

A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

23-241

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

February 4, 2020

To recognize February as Black History Month and to celebrate the legacy, achievements, and contributions of African-Americans in the District of Columbia, and to honor 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 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, 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, DC serves as a center of African-American history and culture and the epicenter of fights for abolition, civil rights, and race equity;

WHEREAS, Washington, DC has an abhorrent history of slavery and racial segregation;

WHEREAS, Washington, DC 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, Frederick 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, DC as historically Black institutions that offered high-quality education to African-American students at a time when they were not welcomed at other institutions of higher education;

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WHEREAS, in 1871, Frederick Douglass was appointed by President Ulysses S. Grant to serve on the eleven-member Legislative Council of the District of Columbia 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 1896, 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, world renowned jazz music pioneer Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington was born in Washington, DC on April 29, 1899 and is honored with 14 Grammy Awards, a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom;

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, DC;

WHEREAS, Marvin Gaye, born in Washington, DC on April 2, 1939 at Freedmen's Hospital, now Howard University Hospital, and educated at Cardozo High School, was honored with a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award and induction into the Rhythm and Blues Music Hall of Fame, the Songwriters Hall of Fame, and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame;

WHEREAS, Chuck Brown, guitarist, bandleader, singer, and Godfather of Go-Go, moved to the District in the 1940s and developed DC's own musical genre, Go-Go, which continues to influence artists and music across the country today and has become a rallying cry to defend Washington, DC's culture;

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

WHEREAS, in 1957, Washington, DC's African-American population grew to over 50 percent, 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 of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC;

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 DC's "Mayor for Life";

ENROLLED ORIGINAL

WHEREAS, Washington, DC's Black residents created a rich culture that permeates life in the District and residents still experience and appreciate today; and

WHEREAS, the Council of the District of Columbia is hosting "African-Americans and the Vote" at the John A. Wilson Building on February 7, 2020 from 1:00 P.M. to 2:30 P.M. with Master of Ceremonies Danella Sealock VanNiel.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, This resolution may be cited as the "Black History Month Recognition Resolution of 2020".

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 history.

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