

Commissioner Sue Gunzburger Broward County Commission, District 6

Black History Month is celebrated in February and this year the celebration takes on new significance as U.S. history is made with the inauguration our country's first African-American President.

Whether you agree or disagree with President Barack Obama's policies or decisions, his election to the highest office in the land has provided inspiration for African-Americans and people of all races and ethnicities who have experienced a history of oppression, segregation and discrimination.

There was a time, in our not too distant past when Broward County regrettably shared in that history. Last year I won approval from the Broward County Commission to have a historic heritage sign placed at John U. Lloyd Beach State Park marking its historical significance as the County's beach for African-American residents. During segregation, this area was referred to as "colored beach." Blacks had to take a ferry - which only operated on certain holidays - to reach it until a road was later constructed in the early 1960s. I earmarked up to \$2500 from my discretionary commission fund to have a historical marker located at the park so that this time in our past is not forgotten or repeated.

The history of Broward County is a patchwork of cultures that include the original Florida natives, the Seminole Indians, and a mixture of Native Americans from various tribes as well as some escaped slaves. Eventually these people made peace with other settlers who arrived to tame the wilderness of a new frontier. Those settlers included Blacks from North and South Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana, other parts of Florida, and the Bahamas, as well as Europeans.

Since 1990, Broward County has risen from the 16th to the third most racially diverse county in Florida. Approximately 21 percent of the population is African American, including a large number of individuals who immigrated from Haiti, Jamaica, and other parts of the Caribbean, as well as Central and South America.

Black heritage and history can be found in a number of neighborhoods. In Hollywood, there are the communities of Liberia and Washington Park, where cultural roots abound.

Broward's modern day cultural progress is showcased with the African-American Research Library and Cultural Center, one of four in the United States. Broward County's Central Regional Park is the largest regional county park and features the first international cricket venue in the United States. Cricket is a popular sport around the world and well known in the Caribbean.

Broward County's libraries and parks feature a number of events and celebrations during Black History Month. Please check our website at www.broward.org for updated information and join in the celebration!

If you have any questions, comments or concerns please feel free to contact my office at (954) 357-7006 or you can reach me by e-mail at sgunzburger@broward.org