**A** **CONCURRENT RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR THE COURAGE AND SACRIFICE OF THE ELLOREE 21 IN ORANGEBURG COUNTY, A GROUP OF TEACHERS IN ELLOREE WHO CHANGED THE COURSE OF HISTORY OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN SOUTH CAROLINA, AND TO COMMEND THEIR ROLE IN SECURING EQUALITY FOR AFRICAN‑AMERICAN CITIZENS OF OUR STATE.

Whereas, in 1947, Harry and Eliza Briggs filed a lawsuit against the school district of Clarendon County, along with Reverend J. A. Delaine and others from the county, to seek redress about discrimination and segregation in education there; and

Whereas, their case was joined with other cases around the United States in what came to be widely known as the Supreme Court case Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas; and

Whereas, after that case struck down segregated public schools in 1954, the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum, but Orangeburg County suffered a serious setback when the South Carolina General Assembly passed a law on April 19, 1956, that forbade state employees from being members of the NAACP; and

Whereas, on May 18, 1956, the Orangeburg newspaper reported that twenty‑one Negro teachers had resigned from their teaching positions in Elloree, some teachers simply refusing to say whether they were members of the NAACP, and others refusing to fill out the required application; and

Whereas, questions on the application included, “Do you belong to the NAACP? Do you support the NAACP in any way (money or attendance at meetings)? Do any of your family members belong to the NAACP? Do you believe in the aims of the NAACP? Do you favor integration in the schools? If you should join the NAACP while employed in this school, please notify the superintendent and the chairman of the board of trustees”; and

Whereas, the teachers at Elloree garnered national media attention, but they never had a plan or strategy to deal with the prohibition against NAACP membership for state, county, and municipal employees; and

Whereas, by expressing their constitutional rights, these teachers suffered serious financial and career challenges for themselves and their families for years to come; and

Whereas, Principal Charles E. Davis and his wife, Rosa, stood with these teachers for their rights, and Civil Rights activist Septema Clark and eleven others in Charleston County also refused to renounce their memberships and were fired; and

Whereas, Ms. Clark urged African‑American teachers in South Carolina to show solidarity, but that did not happen; and

Whereas, before the case seeking redress for the teachers could be heard by the United States Supreme Court, the South Carolina General Assembly repealed the law pertaining to state workers’ holding NAACP membership in 1957; and

Whereas, many of the twenty‑one Elloree teachers looked for teaching positions for years before any school would risk hiring them, causing them severe financial hardships and emotional and mental stress; and

Whereas, the South Carolina General Assembly appreciates the courage and determination of this band of brave teachers who sacrificed so much for the cause of Civil Rights across our State and nation. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Senate, the House of Representatives concurring:

That the members of the South Carolina General Assembly, by this resolution, recognize and honor the courage and sacrifice of the Elloree 21 in Orangeburg County, a group of teachers in Elloree who changed the course of history of the civil rights movement in South Carolina, and commend their role in securing equality for African‑American citizens of our State.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be provided to Richard Reed, president of the Orangeburg Historical and Genealogical Society.

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