

Town of Chapel Hill

Proclamation

WHEREAS, the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution which abolished slavery, except as punishment for a crime, passed in 1865; and

WHEREAS, that same year, North Carolina and other southern states enacted black codes which denied African Americans rights such as the right to serve on juries, the right to testify against whites and the right to vote; and

WHEREAS, in response to these actions by southern states, the United States House of Representatives introduced and proposed the 15th Amendment; and

WHEREAS, the United States ratified the 15th Amendment to the Constitution in 1870 which reads "the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude"; and

WHEREAS, when white supremacist legislators regained control of the North Carolina General Assembly, in 1899, the General Assembly approved a state constitutional amendment instituting a poll tax, literacy test and a grandfather clause which effectively prohibited African American men and later, African American women, from voting; and

WHEREAS, in March 1965, peaceful protesters marching for African Americans' right to vote were brutally beaten and some were killed by Alabama state troopers on what was later called "Bloody Sunday"; and

WHEREAS, these protests forced President Lyndon Johnson and Congress to determine that the existing federal anti-discrimination laws were not sufficient to overcome the resistance by state officials to the enforcement of the 15th Amendment; and

WHEREAS, on August 6, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law; and

WHEREAS, the Voting Rights Act applied a nationwide prohibition against the denial or abridgment of the right to vote to literacy tests and it contained special enforcement provisions targeted at those areas of the country - including parts of North Carolina - where Congress believed the potential for discrimination to be the greatest; and

WHEREAS, without the aforementioned special enforcement provisions which were struck down in 2013 by the United States Supreme Court in *Shelby County v. Holder*, a number of states have since implemented laws which curtail and limit the exercise of the right to vote.

NOW, THEREFORE, we, the Chapel Hill Town Council, do hereby recognize the anniversaries of

The Voting Rights Act and The Fifteenth Amendment

as important milestones in the struggle for civil rights in our country and encourage everyone to tune into the Orange County Community Remembrance Coalition's Zoom Webinar on Thursday, August 6, 2020 from 6:00-7:30 pm - <https://www.facebook.com/events/573814776621650/> - to learn more about these watershed laws.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the fight to guarantee citizen access to the ballot continues and the Town urges every citizen to vote in the upcoming election this fall.

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND THE SEAL OF THE TOWN OF
CHAPEL HILL, ON THIS THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF JULY IN
THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND TWENTY.



