July 30, 2019

Position Paper

Organization: National Blacks In Government, Inc.

Committee: National Legislative Review

Topic: Why Harriet Tubman’s Legacy is Important

National Blacks In Government, Inc. was asked to respond to questions on, “Why is it important to ensure that Harriet Tubman’s legacy is still discussed and honored by Americans?” For our organization, National Blacks In Government, Inc. or BIG, it speaks to the very core of what we believe. It is critical that current as well as future generations develop a deeper and broader understanding of our collective national story. Remember, Black History is more than moments to be celebrated in February. So, Araminta “Minty” Ross or Harriett Tubman as she is more widely known, leaves us a legacy that not only clearly reflects the important role of women, but more importantly, women of color, have played in our nation’s history. Her heroism and military prowess reflect the values America was founded upon and very clearly demonstrate the power of an individual to make a difference.

She is an icon of freedom; a fearless crusader; a legend in her own time. As Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer stated, “Harriet Tubman was an extraordinary American ...whose story deserves to be shared with current and future generations. She deserves to be honored for her bravery, compassion, and service to the United States.” Her legacy is pivotal if we are to understand our own stories of what makes us who we are when we think BIG! In line with the goals and objectives of Blacks In Government, Harriett Tubman, believed in and fought courageously for equality. We are stewards of this world, and we have a calling on our lives to leave it better
What are the organization’s thoughts on Congresswoman Maloney of New York’s efforts to have a statue of Tubman added to the Capitol through the Honoring Harriet Tubman Act? Does the organization believe it is possible to see the legislation move forward under the President Donald Trump administration?

For the first part of your question, what does BIG think about the legislation to place a statue of Harriet Tubman in the National Statuary Hall of the United States Capitol? Well, as the primary sponsor of the Honoring Harriet Tubman Act Congresswoman Maloney gave her rationale for doing so. She believes that based upon Harriet Tubman’s legacy “as a visionary, a leader, and a paragon of freedom... her invaluable contributions to the United States should be formally and permanently recognized in the U.S. Capitol”. And just as Congressmen Elijah E. Cummings and John Katko have introduced legislation to redesign the $20-dollar bill with her image on the front; Blacks In Government also pays homage to her courage, conviction and commitment to equality. Yes, we know that the Harriet Tubman Memorial affectionately called “Swing Low” currently exists in Harlem. It is a monument full of symbolism. The bronze and Tubman strides forward, the “roots of slavery” weigh her down; her skirt features images that represent passengers on the railroad, some inspired by West African “passport masks”; the icons around the base of the memorial alternately reference moments in the abolitionist’s life and those traditional quilting symbols. We can only assume that the proposed monument the United States Capitol would truly capture her spirit while “honoring her role in making America a freer and more equal society.” So, to more concisely answer your question, who could better represent all that BIG stands for? As Frederick Douglass once said to Harriett Tubman, “…I know of no one who has willingly encountered more perils and hardship to serve an enslaved people than you have.” That so succinctly parallels the vision and mission of Blacks In Government. It is our belief that we must use our collective strength as an organization to promote equity and equality in all aspects of American life: That’s why thinking BIG is so important! Is it possible to see the legislation move forward under the current administration? That depends upon how many of us can think BIG. A vision delayed is not a vision denied! Especially, when you think BIG and do what BIG has done. You write the vision and make it plain!

Harriet Tubman was extraordinary and courageous black woman who embodied America’s ideals. She was indeed a Drum Major for freedom and justice and her legacy should live on through honorary recognitions. As Representative Cummings, recently said in a statement, “[We] must reflect the important role women, and especially women of color, have played in our nation’s history.” She was indeed a Drum Major for freedom and justice and her legacy should live on through honorary recognition at every level of government, libraries, public schools. And just like the membership of Blacks In Government, Harriet Tubman represents bravery, patriotism and a commitment to liberty, justice and equality. So, supporting Harriet Tubman’s gift to America and the world, would require Congress to do as she did; recognize that ALL men and women have certain inalienable rights.

Blacks In Government cited in article that appeared in the Times Union.

National Legislative Review Chair, Dr. Charles Horne,
Email: mailto:tristar89@hotmail.com