

CITY COUNCIL**The City of Orange Township, New Jersey**DATE FEBRUARY 6, 2024NUMBER 64-2024

TITLE: A RESOLUTION CELEBRATING THE ORANGES AND MAPLEWOOD BRANCH OF THE NAACP. THE FIRST NAACP BRANCH ESTABLISHED IN NEW JERSEY AND THE THIRD OLDEST BRANCH IN THE NATION - A LITTLE KNOWN BLACK HISTORY MOMENT IN THE CITY OF ORANGE TOWNSHIP (Submitted by Councilmember-At-Large Adrienne Wooten & the Orange Municipal Council)

WHEREAS, our responsibility as citizens is to address the inequalities and injustices that linger, and we must secure our birthright freedoms for all people.

WHEREAS, we must reflect on the sacrifices and contributions made by generations of African Americans, and let us resolve to continue our march toward a day when every person knows the unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

WHEREAS, the National Association for the Advancement of Color People (NAACP) was founded on February 12, 1909, it is the nation's foremost, largest, and most widely recognized civil rights organization. Its members and supporters throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities, leading grassroots campaigns for equal opportunity and conducting voter mobilization.

WHEREAS, three years after the NAACP was incorporated, the Oranges and Maplewood Branch received its charter in 1913. It is the oldest NAACP Branch in New Jersey and the third oldest in the nation.

WHEREAS, the founding leadership of the Branch was launched by: Dr. Walter G. Alexander (the first African American elected to the New Jersey Assembly), Mr. Fred Buford (Assistant Secretary), Mr. W.P. Burwell, Mrs. Mary B. Christine, Reverend James Churchman (President), Mr. W. H. Jackson, Rev. W.P. Lawrence (Union Baptist Church), Mrs. Louisa Pinnewill, Mrs. Kathryn Williams (Secretary) Mr. George Woodson (Vice President) and Mrs. Mary C. Woody (Treasurer/the first fully paid Life Member). In 1914, the elected leadership of the Branch initiated local membership drives and began to influence the launching of other NAACP Branches (Irvington, Montclair and Newark) throughout the State.

WHEREAS, in the early years of civil rights engagements, various attempts were made to intimidate the leadership of the Branch. However, throughout, the darkest days of the Branch's history, the leadership did not waiver from seeking improved conditions for the residents of the Oranges and Maplewood catchment area (Orange, East Orange, West Orange, South Orange, Livingston, Maplewood, Millburn, Bloomfield, Belleville, Nutley and Verona).

WHEREAS, the Branch was intimately involved in the 1930's closing of the East Orange High School swimming pool (all students were required to pass a swimming test, white students could swim during gym class and after school, however, African American students could use the pool only on alternative Fridays, after the African American students used the pool, the facility was drained).


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WHEREAS, in 1947, the Branch’s lawyers were successful in an East Orange Veterans Housing case (“Swell vs. McWhithey”). In this matter the New Jersey Courts ruled that segregation was discriminatory. During the height (1963) of the Civil Rights movement the Branch was victorious in a de facto segregation case (“Orange de Facto School case Fisher et al”). The impact of this legal decision extended beyond education and had immediate national civil rights implications.

WHEREAS, in 1964, the Branch’s unified drive against rental evacuation ended the “rental housing discrimination”. Other firsts included the election of African American officials (East Orange: William S. Hart) coupled with other elected officials of color and the appointment of African American superintendents to local school boards of education. Successful legal litigation also included (1971) the “Lewis Case” that addressed police brutality, the “Rebellion Case Riots Muslim et al” that successfully improved the lives of residents. Then, in 1974, the Branch initiated targeted direct action activities that secured significant monies for contractors of color from local municipalities.

WHEREAS, in 2016, the Unit launched Café 5000, a monthly opportunity to provide a free hot meal to local residents. Currently, members of the education committee engage with the students at Oakwood Avenue School (Orange), as we have the opportunity to read to the youngsters.

WHEREAS, the Afro Academic Cultural Technological Scientific Olympics (ACT- SO) component continues to build upon past successes. The Branch has received National recognition bringing home the Governor’s Award in Arts & Education, the Lancome Cosmetics “Write Her Future” \$10,000 Scholarships, Gold Medals, Silver Medals, and Bronze Medals.

WHEREAS, the Branch has addressed specific housing and employment concerns while monitoring the lack of diversity in our local school systems. In addition, the Oranges and Maplewood Branch of the NAACP seeks to guarantee the civil rights of the residents in the eleven municipalities they serve.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Municipal Council of the City of Orange Township call upon public officials, educators, librarians, and all the people of the City of Orange Township to observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we celebrate Oranges and Maplewood Branch of the NAACP. The first NAACP Branch established in New Jersey.

Approved: February 6, 2024

Joyce Lanier
City Clerk

Tency A. Eason
Council President