

A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

24-101

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

November 2, 2021

To acknowledge and honor the Southeast Tennis and Learning Center Annual Blacks in Wax Production for its innovative and empowering African American history and education program for youth and yearly city-wide theatrical performance.

WHEREAS, in 2006, during Black History Month, Cora Masters Barry, CEO of the Recreation Wish List Committee, conceived of the Blacks in Wax Program as a way for the Southeast Tennis and Learning Center (SETLC) to provide a non-traditional approach to educating youth about African American culture and history to help them enjoy and retain the information;

WHEREAS, the Blacks in Wax Program originally started as an alternative way to educate SETLC scholars about African American history and African American icons. The cultural, educational, and artistic impact of the Blacks in Wax Program continues to ensure that the diverse District of Columbia residents and guests who attend the annual theatrical performance are informed, engaged, and amazed;

WHEREAS, the inaugural Blacks in Wax Production was a simple play created and performed by SETLC scholars in the Dr. Julianne Malveaux Reading Room (Library) that allowed children to act out various African American characters and events. Scholars modeled their approach after the National Blacks in Wax Museum in Baltimore. The goal of Cora Masters Barry's program was accomplished. SETLC scholars had fun, learned from their research, and embraced the process;

WHEREAS, Blacks in Wax gives the SETLC tennis scholars the ability to gain more confidence in themselves and pride in their heritage which results in overall greater self-esteem. The Blacks in Wax Program experience helps SETLC scholars to relate to positive role models and inspires SETLC scholars to become future leaders;

WHEREAS, Blacks in Wax theatrical performance comprise 50 to 70 SETLC scholars, ages 4 to 17, transform from a "wax replica" to a live portrayal of influential figures from American History including artists, entertainers, writers, athletes, and political/inspirational leaders. As a member of the Blacks in Wax cast, SETLC scholars

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research, write, study characterization, coach and support each other while learning and growing more confident as young citizens;

WHEREAS, SETLC's Annual Blacks in Wax theatrical performance is the culmination of months of preparation. The process begins with the tennis scholars researching iconic African American citizens and events. Scholars suggest facts to be included in the script and engage in coaching sessions. SETLC scholars practice together and critique each other until they can present flawless portrayals in front of their peers and larger audiences;

WHEREAS, while SETLC scholars learn about the historic figures and historical events, they also learn about themselves, and discover they too, can do anything and be anything they work hard to become. As each scholar goes through the process, they are educated, empowered, and transformed into the icons they have studied;

WHEREAS, through the Blacks in Wax Program, SETLC scholars build self-esteem, self-confidence, and an amazing sense of accomplishment which is confirmed by the overwhelming response to their performances;

WHEREAS, the SETLC scholars strive toward excellence and their extensive hours of hard work and dedication always pays off. The result is developing an outstanding work ethic, immense memorization techniques and a greater understanding of sacrifice;

WHEREAS, from humble beginnings in the SETLC library to sold-out performances at the John F. Kennedy for Performing Arts Center, Blacks in Wax continues to excite, teach, and unite through the power of music, dance, and drama;

WHEREAS, SETLC scholars have delivered their Blacks in Wax theatrical performances at several venues throughout the District of Columbia, among them, The White House, Lincoln Theater, Howard Theater, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, TheArc, and, the steps of the Lincoln Memorial;

WHEREAS, SETLC scholars have delivered their Blacks in Wax theatrical performances in front of historical icons, among them, Cicely Tyson, Jessie Jackson, Hilary Rodham Clinton, Mayor Marion Barry, Mayor Vincent Gray, and Mayor Muriel Bowser.

RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA that this resolution may be cited as the "Southeast Tennis and Learning Center Blacks in Wax Production Recognition Resolution of 2021".

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Sec. 2. The Council and District of Columbia acknowledge and honor the Southeast Tennis and Learning Center Annual Blacks in Wax Production for its innovative and empowering African American history and education program for youth and yearly city-wide theatrical performance.

Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately.