

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 457

Commending the Richmond 34.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 3, 2020
Agreed to by the Senate, March 5, 2020

WHEREAS, the Richmond 34, a group of Virginia Union University students who participated in the Thalhimer's lunch counter sit-in, were at the forefront of the modern Civil Rights Movement and played a pivotal role in the desegregation of Richmond businesses; and

WHEREAS, under Jim Crow laws and the doctrine of "separate but equal" derived from *Plessy v. Ferguson*, many businesses throughout the nation maintained a system of segregation, whereby African American customers were served separately from white customers or not served at all; and

WHEREAS, inspired by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who had recently given a speech at Virginia Union University, as well as the student sit-ins at the Woolworth's department store in Greensboro in early February 1960, students at Virginia Union University launched a campaign of nonviolent protests at Richmond department stores; and

WHEREAS, on the morning of February 22, 1960, 34 students assembled at the Thalhimer's department store in downtown Richmond, sat at the whites-only lunch counter and restaurant, and demanded to be served; after refusing to leave, the students were arrested and briefly taken to jail before being released on bail; and

WHEREAS, the members of the Richmond 34 were Leroy M. Bray, Jr., Gordon Coleman, Gloria C. Collins, Robert B. Dalton, Joseph E. Ellison, Marise L. Ellison, Wendell T. Foster, Jr., Anderson J. Franklin, Donald Vincent Goode, Woodrow B. Grant, Albert Van Graves, Jr., George Wendall Harris, Jr., Thalma Y. Hickman, Joanna Hinton, Carolyn Anne Horne, Richard C. Jackson, Elizabeth Patricia Johnson, Ford Tucker Johnson, Jr., Milton Johnson, Celia E. Jones, Clarence A. Jones, John J. McCall, Frank George Pinkston, Larry Pridgen, Leotis L. Pryor, Raymond B. Randolph, Jr., Samuel F. Shaw, Charles Melvin Sherrod, Virginia G. Simms, Ronald B. Smith, Barbara A. Thornton, Randolph A. Tobias, Patricia A. Washington, and Lois B. White; and

WHEREAS, the members of the Richmond 34 were all convicted of trespassing; all 34 students appealed the convictions, which were upheld by the Supreme Court of Virginia but overturned by the Supreme Court of the United States in 1963 in *Randolph v. Virginia*; and

WHEREAS, the Richmond 34 galvanized the Richmond community; the students' arrest and great personal sacrifice launched shopping boycotts by the African American community and further pickets of business establishments by Virginia Union University and high school students, resulting in many businesses integrating main-floor lunch counters and even upstairs dining rooms within a year of the original protest; and

WHEREAS, members of the Richmond 34 went on to become accomplished professionals in many fields, including law, education, medicine, jurisprudence, ministry, business and industry, pharmacy, politics, the criminal justice system, and social sciences; and

WHEREAS, the Richmond 34 demonstrated the power of peaceful protest and the necessity of confronting bigotry, discrimination, and hatred in the pursuit of justice and equality; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Richmond 34 on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of their courageous participation in the historic Thalhimer's lunch counter sit-in; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Virginia Union University as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the Richmond 34's important contributions to the Civil Rights Movement and the Richmond community as a whole.

ENROLLED

HJ457ER