

A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

23-21

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

February 19, 2019

To honor February as Black History Month, to celebrate the legacy, achievements, and contributions of African-Americans in the District of Columbia, and to recognize the important role African-Americans played in American history.

WHEREAS, Black History Month was first proposed by Black educators and the Black United Students at Kent State University in February 1969;

WHEREAS, this tradition born of educational institutions was transformed into a nationally recognized event by President Gerald Ford during the United States Bicentennial celebration in 1976;

WHEREAS, in the words of President Gerald Ford, during the month of February, the nation should “seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history”;

WHEREAS, Washington, D.C. serves as a center of African-American history and culture and the epicenter of fights for abolition, civil rights, and race equity;

WHEREAS, Washington, D.C. has an abhorrent history of slavery and racial segregation;

WHEREAS, Washington, D.C. is home to countless destinations devoted to educating visitors from around the world on Black history and the accomplishments of Black Americans, including the National Museum of African-American History and Culture, National Museum of African Art, Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, Malcolm X Park, Fredrick Douglass National Historic Site, and the African-American Civil War Museum and Memorial;

WHEREAS, Howard University and Howard University School of Law were founded in Washington, D.C. as historically Black institutions that offered high-quality education to African-American students at a time when they were not welcomed at other institutions for higher education;

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WHEREAS, in 1871, Frederick Douglass was appointed by President Ulysses S. Grant to serve on the 11-member DC Legislative Council and served as the Marshall for the District of Columbia, the first African-American confirmed for a presidential appointment by the United States Senate in 1877;

WHEREAS, in 1933, the New Negro Alliance launched the “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work,” campaign to protest discriminatory hiring practices in white-owned businesses in Washington, D.C.;

WHEREAS, in 1943, Mary McLeod Bethune, educator, stateswoman, and philanthropist, operated the National Council of Negro Women in Washington, D.C., and led Franklin Roosevelt’s Black Cabinet advising the administration on issues facing Black people in America;

WHEREAS, in 1957, Washington, D.C.’s African-American population grew to over 50%, making it the first predominantly Black major city in the nation, leading a nationwide trend;

WHEREAS, on August 28, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his renowned “I Have a Dream” speech on the steps at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.;

WHEREAS, Marion Barry, was the first prominent civil rights activist to become mayor of a major American city in 1979 and is referred to as the District of Columbia’s “Mayor for Life”;

WHEREAS, Mary Church Terrell, educator and civil and women’s rights advocate, was the first Black woman appointed to the District of Columbia Board of Education and the founding president of the National Association of Colored Women and a founder of the NAACP;

WHEREAS, Chuck Brown, guitarist, bandleader, singer, and Godfather of Go-Go, developed the District of Columbia’s own musical genre, Go-Go, which continues to influence artists and music across the country today;

WHEREAS, Washington, D.C. is home to Marvin Gaye, Motown legend and one of the most recognized Black voices in music, and Mayor Marion Barry declared April 2 as “Marvin Gaye Jr. Memorial Scholarship Fund Day”;

WHEREAS, Washington, D.C.’s Black residents created a rich culture that all District of Columbia residents experience and appreciate today; and

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WHEREAS, the Council of the District of Columbia is hosting “Reflections and Milestones” at the John A. Wilson Building on February 22, 2019 from 2:15 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. to discuss “What’s Happening to Black DC?” with Master of Ceremonies Lamont King from Thinkertainment.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the “Black History Month Recognition Resolution of 2019”.

Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia recognizes the exceptional contributions of African-Americans to the United States and the District of Columbia and honors those who have shaped District of Columbia history.

Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon the first date of publication in the District of Columbia Register.