



CITY COUNCILMEMBER
RIGEL ROBINSON
DISTRICT 7

CONSENT CALENDAR
May 14, 2019

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Councilmembers Rigel Robinson, Kate Harrison, and Cheryl Davila
Subject: Pronouncement of May 15th, 2019 as a Day of Bloody Thursday Remembrance and Commemoration of People’s Park

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution pronouncing May 15th, 2019, as a Day of Bloody Thursday Remembrance, on which the People of Berkeley and the world may reflect upon the continuing history of the People’s Park and its significance for our present society.

BACKGROUND

The Peace & Justice Commission advises the City Council on all matters relating to the City of Berkeley’s role in issues of peace and social justice (Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 3.68.070). At the April 8th meeting of the Peace & Justice Commission, the commission passed a resolution introduced by Commissioners Tregub and Han urging the council to pronounce May 15th, 2019 as a Day of Bloody Thursday Remembrance and Commemorating People’s Park. However, the resolution would not reach the City Council in time for May 15th without being introduced as an urgency item at the Agenda Committee.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

None.

CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Rigel Robinson, (510) 981-7170

Attachments:

1: Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

PRONOUNCEMENT OF MAY 15TH, 2019 AS A DAY OF BLOODY THURSDAY
REMEMBRANCE AND COMMEMORATION OF PEOPLE'S PARK

WHEREAS, the Peace and Justice Commission advises the City Council on all matters relating to the City of Berkeley's role in issues of peace and social justice (Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 3.68.070); and

WHEREAS, May 15th, 2019, is the 50th anniversary of "Bloody Thursday" in Berkeley; and

WHEREAS, the world must long remember the events of that day, why those tragedies occurred, and their continuing relevance to our society; and

WHEREAS, on May 15th 1969 Berkeley Mayor Wallace Johnson and California Governor Ronald Reagan directed the California Highway Patrol and the Berkeley Police to surround the People's Park - then three weeks old - to fence it in and destroy it; and

WHEREAS, a spontaneous and militant protest that afternoon confronted those police and were greeted with clubs and CS gas (more commonly known as tear gas), sparking a rebellion in the streets; and

WHEREAS, during the ensuing melee, Governor Reagan's Secretary of State Edwin Meese directed the Alameda County Sheriffs force to suppress the rebellion; and

WHEREAS, the Sheriffs attacked the rebellion with CS gas, batons, and live fire of birdshot and buckshot, blinding Alan Blanchard, killing James Rector, and sending numerous others to the hospital; and

WHEREAS, Governor Reagan then ordered the National Guard into Berkeley and the Guard dropped CS gas from helicopters, imposed curfews and checkpoints, strung barbed wire across roads, and patrolled with loaded rifles and bayonets; and

WHEREAS, in the days that followed, after memorializing James Rector, activists defiantly created a separate park on Hearst St., then dubbed the People's Park Annex; and

WHEREAS, the Berkeley Police violently attacked the people who were building the People's Park Annex; and

WHEREAS, that park, the People's Park Annex, is today honored by the name Ohlone Park; and

WHEREAS, decades of research by journalist Seth Rosenfeld has exposed the attack on the Park as not merely a defense of University-owned land, but as part of a systematic program of political oppression of activists who were viewed as a threat to capital and to U.S. imperialism; and

WHEREAS, the founding organizers who sparked creation of the Park included Telegraph Avenue area business owners, property owners, students, other UC affiliates, and activist organizers; and

WHEREAS, the Park grew out of the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement, and the free speech movement; and

WHEREAS, it was envisioned as a true Free Speech forum, a cooperative project, much needed green and open space, an expression of hope for the oppressed, a tribute to the power of community, and a place of joy and celebration; and

WHEREAS, today those ideals are still practiced at the Park and define its daily life; and

WHEREAS, the founding ideals of the Park remain critically important today.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Berkeley City Council pronounces May 15th, 2019, as a Day of Bloody Thursday Remembrance, a day on which the People of Berkeley and the world may reflect upon the continuing history of the People's Park and its significance for our present society.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that on this day we reflect upon the importance of Free Speech, cooperation, green and open space, hope and possibility for the future, the power of community, joy and celebration, justice, peace, and love.

