



Eleazar Bueno, Chairperson
Ebenezer Smith, District

Community Board 12 - Manhattan Washington Heights & Inwood

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February 26, 2021

Hon. Mitchell J. Silver
Commissioner of NYC Department of Parks & Recreation
830 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10065

Re: Resolution in Support of CB10M Installation Commemorating the Exonerated Five

Dear Commissioner Silver:

Please be advised that Community Board 12, Manhattan, passed a resolution with 38 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions, 1 not voting due to conflict at its Tuesday, February 23, 2021, General Meeting, supporting the resolution of our brothers & sisters on Community Board 10, Manhattan, and joining with our brothers & sisters on Community Board 9 in support of CB10M's proposal for a permanent installation in Central Park to honor the Exonerated Five; and encouraging the Central Park Conservancy to actively support, and help to fund, such an installation; and urging the NYC Public Design Commission to approve such an installation when it comes before the Commission.

Whereas: Public art has the power, over time, to uplift and to transform social consciousness; and

Whereas: Five Black and Latino teenagers from Harlem were wrongfully convicted and prosecuted for the brutal and vicious rape of a white woman in Central Park in 1989. The five teenagers – Antron McCray, 15; Kevin Richardson, 15; Raymond Santana, 14; Korey Wise, 16; & Yusef Salaam, 15 – were subjected to life-devastating consequences as a result of this gross miscarriage of justice. The five youth served their complete sentences, between 6 and 13 years, before another man, serial rapist Matias Reyes, admitted to the crime, which was substantiated with DNA testing. Based on this new evidence, the NYS Supreme Court vacated the convictions of the five previously accused youth. The City of New York agreed to a financial settlement on June 19, 2014, but a financial settlement can never repay what was taken. The experience of the Exonerated Five did not just traumatize these men and their families; it had resounding ramifications throughout the Harlem community, which are still felt today; and

Whereas: Community Board 10, Manhattan (CB10M) Chair, Cicely Harris & CB10M Parks & Recreation Committee Chair Karen Horry gave to Community Board 12, Manhattan's Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee on February 9, 2021, a powerful, moving, and detailed presentation on both CB10M's proposal and its almost two-year process of research, design, and community engagement which culminated in the passage by CB10M of a resolution in June 2020; and

Whereas: A commemoration should be designed to be both compelling and inviting to the viewing experience while pervading a sense of community ownership. For too long, members of the Harlem community have been made to feel that their park was not for them. Visitors should be able to reflect on the human cost of systemic racism and explore the roles and responsibilities of individuals, society, and government when confronting racism, injustice, and institutionalized inequities. The installation should educate the public about what led to the conviction and subsequent exoneration of "the Central Park Five," including the historical context about policing in New York City at the time; and

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Whereas: A permanent art piece that celebrates the extraordinary diversity and history of the Harlem community, a commemoration to the fortitude and resilience of the Exonerated Five and the need for social justice reform while pointing to the city's aspirations for the future, is proposed to be sited in the northeast section of Central Park and is anticipated to be completed and installed by April 2022; and

Whereas: This work has been done in close collaboration with the community, the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation, and the Manhattan Borough President's Office; and

Whereas: CB 10 submitted a Statement of Objectives and Goals to the Central Park Conservancy (CPC) and NYC Parks on October 23, 2020, and received a suggested proposal that is in discussion with CB10, the city agencies and CPC; and

Whereas: Community Board 9, Manhattan has written a Letter of Support for CB10M's proposal; and

Whereas: It is not the business of any Board to dictate what is done in other districts, this matter is of borough-wide, citywide, and national importance. The lingering trauma is felt in communities of color, including ours, and in our current national moment of reckoning on race, it is vitally important to engage in an ongoing dialogue on and commemoration of this event to serve as an enduring lesson of an injustice that must not be repeated; now, therefore, be it

Resolved: Community Board 12, Manhattan supports the resolution of our brothers & sisters on Community Board 10, Manhattan, and joins with our brothers & sisters on Community Board 9 in support of CB10M's proposal for a permanent installation in Central Park to honor the Exonerated Five; and be it further

Resolved: Community Board 12, Manhattan encourages the Central Park Conservancy actively to support, and help to fund, such an installation; and be it further

Resolved: Community Board 12, Manhattan urges the NYC Public Design Commission to approve such an installation when it comes before the Commission.

Sincerely,



Eleazar Bueno
Chairperson

cc: Hon. William Castro, Borough Commissioner NYC Parks
Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate
Hon. Scott M. Stringer, Comptroller
Hon. Adriano Espaillat, Congressman
Ms. Jennifer Hoppa, Northern Manhattan Parks Administrator
Hon. Robert Jackson, State Senator
Hon. Brian Benjamin, State Senator
Hon. Carmen De La Rosa, Assembly Member
Hon. Al Taylor, Assembly Member
Hon. Ydanis Rodriguez, Council Member
Hon. Mark Levine, Council Member
Hon. Signe Nielsen, Commissioner NYC PDC