

Port Chicago 50

WHEREAS, in July, 1944, the United States of America was actively involved in World War II; and

WHEREAS, in 1994, the United States Armed Forces were highly segregated with the only positions open to African-Americans being menial jobs; and

WHEREAS, at the Port Chicago Naval Magazine in Port Chicago, California, mostly African-American sailors loaded ammunitions hand-to-hand, or on hand trucks or carts on to cargo ships 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; and

WHEREAS, on July 17, 1944, while loading munitions on to two naval cargo ships, there was a major explosion which killed 320 persons and injured 390 others, most of whom where African-Americans; and

WHEREAS, about a month later, because of unsafe working conditions, hundreds of sailors refused to load munitions on to cargo ships in a incident now referred to as the Port Chicago Mutiny; and

WHEREAS, as result of their refusal to load any more munitions, fifty of the men, mostly African-Americans, were convicted of mutiny and sentenced to long prison terms; and

WHEREAS, it was the Navy policy back then to put the majority of African-Americans into highly segregated shore duty; and

WHEREAS, the unsafe munitions handling practices and lack of training led to the catastrophic detonation; and

WHEREAS, the manner in which 50 of the 258 men were singled out as mutineers was unfair; and

WHEREAS, on December 1999, one of the surviving three sailors, Freddie Meeks, was pardoned by President Bill Clinton.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the NAACP demands that the remaining sailors and their descendants be compensated for the lost wages and benefits of the wrongly convicted sailors and the U.S. President give them an honorable discharge and a full pardon; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the NAACP demands that any of the convicted sailors who were discharged dishonorably be granted honorable discharge immediately by the United States Navy.