

A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To recognize and honor the Freedom Riders, civil rights activists who risked their lives to travel to Southern states in protest of racial segregation.

WHEREAS, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was founded in 1942 by James Farmer to combat racial injustice and end discriminatory laws throughout the United States;

WHEREAS, the mission of CORE was to bring equality for all, regardless of race, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, or religious or ethnic background;

WHEREAS, Supreme Court rulings in *Morgan v. Virginia* in 1946, *Gayle v. Browder* in 1956, and *Boynton v. Virginia* in 1960 overturned state laws permitting segregation on interstate buses and in bus terminals;

WHEREAS, these rulings proceeded to be openly and brazenly violated, with opponents coordinating political strategies of massive resistance, enforcing Jim Crow laws, and attacking and murdering those who resisted;

WHEREAS, from April 9th to April 23rd, 1947, sixteen members of CORE participated in the Journey of Reconciliation, embarking on buses from Washington, D.C. and traveling through Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky in open defiance of state laws requiring passengers to sit in designated areas according to their race;

WHEREAS, Black and white participants who refused to move faced assaults and arrests, with three participants in the Journey of Reconciliation ultimately being sentenced to work in segregated chain gangs;

WHEREAS, in response to continued defiance of Supreme Court rulings, CORE organized the Freedom Rides in 1961, with the first bus departing from Washington D.C. on May 4th and additional trips planned through the end of the year;

49 WHEREAS, the Freedom Riders faced violent mob attacks, often supported by the police,
50 including several attacks in which assailants threw firebombs into the buses in an attempt to burn
51 occupants alive;

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53 WHEREAS, international press coverage of the Freedom Rides led to criticism and
54 condemnation of the U.S., with countries including France, the Soviet Union, the People’s Republic of
55 China, and Mexico arguing that racism belied American claims of a free and democratic society;

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57 WHEREAS, organizers rejected the federal administration’s request for a “cooling off period,”
58 instead escalating the campaign with more than sixty rides organized throughout the summer months of
59 1961;

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61 WHEREAS, in the month of July, 1961, more than 300 Freedom Riders were incarcerated
62 simultaneously;

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64 WHEREAS, 75% of Freedom Riders ultimately were arrested for refusing to comply with
65 segregation laws;

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67 WHEREAS, amongst others, DC-area natives Joan Trumpauer Mulholland, Genevieve Hughes
68 Houghton, and Gwendolyn T. Britt participated in the Freedom Rides;

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70 WHEREAS, amongst others, Howard University students Hank Thomas, John Moody, Kwame
71 Ture, and Dion Diamond participated in the Freedom Rides;

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73 WHEREAS, the Freedom Singers amplified the messages of the civil rights movement through
74 gospel music and call-and-response spirituals, performing across the country and before a crowd of more
75 than 250,000 at the March on Washington in August 1963;

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77 WHEREAS, throughout the civil rights movement, CORE and other organizations, including the
78 Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and the
79 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, organized acts of civil disobedience in the
80 form of sit-ins, bus boycotts, and public marches and demonstrations;

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82 WHEREAS, Black Americans have continued to fight for racial equality, opposing state-imposed
83 voting laws, voter suppression efforts, segregation in public schools, educational discrimination, housing
84 discrimination, employment discrimination, and other forms of legal and illegal injustice;

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86 RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, that this resolution
87 may be cited as the “Freedom Riders Recognition Resolution of 2026”.

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89 Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia hereby recognizes all of the Freedom Riders who
90 fought against racism and segregation, courageously facing violence and arrests, and risking their lives to
91 ensure a better, more equitable future.

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