

City of Philadelphia



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

(Resolution No. 090937)

RESOLUTION

Recognizing and honoring the shared contributions and legacy of John Brown, the Quakers and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper in the fight against slavery, violence, injustice and inequality and calling for the posthumous pardon of John Brown for his heroic efforts to free four million enslaved African-Americans that helped start the war to end slavery in the United States.

WHEREAS, John Brown believed that slavery was such an evil that it should be ended by any means necessary. He devoted his life to freeing slaves and protecting free African-Americans in the pre-Civil War United States after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act; and

WHEREAS, As his anti-slavery commitments continued to deepen, he began to organize an army that would trigger an African American revolution to wipe out slavery. Part of this plan involved the attack on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry which took place on October 16, 1859. As a result Brown was captured, tried by the State of Virginia and hung on December 2, 1859; and

WHEREAS, On December 2, 1859, the Philadelphia abolitionist and African-American communities honored Brown by declaring "Martyr Day." African-American homes and businesses were draped in black and two vigils were held in his honor. Brown was characterized by many prominent literary figures of the day such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau as a true hero and martyr; and

WHEREAS, The Religious Society of Friends, the Quakers hailed, John Brown as a moral hero while remaining true to their own mission to end slavery by peaceful means. They have continued this legacy in recent times through their work against violence and injustice in all forms, including the sponsorship in Philadelphia of the 1972 gang conference at a time when no other group would risk taking on such an endeavor; and

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WHEREAS, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, an abolitionist who resided in Philadelphia from 1870 until her death in 1911 and eulogized John Brown, used her eloquence as a lecturer and writer to actively fight against slavery and for women's suffrage. As the first African-American to publish a novel; her book, *Iola LeRoy* or *Shadows Uplifted*, published in 1892, sought to inspire African-American youth as well as educate white people about the culture of her people. Her legacy lives on in her relative, Philadelphian Sister Falaka Fattah, who in addition to founding the House of Umoja to combat gang violence, is a writer and civil rights worker who helped abolish Jim Crow laws in America; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby recognizes and honors the shared contributions and legacy of John Brown, the Quakers and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper in the fight against slavery, violence, injustice and inequality.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Philadelphia City Council calls for the posthumous pardon of John Brown for his heroic efforts to free four million enslaved African-Americans that helped start the war to end slavery in the United States.

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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 seventeenth of December, 2009

Anna C. Verna
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Michael A. Decker
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmembers Jones and Green

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