

A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To recognize and honor activist Harold George Bellanfanti Jr. AKA Harry Belafonte for his legendary career and accomplishments as a civil rights leader, as he recently passed April 25, 2023.

WHEREAS, Harry Belafonte was born in 1927 and raised in Harlem, New York;

WHEREAS, Mr. Belafonte began his career in music as a club singer in an effort to pay for acting classes;

WHEREAS, He launched his recording career as a pop singer on the Roost Label in 1949 but quickly developed a keen interest in folk music, learning material through the Library of Congress' American folk songs archive;

WHEREAS, Mr. Belafonte's breakthrough album *Calypso* became the first LP in the world to sell more than one million copies within a year;

WHEREAS, Mr. Belafonte was a sensational talent, it is also widely acknowledged that he used his fame to marry politics and pop culture;

WHEREAS, in the 1950s and 1960s, Mr. Belafonte was one of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s most trusted confidants;

WHEREAS, from 1954 to 1961, Mr. Belafonte refused to perform in the American South;

WHEREAS, Mr. Belafonte financially supported Dr. King's family, as King earned merely \$8,000 per year as a preacher;

WHEREAS, in 1961, Mr. Belafonte appeared in a campaign commercial for Democratic Presidential candidate, John F. Kennedy;

WHEREAS, subsequently, President Kennedy named Mr. Belafonte cultural advisor to the Peace Corps;

WHEREAS, in 1963, Mr. Belafonte raised \$50,000 for civil rights protestors and personally bailed Dr. King out of jail in Birmingham, Alabama;

WHEREAS, Mr. Belafonte was financially supportive of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, once led by Mayor Marion Barry;

WHEREAS, during the 1960s and 1970s, Mr. Belafonte was a supporter of D.C. self-governance and worked alongside District leaders to achieve home rule;

WHEREAS, from 1987 until his passing, Mr. Belafonte was the UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador;

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WHEREAS, Mr. Belafonte was an advocate for political and humanitarian causes, such as the Anti-Apartheid Movement and USA for Africa;

WHEREAS, in 2004, Mr. Belafonte was awarded the Domestic Human Rights Award in San Francisco by Global Exchange;

WHEREAS, in 2013, Mr. Belafonte received the NAACP’s Spingarn Medal, for outstanding achievement by an African-American;

WHEREAS, Mr. Belafonte inspired thousands of fans around the world with his entertainment roles, but inspired so many more with his civil rights activism and humanitarian efforts; and,

WHEREAS, on April 25, 2023, Mr. Belafonte transitioned.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, that this resolution may be cited as the “Harry Belafonte Recognition Resolution of 2023”.

Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia honors, recognizes, and commends activist Harry Belafonte on his remarkable courage and awareness during his storied career in show business and beyond. He will be forever remembered as a groundbreaking champion for the African Diaspora and human rights alike.

Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon the first date of publication in the District of Columbia Register.