

Each February we take the opportunity to stop and remember the struggles and perseverance of African American leaders throughout history. As Secretary of State, I especially appreciate the fight for the basic right to vote. This right and privilege that many people take for granted now was fought for and earned by the suffering and blood of many dedicated men and women.

Throughout the year, but particularly in February, it is important to take time to recognize the role African American leaders have played in Kentucky history. Leaders such as Georgia Davis Powers who was not only an active participant in political campaigns and the civil rights struggle, but also the first African American and the first woman to serve in the Kentucky State Senate. Leaders such as this should be celebrated in Kentucky. She changed not only what is possible in this country, but she also provides an excellent living role model for future leaders.

This year, I encourage civics and history teachers, parents, and others to share with young Kentuckians their memories and the lessons of the civil rights movement that took place not so very long ago. It is in this way that we can help ensure tomorrow's leaders understand the struggles and successes of our past as they look to make a difference in the future.

As part of the Capitol's Black History month celebration, the Governor, leadership of the General Assembly, my fellow constitutional officers, and I welcomed the Rev. Kevin Cosby to the rotunda. Rev. Cosby used that celebration to encourage us all to "be the best me I can be." This message applies to everyone regardless of race, sex, or religion. When we strive to be the best person that we are capable of, we help to make our communities and this Commonwealth a better place. We teach our children by example. So I urge everyone to lead by example, step up, celebrate diversity, and encourage the future of Kentucky through civic engagement and participation for everyone. And most importantly, to exercise your right – and your responsibility – to vote.