

Commonwealth of Kentucky

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

71st Legislative District
PO Box 2153
Berea, KY 40403



Capitol Annex, Room 316
Frankfort, KY 40601
(502) 564-8100, Ext. 651
email: travis.brenda@lrc.ky.gov

R. Travis Brenda
State Representative

Recognition of Berea College during Black History Month, February 13, 2019

I rise today to celebrate Black History Month. In Kentucky, we are blessed with many treasures. One of those treasures is my alma mater, Berea College. Berea College was founded in 1855 by Rev. John G. Fee, an abolitionist, with the purpose to educate all students, male and female, black and white, together. The motto for Berea comes from Acts 17:26; God hath made of one blood ALL peoples of the earth.

Berea College has faced some obstacles throughout the years. Fee and the teachers were forced by pro-slavery supporters to leave Berea in 1859. After the Civil War, Fee returned to Berea in 1866 with 96 African American students and 91 white students.

Last week, the Gentleman from Jefferson 42 introduced a House Resolution honoring the work of Carter G. Woodson, a 1903 graduate of Berea College. The Center for Interracial Education at Berea College bears the name of Carter G. Woodson, and has the mission "to promote social and cultural change through the transformative power of education that recognizes the enhancing value of all peoples of the earth."

In 1904, the legislative body that we now occupy passed a piece of legislation referred to as "The Day Law", which prohibited students of color from being educated alongside white students, or at a branch of the school within 25 miles of each other. Berea College was the only school in Kentucky at the time to fit the description for this legislation.

Berea College challenged the ruling all of the way to the United States Supreme Court, ultimately losing the battle in 1908. This loss did not deter the trustees of Berea College. Instead, they worked to establish the Lincoln Institute on a 444 acre farm in Shelby County in order to provide the college education for the African American students. The Lincoln Institute opened its doors in 1912, and remained open until 1966.

In 1954, the U. S. Supreme Court rendered its decision in Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka. This decision resulted in The Day Law becoming illegal, and allowed Berea College to once again educate black and white students together.

In 1965, a group of students from Berea College joined Martin Luther King, Jr. in the 54 mile march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. Fifty years later, another group from Berea College returned to Selma to join the commemoration of the march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

Joining us today in the Gallery, representing Berea College, are Kim Brown, Virgil Burnside, Jackie Collier, Tim Jordan, and Alicestyne Turley.

I ask that the members of the House join me today in honoring the work and legacy of Berea College, and their efforts to improve the education of countless African American students as we celebrate Black History Month.