**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO COMMEMORATE THE FEARLESS ACTIONS OF HEROIC SOUTH CAROLINIANS WHO PROTESTED THROUGH CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE DURING THE 1960S TO SECURE RIGHTS NOW COMMON TO ALL AND TO REMEMBER THOSE WHO WERE ARRESTED AS THEY ATTEMPTED TO REALIZE THOSE RIGHTS IN FLORENCE.

Whereas, early in 1960, the NAACP initiated a program of civil disobedience throughout the Southeast to obtain equal services and to work toward abolishing segregation; and

Whereas, in South Carolina, these civil disobedience protests sought to draw attention to the unequal service given to African Americans at Woolworth and Kress Department Store lunch counters; and

Whereas, inspired by the lunch counter demonstrations in Greensboro, North Carolina, and by Friendship College students in Rock Hill, South Carolina, planning for the protest commenced under the guidance of Rev. Edward H. Thomas, Youth Advisor for the youth chapter of the Florence Branch of the NAACP. The demonstration took place in Florence on Thursday and Friday, March 3 and 4, 1960; and

Whereas, at approximately two o’clock on the first afternoon, some twenty‑five to thirty protesters marched from Trinity Baptist Church and entered the Kress Department Store, several of them taking seats at the lunch counter; and

Whereas, the protesters were refused service, remained seated, and were asked to leave. Some white customers left the lunch counter abruptly, but none exchanged words with the protesters; and

Whereas, after the police were alerted and the Florence chief of police arrived at the store, store management and police approached the lunch counter and announced that the lunch counter and store were closing. Lights in the store were turned off, and the protesters were obliged to leave; and

Whereas, the next day the determined group reconvened and agreed that a second attempt should be made with more participants so that the purpose of the protest would not go unnoticed; and

Whereas, demonstrators, who were mostly high school students, made signs with slogans such as, “2, 4, 6, 8, we want to integrate,” and “What happened to democracy?” That afternoon, sixty to seventy individuals split into two groups, with the intent that each group would march on the two separate entrances of the Kress Department Store; and

Whereas, the group approaching the south entrance was cut off by police who had been ordered to wait in anticipation of a second attempt. The undeterred group then turned around and rejoined the protesters approaching the other entrance. The enlarged group was led on the protest march by Wilson High School student John Miller, vice president of the Florence NAACP youth division; and

Whereas, when students attempted to enter the building, police inside were poised to intercept the demonstration while police outside surrounded the group and confiscated the protest signs. Nearly fifty members of the group were arrested, the youngest being twelve‑year‑old Ann Nelson. They were escorted out the back door of the department store and taken to the city jail, located directly behind the Kress building; and

Whereas, the protestors who were arrested included John George; John Wesley Miller, Jr.; Ernest White; Cecil Gunter; Edward James McIver; Michael Maxwell; Samuel Green; Warren James; Leroy Ellerbe; Conyers Scippio; Cephus Jackson; Moses Smoot; Leroy McClain; Samuel Briggs; Frank Williams; Horace Shannon; Nicola Gee; Annie Henderson; Claudia Echoles; Betty Rush; Dorothy Brown; Charles Garner; Harold Fleming; Alphonso Kirven; Lewis Brown; Willie Gurley; Herman E. Frederick; Eddie Lawrence; Earl Hinds; Freddy Lawrence; Geraldine McBride; Claudia Woods; Ramanda Kirven; Mary Holloway; Joseph Strother; Norman Hankins; Arthur Jones; William Thomas; Ann E. Nelson; Gloria Ann Singletary; Susannah Thomas; Barbara Gregg; Margaret Fullwood; Reginald Scott; Nathanial Barrett; Lavern Dancy, William Andrews, and Thomas Douglas; and

Whereas, males and females were separated and searched, and mug shots were taken. They were placed in deplorable cells in separate quarters of the jail until their release, the majority of whom were released by midnight; and

Whereas, on April 20, 1960, those who were arrested were tried and found guilty of parading without a permit and fined; and

Whereas, NAACP civil rights Attorney Matthew J. Perry and Florence Attorney William Bennett appealed the subsequent arrests and convictions for violation of the City’s Parade Ordinance to the South Carolina Supreme Court. The court overturned the convictions in 1962; and

Whereas, after the 1960 demonstrations, the Kress lunch counter in Florence closed for nearly ten years, reopening in the early 1970s with equal service for whites and African Americans; and

Whereas, the House of Representatives deeply appreciates the courage of the young people who were willing to engage in civil disobedience and undergo arrest in order to enjoy the blessings of liberty enshrined in the Constitution of the United States. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, commemorate the fearless actions of heroic South Carolinians who protested through civil disobedience during the 1960s to secure rights now common to all and remember those who were arrested as they attempted to realize those rights in Florence.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Mr. John W. Miller, Jr.

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