

FILE OF THE CITY CLERK

COUNCIL RESOLUTION NO. 08 - 2024

INTRODUCED BY COUNCILOR CRAIG – FEBRUARY 13, 2024

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A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LANCASTER DESIGNATING FEBRUARY 2024 AS BLACK HISTORY MONTH IN THE CITY OF LANCASTER AND RECOGNIZING RESISTANCE TO INJUSTICE BY AFRICAN AMERICANS THROUGHOUT LANCASTER’S HISTORY.

WHEREAS, since 1976, February has been recognized in the United States as Black History Month, and national attention has been focused on the history of African Americans, the Civil Rights Movement, and efforts to advance the place of African Americans in society; and

WHEREAS, the theme of the 2024 national recognition of Black History Month is black resistance; and

WHEREAS, Lancaster has been the scene of black resistance from the days of the Underground Railroad before the Civil War, during the civil rights protests of the mid-20th Century, to Black Lives Matter protests of recent years; and

WHEREAS, William Whipper and Stephen Smith, African American business owners in nearby Columbia, ferried run-away slaves through Lancaster in special freight railroad cars equipped with hidden compartments in the 1840s and 1850s; and clandestine Underground Railroad conductors led fugitives to and from hiding places in Lancaster; and

WHEREAS, members of Lancaster’s Black community and their White allies persisted in organizing to resist unfair practices in housing, education, and employment, including Abraham L. Polite, Marianna Gibbons Brubaker, and Laura Carter, who organized the Lancaster Branch of the NAACP in 1923; all those who served as presidents of NAACP Lancaster during the important years of resistance in the 1960s, including the Rev. Philip Accooe, Robert A. Cooper, Ashley S. Dudley, Jr., the Rev. Alexander L. Stephans, Kenneth Bost, the Rev. Ernest Christian, and Kenneth H. Abernathy; Betty Tompkins, publicity secretary of NAACP Lancaster, and Ruby Cook Bohee Payne, who served for nearly thirty years as the leader of the Crispus Attucks Center; and

WHEREAS, Black leaders in academia both created and documented Black history in Lancaster, including Frederick Reed, the first Black male teacher in the School District of Lancaster and an alumni of Franklin & Marshall College; Hazel I. Jackson, who held her own quiet protest spending Friday afternoons in the 1950s outside the office of the School District of Lancaster superintendent before being hired as the district’s first Black female teacher in 1961, and founded the Black Culture Celebration at Millersville University in 1970; Dr. Rita Smith-Wade-El, who founded the African-American Studies program at Millersville University; and Dr. Leroy Hopkins, who, through his research, lectures, and articles in the *Journal of Lancaster County’s Historical Society*, has elevated the Black history of Lancaster; and schools in Lancaster were later renamed in honor of Hazel I. Jackson and Dr. Rita Smith-Wade-El; and

WHEREAS, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, founded in 1817 and incorporated in 1848, and other religious congregations of predominantly Black members have provided spiritual, social, and civic support to Lancastrians, and before the Civil War to Black freedom seekers traveling through Lancaster under the protection of the Underground Railroad network; and

WHEREAS, in one of Lancaster’s first known civil rights-era protests, Black and white youth staged a lunch counter sit-in at the old Brunswick Hotel in 1937; and

WHEREAS, in the summer of 1963, the Lancaster Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People organized protests of downtown Lancaster department stores over discriminatory hiring practices because black employees at those stores were relegated to jobs as janitors and elevator operators; and

WHEREAS, that same summer, NAACP members were joined by members of local churches in marching outside the Rocky Springs Park pool, which the park owner refused to desegregate even after a court ruling; and

WHEREAS, Henry Norwood "Bamey" Ewell, national and international champion in track events and winner of one gold and two silver medals in the 1948 Olympics, was recognized by the City of Lancaster in the naming of Ewell Plaza; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, an historian who earned a Ph. D. degree from Harvard University and later taught at Howard University, founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915, after being barred from the American Historical Association, and in 1926 founded Black History Week, the origin of Black History Month, celebrated annually in February; and

WHEREAS, Lancaster has long been a place of welcome for those seeking religious liberty and has sought to live up to the principle of liberty for all; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the City Council of the City of Lancaster, that during this Black History Month and every month, City Council calls on all Lancastrians and to respect and honor the sacrifice of those who have struggled for the right of African Americans to justice and equality.

Attest:


Bernard W. Harris Jr., City Clerk


Danene Sorace, Mayor