

Resolution urging the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and Mayor to bring Restorative Justice to the US Navy Sailors of Port Chicago.

1 WHEREAS, on July 17, 1944, The United States Navy experienced the worst ammunitions disaster and
2 explosion in our Nation's history, instantly destroying the Contra-Costa County California town of Port
3 Chicago and killing 320 men, 202 of whom were African American enlisted men; and,

4 WHEREAS, the five thousand tons of exploding munitions injured in excess of 400 sailors as well,
5 thereby representing more than 15 percent of all African American Naval casualties during World War
6 II; and,

7 WHEREAS, of the 258 sailors who initially refused to resume unsafe loading of munitions some 208
8 would eventually yield to the Navy after threats with death by firing squad, however the 50 who would
9 not acquiesce faced the largest mass mutiny trial in Naval history; and,

10 WHEREAS, on October 24, 1944, at a Courts Martial trial at Treasure Island, in San Francisco, in a
11 now widely recognized miscarriage of justice, all 50 men were found guilty of mutiny and sentenced to
12 15 years imprisonment; and,

13 WHEREAS, the Port Chicago Mutiny trial (aka the Port Chicago 50) would ultimately serve as the
14 catalyst for eventual desegregation of the US Navy and the Armed Services; and,

15 WHEREAS, in 1994, the National Park Service dedicated the Port Chicago site as a National Memorial;
16 and,

17 WHEREAS, on April 19, 1999, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed Resolution No. 361-99,
18 urging President William Clinton and the US Congress to exonerate the 50 sailors convicted of mutiny
19 in the Port Chicago disaster. Subsequently a pardon was granted to one of the 50 sailors but none of
20 the 50 were exonerated. Family members and activists are still working towards exoneration and,

21 Now therefore be it RESOLVED, as we approach the 71st Anniversary of the Port Chicago explosion,
22 the San Francisco Human Rights Commission urges the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and
23 Mayor Lee to take all necessary action to bring restitution and Restorative Justice to the lasting memory
24 of the service of the sailors of Port Chicago; and,

25 Be it FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this Resolution shall be forwarded to our Congressional
26 Representatives and our Commander-In-Chief, President Barack Obama for their consideration and to
27 urge federal legislation to posthumously vacate the unjust convictions of these brave men, and to
28 elevate their military records to show the appropriate designation of Honorable Discharge.

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31 Adopted by the San Francisco Human Rights Commission May 28, 2015