



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Clarke

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Informational Hearing - Establishing the Baltimore City African-American Civil Rights Historic Commission

FOR the purpose of calling on representatives from Baltimore's civil rights, historical, and cultural institutions to meet with the City Council in a hearing to determine how best to fashion and establish a Baltimore City African-American Civil Rights Historic Commission whose mission is to catalog, preserve, link, and promote the many resources memorializing the pioneering civil rights struggle which occurred in Baltimore City in the 1950's and 60's, the significant benchmarks achieved of both local and national importance, and the continuing struggle to finish the work begun.

Recitals

Baltimore City has historically played a pivotal and pioneering role in our nation's civil rights struggle. Many of the struggle's national leaders were raised in our City, led congregations in our City, or formed alliances with Baltimore's pioneering leaders. Numerous precedent-setting legal challenges originated here which reached the highest courts in the land and won some of the earliest decisions in the nation against discrimination and segregation. Tactics, methods, and philosophies which came to characterize the national civil rights movement were tested and refined in the 1950's and early 1960's in Baltimore by local leaders who went on to mentor and join forces with other emerging national civil rights leaders.

As time passes, however, this rich history and legacy are in danger of being forgotten as if too long ago and far away to matter, to celebrate, or to inspire new generations to carry on the work still undone. Each generation needs to know and appreciate, for example, the significance of such Baltimore-related legal cases as *Williams v. Zimmerman*, *Kerr v. Enoch Pratt*, *McCready v. Byrd*, *Bell v. Maryland*, *Morgan v. Virginia*, *Mills v. Lowndes*, *Griffin v. Maryland*, and *Murray v. Pearson*. Each generation needs to meet anew Baltimore's impressive roster of civil rights heroes and heroines, including:

- Thurgood Marshall
- Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr.

- Donald Murray
- Juanita Jackson Mitchell
- Lillie Mae Carroll Jackson

- Carl Murphy
- Enolia P. McMillan
- W.A.C. Hughes, Jr.
- Esther McCready
- Walter Lively
- Walter P. Carter
- Chester Wickwire
- Gloria Richardson
- John Preentiss Poe
- Clarence Logan
- Rabbi Morris Lieberman
- Edward A. Chance
- Rev. Douglas Sands
- The 'Goon Squad'
- Rev. Dr. Marion Bascom
- Rev. Harvey Johnson
- Attorney Everett J. Wating
- Homer Favor
- Parren J. Mitchell
- Samuel Daniels
- William 'Little Willie' Adams
- Louise Kerr
- Robert Watts
- Furman Templeton

As in the civil rights movement itself, Baltimore has indeed taken the lead in creating prominent institutions and advocacy groups which have worked admirably, against all odds, to undertake the tasks of preserving and promoting Baltimore's African-American civil rights history, including its landmarks, artifacts, pioneers, and documentation. The call of this resolution, however, is to ensure that these singular achievements find common ground through coordination, cataloging, even "mapping" and closing gaps so that all this remarkable work is somehow comprehensive in capturing the accounts of our elders, while time permits; available to inspire our future generations; and, accessible as a whole through its many facets.

It is especially fitting to issue this call and begin this conversation in earnest today, June 18, 2012, which is the 77th anniversary of one of the most pivotal moments in Baltimore civil rights history, that is, the date of the opening arguments in *Murray v. Pearson*. On this date in 1935, two young attorneys, Thurgood Marshall and Clarence Mitchell, Jr., stood in the Baltimore courtroom of Judge Eugene O'Dunne and argued that Donald Gaines Murray, a lifelong Baltimore resident, should be allowed to begin his journey to join them in the legal profession - and to do so as a Black - by attending the University of Maryland despite its policy of admitting only whites. The long journey of this legal challenge ended at last when Maryland's highest court ordered Donald Murray's admission into the University of Maryland Law School, and that case became the first successful school desegregation case of any kind in the United States - and the first step on the even longer journey of ending legal segregation throughout this nation.

Let us do justice to leaders and achievements like this by undertaking the pioneering work, ourselves, of collaboration in keeping alive and available what they did, and who they were, and how the carrying-on requires the

knowledge and inspiration we can, together, provide.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That this Council supports the work and resources required to establish the proposed Baltimore City African/American Civil Rights Historic Commission should that proposed Commission be approved in principle by those who convene to and deliberate with City Council on the need for such a Commission and to offer help in formulating its mission, formation and governance under law.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the leaders of Baltimore's civil rights, historical, and cultural institutions, the Mayor, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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