

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 20

BY SENATOR PETERSON

A RESOLUTION

To recognize the 120th anniversary of the landmark United States Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson* and encourage President Barack Obama to bestow the United States Presidential Medal of Freedom posthumously upon Homer Adolph Plessy.

WHEREAS, this year marks the 120th anniversary of the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, the case that marked the first post-reconstruction use of the Fourteenth Amendment's "equal protection" provision in a legal challenge to segregation; and

WHEREAS, in 1896, through the landmark *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, the Supreme Court established the doctrine of separate-but-equal as the law of the land; and

WHEREAS, the NAACP incorporated Mr. Plessy's 14th Amendment arguments before the United States Supreme Court in the 1954 landmark case, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, in which the Supreme Court overturned the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision and declared that state laws establishing separate public schools for black and white students to be unconstitutional; and

WHEREAS, Homer Adolph Plessy was born on March 17, 1862, in New Orleans, Louisiana, to a family of mixed racial heritage who were considered free people of color; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Plessy worked as a shoemaker and also took up social activism and in 1887 served as vice president of the Justice, Protective, Educational, and Social Club to reform the New Orleans public education system; and

WHEREAS, On June 7, 1892, Mr. Plessy was removed from the East Louisiana railroad train, arrested at the corner of Royal and Press streets in New Orleans, and charged with violating the 1890 Louisiana Separate Car Act that separated railroad passengers by race; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Plessy's act of civil disobedience was a test case organized by the Citizens Committee, whose philosophy and strategies inspired the Civil Rights movement of the 20th century, which aimed to overturn segregation laws that were being enacted across the South; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Plessy passed away on March 1, 1925, at the age of sixty-two, and his courage, commitment, and sacrifice opened the gates of the Civil Rights movement across the South; and

WHEREAS, we join in support to encourage President Barack Obama to bestow the United States Presidential Medal of Freedom posthumously upon Mr. Plessy in recognition of the impact his fight for justice had on the advancement of blacks in America and the immense effect his life had on making the country a better place.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby encourage President Barack Obama to bestow the United States Presidential Medal of Freedom posthumously upon Homer Adolph Plessy.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE