

By: Lucio III

H.R. No. 835

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, For more than four decades, African American members
2 of the United States military served bravely and with distinction
3 in the face of racism and neglect while stationed at Fort Brown in
4 Brownsville, on the Texas-Mexico border; and

5 WHEREAS, African Americans were prohibited by law from
6 serving in this nation's armed forces until the second year of the
7 Civil War, when the Militia Act of 1862 allowed them to join the
8 army; this led to the formation of regiments known, in the language
9 of the time, as United States Colored Troops (USCT); by the end of
10 the war, the USCT included more than 123,000 men, approximately 10
11 percent of the Union army; and

12 WHEREAS, In 1864, a Union force that was 75 percent black took
13 control of Fort Brown, which guarded the U.S. border along the lower
14 Rio Grande; the black troops were ordered to camp on low, swampy
15 land away from the white troops, and they were given inferior
16 uniforms, clothing, equipment, and food; many of them died as a
17 result of their deplorable circumstances, mostly from diseases such
18 as cholera, malaria, and yellow fever; and

19 WHEREAS, In 1866, members of the USCT were allowed to join the
20 regular army, and these "Buffalo Soldiers" continued to serve at
21 Fort Brown until the turn of the century, policing the border,
22 protecting stagecoach routes, and pursuing bandits and Indian
23 raiders; they were also tasked with jobs, such as road building,
24 that were not assigned to white soldiers, and they had to deal with

1 a white population that bitterly resented the presence of black
2 troops in their community; and

3 WHEREAS, In 1899, the black soldiers of the 25th Infantry
4 Regiment displayed exceptional valor at the Battle of San Juan Hill
5 during the Spanish-American War, but when members of the same unit
6 were posted to Fort Brown in 1906, they were met with animosity by
7 the local community; white residents of Brownsville dressed up in
8 blackface and shot up the town, and the black soldiers were blamed;
9 as a result of the infamous "Brownsville Raid," the members of the
10 25th were cashiered, and it wasn't until 1972 that they were
11 posthumously exonerated; in 1909, the national military cemetery at
12 Brownsville was abandoned, and the soldiers who had been interred
13 there, most of whom were black, were reburied in a mass grave in
14 Louisiana; Fort Brown was decommissioned after World War II; and

15 WHEREAS, Over the course of 42 years, African American troops
16 endured disease, inadequate resources, unhealthy living
17 conditions, and the ferocious hostility of the community they had
18 sworn to defend, and yet despite those hardships, they stood guard
19 along our nation's southern border and served with courage,
20 dedication, and fortitude; now, therefore, be it

21 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 85th Texas
22 Legislature hereby express its gratitude for the service of the
23 United States Colored Troops and the Buffalo Soldiers who were
24 stationed at Fort Brown from 1864 to 1906 and pay tribute to their
25 determination and resolve.