

A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

25-5

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

January 17, 2023

To honor the life and legacy of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to commemorate his 93rd birthday, and to designate Monday, January 16, 2023, as “Dr. King’s Celebration of Excellence featuring Howard University vs. Morehouse College Men’s Basketball” in the District of Columbia.

WHEREAS, Dr. King was raised in a home where education was a priority;

WHEREAS, at age 15, Dr. King was a scholar enrolled in Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, a historically Black men’s liberal arts college, and graduated in 1948 with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology;

WHEREAS, Dr. King was raised in a Christian home, was a spiritual and religious man, and decided to follow in the path of his father, a minister, by enrolling in his first integrated school, Crozer Theological Seminary in Upland, Pennsylvania, and graduated in 1951;

WHEREAS, Dr. King continued his educational and religious studies as a doctoral student at Boston University in Boston, Massachusetts, where he also audited philosophy classes at Harvard University, and earned his Doctor of Philosophy in Systemic Theology in 1955 at the age of 26;

WHEREAS, Dr. King led his family as husband and father, his churches as pastor, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference as co-founder;

WHEREAS, Dr. King received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Howard University in 1957 alongside Jackie Robinson, Major League Baseball’s first African-American player, and Patrick Murphy Malin, Director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU);

WHEREAS, Dr. King engaged in civil rights movement actions throughout the South, including the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955, the student-led Atlanta Student Movement sit-ins beginning in 1960, the 1965 Alabama voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery, and, of great import to the District of Columbia, the March on Washington on August 28, 1963 where he delivered the iconic “I Have a Dream” speech;

ENROLLED ORIGINAL

WHEREAS, Dr. King earned the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 for his global efforts, having a transformative impact not just on African-American culture, but on American culture, and is quoted as saying, “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy”;

WHEREAS, Dr. King recognized the political and symbolic power of sports, and understood athletic competitions and athletes could serve as a visible and vocal force to advance civil rights and social justice;

WHEREAS, each year in the District of Columbia, Howard University honors Dr. King's Celebration of Excellence by hosting nonconference men's basketball contests against iconic historical institutions;

WHEREAS, this year Howard University invited the Morehouse College to participate in the annual game, elevating the message of Dr. King by inviting student athletes from Dr. King's alma mater to Washington, DC for the athletic competition, and for continued community commitment towards Dr. King's social justice goals;

WHEREAS, this contest will take place in Burr Gymnasium which is where Dr. King gave his last ever address on Howard University's campus in 1966 as part of the seventh annual Gandhi Memorial Lecture Series;

WHEREAS, Howard University, founded in 1867, has furthered its mission to eliminate the inequities related to race, color, social, economic, and political circumstances and continues to develop some of the most talented Black scholars, activists, theologians, educators, and athletes for the benefit of the world;

WHEREAS, Howard University's Men's Basketball program features 3 District of Columbia natives on their roster: Team Captain Jelani Williams, Elijah Hawkins, and Marcus Dockery;

WHEREAS, 3 members of the coaching staff are also native to the District of Columbia: Head Coach Kenneth Blakeney, Assistant Coach Tyler Thornton, and Chief Program Strategist Daniel Marks;

WHEREAS, Morehouse College, founded as Augusta Theological Institute in 1867 in Augusta, Georgia, with the purpose of preparing African-American men for careers in theology and education, and later relocated to Atlanta, Georgia and renamed Morehouse College in 1913 in honor of Henry L. Morehouse, the corresponding secretary of the Northern Baptist Home Mission Society;

ENROLLED ORIGINAL

WHEREAS, Morehouse College has been a leader in this country for developing men with disciplined minds who lead lives of leadership and service;

WHEREAS, Howard University Men’s Basketball Coach Kenneth Blakeney and the Morehouse College Men’s Basketball Coach Douglas Whittler both have strong commitment in developing their respective HBCU athletic programs, and most importantly, in developing socially conscious young men committed to excellence embodied by both of their institutions;

WHEREAS, Coach Whittler will take his team to the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial on Monday, January 16th for a gathering with Morehouse alumni to honor Dr. King’s legacy;

WHEREAS, Coach Blakeney challenged his team to honor the legacy of activism at Howard University by partaking in a season-long social justice project around an issue of their choosing, and took his team to multiple events at the 2022 Congressional Black Caucus Annual Legislative Conference;

WHEREAS, Howard University Men’s Basketball humbly decided to prioritize Black maternal health advocacy and has committed to volunteering with Mamatoto Village, an organization located in Ward 7 devoted to serving Black women through the creation of career pathways in maternal health and providing accessible perinatal support services to expectant Black mothers, for a community event to prepare pregnancy care kits as a team service activity, and has engaged in multiple conversations with the Congressional Black Caucus on these issues;

WHEREAS, both on and off the basketball court, the annual game honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Celebration of Excellence stands as a demonstration of unity, collegiality, and sportsmanship.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the “Dr. King’s Celebration of Excellence featuring Howard University vs. Morehouse College Men’s Basketball Recognition Resolution of 2023”.

Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia recognizes the historic nature of this matchup, as well as the contributions of Howard University and Morehouse College in furthering the educational, spiritual, athletic, and moral development of their students, and declares Monday, January 16, 2023, as “Dr. King’s Celebration of Excellence featuring Howard University vs. Morehouse College Men’s Basketball Day” in the District of Columbia.

Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately.