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Orinda recognizes Black History Month

By Sora O'Doherty

At its Feb. 7 City Council meeting, Orinda adopted a proclamation recognizing February as Black History Month. Read into the record by Mayor Inga Miller, the proclamation acknowledges Black History Month, also known as African American History Month, as an annual celebration and recognition of the tremendous achievements by Black Americans in all aspects of American life and a time for acknowledging their important role in U.S. history.

The proclamation states that the Orinda City Council feels it is important to communicate its support for inclusivity and respect in the city, and that the council encourages all members of the community to remember and celebrate the contributions that African Americans have made to the nation as well as the importance of diversity and inclusion in our community, concluding that racial equality must always be a cornerstone of democracy.

In 1926, Carter Goodwin Wilson, a Black historian, established a week to recognize the accomplishments of Black American citizens, which has become one of the cultural landmarks of contemporary America. The second week of February was chosen for the event because it coincided with the birthday of Abraham Lincoln on Feb. 12 and of Frederick Douglass on Feb. 14.

The proclamation noted that the Orinda Library is proud to celebrate Black History Month with all the Contra Costa libraries, and has partnered with local authors, artists, historians, activists, and regular folks doing extraordinary things to bring some important programs to the community, with live and virtual events that include art exhibits, conversations with poets, and workshops where Black History is taught and shared by those who are experiencing it.

Library Manager Michael Beller, who attended the Zoom meeting, agreed that the Library collection offers several resources describing Black experiences, and if residents seek further information regarding what to read, view, or listen to, as they recognize Black History Month, the Orinda library staff is happy to provide many reading and listening options. Beller added that he is always happy to answer any questions from the public.

The proclamation spoke to the joint resolution adopted by the city and the school district to adopt a resolution supporting Inclusion, Diversity and Equity in the community. As part of those efforts, the Orinda Union School District has developed a curriculum to celebrate Black History Month highlighting the myriad ways Black Americans have contributed to the fabric of our country, with a focus on different themes and activities for each grade level.

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