

'Exceptional human being' Scott honored at Capitol

By [ALLEN PALMERI/associate editor](#)

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JEFFERSON CITY — As a bust of her ancestor, Dred Scott, was unveiled May 9 in the House of Representatives chamber at the State Capitol, Lynne Jackson said she felt happy.

“We definitely have to learn our history so that we can improve our future,” said Jackson, a member of Cross Keys Baptist Church in Florissant and the great-great granddaughter of the African-American slave who was ruled to be less than a person in a controversial 1857 decision by the United States Supreme Court.

“If you don’t learn from the past you’re going to repeat it. Some things will never happen again, but some things that have never happened need to happen. I hope this will be part of people understanding that—just learning.”

Scott was ushered into the Hall of Famous Missourians by the hand of House Speaker Steven Tilley, R-Perryville. Jackson, founder and president of the Dred Scott Heritage Foundation in St. Louis, thanked Tilley and joined him for the formal presentation of the sculpture on the floor of the House. Sculptor E. Spencer Schubert of Kansas City was one of many distinguished guests in attendance.

“It’s important today that we honor this man not only for what he did but more importantly for who he was—for being an exceptional human being who taught us all the invaluable lesson of perseverance,” Tilley said.

“Negroes,” the justices ruled in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, were “beings of an inferior order” who were not afforded any rights under the United States Constitution. Scott and his wife, Harriet, wanted to be free, but justice was denied them in five separate trials over an 11-year period. Dred Scott did eventually gain his freedom and finished his life working as a porter in a St. Louis hotel.

“Because of this tenacity, this courage, this perseverance that they challenged the courts with, we have ... the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments, the abolition of slavery, the right to citizenship, and the right to vote,” Jackson said. “And for that we should all be eternally grateful.”

Tilley noted that Scott’s legacy is tied to the fact that he was “simply a human being.” His goal in life was “to be recognized as a human being who deserved the same rights as white Americans.”

Jackson’s previous characterization of Scott as a type of Joseph (Genesis 39-50) seemed to fit with the May 9 ceremony. In an earlier interview with *The Pathway*, she said that both men endured suffering and emerged victorious.

“Joseph said, ‘This is what’s right and this is what I’m going to do,’” Jackson said. “He didn’t lie. He took the punishment.”

A statue of Dred and Harriet Scott will be dedicated at 3 p.m. June 8 outside the Old Courthouse in St. Louis.