

City of Philadelphia



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

(Resolution No. 050868)

RESOLUTION

Honoring the memory of Octavius V. Catto.

WHEREAS, Octavius V. Catto, born in 1840 in Philadelphia, was one of our City's most courageous and convincing civil rights leaders of all time; and

WHEREAS, Catto was noted for his scholarship and teaching at the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia (the forerunner of Cheyney University), and was the founder of such prominent institutions as the Banneker Literary Institute, the Equal Rights League and the Pythian Baseball Club, the finest baseball team of its time in the City; and

WHEREAS, Catto was largely responsible for the adoption of the City's "Bill of Rights for Equal Access to Public Transportation," and was an ardent supporter of the Lincoln Administration, the efforts of the Republican Party to improve civil rights, and the struggle to end the scourge of slavery; and

WHEREAS, Catto was a Union Army Major during the Civil War and a leader in recruiting Black troops to fight for their emancipation, and with the assistance of the Union League, helped raise and train eleven regiments of "Colored Troops" from the area; and

WHEREAS, Shortly after Pennsylvania's adoption of the 15th Amendment in 1870 assured Black men the right to vote, Catto worked tirelessly to register Blacks and get them to the polls, despite street violence and murderous riots led by Irish immigrants who were supporters of the Democrats; and

WHEREAS, Catto's involvement as a leading advocate for African American participation in the political process - registering thousands of African Americans and encouraging them to vote - was the cause of his death; and

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WHEREAS, When Catto went to vote on October 10, 1871, a Democratic Party operative, Frank Kelly, fired two pistol shots into his back, killing him just steps from his home at 8th and South Streets; and

WHEREAS, Catto was given a full military funeral, attracting thousands of mourners of all races, the largest funeral the City had seen at that time and for a long time since; now therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we honor the memory of Octavius V. Catto.

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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 twentieth of October, 2005.

Anna C. Verna
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Patricia Rafferty
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmembers Kenney, Mariano, Blackwell and Nutter

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Kenney, Mariano, Blackwell, Nutter, Council President Verna, Councilmembers DiCicco, Tasco, Goode, Clarke, Ramos, Rizzo, Kelly, Krajewski, Miller, O'Neill and Reynolds Brown