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Senate

HONORING THE LEGACY OF STORER COLLEGE

Mr. President, I rise today to honor Storer College, a historic educational establishment that truly left a significant imprint on the history of our state and our nation.

Located in West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle in beautiful Harpers Ferry, the legacy of Storer College began following the Civil War. It was established by the Reverend Dr. Nathan Cook Brackett and philanthropist John Storer of Sanford, Maine whose goals were to create a school that was open and accepting of all students regardless of gender, race or religion.

Particularly now, during Black History Month, it is fitting to recognize such a tremendously important endeavor as Storer College because it had such a significant impact on civil rights in the decades following the Civil War. This educational institution was a constant refuge for former slaves who found themselves without the necessary skillsets to lead marketable lives. Attendees were taught how to read and write, but they also gained a sense of purpose.

John Brown's raid is largely considered the motivation for the school's creation in Jefferson County, as the 1859 rebellion liberated countless African Americans in the area. Frederick Douglas, also a trustee of Storer College, once spoke at the school about John Brown and the raid's significance.

On October 2, 1867, "Storer Normal School" opened its doors with two teachers and 19 attending students. Under the leadership of Henry T.

McDonald, Storer converted into a college in 1938.

Storer College set the groundwork for integrated education across the rest of the nation. For many years, it was the only school that allowed African Americans to acquire an education past elementary school.

By the end of the 19th century, our nation faced another battle marked with Jim Crow laws and legal segregation. To combat these injustices, many brilliant leaders in the African American community created the Niagra Movement, a precursor to the NAACP. The second meeting of the Niagra Movement was held at Storer College in 1906. It was supported by such leaders as W.E.B. Du Bois, William Monroe Trotter and Booker T. Washington.

In 1954, legal segregation came to an end with the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. The Board of Education*. This decision, while revolutionary across our nation, also brought an end to federal and state funding for Storer College, and regrettably, its doors closed a year later.

Today, though no longer a learning institution, the National Park Service continues the college's mission to welcome individuals of all backgrounds by using the campus as a training facility. It continues to serve as a staunch reminder of triumph over injustice.

As we reflect on Storer's history, it is important that we continue to pass down this legacy for future generations because it remains relevant in so many ways to this day.