

RESOLUTION NO. RS2019-1866

A resolution to recognize April 19th as a municipal day of observance that honors a victory of Non-Violent Resistance and also the brave actions of Z. Alexander Looby and local Civil Rights advocates in the battle against Jim Crow laws.

WHEREAS, April 19th, 1960 was the tipping point of a campaign organized by the Nashville Student Movement and the Southern Christian Leadership Council to desegregate local restaurants and department stores; and

WHEREAS, Nashville was the first major city in the South to desegregate public facilities; and

WHEREAS, recognition of this strategic victory of non-violent direct action and paying homage to its visionaries, organizers, and participants who sacrificed their bodies and sometimes their lives is long overdue; and

WHEREAS, this march exemplified to us that love of neighbor is not passive, but stands up in the face of injustice and remains true to non-violent ethics and to a vision of a Beloved Community that values the dignity and worth of every human being; and

WHEREAS, a coalition of students from Tennessee Agriculture and Industry State (now Tennessee State University), Fisk, American Baptist College, Vanderbilt, and Meharry Medical College trained for six months with James Lawson in Gandhian tactics of non-violent protest before embarking upon a long-term sit-in crusade; and

WHEREAS, we should celebrate the inestimable value and contribution of Nashville's historically black colleges and universities in the shaping of our city; and

WHEREAS, Z. Alexander Looby, a prominent civil rights lawyer, who was retained for legal counsel by the Nashville Student Movement, and whose home was bombed by white opponents on the morning of April 19th, 1960 in reprisal for his facilitation of the students' release from prison, left a legacy of supporting students and equity for all; and

WHEREAS, in response to this hate crime -- the bombing that destroyed Looby's home and blew out windows at Meharry Hospital across the street -- several thousand students walked out from their classrooms in North Nashville and marched down Jefferson Street in silence to confront Mayor Ben West at the Davidson County courthouse; and

WHEREAS, the surmounting pressure from this ongoing non-violent campaign pressured Mayor West to undertake and enforce legal desegregation of Nashville businesses; and

WHEREAS, on the following day, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. visited Nashville saying, "I came to Nashville not to bring inspiration, but to gain inspiration from the great movement that has taken place in this community;" and

WHEREAS, their success solidified the Nashville Student Movement's commitment to non-violence and gave the students confidence to take up Freedom Rides, challenging Jim Crow restrictions on interstate bus travel throughout the South; and

WHEREAS, the public observance of April 19th as a day of victory for Non-Violent Resistance will be a civic reminder of the importance of advocacy and will be a day when the people of our city can draw wisdom, strength, and hope from the students, lawyers, and clergy who fought and continue

to fight the long battle for integration, uniting in the moral conviction that all human beings deserve to be treated with dignity and have inalienable rights; and

WHEREAS, it is important to lift up this day so that Nashville's diverse cultures and faith traditions work together to abolish systems of hate, dehumanization, and economic slavery and to live together in prosperity and peace.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY:

Section 1. The Metropolitan Council hereby goes on record as honoring the life and achievements of attorney Z. Alexander Looby, the Nashville Student Movement, and other Civil Rights advocates that participated in the first "Walk In Love" to the courthouse on April 19th, 1960.

Section 2. That the Metropolitan Council hereby goes on record as recognizing April 19th of each year as Non-violent Resistance Appreciation Day, honoring persons who advocated or who are advocating for equity in our city.

Section 3. This Resolution shall take effect from and after its adoption, the welfare of The Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.

INTRODUCED BY:

Brenda Haywood

John Cooper
Members of Council

Electronic Signature Page

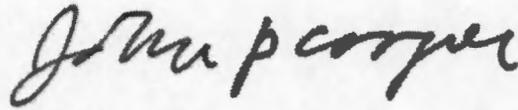
(Attach to Legislation Pursuant to Rule 8 of the Council Rules of Procedure)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brenda Haywood", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Brenda Haywood
Councilmember, District 3

Electronic Signature Page

(Attach to Legislation Pursuant to Rule 8 of the Council Rules of Procedure)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John P. Cooper". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "P".

John Cooper
Councilman At-Large