

FEBRUARY 1, 2002

STATEMENT OF U.S. REPRESENTATIVE SCHAKOWSKY IN HONOR OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH

CHICAGO, IL - Black History Month is our opportunity as a nation to celebrate the rich traditions, the heroes, and the accomplishments of the African American community. This is a time for all of us to shine a bright light on the great contributions made by African Americans to our community. It is also a time for us to recommit ourselves to eliminating discrimination wherever and whenever it occurs.

This year's celebration carries a special meaning. After September 11, we showed the world that we are proud of our diversity, that we are proud of our religious tolerance, and that we are proud of our sense of community. During this month of pride and celebration of the richness of the African American tradition and culture and activism, let us show the world that we are also a nation of action.

Too many members of the African American community are still confronted with discrimination in their daily lives, with economic redlining, and with inadequate opportunities to reach their full potential. Too many live in poverty, without the means to climb up the economic ladder. We must make a national commitment to ending racial disparities and inequalities in access to quality health care, affordable housing, and quality education.

As the events of November 2000 so dramatically demonstrated, we must also make a national commitment to tearing down electoral and voting barriers that disproportionately affect communities of color and make full participation in our democracy so difficult. I am proud to be a member of the Democratic Caucus Special Committee on Election Reform, chaired by Representative Maxine Waters in working for meaningful election reform so that no citizen will be turned away, shut out, or discriminated against on election day.

This month and every month, we must make social and economic justice our priority so that each person can fulfill the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by fully realizing the American dream. As we celebrate Black History Month, we should all commit ourselves to achieving that goal.