

Tuskegee Airmen

Speech delivered by Rep. Barbara Boyd, Ohio House of Representatives District 9 on February 9th, 2010 at the Ohio Statehouse

Ohio is a state of milestones. We were the first in flight, first on the Moon. We had the first telephone, first traffic light. But today I am here to shed light on a dark pocket of history that I invite you to share with me today. Because after all, the honoring of the Tuskegee Airmen here today in Ohio's Statehouse is history itself. I believe strongly that we are the person we are today because of our rich history that has been passed down through family, friends, and society. We can easily forget the hard work that was achieved in the past if we are unaware of the history that goes hand in hand with the achievements of today. If such a significant part of history, like the Tuskegee Airmen, is not passed down accurately, is not some of our rich history missing?

I introduced a bill in the last General Assembly that is now HB 82 in our current assembly that will create a custodial fund to erect a monument for the forgotten Tuskegee Airmen on capitol grounds. But today, we will focus on the rededication and reinstallation of the portrait of Benjamin O. Davis Jr., the first Negro general in the Air Force.

It is inconceivable that our communities know so little about the Tuskegee Airmen, since they have attributed so much to Ohio's and our country's history. But now is the time to combine our histories and collectively celebrate a rich one that honors *all* heroes. This beautiful portrait will serve as a reminder for visitors and legislators alike that Ohio is a state of inclusive greatness—one that does not leave out great moments in history. And it will also serve as a vestibule for future great thinkers, leaders, heroes, and heroines.

Rep. Barbara Boyd, Ohio House of Representatives District 9.