**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE THE COURAGE OF THE “FRIENDSHIP NINE” AND THE HARDSHIPS IMPOSED ON THEM AS A RESULT OF THEIR CONVICTIONS FOR SITTING AT A WHITES‑ONLY LUNCH COUNTER IN 1961 DURING THE CIVIL RIGHTS ERA, TO COMMEND THE REVERSAL OF THEIR CONVICTIONS FOR THEIR PEACEFUL, NONVIOLENT DEMONSTRATION, AND TO HONOR THEIR IMPORTANT ROLE IN BRINGING ABOUT MEANINGFUL CHANGE IN THIS COUNTRY.

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives apologize to the Friendship Nine for the struggle they endured to gain Civil Rights in the Palmetto State; and

Whereas, on January 31, 1961, David Williamson, Jr.; Willie T. “Dub” Massey; Clarence Graham; James Wells; Willie McCleod; Mack Workman; John Gaines; Charles Taylor; and the late Robert McCullough, all students from Friendship Junior College in Rock Hill, along with Civil Rights’ organizer Thomas Gaither, were arrested for sitting at a whites‑only lunch counter at McCrory’s department store in downtown Rock Hill; and

Whereas, only Charles Taylor allowed the NAACP to pay his bail so he would not lose his athletic scholarship; and

Whereas, rather than pay the one‑hundred‑dollar fine, the other men chose to spend thirty days of hard labor on the York County Prison Farm, an act which sparked the Civil Rights strategy of “Jail, No Bail”; and

Whereas, attorney Ernest Finney, who would later become the first black chief justice of the State of South Carolina Supreme Court, stood by their side in the courtroom on that ill‑fated day in 1961, and almost fifty‑four years later to the day, the Honorable Ernest Finney, now 83, stood to represent the men once again, this time to seek a reversal of the 1961 decision; and

Whereas, Circuit Court Judge John C. Hayes, whose uncle originally sentenced the men back in 1961, vacated their 1961 convictions in a Rock Hill courtroom on Wednesday, January 28, 2015, in an attempt to right a past wrong against these Civil Rights’ heroes; and

Whereas, Sixteenth Circuit Solicitor Kevin Brackett also requested that the convictions be vacated by the court, and after Judge Hayes read the decision, Solicitor Brackett asked that the records not be expunged so that the courageous actions of these men would be preserved forever; and

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives are grateful for the courage and tenacity of the brave sons of South Carolina known as the Friendship Nine and for the impact they have had on the Civil Rights Movement in our State and across the nation. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, recognize the courage of the “Friendship Nine” and the hardships imposed on them as a result of their convictions for sitting at a whites‑only lunch counter in 1961 during the Civil Rights Era, commend the reversal of their convictions for their peaceful, nonviolent demonstration, and honor their important role in bringing about meaningful change in our country.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be provided to David Williamson, Jr.; Willie T. “Dub” Massey; Clarence Graham; James Wells; Willie McCleod; Mack Workman; John Gaines; Charles Taylor; Thomas Gaither; and the family of the late Robert McCullough.

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