



## 2025 Assembly Joint Resolution 5

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### ENROLLED JOINT RESOLUTION

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**Relating to:** proclaiming February 2025 as Black History Month.

Whereas, Black History Month provides a deliberate opportunity to reflect on the common humanity underlying all people and to raise awareness and foster respect for the heritage and contributions of people of African descent; and

Whereas, this year marks over 400 years since the arrival of enslaved Africans in Virginia. The existence of Africans in North America can be traced back to 1525, and through 1866 the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade is estimated to have ensnared more than 12 million African people, with an estimated 10 million surviving the unconscionable Middle Passage, landing in North America, the Caribbean, and South America; and

Whereas, Wisconsin history first references African descendants in a speech given in 1725 by a chief of the Illinois Indians, in which he said, "a negro belonging to Monsieur de Boisbriant" at Green Bay; and

Whereas, on February 12, 1926, noted Harvard scholar and historian Dr. Carter G. Woodson founded "Negro History Week," and since then the United States has recognized first Negro History Week and then Black History Month and celebrated the ethnic and racial diversity that enriches and strengthens our nation; and

Whereas, both enslaved and free people of African descent have participated in every aspect of America's effort to secure, protect, and advance the cause of freedom and civil rights, and have stories that are an inspiration to all citizens, that reflect the triumph of the human spirit, and that offer the hopes of everyday people to rise above both prejudice and circumstance and to build lives of dignity; and

Whereas, people of African descent or African Americans have made measurable differences in their respective industries, such as:

1. Elisterine Clayton — a 100-year-old Milwaukee resident who, along with her husband Powell Clayton, was a part of building the historic Halyard Park community. Halyard Park is one of the longest-standing African-American middle class residential neighborhoods within Milwaukee. Elisterine owned and operated a series of grocery stores in underserved communities and ensured that residents had access to healthy food options within their neighborhoods. She was a part of a pioneering group that brought Black-owned banks, medical practices, and businesses to the Bronzeville area.

2. Paul Higginbotham — the first African-American judge to serve on the Wisconsin Court of Appeals. He was appointed to the court by Governor James Doyle in 2003 and was subsequently elected to the court in 2005.

3. Marcia Anderson — a retired senior officer of the United States Army Reserve from Beloit, Wisconsin. The first African-American woman to become a major general in the United States Army Reserve.

4. Dr. William Rogers — a historian and educator, who was an integral part of the formation of the Black Radio Network, was an African studies educator, and made significant contributions to the study of Black life, civil rights, and social justice.

5. Anthony McGahee — a celebrated gospel musician, choir director, and pillar of Milwaukee's artistic and musical community. As the leader of "Anthony McGahee and Praise Motivated," he has spent over 27 years inspiring audiences with soul-stirring performances and a commitment to musical excellence. McGahee is also a proud member of the renowned gospel group "Ricky Dillard and New G." Through his music ministry, he has not only uplifted congregations but also created opportunities for local artists, mentored emerging talent, and brought national attention to Milwaukee's vibrant gospel music scene. His work continues to leave a lasting impact on the city's cultural landscape.

6. Shakita LaGrant-McClain — the executive director of the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), oversees a \$400 million budget and more than 700 employees. She began her tenure with DHHS in 2009 and has held various roles, including program coordinator for the Disability Resource Center. In May 2020, she was appointed interim director of DHHS and the Department on Aging, focusing on improving service accessibility. Her leadership emphasizes racial equity and community connection, exemplified by initiatives like building 120 homes in the King Park area to promote BIPOC homeownership.

7. Victor and Dawn Barnett — the co-executive directors of the Running Rebels Community Organization in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In 1980, at the age of 19, Victor founded Running Rebels to provide local youth with positive alternatives to gang involvement, crime, and violence. He began by organizing basketball games to engage and mentor young people, steering them toward constructive activities. Dawn Barnett joined the organization in 1996 after learning about Victor's work and feeling compelled to contribute. She left her job in restaurant management to become a community organizer with Running Rebels. Dawn and Victor later married and have since worked together to expand the organization's reach and impact. Under their leadership, Running Rebels has grown to serve over 2,500 youth annually, offering programs that include mentoring, education, and community service.

8. Gloria Rogers — a dedicated community leader and advocate in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She has been actively involved in various initiatives aimed at improving the lives of residents in her

community. Gloria's work focuses on promoting social justice, education, and economic development. She has collaborated with local organizations to address issues such as affordable housing, access to quality education, and workforce development. Her commitment to service has made a significant impact on the Milwaukee community, fostering positive change and empowering individuals to reach their full potential.

9. Minnie L. Harmon — a cherished elder in the Milwaukee community, known for her steadfast dedication to service, mentorship, and faith. Throughout her life, Ms. Harmon has been a beacon of wisdom, guiding and inspiring those around her with her kindheartedness and resilience. She has contributed greatly to her community through decades of active involvement in church ministries, local initiatives, and mentorship programs, particularly those supporting youth and families.

10. Dr. Jeanette Mitchell — a passionate developer of leaders in the Greater Milwaukee Community. She founded the African American Leadership Alliance – Milwaukee (AALAM), the African American Leadership Program (AALP), and the Neighborhood Leadership Institute (NLI). She worked for decades in the corporate sector for AT&T, the nonprofit sector for the Helen Bader Foundation (currently Bader Philanthropies), and as an elected official on the Milwaukee School Board, where she served for eight years, including three terms as president.

11. Fred Reed — a key member of the NAACP Youth Council Commandos, Reed was instrumental in the first Black Voter Registration Campaign in Milwaukee. Throughout his distinguished career, he worked with five Wisconsin governors and countless federal, state, and local leaders to advance civil rights, workforce development education, and financial literacy. Notably he has made national history and played several roles such as in shaping the framework for Wisconsin's Americans with Disabilities Act, and he worked for 25 years in the Department of Financial Institutions. Reed has been honored with numerous awards, including the ACLU's Lifetime Achievement Award and the Milwaukee Times Black Excellence Award, for his unwavering dedication to justice, equality, and community empowerment.

12. Anna Mae Robertson, — a pioneering World War II veteran, served in the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, the only all-female African-American unit deployed overseas during the war. Born in Osceola, Arkansas, she enlisted in the Women's Army Corps in 1943 and was stationed in Europe, where her battalion cleared a crucial backlog of mail for soldiers, processing over 17 million pieces in record time. Robertson also worked as a hospital aide while overseas. After returning to the United States in 1946, she lived in Milwaukee, working as a nurse's aide and later as a homemaker for her eight children. For decades, the contributions of the 6888th were overlooked, but in 2022, Robertson was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal alongside her fellow battalion members. Her legacy continues to inspire, especially through her granddaughters, who have followed her nursing path.

13. Dr. Dora L. Clayton-Jones — a pioneering pediatric nurse practitioner and esteemed academic leader who has dedicated over 25 years to improving health care for youth, particularly those with sickle cell disease. She made history as the first African-American pediatric nurse practitioner in Wisconsin to be inducted into the Academy of Nursing and the first to achieve tenure at Marquette University. A passionate advocate for health equity, Dr. Clayton-Jones actively contributes to research through the Delta Research and Educational Foundation's 22 Researchers workgroup and works to eliminate health disparities in underserved communities. Initiated into Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., in 2017, she mentors others and leads by example, creating opportunities for future generations of leaders. Her commitment to service and scholarship,

combined with her dedication to patient care, has earned her numerous accolades and continues to inspire her colleagues and the broader community; now, therefore, be it

***Resolved by the assembly, the senate concurring, That*** the Wisconsin Legislature recognizes February 2025 as Black History Month and extends appreciation to the above-named persons for their contributions to the state of Wisconsin, the country, and their fellow citizens.

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Senator Mary Felzkowski  
President of the Senate

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Representative Robin J. Vos  
Speaker of the Assembly

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Date

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Edward A. Blazel  
Assembly Chief Clerk