

Legislation Text

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Honoring and congratulating Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor for being named a 2021 MacArthur “Genius” Fellow for her innovative scholarship on Black social movements and racial inequality in the United States and her critical examination of race, exploitation, and redlining in American housing policies and practices.

WHEREAS, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, a Philadelphia resident and Professor of African American Studies at Princeton University, has used her trailblazing scholarship to document how Black communities have organized against and challenged policies which deepened racial inequality in American society; and

WHEREAS, On September 28, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation named Dr. Taylor a 2021 MacArthur Fellow for her work analyzing the political and economic forces underlying racial inequality and the role of social movements in transforming society; and

WHEREAS, The MacArthur fellowship is awarded to “extraordinarily talented and creative individuals as an investment in their potential” and is intended to encourage recipients to pursue their creative, intellectual, and professional inclinations; and

WHEREAS, Taylor began her career as an organizer in Chicago, where she was instrumental in challenging evictions and the disproportionate harm they cause to Black and Brown families; and

WHEREAS, After witnessing the extreme segregation in Chicago, Taylor enrolled in graduate studies at Northwestern University to further study housing disparities. Taylor’s doctoral dissertation went beyond existing analyses of racist housing policies to investigate the ways in which the private real estate sector deeply influenced government entities to extract profit from Black communities, despite laws banning housing discrimination; and

WHEREAS, This dissertation laid the foundation for her book, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership*, which examines how the capitalist underpinnings of housing in the United States has reproduced racial inequalities and denied Black Americans the benefits of homeownership, including through patterns of predatory inclusion. Taylor’s work documents the myriad ways that homeownership for Black Americans has failed to function as a vehicle for wealth and thus rejects the belief that homeownership will ever be a “cornerstone of political, social, and economic freedom for African Americans.” The book was a semifinalist for the 2019 National Book Award and a 2020 finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for history; and

WHEREAS, In addition to her transformative work on housing policy, Taylor has written prolifically on the history of Black movements challenging the prevailing social, political, and economic order in pursuit of Black Liberation. Her book, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, connects a history of violent policing to deeply rooted systemic violence against Black people, chronicling decades of disinvestment in Black communities, the acceleration of mass incarceration, and the failure of politicians to meet the needs of their Black constituents; and

WHEREAS, More recently, Taylor has written on the pandemic-exacerbated housing crisis, chronicling the work of grassroots organizations as they attempt to disrupt mass displacement caused by the for-profit housing model; and

WHEREAS, Taylor's expertise has advanced housing and tenant justice in the City of Philadelphia. In support of Philadelphia City Council's Emergency Housing Protection Act, Taylor wrote: "It is simply irresponsible to expect people who have been barred from working by state mandate, or who were already suffering from poverty, to simply produce rents - that they can't pay now - weeks or months from now." Taylor's fierce commitment to using her scholarship to spur social change will undoubtedly alter the Philadelphia housing landscape, especially for low-income renters, for years to come; and

WHEREAS, Taylor's work has been nothing short of prolific and has earned her numerous accolades. She is a regular contributor to the *New Yorker* where she writes about Black history and politics, racial inequality, and social movements and radical activism. She has published in the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Paris Review*, and *Jacobin*, among other publications. She is editor of *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*, which won the Lambda Literary Award for LGBTQ nonfiction in 2018. She was named among the top 100 most influential African Americans in the United States by *The Root* as well as the top 100 changemakers by *Essence*. Additionally, she was awarded a 2021 Guggenheim Fellowship and was appointed as a distinguished lecturer for the Organization of American Historians; and

WHEREAS, Taylor has been a fierce advocate throughout her life, from fighting to end the death penalty in New York to calling for widespread cancellation of rent during the pandemic. Her voice has become a lodestar for those aiming to understand the seeming intractability of racism in American institutions while seeking new visions of justice and democracy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Honors and congratulates Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor for being named a 2021 MacArthur "Genius" Fellow for her innovative scholarship on Black social movements and racial inequality in the United States and her critical examination of race, exploitation, and redlining in American housing policies and practices.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Dr. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor as evidence of the sincere appreciation and recognition of this legislative body.