



CITY OF NEW YORK
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Resolution to Support Exhibit in Central Park to Commemorate the Exonerated Five and Social Justice

WHEREAS The Exonerated Five, formerly known as The Central Park Five, are five black and Latino teenagers from Harlem who were wrongfully convicted and prosecuted for the brutal and vicious raping of a white woman in Central Park in 1989. The five teenagers; Antron McCray (15), Kevin Richardson (15), Raymond Santana (14), Korey Wise (16), and Yusef Salaam (15) were subjected to life devastating consequences as a result of this miscarriage of justice. The minors were detained for hours before their parents were called. They were coerced into making confessions to the rape and beating of the female jogger Trisha Meili, after many hours of aggressive interrogation at the hands of seasoned homicide detectives. The youth later recanted, plead not guilty and insisted on their innocence. The four were then tried as youth, while the eldest as an adult under New York laws of the day and convicted, despite inconsistent and inaccurate confessions, DNA evidence that excluded them, and no eyewitness accounts that connected them to the victim. The five youth served their complete sentences; between 6 and 13 years, before another man, serial rapist Matias Reyes, admitted to the crime. DNA testing substantiated Reyes' confession. The experience not only impacted the lives of the youth and their families but had resounding ramifications throughout the Harlem community which are still being felt today; and

WHEREAS In May 1989, real estate developer (who was sworn in as U.S. President in January 2017), Donald Trump took out full-page ads in The New York Times, the New York Daily News, the New York Post and New York Newsday with the headline, "Bring Back The Death Penalty. Bring Back Our Police!"; calling for the execution of the innocent youth; and

WHEREAS The brutal beating and rape of a white woman in New York City's Central Park provoked public outrage and sensational headlines during the prosecution and conviction of the five youth defendants, promoting a proliferation of racial stereotyping and stigma to the youth of the Harlem community as well as nation-wide; and

WHEREAS On December 19th, 2002, New York State Supreme Court Justice Charles J. Tejada vacated the convictions of the five previously accused youth. He did so based on new evidence: a shocking confession from a serial rapist, Matias Reyes, and a positive DNA substantiating match to evidence found at the crime scene. The young men, who had survived a horrific injustice and violation of their young lives, were exonerated. A year later, the men filed civil lawsuits against

the City of New York, and the police officers and prosecutors who had worked toward their conviction. On June 19th, 2014, NYC agreed to a settlement; and

WHEREAS When the five former teens convicted in the case were finally exonerated, many community leaders decried the miscarriage of justice that sent the Central Park Five to prison. The case became a flashpoint for illustrating racial disparities in sentencing and the inequities at the heart of the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS The experience of the Exonerated Five and their families was not exceptional. It fits an historical pattern of unjust arrests and wrongful convictions of black and Latino young men in the United States. We must understand this pattern to be able to channel the recently newfound interest in the case into the necessary systemic reforms; and

WHEREAS The Manhattan Community Board 10 Parks and Recreation Committee has been addressing a community-based advocacy, first voiced by the community on October 2nd, 2019, for the installation of an educational exhibit based on social justice and a commemoration to the resiliency of the Exonerated Five to be located in Central Park; and

WHEREAS The Manhattan Community Board 10 Executive Committee authorized the formation of a Parks and Recreation subcommittee on March 25th, 2020 to facilitate the process to install an educational and permanent exhibit, based on social justice and commemorating the resiliency of the Exonerated Five to be located in Central Park; and

WHEREAS the Manhattan Community Board 10 Parks and Recreation subcommittee will facilitate a process designed to discern through a diverse dialogue information that will inform the format and content of a permanent exhibit to be located in NYC Central Park. The subcommittee will flesh out objectives, goals and corresponding stakeholders and community partners to bring the project to fruition; and

WHEREAS The Manhattan Community Board 10 Parks and Recreation Committee has facilitated discussions with community stakeholders, elected officials, city and state agencies and not-for-profits to solidify a broad-based and diverse subcommittee to bring to fruition a permanent exhibit to be located in Central Park on March 11th, 2020, April 8th, 2020 and May 26th, 2020; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Manhattan Community Board 10 supports the installation of a permanent exhibit to commemorate the Exonerated Five to be located in NYC Central Park.