

RESOLUTIONS

**CONSIDERED BY THE NAACP
RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE PENDING
REVIEW BY THE DELEGATES DURING THE
114th ANNUAL NAACP CONVENTION**

2023

WHEREAS, Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists at every VA medical center have provided outreach to Justice-Involved Veterans in various settings, including jails and courts in over 600 Veterans Treatment Courts and other Veteran-focused court programs across the U.S except Family Law Court where veterans do not have a criminal charge nor conviction.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the NAACP will work to support amendments to this program to allow veterans that have not committed a crime to qualify for assistance with Family Reconciliation in Family Law court and provide the same wrap-around support as those charged with a crime.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the NAACP work with the US Congress, the Department of Defense and the White House to advocate for the expansion of the Veterans Justice Outreach Program to include Justice Involved Veterans that do not have criminal charges pending but are still in need of the same assistance in Civil Courts, such as in the Family Law court and Children's Court.

2. Supporting Exoneration of the Port Chicago 50 California State Conference, Unit #1021SC

Concurred as amended

WHEREAS, The Port Chicago disaster was a deadly munitions explosion that occurred on July 17, 1944, at the Port Chicago Naval Magazine in Port Chicago, California, and munitions were detonated while being loaded onto a cargo vessel bound for the Pacific Theater of Operations; and

WHEREAS, This incident killed 320 sailors and civilians and injured 390 others, of which approximately two-thirds were enlisted African-American sailors; and

WHEREAS, A Naval Court of Inquiry report released days after the disaster revealed competition and criminalized loading practices were encouraged prior to the explosions, ("Instructions were in effect on 17 July 1944 that were to be followed in principle and must be followed in detail. Violations of some of these regulations occurred."); and

WHEREAS, Less than a month later, the surviving African-American sailors were ordered to return to loading munitions without improvements to safety conditions and 258 servicemen refused, an act which later became known as the Port Chicago Mutiny; and

WHEREAS, Fifty of the sailors, labeled as the "Port Chicago 50", were convicted of mutiny and sentenced to 15 years of prison and hard labor, and dishonorably discharged from the Armed Services; and

WHEREAS, Forty-seven of the 50 were released from prison in January 1946 with the remaining three sailors serving additional months in prison; and

WHEREAS, During and after the trial, questions were raised about the fairness and legality of the court-martial proceedings and owing to public pressure, the United States Navy reconvened the courts-martial board in 1945 wherein the court affirmed the previous guilty verdict of the convicted sailors; and

WHEREAS, Port Chicago was a racially segregated military unit, and African-American sailors, were denied the opportunity to perform or be trained in combat roles and relegated to the dangerous task of moving munitions; and

WHEREAS, Thurgood Marshall, then the Chief Special Counsel for the NAACP, visited California to observe the Chicago 50 trial and stated, "This is not an individual case," "This is not 50 men on trial for mutiny. This is the Navy on trial for its whole vicious policy toward Negroes;" and

WHEREAS, Widespread publicity surrounding the case and other race-related Navy protests of 1944 – 45 led the Navy to change its munitions handling practices and initiated the process of desegregating its forces beginning in February 1946; and

WHEREAS, During the 1999 – the NAACP National Convention called on the President of the United States to pardon the Port Chicago 50 survivors, restore their benefits, and award them and their widows; and

WHEREAS, In 1999, with all but two of the fifty sailors deceased, advocates including state and federal lawmakers, veterans' groups, and the NAACP successfully advocated for a presidential pardon for Port Chicago 50 sailor Freddie Meeks; and

WHEREAS, Freddie Meeks accepted the presidential pardon in an effort to keep the shine light on the injustices experienced by African American Servicemen serving in World War II, federal workers' rights, and the history of Port Chicago in the public view, and his acceptance had no official impact on the records of the other 49 sailors; and

WHEREAS, In 2016, the NAACP demanded that the remaining Sailors and their dependents be compensated for lost wages and benefits and they be given an honorable discharge and a full pardon; and

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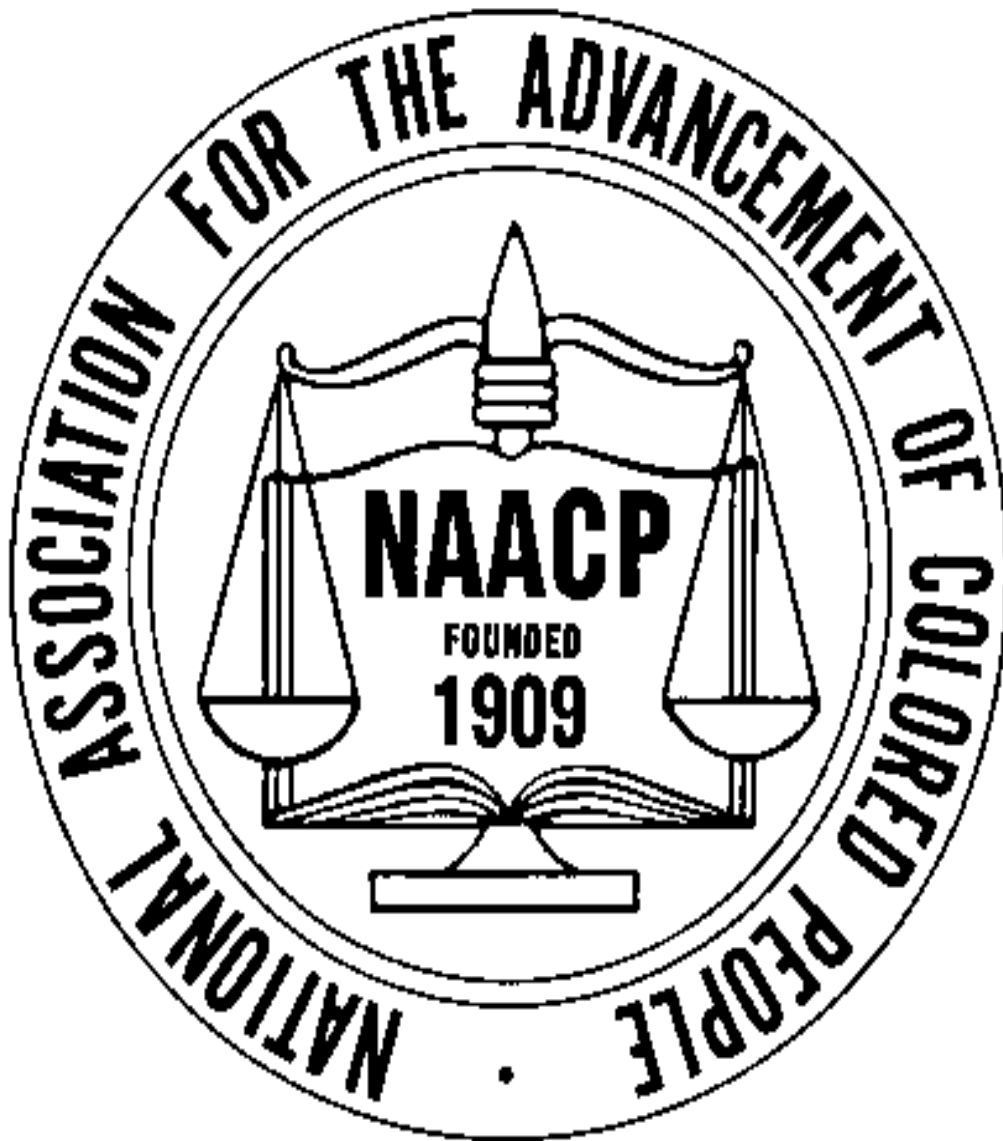
WHEREAS, In June 2021, the East Bay Regional Park District board of directors unanimously renamed a 2,540-acre park in Concord, California the Thurgood Marshall Regional Park – Home of the Port Chicago 50 to honor the brave sailors of Port Chicago who risked their lives standing up against racial discrimination and unsafe working conditions, and NAACP chief special counsel Thurgood Marshall for his advocacy work on their behalf which was instrumental in desegregating the U.S. Navy, the first branch of the military to officially integrate; and

WHEREAS, In August 2022, California Senate Joint Resolution 15 called on the President of the United States of America and the United States Congress to "take action to restore honor to the Sailors unjustly blamed for, and the Sailors convicted of mutiny following, the disaster at the Port Chicago Naval Magazine in Concord, California during World War II and to rectify any mistreatment by the military of those Sailors, including the full exoneration of those who were convicted at court-martial."

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the NAACP reaffirms the 2016 resolution and calls upon the Secretary of the Navy to exonerate the Port Chicago 50 of any wrongdoings based on racial mistreatment.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the NAACP calls upon the Secretary of the Navy to restore the Port Chicago 50 sailors to honorable duty status and award their dependents due compensation and benefits.

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