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**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

**IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024**

**SENATE RESOLUTION**

**PROCLAIMING FEBRUARY OF 2024, AS "BLACK HISTORY MONTH" IN THE STATE  
OF RHODE ISLAND**

Introduced By: Senators Mack, Felag, Lauria, F. Lombardi, Britto, E Morgan, Ciccone,  
Ujifusa, Rogers, and de la Cruz

Date Introduced: March 07, 2024

Referred To: Recommended for Immediate Consideration

1           WHEREAS, Throughout the history of the United States of America, truly significant  
2 African-American contributions to the economy, social growth, sciences, and arts in this great  
3 nation have all too often been ignored. In recognition of this plethora of major accomplishments  
4 made by men and women of African ancestry, the month of February is celebrated as "Black  
5 History Month" across the nation; and

6           WHEREAS, It is also vital to understand that every day of every month of every year in  
7 the history of our country, significant and historical contributions have been made by African-  
8 Americans; and

9           WHEREAS, African-Americans were first brought to America forcibly. They were  
10 enslaved, faced inhuman cruelty, and were subjected to injustices beyond understanding. Families  
11 were torn apart, lynching went unpunished, and segregation and denial of fundamental  
12 constitutional rights and protections went on for decades; and

13           WHEREAS, Though these men and women suffered immense tragedies and social  
14 inequalities, they also persevered, and their triumphs and contributions to the economic, artistic,  
15 literary, scientific, and technological advancement of our country are significant and momentous;  
16 and

17           WHEREAS, African-Americans have been an integral part of Rhode Island's social,  
18 political, and economic development from its beginning as a British colony, to its inclusion in the  
19 formation of the United States, to the rich diversity of today's Ocean State; and

1           WHEREAS, From the initial shots fired in the struggle for American Independence, to  
2 the participation of the Rhode Island 1<sup>st</sup> Black Regiment in the Battle of Newport, to the garrisons  
3 of the Rhode Island 14<sup>th</sup> Heavy Artillery Regiment (Colored) in 1863, Americans of African  
4 descent have responded to the call of duty; and

5           WHEREAS, In recognition of the numerous positive and patriotic contributions of  
6 African-American Rhode Islanders in the United States military, we honor their legacy of  
7 bravery, honor, and sacrifice. From the earliest recordation of Black History in our state,  
8 including those of slaves, former slaves, and free men, African-Americans have served with pride  
9 to protect our vital interests and provide for our common defense; and

10           WHEREAS, Structures in the City of Newport, such as the Brick Market, later used as  
11 the town hall and theater; the Old Colony House, which at one time served Rhode Island as its  
12 capitol; and the oldest library in America, the Redwood Library, stand as lasting and beautiful  
13 tributes to the African-Americans who lived in our state and played a major role in the  
14 construction of these magnificent historic structures; and

15           WHEREAS, Many African-Americans have made enormous and significant  
16 contributions to our nation, from Dr. Martin Luther King, whose eloquent and courageous actions  
17 on behalf of freedom and liberty for all earned him the Nobel Peace Prize and started our nation  
18 on the long and all-too-slow path towards equality for all, and President Barack Obama our  
19 nation's first African-American President, who continued and expanded upon Dr. King's vision  
20 through his support for expanding healthcare access for everyone, diversified the federal  
21 bureaucracy, strengthened women's right to fair pay, and protected LGBTQ citizens from  
22 employment discrimination; and

23           WHEREAS, Other African-Americans who have contributed much to our nation's  
24 vibrancy and success include Maya Angelou, the noted poet, civil rights activist, and recipient of  
25 the Spingarn Medal from the NAACP and the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President  
26 Barack Obama, famed novelist James Baldwin, famous inventor George Washington Carver,  
27 Civil Rights activist and educator Mary McLeod Bethune, Congresswoman Shirley Chisolm, the  
28 first African-American to run for President of the United States, noted author and abolitionist  
29 Frederick Douglass, Doctor Charles Drew, whose research and work on plasma literally saved  
30 millions of lives, famous sociologist, writer and activist W.E.B. Du Bois, noted jazz composer  
31 and bandleader Duke Ellington, Civil Rights activist Jesse Jackson, film director Spike Lee,  
32 famed actors Sidney Poitier and Denzel Washington, the great Hall of Fame baseball player  
33 Jackie Robinson, who courageously faced down death threats to integrate Major League Baseball,  
34 famous boxers and American heroes Joe Louis and Muhammed Ali, Supreme Court Justice

1 Thurgood Marshall, who, as a lawyer, won the famous Brown v. Board of Education public  
2 school desegregation case before the United States Supreme Court, photographer Gordon Parks,  
3 Olympic heroes Jesse Owens and Rafer Johnson, Abolition activists Sojourner Truth and Harriet  
4 Tubman, and noted educator, Civil Rights activist Booker T. Washington, golf legend Tiger  
5 Woods, tennis superstars Serena and Venus Williams and numerous other African-Americans;  
6 and

7 WHEREAS, The United States and particularly the State of Rhode Island owe a debt of  
8 gratitude to our African-American citizens and their forefathers, whose documented  
9 achievements have too long gone unrecognized; and

10 WHEREAS, The theme for 2024 Black History Month is "African Americans and the  
11 Arts." "African American art is infused with African, Caribbean and Black American lived  
12 experiences" and for more than a century it has had an immense impact on the performing and  
13 visual arts, literature, fashion, folklore, language, film, music, architecture, culinary and  
14 numerous other forms of cultural expression. African American artists have used their artistic  
15 expressions to preserve the rich African American culture and to advance the causes of equality,  
16 justice and empowerment; now, therefore be it

17 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island hereby proudly proclaims  
18 February as "Black History Month", and furthermore recognizes and applauds the sacrifices and  
19 myriad contributions made by African-American men and women throughout this great nation's  
20 history; and be it further

21 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to  
22 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society.

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