

110TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. RES. 707

Honoring the 50th anniversary of Althea Gibson's championship at Wimbledon and Forest Hills, and honoring the life and legacy of a teacher, daughter, and internationally acclaimed athlete who defied the boundaries of race, class, and gender.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 2, 2007

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida (for himself and Mr. RANGEL) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

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## RESOLUTION

Honoring the 50th anniversary of Althea Gibson's championship at Wimbledon and Forest Hills, and honoring the life and legacy of a teacher, daughter, and internationally acclaimed athlete who defied the boundaries of race, class, and gender.

Whereas 2007 marks the 50th anniversary of Althea Gibson becoming the first African-American to win the United States Championship (now the United States Open) and Wimbledon;

Whereas in 1957, Queen Elizabeth II presented Althea Gibson with the Championship trophy at Wimbledon, and Vice President Richard Nixon presented Althea Gibson

with the United States Championship trophy at Forest Hills;

Whereas when Althea Gibson defended her titles at Wimbledon and the United States Championship in the following year of 1958, she embodied her belief that winning more than once is proof of one's ability;

Whereas Althea Gibson would have been eighty years old this year on August 25, if she had not died at the age of 76 on September, 28, 2003;

Whereas Althea Gibson, the eldest daughter of sharecroppers who moved from South Carolina to Harlem during the Depression, wrote that she always wanted to be somebody, and she won nearly 100 awards for tennis;

Whereas despite poverty and her previous troubles in academics, Althea Gibson received a full athletic scholarship to attend Florida A&M University for basketball, becoming one of the few African-American females to receive this honor at any college in the United States at that time;

Whereas Althea Gibson did not let prejudice, poverty, or consistent threats against her life compromise her drive to become a champion of tennis and an example of human excellence;

Whereas Althea Gibson transcended barriers of class, race, and gender when she entered the world of national competitive tennis, a sphere historically closed to individuals of her race and socioeconomic status;

Whereas Althea Gibson's style and ability defied conventional concepts of the female tennis athlete when she played and won against men and women on nearly every continent;

Whereas in an era in which there were few international celebrities of color, Althea Gibson was an ambassador of sports and exhibited her talents in many countries, including Australia, China, Mexico, Germany, England, Italy, Haiti, and Egypt;

Whereas although Althea Gibson was recognized as the Queen of Tennis, racial prejudice excluded her from lodging in the hotels that were in close proximity to the arenas where she competed;

Whereas in 1950, Althea Gibson's talent and determination engendered discussions about how the integration of tennis was an inevitable occurrence that would benefit tennis as it had benefitted basketball, football, baseball, and boxing;

Whereas on August 28 of that same year, Althea Gibson became the first African-American to compete at the National Open in Forest Hills;

Whereas Althea Gibson was not only the first African-American to win the championship trophy at Wimbledon, but 6 years before that victory, she was the first African-American to compete at Wimbledon;

Whereas Althea Gibson combated racial prejudice when she competed and won on tennis courts that were previously segregated;

Whereas Althea Gibson's athletic prowess was not limited to tennis;

Whereas during the same year as the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a law that outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, Althea Gibson became the first African-American to become a Ladies Professional Golf Association card carrier;

Whereas although Althea Gibson was a champion of tennis, she was also an actress, musician, and teacher, the quintessential Renaissance woman;

Whereas Althea Gibson risked her salary when she refused to adopt a dialect in her portrayal of a Civil War maid in the 1959 film *The Horses' Soldiers* because she felt that it compromised her dignity and the dignity of the African-American community;

Whereas in 1971, Althea Gibson became the first African-American to be inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame, the only African-American woman of the 200 athletes who have received this honor from its creation in 1955 until the present year of 2007;

Whereas Althea Gibson was 1 of the first 6 people to be inducted into the International Women's Sports Hall of Fame on September 16, 1980, an honor shared by such pioneers as Amelia Earhart;

Whereas, in January 1991, Althea became the first woman to receive the Theodore Roosevelt Award, the highest honor awarded by the National Collegiate Athletic Association for "symbolizing the best qualities of competitive excellence and good sportsmanship, and for her significant contribution to expanding opportunities for women and minorities through sports";

Whereas Althea Gibson is a universal inspiration who received numerous accolades and endured numerous humiliations, and despite the fact that she has been largely forgotten, she undoubtedly made great strides for those persons of color who sought to coach or play in professional sports; and

Whereas the Althea Gibson Foundation was established to support underprivileged youth in their drive to succeed in golf, tennis, and the classroom, and to ensure that Althea Gibson's legacy of excellence, tenacity, and dedication lives on: Now, therefore, be it

1       *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2               (1) honors the 50-year anniversary of Althea  
3       Gibson becoming the first African-American to win  
4       at Wimbledon and the United States Championship  
5       at Forest Hills;

6               (2) encourages the support of the Althea Gib-  
7       son Foundation and other organizations that sup-  
8       port under-privileged youth in their educational aspi-  
9       rations and athletic pursuits in the areas of tennis  
10      and golf; and

11              (3) encourages the preservation of the memory,  
12      legacy, and well-being of athletes that were pioneers  
13      in their time and who served as inspirations for suc-  
14      ceeding generations.

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