their letter, these 72 historians noted that the statue "offers a visceral and potent miseducation" and that "virtually no respected professional historians embrace" the view that Jefferson Davis was a hero, which the statue unambiguously

supports. The statue, the historians contend, "winks at the [Civil War] as a charming national fistfight, rather than a national tragedy of the most profound proportions"; and

WHEREAS, it is the hope of the members of this chamber that the voices of Dr. Carolyn Dupont and these 72 esteemed historians will be heeded by the citizens of this Commonwealth and those lawmakers who have decided that the Jefferson Davis statue should remain in the Rotunda. It is the historians' belief, and the belief of so many Kentuckians, that if the statue is not removed then "our citizens will continue to carry the heavy burden of mistaken assumptions" and that merely adding a plaque alongside the statue for educational context will not "undo the more powerful falsehoods" it conveys; and

WHEREAS, it is also hoped that Kentuckians will give merit to the opinions of these 72 historians not only because of their educational distinction but also because they, like all of us in this Commonwealth, strive for equality and justice in both our daily lives and also in the symbology on display in our state capital. These lauded historians "believe that history must stay alive" because they have "dedicated [their] lives to uncovering, preserving, and teaching the past. However, removing the Davis statue would not 'erase history'; it would rather make room to elevate in his place a more deserving Kentuckian";

NOW, THEREFORE,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:

➔Section 1. The members of the House of Representatives hereby celebrate February as Black History Month and acknowledge the voices of those 72 historians who signed the letter urging the removal of the Jefferson Davis statue from the Capitol Rotunda.

➔Section 2. When the House of Representatives adjourns this day, it does so in honor of Black History Month and in rightful recognition of those historians whose courage and vision are paramount in the creation of a more equal, just, and historically

fair depiction of Kentucky's past.

➔Section 3. The Clerk of the House of Representatives is directed to transmit a copy of this Resolution to Representative Darryl T. Owens.