

City of Philadelphia



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

(Resolution No. 260587)

RESOLUTION

Recognizing July 5, 2026, as “Martyrs Day in Philadelphia” to honor the memory of five Philadelphians – Octavius Catto, Levi Bolden, Jacob Gordon, Moses Wright, and Isaac Chase – who were slain while attempting to exercise their right to vote after the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment.

WHEREAS, The Declaration of Independence was signed in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776, and this day is celebrated annually as a tribute to American ideals of liberty and freedom; and

WHEREAS, July 5th marks the anniversary of Frederick Douglass’ historic 1852 address, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”, his powerful call to confront hypocrisy and the chasm between America’s founding ideals and its lived reality of chattel slavery; and

WHEREAS, Throughout American history, courageous individuals have sacrificed their lives in the pursuit of equality, justice and human rights for all people; and

WHEREAS, In 1871, only one year after ratification of the 15th Amendment to the US Constitution granting African American men the right to vote, courageous Black men in Philadelphia headed to the polls to cast their votes in the exercise of political freedom; and

WHEREAS, A campaign of organized violence was unleashed to suppress the Black vote, resulting in the death of five men and injury to countless other Philadelphians; and

WHEREAS, The names of those slain were Octavius Catto, Levi Bolden, Jacob Gordon, Moses Wright, and Isaac Chase; and

WHEREAS, It is fitting to honor and remember those slain for the cause of exercising their freedom to vote; and

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WHEREAS, It is fitting and proper that we secure this memory and recommit ourselves to the principles for which they made the ultimate sacrifice; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby recognizes and honors July 5, 2026 as “Martyrs Day in Philadelphia” and encourages residents, community groups, institutions, educators and businesses to commemorate this day of remembrance through reflection, peaceful social action including voter registration and a renewed commitment to social justice and human rights for all people.

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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 twenty-eight day of May, 2026.

Kenyatta Johnson
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Elizabeth McCollum
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmember Landau for

Sponsored by: Council President Johnson, Councilmembers Landau, Gauthier, Lozada, Brooks, Harrity, O'Rourke and Ahmad