

TOWN OF PORTSMOUTH, RI
RESOLUTION #2020-xx-xx

RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING AND HONORING AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY IN
RHODE ISLAND AND URGING THE ADOPTION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN
EDUCATION IN RHODE ISLAND'S K-12 SCHOOLS STARTING IN THE
2021-2022 ACADEMIC YEAR

WHEREAS, Rhode Island holds a unique place in history with the establishment of its Royal Charter on July 8, 1663, that marked the first time that a sovereign leader signed a charter guaranteeing that individuals within a society were free to practice the religion of their choice without any interference from the government; and

WHEREAS, as Rhode Island became the first American Colony to declare its independence from Great Britain on May 4, 1776, it was also at the same time in history, one of the most active slave ports in British North America transporting thousands of enslaved Africans to the Colony, with the first documented slave ship arriving at Newport in 1696; and

WHEREAS, the contributions of African heritage people from all walks of life and their endeavors to learn and thrive throughout history and make unforgettable marks in our State and Nation as artists, scientists, educators, business people, influential thinkers, members of the faith community, athletes, and political and governmental leaders, reflects the greatness of the State of Rhode Island; and

WHEREAS, the 1696 Historical Commission was signed into law on July 1, 2014 and was tasked with developing a comprehensive African American history curriculum for Rhode Island public schools from kindergarten through grade 12 and said Commission led by our Secretary of State and comprised of scholars, civic and educational leaders, developed and submitted a comprehensive report that included units of instruction and educational resources; and

WHEREAS, as an important resource for building history curriculum, the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, the oldest African heritage society, has an extensive collection of documents, photographs, and artifacts from the African heritage people of Rhode Island and works in collaboration with other historical societies across the state; and

WHEREAS, with the unifying call for Black Lives Matter, racial reconciliation, social justice, and citizen equity being reflected across the state, nation and world, the establishment of an African Heritage history curriculum in Rhode Island is long overdue; and

WHEREAS, remaining hopeful and confident about the path ahead, and a time to acknowledge the courageous fight for the rights, liberties, and freedoms for all Americans, the Portsmouth Town Council encourages all citizens, educators, students, and families across the city and state to learn about the heritage and achievements of African Americans through appropriate educational programs and learning experiences.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Portsmouth Town Council does hereby adopt this resolution to honor and recognize our town and state's great history and the tremendous contributions made by citizens of African heritage and call on the Rhode Island General Assembly and Honorable Governor of the State of Rhode Island to enact legislation that authorizes the Rhode Island Department of Education to include African Heritage history education in all public K-12 schools, starting in the 2021-22 Academic Year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be sent to all other Rhode Island cities and towns urging them to pass similar resolutions and support this worthwhile learning endeavor.

Approved by Town Council action this 27th day of July, 2020.

Kevin M. Aguiar, President
Portsmouth Town Council

ATTEST: _____
Jennifer M. West, Town Clerk