

Z.T.T.

Councilmember Brandon T. Todd

A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To recognize the Ethiopian community’s heritage and culture, outstanding leadership and contributions to the District of Columbia’s economy and the 9th and U Street business corridor located in the Shaw neighborhood, and its partnership with the African America community in the fight for social justice and civil rights.

WHEREAS, Ethiopia is an independent African country that has never been colonized and stands as a symbol for all African peoples in their struggle for freedom, dignity and respect;

WHEREAS, Ethiopia defended itself from Italian invasion on March 1, 1896 at the Battle of ADWA. The Ethiopia’s landmark victory unified the country and marked the first defeat of a European power by an African Country;

WHEREAS, Ethiopia is widely recognized as a pioneering nation in the decades long struggle against colonialism and an inspiration to people across the Disapora, and other nations around the world;

WHEREAS, Ethiopia’s root can be traced to the origins of civilization and is home to the remains of the first human ancestors found in the bones of Ardi dating back to 4.2 million years ago, and Lucy dating back to 3.5 million years ago;

WHEREAS, Ethiopia is also home to the great Axumite Kingdom that rivals Rome, Persia, and China;

WHEREAS, Ethiopia is the birthplace of Queen of Sheba and the enduring Solomonic dynasty;

WHEREAS, there are nine United Nations World Cultural sites in Ethiopia including the eleven 13th century cave churches in Lalibela “New Jerusalem”, and the 16th Century fortress-city of Fasilades surround by a 900-meter long wall;

WHEREAS, on December 27, 1903 Ethiopia’s Emperor Menelik II and President Theodore Roosevelt established diplomatic relations with the signing of a Treaty of Amity and Commerce;

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48 WHEREAS, the Ethiopian community has a long relationship with the African American
49 community anchored by the historical spiritual struggle for liberation reflected in the Abyssinian
50 Christian Churches;

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52 WHEREAS, a significant milestone in the longstanding relationship with the Ethiopian
53 and African American communities took place in 1808 when Ethiopian seamen and African
54 American parishioners left the First Baptist Church of New York, and founded the Abyssinian
55 Baptist Church in Harlem, New York in protest of segregated seating arrangements;

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57 WHEREAS, the Abyssinian Baptist Church was inspired by the ancient name of
58 Ethiopia, Abyssinia;

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60 WHEREAS, the relationship was enhanced through an education exchange that
61 encompassed the training of pilots, teachers, and medical personnel at Howard University; and a
62 cultural exchange of musical and artistic performances that together deepened the ties that
63 connect Ethiopia with the United States;

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65 WHEREAS, the first African Studies Department in the United States was started at
66 Howard University by Dr. William Leo Hansberry, who with the first Ethiopian medical school
67 graduate Dr. Melaku Beyan, founded the famed Ethiopian Research Council. The department
68 was founded for the unique purpose of disseminating information on the
69 history, culture, civilization, and diplomatic relations of Ethiopia in ancient and modern times;

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71 WHEREAS, the first African American Rhodes Scholar and Howard Professor Dr. Alain
72 Locke encouraged his students to recognize and incorporate their African Heritage in their work;

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74 WHEREAS, the great African American poet and District resident Paul Laurence Dunbar
75 in "Ode to Ethiopia" promotes African Americans to look to Ethiopia for pride;

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77 WHEREAS, District native and jazz musician extraordinaire Duke Ellington traveled and
78 performed in Ethiopia and received Ethiopia's Medal of Honor in 1973, Ethiopia's highest prize
79 from Emperor Haile Selassie I;

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81 WHEREAS, it was Dr. Alain Locke and others at Howard that provided the intellectual
82 inspiration for the Harlem Renaissance and U Street's portrayal as Black Broadway;

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84 WHEREAS, Ethiopia inspired Pan African movements that gave hope to those seeking
85 justice in the eyes of God and the world;

86
87 WHEREAS, writers, artists, and activists such as W.E.B. Dubois, Frederick
88 Douglas, Martin Delaney, Langston Hughes, Joseph Harris, Marcus Garvey and Edward Blyden
89 built on these traditions culminating in the US Civil Rights Movement and African Independence
90 Movements;

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92 WHEREAS, Ethiopians first began migrating to the United States in the 1970's because
93 of political persecution by the military junta that overthrew Emperor Haile Selassie I;

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95 WHEREAS, more than 300,000 Ethiopian descendants reside in the Washington, D.C.
96 Metropolitan area, one of the largest populations of Ethiopians in the United States. The region
97 has a multitude of Ethiopian business owners, doctors, professors, entrepreneurs, community
98 leaders, artists, and families;

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100 WHEREAS, Ethiopian immigrants initially settled in Adams Morgan, then along 9th
101 Street NW in the historical African American Shaw neighborhood, where the 9th Street corridor
102 between 9th and 11th Streets NW is fondly known as "Little Ethiopia";

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104 WHEREAS, during the 1990's, Ethiopian business owners selected the Shaw community
105 as a central location and hub to establish new businesses that led to a vibrant flourishing business
106 enclave that was largely responsible for revitalizing the community following the riots in the mid
107 1960's, and returned it to a thriving corridor established by African American business owners
108 prior to the riots;

109
110 WHEREAS, Ethiopian entrepreneurs have made significant contributions to the business
111 community and have been outstanding leaders in Washington, D.C. and surrounding areas
112 particularly retail strips where their strategy to establish a concentrated group of businesses has
113 contributed to sustainability, and attracted members of both the Ethiopian community and local
114 residents, ultimately enriching the cultural fabric of our international city and tax revenue;

115
116 WHEREAS, in 2019 the District of Columbia under Mayor Muriel Bowser's leadership,
117 renewed its Sister City Agreement between Addis Ababa and Washington, D.C. to create lasting
118 partnerships and cooperation on economic development, public health, culture, tourism and
119 education;

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121 WHEREAS, the Sister City agreement confirms that the two cities will promote
122 collaboration, information exchange, and joint ventures, with a special focus on the growth and
123 development of business investment, trade and tourism and public-private partnerships;

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125 WHEREAS, the Sister City agreement shares best practices in the areas of government
126 operations including public works, transportation, technology, infrastructure and housing; health
127 polices to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of prevention and treatment programs;
128 sustainable environment, including energy conservation and the green economy; and promote the
129 development of programs in the areas of culture, arts and education;

130
131 WHEREAS, the 2019 Sister City Agreement was the culmination of first-hand efforts by
132 a delegation to Addis Ababa of Washington, D.C. leaders, under the auspices, direction, and
133 stewardship of Henok Tesfaye, a prominent and long-standing Washington, D.C. entrepreneur,
134 civic leader, and humanitarian;

138 WHEREAS, during the mission, the Mayor of Addis Ababa, Takele Uma Banti, unveiled
139 a newly-named street, “Mayor Muriel Bowser Street,” and announced the renaming of Gazebo
140 Roundabout to “Washington, D.C. Square”, an historic honor, as part of the signing ceremony
141 for the renewal of the Sister City agreement between the District and Addis Ababa;
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143 WHEREAS, Mayor Muriel Bowser proclaimed July 28, 2018 as “Ethiopia Day in DC” in
144 honor of the visit of Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali to Washington, D.C.;

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146 WHEREAS, the Ethiopian communities’ contributions to arts, culture, and education in
147 the District encompass four annual events to commemorate the fight for freedom by the resilient
148 and the patriotic people of Ethiopia against Italian invasion and the annual holiday celebration;
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150 WHEREAS, the four annual events include the victory of Adwa on March 1, 1896, the
151 Addis Ababa Massacre and Yekatit 12 on February 19, 1937; the liberation of Addis Ababa and
152 Miazia 27 on May 5, 1941; and Kwanzaa and Early celebration of Genna on December 26, 2004;
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154 WHEREAS, the Ethiopian community also commemorates Adwa and Miazia by placing
155 a wreath with the colors of the Ethiopian flag in front of the African American Civil War
156 Memorial in March and May of each year;
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158 WHEREAS, June 4, 2015 Mayor Muriel Bowser declared “Ethiopian International Food
159 Day “where 47,000 students in over 100 schools were served Ethiopian food for breakfast, lunch
160 and dinner. The event was held at Walker Jones Education Campus;
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162 WHEREAS, the program was planned by DC Mayor Bowser’s Office of the Secretary,
163 Executive Office of the Mayor in collaboration with District of Columbia Public Schools, the
164 Little Ethiopia DC organization, and an advisory group of ten Ethiopian chefs and restaurateurs
165 guided food preparations for the event including the prominent Ethiopian Chef “Etete”
166 Tiwaltengus Sheenegelgn; and
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168 WHEREAS, the Ethiopian community continues to make exceptional contributions to the
169 District of Columbia.
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171 RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, that this
172 resolution may be cited as the “District of Columbia's Ethiopian Business and Cultural
173 Community ‘Little Ethiopia’ Ceremonial Recognition Resolution of 2020”.
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175 Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia recognizes the long history between the
176 United States and Ethiopia, and congratulates the Ethiopian community for over seventy years of
177 collaborative work in the areas of economic development, entrepreneurship, arts, culture,
178 education, and government collaboration in the District of Columbia.
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180 Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon the first date of publication in the
181 District of Columbia Register.