

By: Giddings

H.R. No. 2302

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, From the beginning and throughout this proud state's
2 history, blacks have played a role in the discovery, exploration,
3 and development of Texas; and

4 WHEREAS, In 1528, less than 10 years after explorers claimed
5 Texas in the name of King Charles I of Spain, a member of Cabeza de
6 Vaca's expedition named Estevanico became the first black to set
7 foot in what is modern-day Texas; and

8 WHEREAS, Other expeditions that followed also included
9 blacks among their numbers, some of whom were instrumental in the
10 establishment of new settlements in the territory, and by the close
11 of the 18th century, blacks comprised approximately 15 percent of
12 the population in Texas; and

13 WHEREAS, The first blacks had come to Texas from Mexico, but
14 by the early 1800s a wave of immigration from the United States had
15 begun to swell Texas' black population; many of these newcomers
16 came as slaves, but some were able to purchase their freedom and
17 eventually prospered as freemen and established members of their
18 respective communities; on the eve of the Texas Revolution, there
19 were about 3,000 blacks, both freemen and slaves, in Texas; and

20 WHEREAS, Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, blacks
21 played key roles in nearly every aspect of Texas' economic and
22 cultural development, including ranching, one of the pillars not
23 only of the state's economy but of its near-mythic identity; for
24 example, of the estimated 35,000 cowboys that worked the ranches

1 and rode on the epic trail drives of the Old West, between 5,000 and
2 9,000 were black cowboys; and

3 WHEREAS, From the famed Buffalo Soldiers to groundbreaking
4 activists such as Hemann Sweatt to political figures such as
5 Barbara Jordan, many blacks have become icons in the state's long
6 history, and they have left a legacy of courage, pride,
7 self-determination, and noteworthy achievement that continues to
8 inspire and motivate Texans everywhere regardless of ancestry or
9 origin; and

10 WHEREAS, Recognizing the importance of preserving this
11 legacy and the state's multicultural heritage, several Texas
12 universities offer black studies programs, among them Baylor
13 University, Southern Methodist University, the University of
14 Houston, and The University of Texas at Austin; it is noteworthy
15 that all of the black studies programs in the state are offered only
16 at four-year institutions; and

17 WHEREAS, In recent years, however, enrollment at community
18 colleges and junior colleges has been increasing at a greater rate
19 than enrollment at four-year colleges and universities, and more
20 than half of all students in the state attending public
21 institutions of higher education during the 2004-2005 academic year
22 are community college students; and

23 WHEREAS, In light of the growing role that public community
24 colleges are playing in educating the citizens of Texas, it is vital
25 that they expand their offerings to include important programs now
26 available only to students at senior colleges and universities;
27 now, therefore, be it

1 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 79th Texas
2 Legislature hereby urge Texas community colleges to offer an
3 associate's degree with an emphasis on African American/Black
4 Studies.