

DENVER CITY COUNCIL



**Proclamation No. 26-0166
Recognizing the Ongoing Struggle for Racial Justice at Washington Park**

WHEREAS, in 1911, at Smith Lake in Washington Park, the City and County of Denver opened a public swimming beach and bathhouse that was accessible to only white residents, reflecting the systemic racial segregation of public spaces during that era; and

WHEREAS, on August 17, 1932, Black residents courageously asserted their right to equal access to this public facility, challenging the discriminatory practices that denied them full participation in civic life; and

WHEREAS, white beach and bathhouse users violently assaulted these residents, and the unrest spread into surrounding neighborhoods, exposing the deep racial tensions and resistance to desegregation present in Denver at the time; and

WHEREAS, seventeen Black protestors were arrested by police, while none of the individuals who carried out the assaults were arrested, demonstrating unequal enforcement of the law; and

WHEREAS, contemporary news coverage often mischaracterized the protest as being organized by outside agitators and minimized its call for racial equality, further obscuring the legitimate demands for justice and fairness raised by the protestors; and

WHEREAS, the swimming beach ultimately closed in 1957 due to health concerns, and in 1971 an indoor recreation center and swimming pool opened at this site and was made accessible to all residents, marking a significant step toward inclusion; and

WHEREAS, local efforts to desegregate public spaces in Denver ultimately prevailed, contributing to broader progress toward civil rights and equal access, while reminding the community that such progress was hard-fought and incomplete; and

WHEREAS, this site stands as a testament to the courage of those who demanded equality and honors the ongoing struggle for racial justice in Denver and beyond.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED BY THE DENVER CITY COUNCIL:

Section 1. That the Council of the City and County of Denver hereby recognize and honors the history of racial injustice and resistance at Washington Park and affirms the importance of remembering this history as part of our shared civic responsibility. That this proclamation serves as a commitment to continue striving for racial equity, justice, and equal access to public spaces for all residents of the City and County of Denver.

Section 2. That the Clerk and Recorder of the City and County of Denver shall affix the seal of the City and County of Denver to this proclamation and that a copy be transmitted to Pastor Nicole Garcia of Epiphany Lutheran Church, History Colorado, West Washington Park Neighborhood Association, East Washington Park Neighborhood Association, and Friends and Neighbors (FANS) of Washington Park Association.

PASSED BY THE COUNCIL February 17, 2026

Signed by:
A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amanda P. Sandoval".

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PRESIDENT

