

City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia
Office of the Chief Clerk
Room 402, City Hall
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 090271)

RESOLUTION

Honoring and Recognizing the Life and Accomplishments of Historian and Scholar John Hope Franklin.

WHEREAS, John Hope Franklin was born January 2, 1915, in Rentiesville, Oklahoma; and

WHEREAS, Franklin, who died Wednesday, March 25, 2009 at age 94, was a prodigious historian and author of several renowned works including, “*From Slavery to Freedom*”, published in 1947, a landmark integration of Black history into American history that has sold more than 3.5 million copies and remains relevant more than 60 years after being published; and

WHEREAS, His research helped Thurgood Marshall and his team at the NAACP win Brown v. Board of Education, the 1954 case that barred the doctrine of, “Separate but Equal”, in the nation’s public schools; and

WHEREAS, Franklin, who was raised in an all-Black community in Oklahoma and often subjected to humiliating racism, was later instrumental in bringing down the legal and historical validations for racial segregation in America; and

WHEREAS, His mother, Mollie, a teacher, began taking him to school with her when he was 3 and taught him to read by age 5; and

WHEREAS, At the age of 6, he first became aware of what he described as the, “racial divide separating me from white America,”; and

WHEREAS, During his youth, Franklin, his mother and sister Anne were ejected from a train when his mother refused the conductor’s orders to move to the “Negro” coach; and

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WHEREAS, He recalled his mother telling him that, “There was not a white person on that train or anywhere else who was any better than I was. She admonished me not to waste my energy by fretting but to save it in order to prove that I was as good as any of them,”; and

WHEREAS, Franklin himself broke numerous color barriers including becoming the first African-American department chair at a predominantly white institution, Brooklyn College; the first African-American professor to hold an endowed chair at Duke University; and the first African-American president of the American Historical Association; and

WHEREAS, Above all, he used history to document how African-Americans lived and served alongside whites from the nation’s birth including fighting at Lexington and Concord, crossing the Delaware with Washington and exploring the North American frontier with Lewis and Clark; and

WHEREAS, Franklin received more than 130 honorary degrees and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People’s Spingarn Award; and

WHEREAS, In 1993, President Bill Clinton honored Franklin with the Charles Frankel Prize, recognizing scholarly contributions that give “...eloquence and meaning...to our ideas, hopes and dreams as American citizens,”; and

WHEREAS, Clinton awarded Franklin the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian prize, two years later, and made him the chairman of Clinton’s Initiative on Race saying, “John Hope Franklin was one of the most important American historians of the 20th Century and one of the people I most admired. He graced our country with his life, his scholarship, and his citizenship,”; and

WHEREAS, Having witnessed Barack Obama’s inauguration as the nation’s first African-American president, Franklin called his ascension to the White House “...one of the most historic moments, if not the most historic moment, in the history of this country,”; and

WHEREAS, President Barack Obama said in a statement that, “Because of the life John Hope Franklin lived, the public service he rendered, and the scholarship that was the mark of his distinguished career, we all have a richer understanding of who we are as Americans and our journey as a people,”; now therefore, be it,

RESOLVED, That the Philadelphia City Council hereby Honors and Recognizes the Life and Accomplishments of Historian and Scholar John Hope Franklin; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented as a Sincere Expression of this Council’s Appreciation and Recognition of his Profound Contributions to American History and Culture.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the second of April, 2009.

Anna C. Verna
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Patricia Rafferty
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmembers Blackwell and Green

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Blackwell, Green, Jones, DiCicco, Goode, Rizzo, Reynolds Brown, Krajewski, Greenlee, Sanchez, Clarke, Tasco, Kenney, Miller and Kelly