



Office of the City Clerk

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Legislation Details (With Text)

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Title: Commendation for Village Leadership Academy students for petition to rename Douglas Park to Anna and Frederick Douglass Park
Sponsors: Lightfoot, Lori E.
Indexes: COMMENDATIONS & DECLARATIONS
Attachments: 1. R2020-795.pdf

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
10/7/2020	1	City Council	Introduced (Agreed Calendar)	
10/7/2020	1	City Council	Adopted	Pass

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, On September 9, 2020, the Chicago Park District Board voted unanimously at a special meeting to rename Douglas Park as Anna and Frederick Douglass Park to commemorate abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who escaped slavery to become a well-known speaker and author advocating for equality and human rights, and his wife Anna-Murray Douglass, who helped her husband escape slavery; and

WHEREAS, Douglas Park is located at 1401 S. Sacramento Avenue in what is now a predominantly African American community. The park was originally named after Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas, a slave owner, who argued against abolishing slavery in favor of allowing voters to decide its fate. Douglas lost the 1860 presidential election to Abraham Lincoln; and

WHEREAS, Students at the Village Leadership Academy, with the support of their teachers and parents, were instrumental in persuading the Chicago Park District to take the unprecedented step of renaming an existing park and establishing processes and procedures for renaming other City parks; and

WHEREAS, Beginning in 2016, a group of remarkable, civic-minded students at the Village Leadership Academy launched a campaign to change the name of Douglas Park to honor the celebrated abolitionists Frederick Douglass and Anna-Murray Douglass; and

WHEREAS, In December of 2019, these students formally submitted a proposal to the Chicago Park District to rename Douglas Park. The proposal included more than 4,000 signatures; and

WHEREAS, During the ensuing 45-day public comment period, the students took their crusade to rename the park directly to community members. The students peacefully campaigned in parks and subway stations to build support for this initiative to right the wrongs of history, to express support for racial and social justice and equity, and to reclaim the park for the community. Largely due to their efforts, the proposal to rename Douglas Park won the day. City residents made their voices loud and clear in support of the change; and

WHEREAS, The thoughtfulness, diligence and dedication with which the students at the Village Leadership Academy pursued their successful effort to rename Douglas Park as Anna and Frederick Douglass Park serve as a powerful testament to the importance and effectiveness of student advocacy, and as an inspiring reminder to all Chicagoans, regardless of age, of our inherent ability as residents of this great City to serve as meaningful agents of change; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Mayor and Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, assembled this seventh day of October, 2020, do hereby commend the students at Village Leadership Academy for their outstanding leadership and vision in facilitating the renaming of Douglas Park to Anna and Frederick Douglass Park; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be presented to the Village Leadership Academy, and to the students there who petitioned for the renaming of Douglas Park as Anna and Frederick Douglass Park, as a token of our appreciation and esteem.