



2022-00166

Greg Landsman
Councilmember

January 20, 2022

Black History Month & the Raising of the Pan-African Flag ('22)

MOTION

We hereby move that during the month of February 2022, the City of Cincinnati raise a Pan-African flag in recognition of, celebration of, and solidarity with our Black residents — as has become a customary tradition¹ during our observance of Black History Month.²

And, that in light of procedural time sensitivity, this motion be considered an emergency measure necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health, safety, and general welfare, making it effective immediately.

STATEMENT

History of Black History Month: Carter G. Woodson, noted Black Scholar and historian, founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915, and initiated *Black History Week* on February 12, 1926 (so as to coincide with the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln). In 1976, as part of the United States Bicentennial celebrations, the week was expanded to *Black History Month*, honoring the shared heritage of African-American citizens and aiding in the active conservation and preservation of African-American history and culture.

History of the Pan-African Flag: The Pan-African flag — also varyingly referred to as the Marcus Garvey, UNIA, Afro-American, or Black Liberation flag — was formally adopted in 1920 by the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in then-leader Marcus Garvey's first official Declaration of the Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World. Inspired by other liberationist movement flags for oppressed ethnic minorities (in particular, the Flag of Ireland, which arose from the Irish struggle for independence), it was created to celebrate and honor Black Americans, all people of the African Diaspora; as one scholar put it, it represents "black freedom, simple."³

¹ It should be noted that the City's installation and maintenance of the Pan-African flag is the City's own expression, constitutes government speech, and does not signify the City's intent to create a free speech forum.

²

<https://cincinnati.oh.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4793494&GUID=D3B71BB7-9BF5-4C59-BADC-A53E6CE7295A&Options=ID%7CText%7CAttachments%7C&Search=pan-african>

³ <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/06/14/532667081/on-flag-day-remembering-the-red-black-and-green>

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Garvey believed that the flags' importance was not only in Black celebration and solidarity but in *public communities-at-large recognizing each facet of the flag in its symbolic and historical purpose*. He said, "Everybody immediately seeing that flag would recognize that this is a manifestation of black aspirations, black resistance to oppression." By raising this flag in Cincinnati for the second year in a row, in the spirit of our yearly observance of Black History Month, we intend for its symbolic meaning to extend into our lives beyond the flag, further instilling in us all a deep and sincere commitment to racial justice.

Symbolic Meaning of the Pan-African Flag

THE RED represents blood. Both the shared blood of Black African ancestry and the solemn commemoration of the blood shed by Africans who fought for liberation;

THE BLACK represents Black people, whose existence as a nation, though not a nation-state, is further affirmed by the existence of the flag; and

THE GREEN represents the abundant natural wealth, growth, and natural fertility of Africa.

Councilmember Greg Landsman

Councilmember Jan-Michele Kearney

KL - CAL