

CITY OF NEW BEDFORD

IN CITY COUNCIL

February 11, 2016

RESOLUTION IN HONOR AND CELEBRATION OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH - FEBRUARY 2016

WHEREAS, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, a high school teacher, discovered that schools did not teach the history of Black Americans; and in 1915, he set out to change that by establishing the Association for the Study of African-American Life and History (ASALH) and in 1926, he established "Negro History Week" to be held during the second week of February, this date was chosen because it marked the birthdays of famed abolitionists Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass; and

WHEREAS, The Celebration of Black History Week was then expanded to encompass the month of February 1976, the Country's Bicentennial year, but not without some controversy and debate regarding designating a month to the history of one race rather than overall history; therefore, the importance of providing a Theme to focus the attention of the public occurred, to show that the intention was never to dictate or limit the exploration of the Black experience, but to bring to the public's attention important developments that merit emphasis; and

WHEREAS, The ongoing mission of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, now holding its 101st Annual ASALH Convention, is to promote, research, preserve, interpret and disseminate information about Black life, history and culture and to be the premier Black Heritage learned society with a strong network of national and international branches whose diverse and inclusive membership will continue the Woodson Legacy, and one of the most successful means to achieve this goal has been, and still is, BLACK HISTORY MONTH and its powerful Themes; and

WHEREAS, The **THEME** for 2016 is **HALLOWED GROUNDS: SITES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MEMORIES**, honoring important locations that date back to before the arrival of the Mayflower and continue to the present, from port cities where Africans disembarked from slave ships to the battlefields where their descendants fought for freedom, from the colleges and universities where they pursued education, to the cities where they created communities, the imprint of Americans of African descent is deeply embedded in the narrative of the American past, there are sites that should be remembered; and with the passing of time certain sites have become hallowed ground, of which there are more than twenty-five, the Underground Railroad Network to Freedom being one of them, others include the home of the father of Black History, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, the Frederick Douglass home, 125th Street in Harlem, with its notable buildings which include the Apollo Theatre, the Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. State Office Building, the Studio Museum and the West End Theatre; Beale Street in Memphis, the home site of Jean Baptiste Point DuSable, a Haitian of African and French Descent, who in 1779, established the trading post and permanent settlement which would become known as Chicago, where the DuSable Museum of African-American History is named in his honor, Sweet Auburn Avenue in Atlanta, Georgia; designated a National Historic Landmark District in 1976, significant for its history and development as a segregated area under the State's Jim Crow laws, honoring these sites helps to keep alive the memories of our forbearer's struggles for freedom and justice; and

WHEREAS, We cannot allow Black History Month to pass without recognizing our many local people of color who have accomplished great things against great odds, such as Frederick Douglass, who began his new, free life in our great City; Medal of Honor recipient Sgt. William Carney, who led his Civil War Regiment to victory; Westport's Paul Cuffe, son of an African slave and Wampanoag Indian, born in Cuttyhunk, who, in the years after the American Revolution built an American shipbuilding fortune on the Westport River and founded the first elementary school in Westport, MA; New Bedford Whaling Era's Lewis Temple, inventor of the toggle harpoon; abolitionist and confectioner Polly Johnson; escaped slave Henry "Box" Brown; Edward M. Brooke, III, of Massachusetts, who was the first African-American Attorney General of any State, first African-American United States Senator and a Presidential Medal of Freedom Winner; Deval Patrick, who was the first African-American Governor of Massachusetts; former Illinois Senator Barack Obama, who became the first African-American elected to the Office of President of the United States; as well as many, many other individuals whose accomplishments have not yet been fully recognized; and

WHEREAS, Black History Month continues to pay tribute to the African-American history makers of the past and present, and the sacrifices made to ensure equality among all men and women of this great Nation, and serves as an occasion to examine the collective creativity, cultural and political experience of the masses of Africans and people of African descent, through lectures, exhibitions, banquets and cultural activities held throughout the United States in schools, communities, Churches and political arenas:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the New Bedford City Council takes note and celebrates the **MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2016**, as **BLACK HISTORY MONTH**, urges Citizens to honor and remember the Black Heroes of the past and present, and encourages everyone to take part in activities held Citywide in recognition of our community's rich heritage of diversity; and **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That this Resolution be posted outside of the City Council Chamber for the entire month of February 2016, in recognition of **BLACK HISTORY MONTH**.

Offered by: