

**RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_-23**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MARTINEZ  
SUPPORTING THE LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL EFFORTS TO EXONERATE  
THE PORT CHICAGO 50**

**WHEREAS**, on July 17, 1944, there was a large waterfront munitions explosion at the Port Chicago Naval Magazine which killed more than 320 sailors, more than 200 of whom were Black; and

**WHEREAS**, the explosion also injured 390 others, including 226 Black enlisted men; and

**WHEREAS**, before the explosion, these men were working significant hours with munitions continuously being loaded despite little to no training; and

**WHEREAS**, the specific cause of the explosion was never officially determined by a court of inquiry, and the blame was placed on the shoulders of the men who died in the explosion; and

**WHEREAS**, when ordered to return to loading ammunitions, more than 200 sailors refused to return to work due to the unsafe working conditions; and

**WHEREAS**, these sailors courageously advocated for safety for themselves and others by requesting adequate training and equipment before returning to work, and in response, the Navy identified fifty Black sailors as the leaders of the organized action; and

**WHEREAS**, the Navy charged these individuals with mutiny, and this decision resulted in one of the most significant mutiny trials in U.S. military history; and

**WHEREAS**, the fifty sailors were supported by then NAACP Chief Counsel Thurgood Marshall who through the press raised the racist nature of the trial and called into question the Navy's segregationist policies; and

**WHEREAS**, this trial was a major catalyst for the United States Navy to desegregate following the war; and

**WHEREAS**, the outcome of the trial wrongly convicted the Port Chicago 50 of mutiny, and they were sentenced to prison; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Marshall's appeal of their convictions was officially denied; and

**WHEREAS**, there have been several attempts over the years to appeal the decision, but all have failed; and

**WHEREAS**, starting in the 1990s, former Congressman George Miller worked to preserve the history of the Port Chicago 50 and worked towards their exoneration, and in 1992, his

legislation designated the site of the Port Chicago Naval Magazine as a national memorial park, which is managed by the National Park Service; and

**WHEREAS**, the East Bay Regional Parks District has named the park the Thurgood Marshall Regional Park – Home of the Port Chicago 50, which honors the courage and legacy of the Port Chicago 50 and all those who sacrificed their lives in our nation’s ongoing struggle for social justice, racial equality, and workers’ rights; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2022, Congressman Mark DeSaulnier, whose District includes the Thurgood Marshall Regional Park in Concord, California, successfully passed a measure that would direct the Secretary of the United States Navy to publicly exonerate the Port Chicago 50, and this effort was included in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) (H.R. 7900) which passed the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 329-to-101.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the City Council of the City of Martinez as follows:

Section 1. The City Council of the City of Martinez does hereby support these and all efforts to exonerate the Port Chicago 50 and recognize their service to our country.

Section 2. The City Council of the City of Martinez recognizes the efforts that this case presents in our nation’s struggle for social justice, racial equity, and workers’ rights.

Section 3. The City Council of the City of Martinez affirms support for all future efforts which urge the President and Congress of the United States to take all necessary actions to restore honor to and rectify the mistreatment by the United States Military of any sailors who were unjustly blamed for and convicted of mutiny after the Port Chicago disaster on July 17, 1944.

Section 4. This resolution shall become effective immediately upon its passage and adoption.

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**I HEREBY CERTIFY** that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution duly adopted by the City Council of the City of Martinez at a Regular Meeting of said Council held on the 19th day of July, 2023, by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

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RICHARD G. HERNANDEZ, CITY CLERK  
CITY OF MARTINEZ