

May 8,2019

House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Rob Bishop:

My name is Marcus Ewell. Shortly after returning from a two-year mission to Madagascar, I was asked to assist in producing “Discovery Road” documentaries along the Mormon Trail. Three shows for UEN (the Utah Education Network) and other public television stations resulted from this filming trip. We told the story of courageous disabled people who literally walked their way to Zion; we honored pioneers who were buried along the way. A third show centered on Black Mormon pioneers, and it gave me a whole new perspective about my heritage. My ancestor, William Fletcher Ewell, his wife Mary Lee Bland Ewell, and their children made it to Winter Quarters. William was called to serve in the Mormon Battalion, and shortly after returning to what is now Omaha, Nebraska, he died. Mary and her children were left to make the trek to the Salt Lake Valley alone, but they had one great asset—Mammy Chloe, an African American slave who had nursed Mary from her birth. When Mary cast her lot with William Fletcher Ewell and the Mormons, Mammy Chole joined them and provided the survival skills that enabled the family to make it to the Great Basin. Mammy Chole helped the Ewell family for the rest of her life.

It was an honor to learn more about this amazing African American woman who played such an important part in my family history. Her story helped me understand the tremendous contribution Black Mormon pioneers made in colonizing the West. It is also very personal, because my mother is African American. I am proud of my Black heritage and thank the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area for paying tribute to the pioneers who made us who we are today.

Please support H.R. 1049 to keep our heritage vital and meaningful.

You can view the MPNHA’s Discovery Road documentary about black experience at this link: [Discovery Road – The Mormon Trail – Black Experience \(https://youtu.be/9bLTxgewYjA\)](https://youtu.be/9bLTxgewYjA).

Sincerely,

Marcus Ewell