

H. Res. 231

In the House of Representatives, U.S.,

May 5, 2005.

Whereas Jimmy “Wink” Winkfield was born on April 12th, 1882 in Chilesburg, Kentucky, the youngest of 17 in a family of sharecroppers;

Whereas Wink was born in an era when African American jockeys dominated the sport of horse racing, to the extent that African American riders won 15 of the first 28 Kentucky Derbies and in the first Kentucky Derby in 1875, 13 of the 15 jockeys were African American;

Whereas the African American jockey Oliver Lewis won the first Derby by two lengths, and the African American jockey Alonzo “Lonnie” Clayton, at age 15, is the youngest rider ever to win the Derby;

Whereas Wink worked by shining shoes, moved up as a stable hand, then as an exercise rider, and rode his first race at the age of 16;

Whereas at the age of 22, Wink won back-to-back Kentucky Derbies in 1901 (on His Eminence) and 1902 (on Alan-A-Dale), and placed second in 1903 (on Early);

Whereas Wink is one of only 4 jockeys ever to accomplish this back-to-back feat, and he was the last African American jockey to win the Kentucky Derby;

Whereas during his career Wink was known as king of the Chicago race tracks;

Whereas unfortunately, segregation eventually forced African American jockeys off the race track and often into exile;

Whereas Wink left the United States by buying a steamer ticket to Europe and settled down in Czarist Russia, where he became a wealthy and dominant athlete in Russia's national sport;

Whereas Wink went on to win the Russian national riding title an unheard of 3 times, won the Moscow Derby twice, the Russian Derby three times, the Grand Prix de Baden (in Germany), the Poland Derby twice, and the Grand Prix de la Republique (in France);

Whereas the Bolshevik Communist Revolution in 1917 forced Wink to flee Russia, and he led 200 jockeys, trainers, and owners over treacherous mountain terrain into Poland;

Whereas Wink eventually settled down in France and retired in 1930 after accumulating 2,600 racing victories in 10 countries, and turned to raising and training horses on his farm outside of Paris;

Whereas in 1940, when the Nazis invaded France and commandeered his stables for their own horses, Wink defended himself and his farm with a pitchfork, only to eventually flee Nazi-occupied territory;

Whereas after decades of exile, Wink returned to the United States one last time in 1961, 60 years after winning his first Kentucky Derby, when he was invited to a pre-Kentucky Derby banquet at the historic Brown Hotel in Louisville as a 2-time winner of the Derby;

Whereas Wink and his daughter Lillian were denied entrance through the front door, but after a long delay were eventually admitted, and spent most of the evening with a white jockey named Roscoe Goose, an ex-competitor from their own Kentucky Derby days 60 years earlier, who sat with Wink for the evening and for the Derby the following afternoon;

Whereas Wink returned to his home in Paris, where he died in 1974 at the age of 94 still homesick for the Kentucky bluegrass of his boyhood, his death virtually unnoticed in the United States; and

Whereas in 2003, Wink was admitted to the National Racing Hall of Fame and joined two other African American Hall of Fame jockeys, 3-time Kentucky Derby winner Isaac Murphy and 2-time winner Willie Simms: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) celebrates the remarkable life and accomplishments of one of the truly great American athletes, Jimmy “Wink” Winkfield, who continuously overcame racism and other significant obstacles during his lifetime; and

(2) recognizes and celebrates the significant contributions and excellence of African American jockeys

and trainers in the sport of horse racing and in the history of the Kentucky Derby.

Attest:

Clerk.